

## **Social Media Policy Template**

A guide for staff on using social media to promote the work of [*charity name*] and in a personal capacity.

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, at least once a year. [*Charity name*] will amend this policy, following consultation, where appropriate.

Date of last review: [*date*]

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## **Introduction**

### **What is social media?**

Social media is the term given to web-based tools and applications which enable users to create and share content (words, images and video content), and network with each other through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. Examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

### **Why do we use social media?**

Social media is essential to the success of communicating [charity name]'s work. It is important for some staff to participate in social media to engage with our audience, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of [charity name]'s work.

### **Why do we need a social media policy?**

The difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to [charity name]'s work. While we encourage the use of social media, we have certain standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe. Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain.

This policy is intended for all [staff members of all levels, volunteers and trustees (delete as appropriate)], and applies to content posted on both a [charity name] device and a personal device. Before engaging in work-related social media activity, staff must read this policy.

### **Setting out the social media policy**

This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of [charity name], and the use of social media by staff in both a professional and personal capacity. It sets out what you need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to help staff support and expand our official social media channels, while protecting the charity and its reputation and preventing any legal issues.

### **Internet access and monitoring usage**

There are currently no access restrictions to any of our social media sites in the [charity name] office. However, when using the internet at work, it is important that staff refer to our [policy name i.e. IT Policy]. You are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of personal social media activity during your lunch breaks. But usage should not be excessive and interfere with your duties.

### **Point of contact for social media**

Our [team name or individual name] is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our social media channels. If you have specific questions about any aspect of these channels, speak to the [job title]. No other staff member can post content on [charity name]'s official channels without the permission of the [job title].

### **Which social media channels do we use?**

[Charity name] uses the following social media channels:

[List your charity's social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and include the links. For example: [www.facebook/charityname](http://www.facebook/charityname)]

[Explain what you use these social media accounts for and who your audience(s) is/are. For example: [Charity name] has a Facebook account which it uses to share news with supporters (females, primarily aged 20-40) and to encourage people to become involved in our work].

## **Guidelines**

### **Using [charity name]'s social media channels — appropriate conduct**

1. [Team name or individual name] is responsible for setting up and managing [charity name]'s social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the [job title] will have access to these accounts.
2. *[Add in content about the days/hours you check social media and respond to comments. For example, our digital communications officer responds to comments Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, and then on evenings and weekends we have a social media out-of-hours rota, covered by the whole communications team.]*
3. Be an ambassador for our brand. Staff should ensure they reflect [charity name] values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Our brand guidelines set out our tone of voice that all staff should refer to when posting content on [charity name]'s social media channels.
4. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for [charity name], and accurately reflects [charity name]'s agreed position.
5. Bring value to our audience(s). Answer their questions, help and engage with them
6. Take care with the presentation of content. Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors. Also check the quality of images.
7. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
8. If staff outside of [team name] wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should speak to the [team name] about this.
9. Staff shouldn't post content about supporters or service users without their express permission. If staff are sharing information about supporters, service users or third party organisations, this content should be clearly labelled so our audiences know it has not come directly from [charity name]. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.
10. Always check facts. Staff should not automatically assume that material is accurate and should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification, for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation.
11. Be honest. Say what you know to be true or have a good source for. If you've made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it.
12. Staff should refrain from offering personal opinions via [charity name]'s social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting'. If you are in doubt about [charity name]'s position on a particular issue, please speak to [team name].
13. It is vital that [charity name] does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials. For example, a video of a stunt.
14. Staff should not encourage people to break the law to supply material for social media, such as using unauthorised video footage. All relevant rights for usage must be obtained before publishing material.

15. Staff should not set up other Facebook groups or pages, Twitter accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of *[charity name]*. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, the *[team name]* can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following.
16. *[Charity name]* is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We have every right to express views on policy, including the policies of parties, but we can't tell people how to vote.
17. If a complaint is made on *[charity name]*'s social media channels, staff should seek advice from the *[job title i.e. head of communications]* before responding. If they are not available, then staff should speak to the *[job title i.e. director of communications]*.
18. Sometimes issues can arise on social media which can escalate into a crisis situation because they are sensitive or risk serious damage to the charity's reputation. Examples might include: *[include example crisis situations for your charity]*. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity.

The *[team name]* regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of *[charity name]* so we can catch any issues or problems early. If there is an issue that could develop or has already developed into a crisis situation, the *[team name]* will do the following: *[add in your crisis management plan]*.

If any staff outside of the *[team name]* become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on *[charity name]*'s social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the *[job title i.e. head of communications]* immediately.

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## **Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct**

This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media but instead flags up those areas in which conflicts might arise. *[Charity name]* staff are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with *[charity name]*'s values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive *[charity name]*. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of *[charity name]*. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about *[charity name]*'s work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent *[charity name]*'s positions, policies or opinions."
2. Staff who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they work at *[charity name]* should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and the *[team name]*. Similarly, staff who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work for *[charity name]* should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and the *[team name]*.
3. Those in senior management, and specialist roles where they are well known in their field of expertise, must take particular care as personal views published may be misunderstood as expressing *[charity name]*'s view.
4. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with *[charity name]* and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the *[general public, colleagues, partners and funders (delete as appropriate)]*.

