

Social Media Usage Policy

The Bristol Methodist District. (Charity Number 1134873)

First Issued	January 2025
Last review	January 2025

1 Introduction

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 This includes social platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and LinkedIn. You should be aware that there are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area.
- 1.4 Social media also covers blogs, video, and image-sharing websites such as YouTube.
- 1.5 You should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use and feel free to consult your Line Manager with any queries.

2 Use of social media for work

- 2.1 We encourage you to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media as part of your work as we acknowledge it is an important part of how we communicate with our networks and stay up to date with things happening across the business and the wider industry.
- 2.2 You 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 the official social media channels. Please contact your Line Manager for further details.
- 2.3 You must be aware at all times that, while contributing to our social media activities, you are representing us. Staff who use social media as part of their job should adhere to the following rules:
- 2.4 You should use the same safeguards as you would with any other form of communication about our organisation in the public sphere. These safeguards include:
 - 2.4.1 making sure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for our organisation;
 - 2.4.2 liaising with your Line Manager before beginning conversations about or that involve your role.
- 2.5 Any communications that you make in a professional capacity through social media must not bring the organisation into disrepute, for example by:
 - 2.5.1 criticising or arguing in a disrespectful manner with contacts, colleagues or others;
 - 2.5.2 making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or
 - 2.5.3 posting content that is inappropriate or links to inappropriate content, for example:
 - 2.5.3.1 sexually explicit material
 - 2.5.3.2 false or misleading information
 - 2.5.3.3 violence
 - 2.5.3.4 extremism or terrorism
 - 2.5.3.5 hateful or offensive material

- 2.6 Any communications that you make in a professional capacity through social media must not breach confidentiality, for example by:
- 2.6.1 revealing information owned by our organisation which is considered confidential;
 - 2.6.2 giving away confidential information about an individual (i.e., a colleague or contact), or;
 - 2.6.3 discussing our internal workings that have not been communicated to the public
- 2.7 Any communications that you make in a professional capacity through social media must not breach copyright, for example by:
- 2.7.1 using someone else's images or written content without permission;
 - 2.7.2 failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something
- 2.8 You must not do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
- 2.8.1 making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
 - 2.8.2 using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee); or
 - 2.8.3 posting images that are discriminatory or offensive (or links to such content).

3 Use of social media in your personal life

- 3.1 We recognise that you may make use of social media in a personal capacity.
- 3.2 While you are not acting on behalf of us, you must remain aware that, depending on what you post, you can damage us, if you are then recognised as being one of our employees.
- 3.3 You are allowed to say that you work for us, and we recognise that sometimes you may want to discuss your work on social media.
- 3.4 If you do discuss your work on social media (for example, by giving an opinion on your specialism), you may want to consider including on your 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.
- 3.5 Any communications that you make in a personal capacity through social media must not bring the organisation into disrepute, for example by:
- 3.5.1 criticising or arguing in a disrespectful manner with contacts, colleagues or others;
 - 3.5.2 making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or
 - 3.5.3 posting content that is inappropriate or links to inappropriate content, for example:
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 - 3.8.3 posting images that are discriminatory or offensive (or links to such content).

4 Use of social media in the recruitment process

- 4.1 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 an applicant's skills or claims that they have made in the recruitment process. For instance:
- 4.1.1 a prospective employee might claim that they have used social media in their previous job (for example, as a publicity tool); or
 - 4.1.2 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).
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 This is in line with our Equal Opportunities Policy.

5 Disciplinary action over social media use

- 5.1 All employees are required to adhere to this policy.
- 5.2 You should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action.
- 5.3 Serious breaches, 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.

6 Summary

- 6.1 Social media is constantly evolving, as will this policy document, but we want to highlight to you the steps that we have taken to help protect staff as well as the business as a whole.

7 Review

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

8 Definitions

- 8.1 The Bristol Methodist District ("we", "us", "our")
- 8.2 The Employee ("you", "your")

Document control box

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