



West Heath Community Association

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

West Heath Community Association is a registered charity (no: 1124993)
and has limited liability being a company limited by guarantee
registered in England & Wales (no: 06570815)

Social Media Policy

A comprehensive guide for social media use for West Heath Community Centre's channels and for individuals using social media in a personal capacity as a representative of West Heath Community Association (hereafter referred to as WHCA).

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, every 2 years. West Heath Community Association will amend this policy, following consultations with the Community Centre Manager where appropriate.

This policy is intended for all staff and volunteers of the charity; this includes employees, trustees 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 last review:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Change</i>
<i>March 2025</i>	<i>Document created and confirmed by the Board</i>

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Section 1 : 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 West Heath Community Association'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 WHCA'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 groups, activities and events
- ☐ Share our news and updates with our audiences
- ☐ Celebrate our successes
- ☐ Raise awareness of important issues and challenges
- ☐ Advertise job and volunteering opportunities
- ☐ Support our fundraising activities
- ☐ 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 WHCA 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 WHCA'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 WHCA 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 WHCA 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. Staff and volunteers who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach policies should seek advice from the Community Centre Manager.

Section 2 : 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

Access to the WHCA internet is restricted by password code to limited users.

Staff are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of personal social media activity during breaks but usage should not be excessive or interfere with work.

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

The Centre's Office staff 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 the Office staff.

Which social media channels do we use?

WHCA uses the following social media channels:

Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp.

- Facebook - to share news, advertise groups, publicise events and to encourage people to become involved in our work. Aimed at whole community and beyond.
- Instagram - to share news, advertise groups, publicise events and to encourage people to become involved in our work. Aimed at whole community and beyond.
- Whats App – a closed group focusing on fundraising to share news and ideas, events and encouragement to become involved in our work and support the events in a volunteering capacity.

Policy ownership

The West Heath Community Centre Manager is responsible for authoring and updating this document. The policy must be approved by the trustees and reviewed every 24 months, 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.

Rules for use: headlines

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 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 WHCA and its services

Rules for use: full list

Using WHCA's social media channels - appropriate conduct

1. Know our social media guardians

The Centre's Office Staff are responsible for setting up and managing WHCA's social media channels. The Centre's Office Staff have overall ownership of these accounts and only those authorised to do so by the Centre Manager will have access to these accounts.

The Centre's Office staff will uphold best practices for channel security with secure passwords that regularly change and never give out the passwords for our channels without express permission from the Centre Manager.

2. Be an ambassador for our brand

Staff and volunteers should ensure they reflect West Heath Community Association's values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Only certain office 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 responses should be considered and appropriate.

3. Always pause and think before posting

When posting from WHCA'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 WHCA. If you are in doubt WHCA's position on a particular issue, please speak to the Centre Manager.

4. Ensure brand consistency

Staff or volunteers must not create or manage any other social media channels, groups or pages on behalf of WHCA without express permission from the Centre Manager. 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 WHCA to further our charitable purposes (either directly or indirectly, by engaging stakeholders and building our brand). All content must accurately reflect West Heath Community Association's agreed position.

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 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 the WHCA. 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.

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 Centre Manager where necessary.

It is also vital that WHCA 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

WHCA 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 WHCA 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 Centre Manager to craft the response.

12. Seek advice for complaints

If a complaint is made on WHCA's social media channels, staff and volunteers should seek advice from the Centre Manager before responding. If they are not available, then staff and volunteers should speak to the Vice Chair of the Association.

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. Examples might include: Defamatory statements.

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. The Office staff regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of WHCA 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 Centre Manager will do the following: Follow the Serious incident reporting policy and Internal risk management policy and procedures.

If any staff or volunteers outside of the Centre office become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on WHCA's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the Centre Manager 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 Centre Manager is permitted to amend or delete content in a crisis.

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

14. Timings, schedules and rotas

The Office responds to *our digital communications Monday-Friday, 9.30am-2.30pm. The office staff will however, respond to social media out-of-hours if an urgent response is required and/also beneficial to the WHCA.*

15. Use AI appropriately

AI can be a valuable tool that can support communications activities. However, staff and volunteers must ensure any AI created content is safe and appropriate. Although AI use is very limited right now, this is likely to become more prevalent in the future.

16. 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 WHCA.

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. WHCA staff and volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are considerate of WHCA'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 WHCA. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of WHCA. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about WHCA'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 WHCA'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 WHCA'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 WHCA may be interpreted.
- Avoiding posting any material which might be construed as contrary or conflicting with to the charity's charitable mission or work.
- Ensuring you do not refer to the charity by name on your personal accounts on social media (e.g. 'CEO at a children's charity' rather than the charity's name), unless you are using an account as if it were the charity's own social media account (in line with the first section of the policy).

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 WHCA should discuss any potential risk or conflicts of interest with their line manager and the Centre Manager. Similarly, staff or trustees who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work for WHCA should discuss any potential risk or conflicts of interest with their line manager and the Centre 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 WHCA and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the general public, colleagues, and funders.

6. Don't approach VIPs directly

WHCA works with many other 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 the WHCA office. 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 Centre Manager to share the details.

7. Refer press enquiries

If a staff member or volunteer is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to WHCA, they should talk to the Centre Manager or Member of the Board immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.

8. Keep your political activity separate from the charity

When representing WHCA, staff and volunteers are expected to uphold WHCA's positioning. Staff and volunteers who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from WHCA 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 WHCA'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.

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 WHCA 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 Centre Manager who will respond as appropriate.

11. Avoid logos or trademarks

Never use WHCA's logo unless approved to do so. Permission to use our name or logo must be requested from the Centre Manager and content must be approved by the Centre Manager before publishing.

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 Centre Manager 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 WHCA. Staff and volunteers should be wary of fake accounts that may claim to be WHCA and should immediately notify the Centre Manager

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 GDPR policy.

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

Section 3 : 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 WHCA 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 WHCA is not ready to disclose yet, or 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 WHCA 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 WHCA's Memorandum & Articles aims on equity, diversity and inclusion, 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
- Using knowledge of 'Easy Read' training to adapt wording where possible

Use of social media in the recruitment process

Any advertising of vacancies should be done through the Centre Manager in conjunction with the Board of Trustees and only 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 WHCA's Equal Opportunities policy.

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 read 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 this to the Centre Manager immediately.

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

WHCA Social Media Policy Agreement

Staff Agreement

I have read and understood the WHCA 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: