

	<h1>Communication Policy</h1>
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N/A	Communication Strategy	S Davies	May 2023	Board	May 2023	May 2023	May 2026
N/A	Social Media Policy	P Latham	Oct 2023	Board	Oct 2023	Oct 2023	Oct 2026
1	Communication Policy	P Latham	Oct 2024	Board (based on previous approvals)	N/A	Oct 2024	May 2026

## 1. Introduction

This policy seeks to set out Eldonian Community Based Housing Association's (ECBHA's) policy positions regarding business and customer communications.

This policy has brought together a number of previously separate policies into one document, including continuation of policy positions established within the Communication Strategy. Previous policies are superseded by this document.

## 2. ECBHA Communications Policy Positions

ECBHA seeks to ensure that its communications support the organisations ambitions to provide good quality homes and excellent services to improve the quality of life in our communities.

This will be achieved through:

- Increasing ECBHA's profile as a voice on the experiences and value of smaller community based housing associations.
- Demonstrate how we are open and accountable, where necessary challenging negative perceptions of the organisation and sector but also ensuring when things go wrong, we demonstrate how we will put them right and learn for the future.
- Engage with our customers in the most effective ways to achieve understanding and encourage interaction.
- Build on existing collaborative relationships with our partners to help improve lives across our community.
- Encourage our colleagues to share in the ownership of positive communications across their areas of influence.
- Ensure all the requirements under law, Health and Safety etc, are communicated effectively to all relevant stakeholders.

ECBHA will put in place a communications strategy and action plan that defines our audience priorities and the main communication methods that are intended to be used for this engagement. The strategy and action plan will be approved by the Board. Its impact will be measured and reported to Board regularly.

The ECBHA brand is important and identifies us locally. We will seek to define and protect the brand identity. The communications strategy will seek to shape its development.

As a small organisation ECBHA doesn't have in-house communications specialists, however we will engage external communications support as and when a need is identified.

### **3. Social Media**

ECBHA recognises the rapid growth of social media channels as a business tool to engage with customers and other stakeholders as well as enabling the delivery of key organisational messages. Therefore, to manage this emerging communication method this policy outlines our specific positions regarding its use:

- ECBHA social media channels will provide information about events, useful films and links, and a means to be involved with ECBHA.
- ECBHA is a small organisation, it must be proportional in the resources it applies to its social media presence; therefore, it will use a limited number of platforms and will discourage ECBHA using direct messaging through platforms, and instead encourage communication via its established direct communication routes.
- This policy prohibits the posting of any social media content which:
  - Contains illegal material.
  - Breaches regulatory rules or procedures
  - Contains material which is defamatory to ECBHA.
  - Brings ECBHA into disrepute.
  - Breaches equal opportunity policies
  - Amounts to bullying or harassment.
  - Contains confidential information belonging to ECBHA or its customers.
- ECBHA will manage its social media accounts and content to ensure that the benefits of its use are optimised while also being cautious to reputational risk and potential harm that can be created through inappropriate content and engagement.

Our aims and objectives in the use of social media are:

- To provide clear internal and external customer accountabilities and standards (displayed on our social media sites).
- To embrace social media channels as opportunities and align their development of wider ECBHA communications.
- To ensure that staff engage appropriately with our social media channels; personally, and professionally.
- To mitigate risk factors that may arise through our social media platforms, accounts, and content.

ECBHA is committed to making the best use of technology to improve the way we provide services, communicate, and interact with the community.

We recognise the communication benefits of social media in customer accessibility, public relations, profile, and reputation.

Social media offers us an opportunity to communicate key messages quickly and easily to the community. It can generate word of mouth and encourage engagement. We will:

- Ensure our tone of voice on social media will reflect that we are friendly, professional, and helpful.
- Have a balanced mix of posts including useful information, corporate messages, and human-interest stories.
- Apply to our social media presence our policies and procedure aimed at preventing bullying, harassment, hate crime and disrespectful behaviour.
- Seek to ensure ECBHA's reputation will be positively promoted in meaningful ways.

ECBHA uses social media to:

- Provide fast and affordable information services which are effortless for our customers and stakeholders.
- Provide an informal, 'human' voice for the organisation to enhance customer relations and experience.
- Encourage wider engagement with customers.
- Increase positive awareness of our organisation, brand, activities, and services.
- Listen to and better understand our stakeholder groups, to identify which communities are talking about us and what they are saying.
- Extend reach of corporate messages online, measured by followers and web traffic referrals from external sites.
- Be accessible, including hard to reach groups.
- Provide a free and real-time method of communication.

Social media posts will reflect on the company and are part of ECBHA's reputation. Employees are responsible for their conduct and are required to apply appropriate professional boundaries as they would in communications and activities through traditional routes.

Any posts made by colleagues reflect on ECBHA if the site links them to ECBHA in any way; regardless of whether they are made in work or personal time and from work or private computers.

Any breach of this policy may result in a disciplinary sanction up to and including summary dismissal. That is dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Employees must not share any personal data relating to themselves or others on ECBHA social media accounts. For their own security and protection, they are also strongly advised to not share any sensitive personal data about themselves or others on personal accounts which they allow to remain visible to the ECBHA social media account sites.

Employees must:

- Be professional, responsible, and responsive.
- Provide content which adds value, is relevant, engaging, accurate and assists ECBHA's purpose, objectives, and values.
- Have clear aims, assess risk, and monitor success.
- Opinions expressed must not be discriminatory, defamatory, damage ECBHA reputation or be in breach of the organisation's policies.

When on personal social media sites and blogs, employees must:

- Remember they are responsible for any content they publish.
- Understand and use their online privacy settings.
- Be clear they are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of ECBHA.

If colleagues have ECBHA customers as social media contacts and were to share anything inappropriate or in breach of ECBHA policies, then this will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Where employees have an association to ECBHA online, they may be considered to be acting in the course of their employment. Any content which breaches ECBHA policies, such as discriminatory or bullying content, will be investigated under the ECBHA Disciplinary Policy.

ECBHA reserves the right to view and review information available online, whether in a colleagues' private or professional social media channels if security settings have not been applied so it remains visible.

ECBHA Colleagues are not to post images of customers without a signed Photo Consent form.

Colleagues must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer to be an author on ECBHA social media sites.

A log will be kept of all ECBHA social media accounts. New accounts must not be set up without the approval of the Chief Executive Officer. In setting up new account's colleagues must consider the aims, benefits, risk, information to be shared, membership criteria and who will administer the site.

The Chief Executive Officer will be an administrator on all ECBHA pages and groups for external communication purposes and hold passwords. Additional administrators will be permitted at the Chief Executive Officers discretion.

Colleagues must use this policy and corporate guidance to create a new ECBHA social media content.

Social media content should signpost customers to the ECBHA website and encourage registration for a self-service portal.

ECBHA social media sites are to carry the approved Terms and Conditions such as: 'Please be aware that personal or abusive comments posted on this wall will not be tolerated and you will be blocked if you do so.' In rare instances, further steps can be taken to remove content. Derogatory or offensive comments will be removed, blocked, and reported as deemed appropriate.

#### **4. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion**

We are committed to promoting equal opportunities for all everyone will receive equal treatment regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

This policy supports ECBHA commitment to treat all people with fairness and respect. We aim to foster good relations within our communities. When applying this policy, we will act sensitively towards the diverse needs of individuals and to reduce discrimination and harassment.

We will be inclusive and help ensure representation of diversity in our communities in our imagery and content.

## **5. Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years unless changing circumstances or an incident trigger an earlier review.