



Social Media Policy

Approved by:	Board of Trustees
Date of approval:	May 2024
Originator:	Chief Executive
Review date:	May 2027

Ultimate Responsibility: Chief Executive/Board of Trustees

Responsibility/Accountability:

First Line Responsibility: Head of Marketing and Digital

Related Policies and Procedures

4.1.5 Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

3.1.5 Data Protection and Confidentiality

4.1.15 Prevention of Harassment and Bullying

5.1.4 Policy and Procedure for Managing Concerns about Performance or Conduct of Volunteers

Policy Monitoring and Review

Policy review 3 yearly or if regulations require

Compliance with Statutory Requirements

Policy Statement

Scope

Social media use is governed by a number of laws. Equally, we have a very positive reputation and this is extremely important in delivering our charitable work. This policy will help you understand how to use social media effectively and well and avoid problems.

Staff Responsibilities

The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to.

All staff are responsible for ensuring compliance with the policy.

Policy

The Law

Use of social media is covered by a number of UK laws and social media has no national boundaries, so your posts may well be read in other countries. As a very simple guide, you may be breaking the law, if you post (or potentially repost) anything that may fall into any of the following categories:

- [Harassment](#) – not leaving someone alone.
- [Menacing behaviour](#) – writing something that may scare someone.
- [Threatening behaviour](#) – making someone believe that you were going to hurt them.
- [Grossly offensive comments](#) – making deeply unpleasant comments about a sensitive issue.
- Libel - a post is potentially libellous, if it is a false statement and may damage someone's reputation.
- Defamation - users may be sued for defamation, if they post an unsubstantiated rumour about someone.
- Data protection – breaching an individual's right to privacy.
- Copyright – posting material without permission that is owned by another person or organisation.

Our Spokespeople

We encourage all trustees, staff and volunteers to interact with Treetops' online social media content and to post positive messages about the hospice and its services.

For more professional or sensitive topics (for example assisted dying or response to serious news articles), we have a number of spokespeople to officially represent Treetops. Please do not attempt to represent the hospice in any official capacity without first consulting the marketing team.

Even if you do not speak on behalf of Treetops in any capacity, you are personally responsible for all online content you publish. If you were to post on an issue related to our work, people who know you may think you were speaking on our behalf and those that don't may think so too, especially if you were to use our logo or refer to us in your posts.

Guidelines

- Do not breach privacy or security. Do not post personal information, such as someone's home address, and never post about individuals without their consent, unless there is no doubt it would be given. Remember that individuals who may not be fully competent, perhaps due to a disability or illness, such as dementia, may not be able to give consent.
- We accept that employees of Treetops will list work for Treetops Hospice on their social media. However, we reserve the right to ask you to remove, or edit, this link to Treetops if necessary. This may include situations such as, but not limited to:
 - breaches in other aspects of this policy
 - You have left Treetops employment or finished volunteering
 - You are a volunteer and not directly employed by Treetops.
- Don't make it easy for criminals by posting information that they might use. For example, that the lock on the reception door has broken (again), you will be taking a lot of cash to the bank or working late on your own.
- Clearly state your opinions are your own. If you are not a spokesperson, make clear that your comments, opinions or tweets are your own, so these won't be interpreted as our position. This statement could appear on your profile. On Twitter, this should be in the 'Profile' section, which can be edited under 'Settings'.

- Appear human. Observing certain guidelines does not mean you have to sound like a robot. Speak in the first person; bring your personality to the forefront.
- If you are posting on behalf of Treetops, write using our 'tone of voice'. See the brand guidelines on our staff webpage:
www.treetops.org.uk/staff

We are passionate in supporting our community and like to show a sense of humour when appropriate, but we're professional, courteous, positive and respect the right of others to hold opinions that are different to ours.

Abusive Posts

A troll is someone who intentionally causes upset, harm, or offence by provoking people online. Be careful not to confuse a troll with someone who is critical and/or upset. There will be people who have valid concerns or have a genuine complaint that may come across as angry and irate. Look at their social media to see what they post and how they reply. Trolls often have a profile picture that is an object, rather than a person, or no profile image at all.

People who are abusive are usually trying to provoke a reaction from you, so don't give them what they want. Besides, you are unlikely to convince them they are wrong. Tweet or post separately to address the issue. You can also adjust your settings to not allow replies, use the relevant abuse reporting system, block them and, if you think they are committing a crime, report them to the police.

Here's a [useful flow chart](#) on how to respond to different types of posts.

Disagreeing

See [here](#). If you disagree with something and feel you should respond, always be courteous and do not personalise your response. Focus on the issue, not the person who wrote the post. If you simply 'poke someone in the chest', you won't get a positive response. And no issue was ever solved without a solution, so offer one.

Text and Symbols

Using emojis, 'lol' etc can help add humour to a fun post, but don't use them if you are making an important point, as this would trivialise your message. Using multiple exclamations, and lots of capital letters, bold and underling is 'shouting', you would not be taken seriously.

Think first, post after

If something gets online, it stays there for a long time. Tweets now appear in Google search results. So that off-hand tweet or opinionated blog post can all be traced back to you.

Ask for a second opinion

Not sure if and how you should post or comment on something? Contact the marketing team for advice.