5. [Charity name] works with several high profile people, including [celebrities, journalists, politicians and major donors (delete as appropriate)]. Please don't approach high profile people from your personal social media accounts to ask them to support the charity, as this could hinder any potential relationships that are being managed by [team name]. This includes asking for retweets about the charity.
6. If you have any information about high profile people that have a connection to our cause, or if there is someone who you would like to support the charity, please speak to the [team name] to share the details.
7. If a staff member is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to [charity name], they should talk to the [team name] immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.
8. [Charity name] is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. When representing [charity name], staff are expected to hold [charity name]'s position of neutrality. Staff who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from [charity name], and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.
9. Never use [charity name]'s logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the [team name].
10. Always protect yourself and the charity. Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so do consider the content carefully. When you are using social media sites at work, it is important that you do so safely. You can find more information on your responsibilities when using our computer systems in our [policy name i.e. IT Policy].
11. Think about your reputation as well as the charity's. Express your opinions and deal with differences of opinion respectfully. Don't insult people or treat them badly. Passionate discussions and debates are fine, but you should always be respectful of others and their opinions. Be polite and the first to correct your own mistakes.
12. We encourage staff to share tweets and posts that we have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support [charity name] and the work we do. Where appropriate and using the guidelines within this policy, we encourage staff to do this as it provides a human voice and raises our profile. However, if the content is controversial or misrepresented, please highlight this to the [team name] who will respond as appropriate.

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## **Further guidelines**

### **Libel**

Libel is when a false written statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published online or in print. Whether staff are posting content on social media as part of their job or in a personal capacity, they should not bring [charity name] into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

### **Copyright law**

It is critical that all staff abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Never use or adapt someone else's images or written content without permission.

Failing to acknowledge the source/author/resource citation, where permission has been given to reproduce content, is also considered a breach of copyright.

### **Confidentiality**

Any communications that staff make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that [*charity name*] is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date. Please refer to our [*policy name i.e. Confidentiality Policy*] for further information.

### **Discrimination and harassment**

Staff should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official [*charity name*] social media channel or a personal account. For example:

- making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief
- using social media to bully another individual
- posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content

### **Lobbying Act**

Charities are legally allowed to campaign to bring about a change in policy or law to further their organisational purpose. In most cases, spending on charity campaigns that are in accordance with charity law will not be regulated under electoral law. However, the Lobbying Act, which was passed in January 2014, states that during national elections (known as regulated periods) spending on campaigning activities may be regulated.

Charities which spend more than £20,000 in England or £10,000 in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, during the regulated period, need to register with the Electoral Commission. To abide by the Lobbying Act, campaigning activities on social media must not be seen as intending to influence people's voting choice. During these periods, all campaigning activity will be reviewed by the [*job title*].

### **Use of social media in the recruitment process**

Recruitment should be carried out in accordance with the [*policy name i.e. Recruitment Policy*], and associated procedures and guidelines. Any advertising of vacancies should be done through HR and the [*team name*]. [*Vacancies are shared routinely on LinkedIn (amend/delete as appropriate)*].

There should be no systematic or routine checking of candidate's online social media activities during the recruitment process, as conducting these searches might lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristics, such as religious beliefs or sexual orientation, played a part in a recruitment decision. This is in line with [*charity name*]'s [*policy name i.e. Equal Opportunities Policy*].

### **Protection and intervention**

The responsibility for measures of protection and intervention lies first with the social networking site itself. Different social networking sites offer different models of interventions in different areas. For more information, refer to the guidance available on the social networking site itself. For example, Facebook. However, if a staff member considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the [*job title*] immediately.

### **Under 18s and vulnerable people**

Young and vulnerable people face risks when using social networking sites. They may be at risk of being bullied, publishing sensitive and personal information on their profiles, or from becoming targets for online grooming.

Where known, when communicating with young people under 18-years-old via social media, staff should ensure the online relationship with [*charity name*] follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship. Staff should ensure that young people have been made aware of the risks of

communicating and sharing information online, and given guidance on security/privacy settings as necessary. Staff should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the young person and [charity name] content and other content is appropriate for them. Please refer to our [policy name i.e. Safeguarding Policy].

### **Responsibilities and beach of policy**

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of [charity name] is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect. For staff, breaches of policy may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue. Please refer to our [policy name i.e. HR policy] for further information on disciplinary procedures. Staff who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from the [job title].

### **Public Interest Disclosure**

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, if a staff member releases information through [charity name]'s social media channels that is considered to be in the interest of the public, [charity name]'s [policy name i.e. Whistleblowing Policy] must be initiated before any further action is taken.