



Social Media Policy

A comprehensive guide for social media use for Neighbourhood Watch's channels and for individuals, members and groups using social media in a personal capacity as a representative of the Neighbourhood Watch.

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, at least once a year. Neighbourhood Watch will amend this policy, following consultations with members and central support where appropriate.

This policy is intended for all staff and volunteers of the charity; this includes employees, consultants, trustees, members, groups, and volunteers.

Before engaging in social media activity, you must read this policy, which contains guidance that will help you adhere to our standards.

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Introduction

What is social media?

Social media is the collective term given to web-based tools and applications which enable users to create, share and interact with content (words, images, graphics and video content), as well as network with each other through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. Examples of social media platforms include Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, Twitch and TikTok.

Why do we use social media and what can we use it for?

Social media is essential to the success of communicating Neighbourhood Watch's work. It is important for designated staff and volunteers to participate in social media to engage with our audiences and stakeholders, contribute to relevant conversations, and raise the profile of Neighbourhood Watch's work, using the charity's corporate accounts.

Local Neighbourhood Watch groups may also run their own social media accounts to deliver the same benefits at a local level and to amplify national campaigns.

Some staff and volunteers may also support the charity's work using their personal accounts, and many will have social media accounts for personal use.

Building an engaged online community can lead to more significant long-term support and involvement from supporters. [Social media guidance from the Charity Commission](#) (September 2023) conveys how social media can be a highly effective way for a charity to engage its audiences and communicate about its work.

Social media helps us to:

- Promote our campaigns
- Share our news and updates with our audiences
- Engage in important conversations with stakeholders
- Celebrate our successes
- Raise awareness of important issues and challenges
- Advertise job and volunteering opportunities
- Support our fundraising activities
- Increase our membership
- Build an online supportive community
- Raise our public profile and strengthen our reputation
- React to quickly changing situations and topics

Why do we need a social media policy?

Social media is a fast-moving online world, where nuance and context can be easily lost. While social media brings the charity to a wide audience, it can also present risks. We want to ensure that all staff and volunteers using social media represent and reflect Neighbourhood Watch in the best way possible. It is also important to mitigate risks (such as reputational or legal issues) associated with the use of social media to protect our supporters, staff and volunteers, work and reputation.

While we encourage the use of social media to support our communications strategy or plans, we have important standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe and adhere to. The difference between a personal and professional opinion can also be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to

Neighbourhood Watch's work. Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations and is subject to the same laws as other kinds of publication or commentary in the public domain.

Failure to comply with this policy could expose Neighbourhood Watch to reputational damage as well as putting staff, volunteers, members and members of the public at risk.

Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their compliance with this policy.

Participation in social media on behalf of Neighbourhood Watch is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect. Neighbourhood Watch is a trademarked name and logo.

Breaches of policy or inappropriate behaviour may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue. Please refer to our volunteer information and our [social media protocol document](#) for further information on our processes. Staff and volunteers who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach policies should seek advice from the head of communications.

Setting out the social media policy

Application

This policy applies to all social media platforms used by staff (including consultants, and freelancers) and volunteers (including trustees) in a professional and personal capacity.

This policy also applies to online blogs, wikis, podcasts, forums, and messaging based apps, such as WhatsApp. Social media can be accessed in various ways, including from a desktop or laptop computer, tablet or smartphone. This policy applies to the use of all such devices.

Internet access and monitoring usage

There are currently no access restrictions to any of our social media sites in Neighbourhood Watch's office(s). You can refer to policy for guidance on working from home. You are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of personal social media activity in line with this policy during your breaks. But usage should not be excessive or interfere with your work.

Point of contact for social media and authority to post on Neighbourhood Watch's social media accounts

Our head of communications is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our social media channels. If you have questions about any aspect of these channels, please speak to the head of communications. No other staff member or volunteer is permitted to post content on Neighbourhood Watch's official channels without the permission of the head of communications.

Which social media channels do we use?

Neighbourhood Watch uses the following social media channels:

Facebook
LinkedIn
Instagram
X
Bluesky
Youtube

Policy ownership

The head of communications is responsible for authoring and updating this document. The policy must be approved by the trustees and reviewed every two years, unless a significant change requires the organisation to check the policy before the next review date. All staff and volunteers will be notified of updates.