Be politically neutral

It is essential that we are not only politically-neutral, but we are also seen to be. We aim to influence positively in support of our community and criticising people or establishments won't help us do that.

Equally, we treat all recognised political parties with respect and support any of their initiatives that support our own aims, but we do not actively support or promote any individual party.

Treetops does not campaign, but if we ever did, information on campaigning can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Ethics

We are a health care charity, so appearing to support or endorse (even inadvertently) things such as smoking, getting drunk etc. would be inappropriate.

Posts should always be respectful of beneficiaries and portray them in a way they would wish to be, and not cause embarrassment, offence or alarm.

Respect copyright, fair use and other laws

Using imagery

Make sure you acknowledge the source and observe [copyright laws](#). Images of crowds at events don't require the approval of each individual, but an image where a limited number of individuals are the subject matter of the image may do if taken on land that is not public.

For example, an image of a band at a large cultural event, which includes the audience, doesn't require everyone in the audience's approval, but a small group of people, where they are clearly the subject of the image may do. It is particularly important that you obtain permission, if you wish to use images of children or vulnerable adults.

Treetops has image consent boards that are used at events to notify participants that their images could be used in social media. Participants are

directed to a member of the event team should they wish to opt out of their image being used.

In this instance, Image consent is assumed to have been given if individuals have not opted out.

Don't be offensive

To anyone, for any reason. Two good tests:

- If you wouldn't say it to their face, don't say it at all
- If you wouldn't want your mother to read it, don't write it.

Extremist views, sexism, pornography, distressing or otherwise offensive imagery, racial/ethnic or religious discrimination, homophobia or disparaging comments against any minority group, such as the disabled or mentally ill would not be acceptable, under any circumstances, ever.

Meaning

Remember that the majority of our communication is through body language and voice tone/loudness etc, and the amount of written text in social media can be limited, so meaning can easily be lost. What may appear light hearted and funny to you, may potentially come across very differently on social media.

Take into account potential social and/or cultural differences in your audience who may be more sensitive to particular issues or subjects than the wider population.

Moderation of Posts on Our Social Media

We act as a platform, both online and off, for our community to talk about issues that matter to them and we actively encourage diversity of opinion. We believe that open, honest discussion can help to address divisions and just because we don't agree with something, doesn't necessarily mean that we would remove it. For example, critical comments about our work are rare but, whilst we always respond in a balanced and measured way, we do not remove these, even when we do not necessarily agree with these, subject to the guidelines below.

Any community has a diversity of views, some strongly held. There is nothing wrong in holding strong views, but that does not automatically make alternative views offensive. In general, as long as a post does not break the law, is a genuine contribution to a debate and is not offensive, we would not usually remove it. Specifically, we will take down any post that falls into the categories below:

- Anything we believe may fall into any of the categories in the section above titled 'The Law'.
- We would remove any post that contained views that we feel the majority of reasonable people would consider to be offensive.
- The section 'Don't be offensive' above is not an exhaustive list, but does provide guidance on what would normally be considered offensive.
- The use of 'swear words' would normally also be considered offensive, as would derogatory comments about an individual or organisation.
- Any post that is irrelevant to our work and the online conversations being held.
- We may also block those posting such material and/or report the issue to the relevant authorities.

Take Down Process

Authority to remove posts has been delegated to the head of marketing.

- Any member of the marketing team is authorised to immediately take down of posts that are obviously unacceptable.
- Take down of posts that *may* be unacceptable will be discussed prior to removal.
- Before a post is taken down, a screenshot or other record of the post is taken.

Awareness of Misconduct

Treetops respects employees' and volunteers' online social networking and personal internet use. However, your online presence can affect the charity as your words, images, videos, posts comments, and content shared from other users can reflect or be attributed to Treetops Hospice. As an employee or volunteer, you should be mindful to communicate online, even in your own personal time, responsibly and respectfully to others.

The following applies regardless of where or when employees or volunteers post or communicate information online (including but not limited to the examples listed above). It applies to posting and online activity at work, home or other location and while on duty and off duty.

It shall be considered misconduct to post any of the following:

- Anything that may harm the goodwill or reputation of Treetops or any disparaging information about Treetops.
- Any disparaging, discriminatory or harassing information concerning any service user, supporter, employee, volunteer or other person associated with Treetops, whether the person has been named in the communication or not. Treetops' policies prohibiting harassment apply online as well as offline.
- Any confidential information, trade secrets, or intellectual property of Treetops obtained during your employment, including information relating to finances, research, development, marketing, customers, operational methods, plans and policies.
- Any private information relating to a service user, supporter, employee, volunteer or other person associated with the hospice.

Employees who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Volunteers who violate this policy will be subject to action in accordance with the policy and procedure for managing concerns about performance or conduct of volunteers this could result in termination of volunteering.

Regulatory Guidance

[Charity Commission](#): Managing online risk.

[UK Safer Internet Centre](#).

[NCVO](#): Online safeguarding resources.

[Digi Safe](#): Step-by-step digital safeguarding guide.

Young People

[Facebook](#): Your child's online safety.

[National Youth Agency](#): Safeguarding & Risk Management Hub.

[NCPCC Learning](#): Protecting children from online abuse.

[NSPCC Learning](#): Social media and online safety.

Staff Training Requirements

All staff will receive appropriate guidance and training in the implementation of this policy

Signed..... Trustee

Date.....