



Social Media Policy

A comprehensive guide for social media use for Saffron Walden Mencap Society's channels and for individuals using social media in a personal capacity as a representative of Saffron Walden Mencap Society.

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, at least once every 3 years.

Saffron Walden Mencap Society will amend this policy, following consultations with project leaders where appropriate.

This policy is intended for all staff and volunteers. Before engaging in social media activity, you must read this policy, which contains guidance that will help you adhere to our standards.

Date of next review: **November 2027**

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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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society'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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society's work, using the charity's corporate accounts. 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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society 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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society'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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society to reputational damage as well as putting staff, volunteers, services users and members at risk.

Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their compliance with this policy.

Participation in social media on behalf of Saffron Walden Mencap Society is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect. Breaches of policy or inappropriate behaviour may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue. Please refer to our

Staff and Volunteer codes of Conduct 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 their project leader or admin@saffronwaldenmencapsociety.org.

Setting out our social media policy

Application

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

This policy also applies to online blogs, 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.

Point of contact for social media and authority to post on Saffron Walden Mencap Society's social media accounts

Dianne King (project leader Go With Our Flow) & Jacquie Lucas (admin) are 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 them or alternatively to the Chair of Trustees.

Which social media channels do we use?

Saffron Walden Mencap Society uses the following social media channels.

Saffron Walden Mencap Society has two social media accounts - **Facebook and Instagram.**

Saffron Walden Mencap Society uses these accounts to raise the profile of our charity locally as the voice of learning disability in our area, and inform followers of our status as a small, local charity. We aim to share news with supporters, publicise and celebrate our events, involve and give credit to donors and supporters, including staff and volunteers, and to encourage people to become involved in our work.

Policy ownership

The administrator is responsible for authorising and updating this document. The policy must be approved by the trustees and reviewed every 3 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.

Code of conduct headlines

- 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 ensure that I will adhere to photo permissions before sharing images.
- 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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society and its services

Rules for use: full list

Using Saffron Walden Mencap Society's social media channels — appropriate conduct

1. Know our social media guardians

Jacquie Lucas (Instagram) and Dianne King (Facebook) are responsible for setting up and managing Saffron Walden Mencap Society's social media channels. They will uphold best practices for channel security with secure passwords that regularly change.

2. Be an ambassador for our brand

Staff and volunteers must ensure they reflect Saffron Walden Mencap Society's values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Our ethos, values and vision set out our style that all staff and volunteers should refer to when posting content on Saffron Walden Mencap Society's social media channels. Please note only our social media guardians 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 guardians and removed if deemed inappropriate.

3. Always pause and think before posting

When posting from Saffron Walden Mencap Society'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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society, unless it is clear that you are doing so as an individual staff member or volunteer. If you are in doubt about Saffron Walden Mencap Society's position on a particular issue, please speak to the named persons at 1 above as appropriate.

4. Ensure brand consistency

Staff or volunteers must not create or manage any other social media channels, groups or pages on behalf of Saffron Walden Mencap Society without express permission from the guardians (see 1 above) and training. This is to ensure brand consistency for users and the appropriate safeguarding and monitoring processes are in place.

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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society to further our charitable purposes (either directly or indirectly, by engaging stakeholders and building our brand using our strategy). All content must accurately reflect Saffron Walden Mencap Society's agreed position on any subject.

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. Obtain consent

Staff and volunteers must not post content about supporters, service users or partners without their, or their guardian's, express permission.

If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a service user (referred to by us as a 'member'), staff and volunteers must ensure they have their consent or, where required, the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media. This consent will be in the form of signed photographic permission on membership forms, which will be checked and updated annually.

8. 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 the chair of Trustees where necessary.

It is also vital that Saffron Walden Mencap Society 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.

9. 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.

10. Remain politically neutral

Saffron Walden Mencap Society 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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society 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.

11. 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 the chair of trustees to craft the response.

12. Seek advice for complaints

If a complaint is made on Saffron Walden Mencap Society's social media channels, staff and volunteers should seek advice from the chair of trustees before responding. If they are not available, then staff and volunteers should speak to the secretary or administrator.

13. 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.

The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity or our members.

If any staff or volunteers become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on Saffron Walden Mencap Society's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the chair of trustees 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.

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

14. 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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society.

Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct

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. Saffron Walden Mencap Society staff and volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are considerate of Saffron Walden Mencap Society'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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Saffron Walden Mencap Society. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about Saffron Walden Mencap Society'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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society'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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society's view.

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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society should discuss any potential risk or conflicts of interest with their line manager.

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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the general public, colleagues, and funders/donors.

7. Refer press enquiries

If a staff member or volunteer is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to Saffron Walden Mencap Society, they should talk to the relevant team leader or chair of trustees immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.

8. Keep your political activity separate from the charity

When representing Saffron Walden Mencap Society, staff and volunteers are expected to uphold Saffron Walden Mencap Society's positioning on political activity. Staff and volunteers who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from Saffron Walden Mencap Society and understand and avoid potential risks and conflicts of interest. Staff should also inform their line manager and the 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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society'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 not 'friend' or personally connect with members via social media unless explicit permission is given by the team leader (or chair of trustees for trustees).

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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society 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.

11. Use of our logo.

Staff, volunteers or members should **never** use Saffron Walden Mencap Society's logo unless approved to do so. Permission must be requested from the team leader and any content created must adhere to our charity values. If permission is granted, content must be approved before publishing by the agreed medium.

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 chair of trustees 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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society. Staff and volunteers should be wary of fake accounts that may claim to be Saffron Walden Mencap Society and should immediately notify the administrator and/or chair of trustees.

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.

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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society 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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society 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. Please refer to our confidentiality policy for further information.

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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society 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 our equality, diversity and inclusion policy], we will try 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

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](#).

Use of social media in the recruitment process

Recruitment should be carried out in accordance with the safer recruitment policy, and associated procedures and guidelines. Any advertising of vacancies should be done through the Chair and the administrator 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. This is in line with Saffron Walden Mencap Society's Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy.

Use of social media to support fundraising activities

We subscribe to the Fundraising Regulator. 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 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 this to the safeguarding lead or deputy 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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society follows the same rules as offline.

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 our safeguarding policies.

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

Engaging on emotive topics

Saffron Walden Mencap Society 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 Saffron Walden Mencap Society's social media channels that is considered to be in the interest of the public, Saffron Walden Mencap Society's whistleblowing policy must be initiated before any further action is taken.

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 the chair of trustees where possible or advise the team of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed.

Related policies, laws and guidance

- Data Protection Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Codes of Conduct
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Volunteer Policy

- Grievance Policy
- Reporting [serious incidents](#) to the Commission, police or other regulators
- Disciplinary Policy
- Fundraising Regulator
- Equality Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Employment Law

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](#)

Saffron Walden Mencap Society Social Media Policy Agreement

Staff Agreement

I have read and understood the Saffron Walden Mencap Society 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: