

## Tool: Social media channel chooser

When it comes to social media, the choices made are important. The UK's most popular social media platforms can be broken down into the following categories. There are always new channels, but at the time of writing those flagged remain the most important.

- **Online communities.** While the popularity of [Facebook](#) among younger people is dropping, it is increasing in popularity amongst older generations. It remains the most important platform to engage with by far. In contrast, [LinkedIn](#) has a less active and far smaller community, but it's focus on business provides a means of approaching a distinct audience, particularly with regard to local economic issues.
- **Micro-blogging.** There is significant public awareness of [Twitter](#) and its cultural impact appears to go beyond what its relatively low usage figures would suggest. The main benefit of Twitter is that its reach is potentially global, rather than the exclusive friend-focused nature of online communities. Because of this, it can be a double-edged sword, magnifying things done well but also those done badly.
- **Messages.** [Messenger](#) by Facebook, [WhatsApp](#) and [Snapchat](#) all provide a means of sending messages directly to individuals. Use of these platforms by councils so far has been creating groups through which to send mass-messages. Message based platforms are important because they are the primary way that many young people communicate, so it is important that the council can be contacted through them.
- **Multi-media.** By enabling users to upload their own content, [YouTube](#) has become one of the most widely referenced platforms, especially among younger demographics. Video provides councils with an opportunity to explain complex issues and engage audiences who might not be willing to undertake extensive reading. [Instagram](#) provides a similar opportunity to draw users in using rich content, such as infographics. The vast majority of users are under 35.
- **Local social networks.** Local social networks let people flag local issues, both positive and negative. They are neighbourhood-based, and work in similar ways to listings sites, and they often provide a good locus between online and offline. You can use the service to let residents know about an issue with a bin collection or about a power cut affecting a few streets. [NextDoor](#) is the best-known local social network, and has increasingly wide reach across UK communities.

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- **Mail-outs.** Councils often have lists of resident emails, and these can be used to reach a wider resident base. They provide a regular way to check in, and can provide outlets for residents to feed back. In using emails, it is important to be aware of data protection and of the recent GDPR legislation. Also bear in mind that you will need platforms to support mass mailouts, otherwise your emails will just end up in people's spam folders. There are lots of sites that let you do this, but [Mailchimp](#) is probably the best known.
- **SMS messaging.** Although not technically social media, mobile phones are the best means of reaching people on a day-to-day sense. Residents are rarely more than a couple of metres from their phone, and are more likely to read a text message than an email. Services like [Textizen](#) allow a more professional, dashboard-style approach to sending out texts like this. Where a councils have their own app, push notifications can be used to draw residents' attention to a local engagement activity.

Lastly, whatever social media platforms you use to monitor your output and the responses you are getting. This will help to identify what is working and what is not. [Click on this list of social media monitoring sites](#) to see some of the options here.

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