

Church Society Social Media Policy

All Church Society staff and council members are expected to adhere to this policy in their use of social media. It is designed to ensure that we communicate in a way that is consistent with our Christian character and that is subject to the limits set down by law.

What is social media?

Social Media, in this policy, refers to all online communication in a public space, whether posting on the Church Society blog, using your own website, or apps such as Twitter and Facebook. Engagement through a computer or smartphone screen should not change our understanding of confidentiality, responsibility, good manners and Christian witness. In particular, we need to remember that online communication is:

1. Public

Anything shared online should be understood as being public communication. If more than one person can access what we have written, it is highly likely that the law would class it as "published" and therefore, subject to normal constraints regarding libel, copyright, freedom of information and data protection. A good rule of thumb is that if we wouldn't say something in the local newspapers we shouldn't say it online.

2. Permanent

Anything shared online should be assumed to be permanent. Even if we delete a comment made on a website, it could still have already been seen by other people, re-published, or had a screenshot picture taken. It is easy to say something in the heat of the moment that we regret later, but it could remain permanently online for all to see.

3. Insecure

Never assume anything communicated online is secure. Privacy settings on social media tools might mean comments going only to accepted "friends" or "followers" but there is no guarantee that they will not pass (repost) them outside trusted circles.

Using social media appropriately

1. Confidentiality

Information which should not be shared in other ways should not be shared online. GDPR restricts the sharing of personal information and care should be taken to adhere to this even online. If in doubt, please refer people to the Church Society office who can make an informed decision about passing on e.g. contact details.

2. Representation

Even on your personal social media accounts, staff and council members are still representatives of Church Society. Our words and actions in public may be interpreted as representative of attitudes and behaviour in Church Society. All our communications on Church Society accounts must be careful to reflect our principles and priorities, including links to external organisations and events.

3. Separation

Personal social media accounts should be kept separate from Church Society accounts. They should have a clear statement (in a bio or pinned post) that the views expressed are personal and should not be assumed to represent Church Society. They should not use the Church Society logo or branding.

Safeguarding and social media

1. Our safeguarding policy applies online just as it does offline.
2. Church Society social media accounts should all be administered with oversight. At least two people should always have full access to our social media accounts at any time.
3. Screenshots of any concerning posts, comments or interactions should be taken and sent to the Church Society Safeguarding Officer who will keep them on record for at least three years.
4. Administrators of our social media accounts have responsibility for regulating the behaviour, content and membership associated with them. There is an expectation that engagement on these forums will be consistent with our Christian character and subject to the limits set down by law. Administrators have the right to moderate or delete comments and discussions, and to ban or remove participants, if there is repeated or serious contravention of these expectations.
5. Private messages should not be exchanged with young people or vulnerable adults via social media. Screenshots should be taken of any private conversation which raises safeguarding concerns, and sent to the safeguarding officer, and the conversation should not be continued in the online space.
6. Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.

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