

# **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

## **NOCS (New Opportunities in Community and Support)**

A guide for staff and volunteers on using social media to promote the work of **NOCS** and in a personal capacity or official capacity

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, at least once a year. NOCS will amend this policy, following consultation, where appropriate.

**Date of last review: 10.01.24**

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## **Introduction**

### **What is social media?**

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

### **Why do we use social media?**

Social media is essential to the success of communicating the work of the charity. It is important for some staff or volunteers to participate in social media to engage with our audience, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of NOCS work.

### **Why do we need a social media policy?**

The difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to NOCS. While we encourage the use of social media, we have certain standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe. Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain.

**This policy is intended for all staff members, volunteers and trustees.**

**Before engaging in work-related social media activity, staff and volunteers must read this policy.**

### **Setting out the social media policy**

This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of NOCS, and the use of social media by staff and volunteers in both a professional and personal capacity. It sets out what you need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to help staff support and expand our official social media channels, while protecting the charity and its reputation and preventing any legal issues.

### **Internet access and monitoring usage**

There are currently no access restrictions to any of our social media sites in the charity. However, when using the internet at work, it is important that staff refer to our Social Media Policy. You are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of personal social media activity during your lunch breaks. But usage should not be excessive and interfere with your duties.

### **Point of contact for social media**

Our charity General Manager is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our social media channels. If you have specific questions about any aspect of these channels, speak to Nocturin Lacey-Clarke. No other staff member can post content on NOCS official channels without the permission of the General Manager.

### **Which social media channels do we use?**

At this time only Facebook is used for social media. This could be updated at a later date if required.

Facebook details: <https://www.facebook.com/CharityNOCS> The Facebook account is used to share news with supporters and to encourage people to become involved in our work.

## **Guidelines**

### **Using NOCS social media channels — appropriate conduct**

1. The General Manager, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, and the Trustee responsible for communications, Byron Quayle, are responsible for setting up and managing NOCS social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the General Manager in consultation with Trustee responsible for communications will have access to these accounts.
2. The General Manager, Trustee responsible for communications, staff or designated volunteers will respond to comments or update the page as required during opening hours Wednesday, 10am - 6pm, Friday, 10am - 6pm and Saturday 10am - 3pm, and then as soon as reasonably possible out of hours.
3. **Be an ambassador for the charity.** Staff and designated volunteers should ensure they reflect NOCS values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Our charity guidelines set out our tone of voice that all staff and volunteers should refer to when posting content on NOCS social media channels.
4. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for NOCS, and accurately reflects NOCS agreed position.
5. Bring value to our audience(s). Answer their questions, help and engage with them.
6. **Take care with the presentation of content.** Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors. Also check the quality of images. It is important that any post/image which is to be shared on social media is fully compliant with the charity's safeguarding policy and meets all GDPR regulations.
7. **Always pause and think before posting.** That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
8. If volunteers outside wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should speak to the General Manager about this.
9. Staff or permitted volunteers shouldn't post content about supporters or service users without their express permission. If staff or permitted 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 charity. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff or permitted volunteers must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.
10. **Always check facts.** Staff or permitted volunteers should not automatically assume that material is accurate and should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification, for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation.
11. **Be honest.** Say what you know to be true or have a good source for. If you've made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it.

12. Staff or permitted volunteers should refrain from offering personal opinions via NOCS social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting'. If you are in doubt about NOCS position on a particular issue, please speak to Nocturin Lacey-Clarke.
13. It is vital that NOCS does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials. For example, a video of a stunt.
14. Staff or permitted volunteers should 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.
15. Staff or permitted volunteers should not set up other Facebook groups or pages, Twitter accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of NOCS. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, the charity can ensure consistency of the message and focus on building a strong following.
16. NOCS is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We have every right to express views on policy, including the policies of parties, but we can't tell people how to vote.
17. If a complaint is made on NOCS social media channels, Staff or permitted volunteers should seek advice from the General Manager before responding. If they are not available, then staff should speak to the trustee responsible for communication. This is currently Byron Quayle.
18. 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 personal safeguarding related issue. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity.