Guidance for NW groups

Our vision is a society where neighbours come together to create safer, stronger, and more active communities

Our mission is to support and enable individuals and communities to be connected, active and safe, which increases wellbeing and minimises crime.

Our values

Friendly: Welcoming and bringing people together

Trusted: Reliable and respected

Active: Energetic and practical

Setting up and branding your group

Join our online community

Local Neighbourhood Watch groups are encouraged to follow the Neighbourhood Watch Network channels on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [BlueSky](#) and to share our content/campaigns.

Make yourself searchable and findable for local residents

Local Neighbourhood Watch groups should also include their locality in their account name so that residents can find them and follow easily.

Official groups can use Neighbourhood Watch branding

The Neighbourhood Watch name and logo are trademarked assets. Registered Neighbourhood Watch groups may apply to use the name and logo for use in their local accounts.

If the Neighbourhood Watch organisation or brand is being falsely represented online, this is brand impersonation, sometimes called brand infringement.

Neighbourhood Watch Network takes this misrepresentation very seriously and will take steps to stop content being posted on our behalf.

In the event our brand or service name is being used falsely or by an unauthorised person, we will contact hosting companies and domain registrars to request that the service/account is taken down or removed.

Neighbourhood Watch is politically neutral

Any NW group posting online must maintain our political neutrality. Neighbourhood Watch is not associated with any political organisation, nor has it any affiliation with or links to political parties. We can express views where appropriate on policies that impact our work and service users, but it is essential that Neighbourhood Watch remains, and is seen to be, politically neutral.

Representing Neighbourhood Watch on social media.

When representing Neighbourhood Watch on social media all posts should be aligned with Neighbourhood Watch core values. We never use discriminatory or derogatory language, we do use a positive and approachable tone.

Code of Conduct

Code of conduct

This sets out the rules and values NW members and volunteers are expected to follow and to uphold when representing the organisation online.

- I will not insult, harass, bully or intimidate individuals or organisations
- I will respond to others' opinions respectfully and professionally
- I will not do anything that breaches my terms of employment/voluntary role
- I will acknowledge and correct mistakes promptly using provided guidance
- I will disclose conflicts of interest where I am able
- I will not knowingly post inaccurate information
- I will link to online references and original source materials directly
- I will be considerate, kind and fair
- I will always ensure my activity does no harm to the organisation or to others
- I will champion Neighbourhood Watch and its services
- I will check my group account regularly and respond in a timely manner to build trust
- I will not share CCTV images – there are strict rules and laws around this
- I will not use photos of other NW members or members of the public without their active consent

How to deliver Neighbourhood Watch content

Be neighbourly: we aspire to be good neighbours.

- Use positive and friendly language – do not make light of serious messages, but do use clear calls to action, to show how people can take positive action to make a change
- Use emojis to bring a light-hearted tone to messages, and break up longer paragraphs into 'bullet points'
- Never swear or use discriminatory or derogatory language

Community focused: we bring people together.

- Think about your audience and the types of posts they will be interested in reading, tag people, themes, and companies relevant to developing your community
- Include relevant images or videos within your posts to grab the attention of residents
- Regularly remind people how to get involved and or/sign up to your group
- Share positive, inspirational stories which highlight how people are making a difference
- Thank volunteers and recognised the success of your members and supporters.

Inclusive: we are welcoming to all people.

- Never use, promote or share hate speech of any form

- Do not post, reshare or promote any demeaning comments about race, gender, religion, culture, sexual orientation, or identity
- Use clear language to support those of all abilities to understand your post
- Use humour wisely. One person's joke is another's shockingly bad taste. Always err on the side of caution before posting something that might be offensive to others. If unsure, test it out on family or friends before posting
- Be kind and respectful of other's views, even if you disagree with them.
- Remain politically neutral in representing Neighbourhood Watch. We are community focussed but not political.

Proactive: we are active within communities, and we are relevant in today's world.

- Share webpages to direct people to the useful information, eg our [downloadable ASB guide and diary](#).
- Keep things interesting by sharing relevant news articles and crime prevention campaigns

Trusted: we are dependable, caring, respectable, approachable, and supportive.

- Check your account regularly and respond in a timely manner to build trust
- Use our logo for your profile picture to let followers know you are a registered group
- Do not share CCTV images – there are strict rules and laws around this
- Do not use photos of other NW members or members of the public without their active consent
- Do not post photos of cars or vehicles.

