Guidance for official FCO Twitter accounts

Contents

Applying for a twitter account

There are 3 different types of FCO official twitter accounts:

1. Post accounts (official voice of the British Government in that country)
2. Individual accounts (to discuss, inform and engage with individuals about UK policy, offering your own insights)
3. Policy accounts (for FCO policy areas such as human rights)

If you are thinking of using twitter in an official capacity you should first speak to your regional hub or your Digital Communications Manager. Once it is agreed how twitter will help you to fulfil your policy objectives you must send a request by completing the social media request form. You will be notified once your account has been approved.

Please note requests are only reviewed on Fridays, so if you would like to set up your twitter account in advance of an event please ensure you have submitted the request in plenty of time.

Setting up a twitter account

If your twitter account is approved, it will be set up on your behalf by Press and Digital Department, who will then provide you with the log in details. You must supply an official FCO email address to associate with the account (i.e. an email address that ends in "fco.gov.uk".

All twitter account names must follow these guidelines.

	Posts	Ambassadors/High Commissioners	Individuals	Policy areas
Username	@UKinX	@HMAFirstnameLastname or HCFirstnameLastname	@FirstnameLastnameFCO	Discuss with regional hub or PDD
Profile picture	Blue post logo on white background	Photo, preferably close up	Photo, preferably close up	Discuss with regional hub or PDD
"Header" image	Colourful image that shows the work of the post/individual. Once uploaded be sure to check how it looks on your profile to make sure your twitter profile picture looks OK on top of the image.			

Bio description	*Official twitter account of the British Embassy/High Commission in #Country. #digitaldiplomacy #UK*	• job description, followed by @foreignoffice • #Country where appropriate • #policy where appropriate • #digitaldiplomacy • mix of work related and personal interests		Discuss with regional hub or PDD
Location	City, Country	City, Country	City, Country	City, Country

What to tweet

The FCO encourages you to use your own discretion when tweeting. Please see the social media guidance for more details. Seek advice before tweeting if you are not sure.

Do not send out automated messages on your twitter account. This includes linking your twitter account to RSS feeds or your Facebook page. The reason for this is that each social network is different and your voice will be more credible if you have tailored messages appropriately for the medium you are using.

Do:

- Familiarise yourself with twitter's rules and best practices
- Use appropriate hashtags that are sensitive to the situation
- Use @replies and mentions
- Retweet (RT) messages from other users to amplify their messages
- Answer sensible questions from people

Don't:

- Be pulled into an argument online
- RT inappropriate messages (remember, a RT is seen as an endorsement)
- Be tempted to use direct messages to talk about anything you wouldn't be happy seeing on your twitter feed – it is very easy to accidentally publish them to your timeline

Dealing with problems

Abuse and harassment

Inappropriate messages directed at Government organisations and officials on twitter are, unfortunately, to be expected. You shouldn't block these people as a matter of course, as we promote and encourage freedom of speech online. However if you repeatedly receive messages from individuals that contain:

- Racist language
- Profanities
- Violence or threats

You can block and report those individuals to twitter for violating twitter's terms and conditions.

Once you have raised a ticket with twitter by reporting an individual, please contact PDD if the request needs to be hurried with your support number. PDD will then be able to contact twitter directly.

- Report abusive behaviour
- Report a violation

Hacking

Your password for twitter should contain mixed case letters and numbers to make it as strong as possible. You must ensure that your hub or Digital Communications Manager has your password and that you update them if you change it.

A common form of hacking is via Direct Messages. You should not click on any links sent to you via DM. Often the message will say something along the lines of: "*FYI this profile on twitter [LINK] is spreading nasty blogs around about you*" or "*Did you see this pic of you? lol [LINK] …*". If you click on the link you will be directed to a site that looks like twitter, and once you enter your log in details the hackers will have your password.

If your account has been compromised but you can still log in you should:

- Change your password
- Notify PDD and your hub who will advise you of the next steps to take

- Check the [apps section of your account and revoke access](#) from any you don't recognise

If your account is compromised and you can no longer log in, you should:

- Contact PDD and your hub immediately
- [Submit a ticket to twitter](#) and advise PDD of the ticket reference

[More information on keeping your account secure](#).

Impersonation/parody accounts

According to [twitter's terms and conditions](#), a parody or impersonation account is allowed as long as it clearly states on the profile that it is a parody account.

If you believe that an account is violating twitter's terms and conditions you can [report them by raising a ticket](#) with twitter. If you would like the request to be looked into as a matter of urgency please contact PDD with your support ticket reference number who will be able to contact twitter directly.

Hootsuite

All twitter accounts will be added to the FCO's main Hootsuite account by PDD when an account is created.

If you would like to use Hootsuite to update and manage your social media accounts please set up a free account at www.hootsuite.com. You **should not** add your social media to this account. Please contact PDD with:

- the email address associated with your Hootsuite account
- the social media accounts you need access to

Advantages of using hootsuite:

- update all your social media accounts from one place
- schedule messages to send in the future
- detailed analytics
- monitoring social media
- mobile app

Useful links

Twitter:

- [Twitter basics](#)

- [Something's not working](#)

- [Report abuse or policy violations to twitter](#)

- [Mobile twitter](#)

Hootsuite:

- [Hootsuite website](#)

- [Quick start guide](#)