Staff or permitted volunteers regularly monitor our social media spaces for mentions of NOCS 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 General Manager will do the following: Try to resolve the situation in accordance to the charity's policies. They will then raise this issue with the Chairman of the charity for further action.

If any staff member or permitted volunteers become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on NOCS social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the General Manager immediately.

## **Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct**

This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media but instead flags up those areas in which conflicts might arise. Staff or permitted volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with NOCS values and policies, both online and in real life.

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

2. Staff or permitted volunteers who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they work at NOCS should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with the General Manager or the trustee responsible for communications. Similarly, staff or permitted volunteers who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work or volunteer for NOCS should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with the General Manager.
3. Those staff or permitted volunteers in 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 NOCS view.
4. **Use common sense and good judgement.** Be aware of your association with NOCS and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the general public, volunteers or service users.
5. If a staff member or permitted volunteer is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to NOCS, they should talk to the General Manager immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.
6. NOCS is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. When representing NOCS, staff or permitted volunteers are expected to hold NOCS position of neutrality. Staff who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from NOCS, and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.
7. Never use NOCS logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the General Manager.
8. **Always protect yourself and the charity.** Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so do consider the content carefully. When you are using social media sites at work, it is important that you do so safely.
9. **Think about your 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 polite and the first to correct your own mistakes.
10. **We encourage staff or permitted volunteers to share posts that we have issued.** When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support NOCS and the work we do. Where appropriate and using the guidelines within this policy, we encourage staff or permitted volunteers to do this as it provides a human voice and raises our profile. However, if the content is controversial or misrepresented, please highlight this to the General Manager who will respond as appropriate.

## **Further guidelines on our policies can be found at the following address:**

<https://nocscharity.com/policy-documents>

### **Libel**

Libel is when a false written statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published online or in print. Whether staff or permitted volunteers are posting content on social media as part of their job or in a personal capacity, they should not bring NOCS into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

### **Copyright law**

It is critical that all staff or permitted volunteers abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. 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 or permitted volunteers make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that NOCS is not ready to disclose yet.

### **Discrimination and harassment**

Staff or permitted volunteers should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official NOCS 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

### **Lobbying Act**

Charities are legally allowed to campaign to bring about a change in policy or law to further their organisational purpose. In most cases, spending on charity campaigns that are in accordance with charity law will not be regulated under electoral law. However, the Lobbying Act, which was passed in January 2014, states that during national elections (known as regulated periods) spending on campaigning activities may be regulated.

Charities which spend more than £20,000 in England, during the regulated period, need to register with the Electoral Commission. To abide by the Lobbying Act, campaigning activities on social media must not be seen as intending to influence people's voting choice. During these periods, all campaigning activity will be reviewed by the Trustees.

### **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 General Manager 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.

**Please refer to our policy site as indicated above**

Where known, when communicating with young people under 18-years-old via social media, staff or permitted volunteers should ensure the online relationship with NOCS follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship. staff or permitted volunteers should ensure that young people have been made aware of the risks of communicating and sharing information online, and given guidance on security/privacy settings as necessary. staff or permitted volunteers should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the young person and NOCS content and other content is appropriate for them.

**Please refer to our policy site as indicated above.**

### **Responsibilities and beach of policy**

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of NOCS is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect. For staff, breaches of policy may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue. Staff or permitted volunteers who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from the General Manager.

**Please refer to our policy site as indicated above.**

### **Public Interest Disclosure**

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, if a staff member or permitted volunteer releases information through NOCS social media channels that is considered to be in the interest of the public, NOCS Whistleblowing Policy 2023 must be initiated before any further action is taken.

**Please refer to our policy site as indicated above.**

Reviewed and established January 2024. See Minutes 10/011/2024