Collaborative: we work as a team, in partnerships and within communities.

- Tag our central Neighbourhood Watch account in your posts:
- Use the hashtags and social media campaign assets shared by central support communications.
- Share partners posts such as those from the Police, and other crime prevention organisations
- Vary the time of day you post to see how your audiences engage with you
- Do not advertise businesses (unless from a partner), self-promotions or spam
- Engage with your audience. Share or add to the messages that other people are already posting. Social media is all about conversations so dive in and take part!

If you are ever in doubt, or want a second opinion when it comes to social media, please feel free to contact our communications team – email comms@ourwatch.org.uk

Full list of rules for use

Using Neighbourhood Watch's social media channels — appropriate conduct for staff

1. Know our social media guardians

The head of communications is responsible for setting up and managing Neighbourhood Watch's official and national social media channels. The head of communications has overall ownership of these accounts and only those authorised to do so by the head of communications will have access to these accounts.

The head of communications and delegated staff will uphold best practices for channel security with secure passwords that regularly change.

Never give out the passwords for our channels without express permission from the head of communications.

2. Be an ambassador for our brand

Staff and volunteers must ensure they reflect Neighbourhood Watch's values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Our brand guidelines set out our style that all staff and volunteers should refer to when posting content on Neighbourhood Watch's social media channels.

Please note only head of communications and delegated communications staff *are* permitted to respond to comments on our social media posts on behalf of the organisation.

All posts and comments should be attributed to the charity and not an individual. In special cases it may be appropriate for a staff member or volunteer to make an individual comment as themselves, but this should be under the supervision, and with the approval, of the head of communications.

3. Always pause and think before posting

When posting from Neighbourhood Watch's social media accounts, you must respond to comments in the voice of our charity and not allow your own personal opinions to influence responses. Staff and volunteers must not reveal their personal opinions via our accounts by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'reposting' as Neighbourhood Watch unless it is clear that you are doing so as an individual staff member or volunteer as part of an approach agreed with the head of communications (e.g. as part of a 'takeover' of the charity's account). If you are in doubt about Neighbourhood Watch's position on a particular issue, please speak to the head of communications.

4. Ensure brand consistency

Staff or volunteers must not create or manage any other social media channels, groups or pages on behalf of Neighbourhood Watch Network without express permission from the head of communications and training. This is to ensure brand consistency for users and the appropriate safeguarding and monitoring processes are in place.

Local NW groups are encouraged to set up and run local social media accounts, in line with our national brand and social media guidelines.

5. Remember the bigger picture and focus on the benefit

Staff and volunteers must make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for Neighbourhood Watch to further our charitable purposes (either directly or indirectly, by engaging stakeholders and building our brand using our strategy). All content must accurately reflect Neighbourhood Watch's agreed position. If in doubt please speak to the head of communications.

6. Bring value to our audience(s)

Those responsible for the management of our social media accounts should answer questions as swiftly as possible to help and engage with our service users and supporters.

7. Seek permission to share

If staff or volunteers outside of communications wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should obtain guidance and permission from head of comms or delegated communications staff.

8. Obtain consent

Staff and volunteers must not post content about supporters, service users or partners without their, or their guardian's, express permission. If staff or and volunteers 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 Neighbourhood Watch. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff and volunteers must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.

9. Put safety first

It can be challenging working on social media and there may be times where staff or volunteers could be subject to unpleasant or abusive comments directed at the charity, our work or people. We encourage everyone who is on social media on behalf of the charity to be aware of our safeguarding and wellbeing practices to deal with online abuse and consult with senior management where necessary.

It is also vital that Neighbourhood Watch does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials in pursuit of social media engagement. For example, a video of a stunt or visiting an unsafe location.

10. Stick to the law

Staff and volunteers must 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.

11. Remain politically neutral

Neighbourhood Watch is not associated with any political organisation or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We can express views where appropriate on policies that impact our work and service users, but it is essential that Neighbourhood Watch remains, and is seen to be, politically neutral.

We cannot endorse a political party or candidate. We must carefully manage the risk that we are perceived to have any party-political bias and should carefully consider any posts which might be perceived as such, for example, posts which talk about individual politicians or parties rather than policies. Please consult with the head of policy for further information.

