

Social Media Policy

Ben's Centre for Vulnerable People (Sheffield)
Charity Number: 1087606.

Issued	June 2024
Recheck	June 2026

Introduction

This policy sets out our expectations on the use of social media and reminds staff of the standards of behaviour expected of them when they are posting on social media, as well as the consequences of falling below those standards.

For the purposes of this policy, social media is any online platform or app that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes social platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Social media also covers blogs, video, and image-sharing websites such as YouTube.

You should be aware that there are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and that this is a constantly changing area.

Employees should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use and are free to consult their line manager if they have any questions.

Use of social media for work

We encourage employees to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media as part of their work as we acknowledge it is an important part of how we stay up to date and communicate with our networks and social media can be a highly effective tool in bringing people together.

Employees may contribute to our social media activities, for example by writing for our blogs, being involved in helping manage social media groups and providing relevant content for us to post through our official social media channels.

Employees must be aware at all times that, while contributing to our social media activities, they are representing us. Staff who use social media as part of their job should adhere to the following rules:

Employees should use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of communication about our organisation in the public sphere. These safeguards include:

- making sure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for our organisation;
- liaising with your line manager before beginning conversations in your work role;

Any communications that employees make in a professional capacity through social media must not:

- bring the organisation into disrepute, for example by:
 - criticising or arguing in a disrespectful manner with contacts, colleagues or others;
 - making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or
 - posting content that is inappropriate or links to inappropriate content, for example:
 - sexually explicit material
 - false or misleading information
 - violence
 - extremism or terrorism
 - hateful or offensive material
- breach confidentiality, for example by:
 - revealing information owned by our organisation which is considered confidential;

- giving away confidential information about an individual (i.e., a colleague or contact), or;
- discussing our internal workings that have not been communicated to the public;
- breach copyright, for example by:
 - using someone else's images or written content without permission;
 - failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something; or
- do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
 - making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
 - using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee); or
 - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive (or links to such content).

Use of social media in your personal life

We recognise that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of us, employees must be aware that they can damage the organisation if they are recognised as being one of our employees.

Employees are allowed to say that they work for us, and we recognise that sometimes you may want to discuss your work on social media. However, the employee's online profile must not contain our name or a reference to it.

If employees do discuss their work on social media (for example, by giving an opinion on their specialism), they may want to consider including on their profile a statement along the following lines: "Views my own", however this is not compulsory and only useful if constant clarification needs to be made.

Any communications that employees make in a personal capacity through social media must not:

- bring us into disrepute, for example by:
 - criticising or arguing in a disrespectful manner with contacts, colleagues or others;
 - making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or
 - posting content that is inappropriate or links to inappropriate content, for example:
 - sexually explicit material
 - false or misleading information
 - violence
 - extremism or terrorism
 - hateful or offensive material
- breach confidentiality, for example by:
 - revealing information owned by us which is considered confidential;
 - giving away confidential information about an individual (i.e., a colleague or contact); or
 - discussing our internal workings that have not been communicated to the public;
- breach copyright, for example by:
 - using someone else's images or written content without permission;
 - failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something; or
- do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
 - making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion, or belief or age;
 - using social media to bully another individual (i.e., an employee of ours); or
 - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive (or links to such content).

Use of social media in the recruitment process

Unless it is in relation to finding candidates (for example, if an individual has put their details on social media websites for the purpose of attracting prospective employers), we will only conduct searches either by ourselves or through a third party on social media when these are directly relevant to the applicant's skills or claims that they have made in the recruitment process. For instance:

- a prospective employee might claim that they have used social media in their previous job (for example, as a publicity tool); or
- a prospective employee's social media use may be directly relevant to a claim made in their application (for example, if they run a blog based around a hobby mentioned in their CV or a skill in which they claim to be proficient).

There should be no systematic or routine checking of prospective employees' online social media activities, as conducting these searches during the selection process might lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristics (for example, sexual orientation or religious beliefs) played a part in a recruitment decision. This is in line with our Equal Opportunities Policy.

Disciplinary action over social media use

All employees are required to adhere to this policy. Employees should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity that might cause serious damage to us, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I just be myself on social media?

Yes. Please be yourself on social media, as it's important we reflect our authentic and honest self on any platform we utilise for communication. The purpose of this policy is to help us manage our official communication usage on social media and safeguard where things can go wrong.

Can I speak about my job on my personal social media?

Yes. Please feel free to communicate what you do on social media. It's an important part of who you are as an individual. Please be sensitive as to how people might view something you post as an official comment from the organisation and follow the best practice laid out in this policy. If in doubt, or if you are contacted by someone asking for an opinion, please contact your line manager for guidance.

This feels very corporate – what is it trying to achieve?

Ultimately, this is about protecting everyone. Social media crosses a divide of official communications and personal opinion, so it is important that we do all that we can to clarify which is which. However, as part of that clarification, it is also important to not shut down an individual's voice on what are their own personal social media channels. Social media is constantly evolving, as will this policy document, but we want to show the steps being taken to help protect our staff as well as the organisation as a whole.

What if I am being trolled or bullied online?

If you feel like you are being targeted online, whether it's by someone from within the organisation or not then please reach out to the SSG who can support you.

Review

This policy may be reviewed at any time at the request of any member of staff, but it will be automatically reviewed 2-years after initial approval and thereafter on a triennial basis unless organisational changes, legislations, guidance, or non-compliance prompt an earlier review.

Definitions

Ben's Centre ("we", "us", "our")

The Employee ("you")