12. Check facts and be honest

Staff and volunteers should not automatically assume that material that's shared or included in any post is accurate and should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification – for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation. If you've made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it. But think first about how to manage any risk to the charity and its brand in doing so by consulting with head of communications and senior management team to craft the response.

13. Seek advice for complaints

If a complaint is made on Neighbourhood Watch's social media channels, staff and volunteers should seek advice from the head of communications before responding. If they are not available, then staff and volunteers should speak to the head of policy or chief executive.

14. Know what to do in a crisis

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: a NW group allowing hate speech to be published, or a NW member being implicated in criminal activity.

The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity or our people. Communications regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of Neighbourhood Watch 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 communications will follow our social media protocol, our safeguarding policy and any additional crisis management policies, including appropriate involvement of trustees and reference to Charity Commission serious incident reporting guidance.

If any staff or volunteers becomes aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on Neighbourhood Watch's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the head of communications immediately.

It is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to report complaints or comments that could escalate into a crisis or have serious implications for the charity. Only the head of communications is permitted to amend or delete content in a crisis.

See further guidance from CharityComms regarding [crisis communications and best practice](#).

15. Timings, schedules and rotas

Content is monitored Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm.

Social media content is not proactively monitored out-of-hours, evenings or weekends. The communications team has a comms phone to manage issues when required.

16. Use AI appropriately

AI can be a valuable tool that can support our communications activities. However, staff and volunteers must ensure AI created content adheres to any AI policies and brand guidelines

You must seek permission from communications before using and publishing content created with AI and only use approved AI tools and processes.

17. Handover ownership if your role changes

You must hand over ownership of the group/page/account you manage to another appropriate staff member (or volunteer) if you change roles or if you leave Neighbourhood Watch.

Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct for staff and volunteers

Personal social media use by staff and volunteers can sometimes be attributed to the charity or bring other risks for the charity or individual staff or volunteers. This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media but instead flags up those areas in which risks or conflicts might arise. Neighbourhood Watch staff and volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are considerate of Neighbourhood Watch's values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Separate your personal views

Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive Neighbourhood Watch. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Neighbourhood Watch. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about Neighbourhood Watch's work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "Views are my own" or "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent Neighbourhood Watch's positions, policies or opinions."

2. Take care when publishing personal views (particularly trustees and senior staff)

Those in senior management including trustees and public-facing or 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 Neighbourhood Watch's view.

For senior roles, we expect you to take additional steps, such as:

- Being aware of your duties and responsibilities.
- Consulting your charity's messaging and crisis plans, being particularly cautious in how your communications as a leading figure for Neighbourhood Watch may be interpreted.
- Avoiding posting any material which might be construed as contrary or conflicting with to the charity's charitable mission or work.

3. Discuss risks and conflicts of interest

Staff and trustees who have a personal blog, social media profile or website which indicates in any way that they work at Neighbourhood Watch should discuss any potential risk or conflicts of interest with central support. Similarly, staff or trustees who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work for Neighbourhood Watch should discuss any potential risk or conflicts of interest with the central support and communications team.

4. Protect your personal reputation

Think about your personal 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 the first to correct your own mistakes.

Remember that if you have a public profile with the charity, your personal social media accounts could be looked at by critics of the charity, and bear this in mind when posting.

5. Use your common sense and good judgement

Be aware of your association with Neighbourhood Watch and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the general public, colleagues, supporters, partners and funders.

6. Don't approach VIPs directly

Neighbourhood Watch works with several high-profile organisations and individuals. Please don't approach high profile people or organisations 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 communications. This includes asking for reposts about the charity.

If you have any information about high profile people or organisations that have a connection to our cause, or if there is someone who you would like to support the charity, please speak to the head of communications to share the details.

7. Refer press enquiries

If a staff member or volunteer is contacted by the press about social media posts that relate to Neighbourhood Watch they should talk to the head of communications immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.

8. Keep your political activity separate from the charity

When representing Neighbourhood Watch staff and volunteers are expected to uphold Neighbourhood Watch's positioning. Staff and volunteers who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from Neighbourhood Watch and understand and avoid potential risks and conflicts of interest. Staff should also inform their line manager about any such political activity, and trustees should inform the Chair. As set out in point two above, senior staff and trustees should take particular care.

9. Protect your privacy

Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information. Remember that a simple 'like' can draw attention to your personal accounts. What you publish is widely accessible and could be around for a long time, so do consider the content, and your privacy, carefully.

All staff and volunteers who wish to engage with any of Neighbourhood Watch's social media platforms are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy. All staff and volunteers should keep their passwords confidential and change them often. Staff should take extreme care if they 'friend' or personally connect with members via social media.

In their own interests, staff and volunteers should be aware of the dangers of putting personal information onto social networking sites, such as addresses, home and mobile phone numbers.

10. Help us to raise our profile (where appropriate)

We encourage staff and volunteers to share posts that we have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support Neighbourhood Watch and the work we do. Where appropriate and using the guidelines within this policy (and taking into consideration the information above), we encourage staff and volunteers to do this as it helps users connect to us and raises our profile.

However, please take care to think about the reputation of the charity. If your personal social media account is not professional or otherwise appropriate for our audiences, please do not use it to amplify or promote the charity, as to do so brings risks both to you personally and to the charity. Similarly, if the content is controversial or misrepresented, please highlight this to the head of communications who will respond as appropriate.

11. Avoid logos or trademarks

Never use Neighbourhood Watch's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos must be requested and any content created must adhere to our brand guidelines. If permission is granted, content and products must be approved.

12. Staying safe online

It can be challenging working on social media and there may be times where staff and volunteers could be subject to unpleasant or abusive comments directed at the charity, our work or people. We encourage everyone who is on social media to be aware of our safeguarding and wellbeing practices to deal with online abuse and consult with the central support team where necessary.

Staff and volunteers should be vigilant regarding suspicious content or links and must not reveal personal, confidential or sensitive information about themselves, other staff members, volunteers or supporters of Neighbourhood Watch. Staff and volunteers should be wary of fake accounts that may claim to be Neighbourhood Watch and should immediately notify head of communications.

Care must also be taken to ensure that any links to external sites from our social media accounts are appropriate and safe. For more information, please see our data protection policy.

Please consult our relevant policies and procedures for the safeguarding of our staff, supporters and volunteers.

Further guidelines: using social media in a professional and personal capacity

Defamation

[Defamation](#) is when a false statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published in print (such as in media publications) or online (such as Instagram Story, Facebook Live, Snapchat post). Whether staff or volunteers are posting content on social media as part of their job or in a personal capacity, they should not bring [*Neighbourhood Watch*] into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

Copyright law

It is critical that all staff or volunteers abide by [the laws governing copyright](#), under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, when representing the charity. 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 and volunteers make must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that Neighbourhood Watch is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date, or information from people who the charity has worked with which is private.

Discrimination and harassment

Staff and volunteers should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official Neighbourhood Watch 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.

Accessibility

In line with Neighbourhood Watch's equity, diversity and inclusion policy we endeavour to ensure our social media is as accessible as possible. This includes:

- Using plain English, accessible fonts and avoiding small text sizes
- Using contrasting colours
- Using subtitles where appropriate
- Using alt text for videos and images
- Explaining text contained in an image in the copy that accompanies it
- Following our brand guidelines which have been designed to be accessible.

You can view more guidance on the government website: [planning, creative and publishing accessible social media campaigns](#).

For accessibility best practices, visit the CharityComms resource: [Accessible communication - a starting point to foster more inclusive comms](#).

The Lobbying Act

Charities are legally allowed to campaign to bring about a change in policy or law to further their organisational purpose but can never be party political. In most cases, spending on charity campaigns that are in accordance with charity law will not be regulated under electoral law (often known as the 'Lobbying Act'¹).

Under the Lobbying Act, organisations (including charities which spend more than £10,000 across the UK on 'regulated activity' during the regulated period need to register with [the Electoral Commission](#) within the outlined windows for elections.

Regulated activity is any activity which could reasonably be seen as intended to influence people's voting choice, either for parties or candidates (which a charity could never do) or for categories of candidates (e.g. female candidates, or candidates who support Net Zero). During these periods, all campaigning activity will be reviewed.

¹ Set out initially in the [Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000](#), as amended by [the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014](#) and [the Elections Act 2022](#).

Use of social media in the recruitment process

Recruitment should be carried out in accordance with the recruitment policy and associated procedures and guidelines. Any advertising of vacancies should be done through communications and promoted through approved channels.

There should be no systematic or routine checking of candidates' 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.

Use of social media to support fundraising activities

Our social media platforms play a key role in our fundraising efforts and engaging with our donors. Before using our social media channels for fundraising purposes, staff and volunteers should consult the fundraising team and adhere to [The Code of Fundraising Practices](#).

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 or volunteer considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report 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 or radicalisation. Where known, when communicating with vulnerable or young people under 18-years-old via social media, staff and volunteers should ensure the online relationship with Neighbourhood Watch follows the same rules as offline.

Staff and volunteers should be aware that children under the age of 13 should not be encouraged to create their own personal social media accounts or engage with others and are not legally allowed to use social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram or X.

Staff and volunteers should ensure that vulnerable and young people have been made aware of the risks of communicating and sharing information online, and given guidance on security and privacy settings as necessary. Staff and volunteers should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the vulnerable or young person and [Neighbourhood Watch] content and other content is appropriate for them. Please refer to our [*policy name i.e. safeguarding policy*].

All staff members and volunteers have a responsibility to do everything possible to ensure that vulnerable and young people are kept safe from harm. If you come across anything online that could mean someone is at risk, you should follow [*Neighbourhood Watch's*] safeguarding policies.

[The Online Safety Act 2023](#) introduced measures to ensure children are protected online.

Engaging on emotive topics

Neighbourhood Watch may be involved in issues that provoke strong emotions. The emotive content we share via our social media channels can engage our audiences and help us achieve our communications goals. However, it is important to plan appropriately and

consider potential reputational risks to the charity. For more information, visit [the government resource called charities and social media](#).

Public Interest Disclosure

Under [the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#), if a staff member releases information through Neighbourhood Watch's social media channels that is considered to be in the interest of the public.

Please note: While all attempts have been made to cover an extensive range of situations, it is possible that this policy may not cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the standards outlined in this document.

It is expected that in these circumstances staff will always consult with head of communications where possible or advise the team of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed.

Related policies, laws and guidance

- Staff Handbook
- Ethics and Standards Statement
- DEI Statement
- Safeguarding policy and procedure.
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Data Breach Policy
- Volunteer Behaviour Policy
- Subject Access Policy

Further external guidance

- [The Charity Commission guidance for charities on social media](#)
- [The Charity Commission checklist for developing a social media policy](#)
- [National Cyber Security Centre's guidance on social media and how to use it safely](#)
- [National Cyber Security Centre's guidance on protecting your published content](#)
- [The Charity Commission guidance on campaigning and political activity guidance for charities](#)
- [Government guidance on the Online Safety Bill](#)
- [Bates Wells website](#)

Neighbourhood Watch Social Media Policy Agreement

Staff Agreement

I have read and understood the Neighbourhood Watch's social media policy. I agree to abide by the rules set out in this policy and I understand that failing to abide by this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Name:

Role:

Signed:

Date:

Getting started with creating your own social media policy

1. Who is overseeing the use of social media at your charity, and do they require any training? (such as moderation or crisis planning etc):

Name and role:

~

- Yes - training required
- No training required

Notes:

2. Do you have current policies and documents you need to include in your social media policy?

- Yes
- No – action required

Actions:

3. Who has a role in your social media management and what are their responsibilities? (include level and types of tasks). Try to be specific on who can

do what and in what circumstances.

4. Does your charity openly encourage the use of social media and have you issued guidelines related to this? (review the list of related policies and guidance outlined in the Further Guidance section).

- Yes
- Yes, with guidelines

No

Actions:

5. **What social media channels are you currently using for communications?** *[Delete / select / amend as appropriate]*

Channel	Manager(s) of channel	Currently in use? How do we use it and what do we use it for? Who uses it?	Benefits of channel	Risks of channel
Facebook				
X				
Instagram				
TikTok				
YouTube				
WhatsApp				
LinkedIn				
<i>[Other]</i>				

6. **Who could we consult for support?**

Individual name:

Job title:

List areas of expertise / what they can help with:

Contact details:

Individual name:

Job title:

List areas of expertise / what they can help with:

Contact details:

Individual name:

Job title:

List areas of expertise / what they can help with:

Contact details: