

## Social Media Policy

For staff, contractors and volunteers using social media to promote the work of the Guildford Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF)/ Diocese of Guildford

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### AMENDMENTS

<b>Date</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Summary of change</b>
23/02/2024	Page 6	#4 inserted link to guidelines #8 inserted link to contacting Communications Partner #9 clarity on how to record permissions #10 clarity on what images can be used
	Page 8	#6 Removal of requirement #10 Clarification that staff are only encouraged to share Diocesan social if it resonates with them. In line with charity commission recommendations.
	Page 10	Clarification on how staff are kept informed of social media policy and requirements
	Page 11	Addition of what to do if staff are at receiving end of harassment or bullying on social media

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## Introduction

This document sets out the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) policy and procedures for social media use by staff, volunteers or contractors working for the DBF. For the rest of this document, we will refer to the Diocese for simplicity.

The Diocese of Guildford (the Diocese) has signed up to the Church of England [Digital Charter](#) and adopted their universal principle based social media community guidelines. The primary aim of this social media policy for employees is to ensure that our corporate and individual social media accounts are run in a way that reflects our values.

As Christians, the same principles that guide our offline conversations should apply to those that take place online. However online, your thoughts can be interpreted by someone else's context and shared widely so consider how your discussion might be playing out in a public arena. Interaction through social media does not change our understanding of confidentiality, responsibility, and Christian witness. Our actions should be consistent with our work and Christian values. Every individual is responsible for the things they do, say, or write. Our conversation should be seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6). This policy sets out the framework and processes to do this.

## Scope

This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of the Diocese and the use of social media by staff, contractors and volunteers working for the Diocesan Board of Finance 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.

The difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly if you are discussing issues relating to the Church of England, the Diocese or a specific project in our parishes, schools, and chaplaincies. 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 carry similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain.

This policy is intended for all including – all staff members, volunteers, and trustees of the DBF and applies to content posted on both a DBF device and a personal device. Before engaging in work-related social media activity, staff must read this policy.

## Definitions – understanding social media

### 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, X, LinkedIn, TikTok and Instagram.

### Why do we use social media?

Social media is essential to the success of communicating the work of the Diocese. It is important for some staff to participate in social media to engage with our different audiences, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile and the work of our parishes, chaplaincies, and schools.

### Internet access and monitoring usage

There are currently no access restrictions to any of our social media sites in Church House Guildford on a laptop. However, when using the internet at work, usage should not be excessive or interfere with your duties. You are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of personal social media activity during your lunch breaks.

### Point of contact for social media

Our Communications Team is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring, and management of our official Diocesan social media channels. If you have specific questions about any aspect of these channels, speak to the Communications Partner. No other staff member can post content on DBF's official channels without prior permission of the Communications Partner or Head of Communications.

### Which social media channels do we use?

The Diocese of Guildford currently uses the following social media channels:

X (twitter.com) [Diocese of Guildford \(@CofEGuildford\)](https://twitter.com/CofEGuildford)

Facebook [Diocese of Guildford \(@cofeguildford\)](https://www.facebook.com/cofeguildford)

Instagram: [Diocese of Guildford \(@cofeguildford\)](https://www.instagram.com/cofeguildford)

Threads: [Diocese of Guildford \(@cofeguildford\)](https://www.threads.net/@cofeguildford)

TikTok: [Diocese of Guildford \(@cofeguildford\)](https://www.tiktok.com/@cofeguildford)

YouTube: [Diocese of Guildford - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

LinkedIn: [Diocese of Guildford, Church of England | LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/diocese-of-guildford)

The Diocese is present on all the seven main social media channels. The primary aim of the Diocesan social media channels is to amplify news from our parishes, chaplaincies, and schools to a wider audience across the SE region. Each channel has specific strengths and specific audiences, one may be better suited to news or content and the Communications Team can advise on this.

The Diocese also manages a private group for our parishes, where Church House employees can post relevant and timely information to an audience of over 400 role holders in the Diocese. This is private so it is not visible to those outside specific parish roles or the Diocese. We also facilitate the Guildford Diocese Environmental Group which has its own protocols for use.

Please note that some people choose not to participate on social media, and so use of these types of groups are only a part of a communications plan.

## Policy – Diocesan channels

### Using the Diocese of Guildford's social media channels — appropriate conduct

1. The Communication team is responsible for setting up and managing the Diocesan corporate social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the Head of Communications will have access to post to these accounts.
2. Our Communications Partner responds to comments Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, and out of hours social media is covered by the whole communications team as and when.
3. Be an ambassador for our brand. Staff should ensure they reflect the Diocese's values in what they post and be mindful of our tone of voice. [Our website guidelines](#) set out our tone of voice that all staff should refer to if/when posting content on Diocesan social media channels.
4. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for the Diocese and its key stakeholders and accurately reflects the Diocesan agreed position, please check with the Communications team if you are unsure of the Diocesan 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 and our right to use them.
7. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
8. If staff outside of the Communications Team wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should speak to the [Communications Partner](#) about this.
9. Staff should not post content about our parishes, chaplaincies and schools or individuals without their express permission, a simple email record will suffice. If staff are sharing information about supporters, individuals or third-party organisations, this content should be clearly labelled so our audiences know it has not come directly from the Diocese. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff must ensure they have the appropriate [consents](#) of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.
10. Always check facts. Staff 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. Be careful that you only use images that you either have permission to use or are royalty-free. with images that they are royalty free, or we have express permission to use them.
11. Be honest. Say what you know to be true or have a reliable source for. If you have made a mistake, do not be afraid to admit it and admit it quickly before an issue becomes high profile and it is too late for simple reactions.

12. Staff should refrain from offering personal opinions if operating the Diocesan social media accounts for a specific event, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting'. If you are in doubt about the Diocese of Guildford's position on a particular issue, please speak to the Communications Team.

13. It is vital that the Diocese does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials. For example, a video of a dangerous stunt.

14. Staff 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 should not set up other Facebook groups or pages, X accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of the Diocese, without discussion and approval from the Head of Communications. All new social channels will be assessed on their need, required audience, purpose and must be consistent with/complimentary to the Diocese's brand.

16. The Diocese 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 cannot tell people how to vote.

17. If a complaint is made on the Diocesan social media channels, staff should seek advice from the Head of Communications before responding. If they are not available, then staff should speak to the Diocesan Secretary.

18. Sometimes issues can arise on social media which can escalate into a crisis because they are sensitive or risk considerable damage to the Diocese's reputation. Examples might include comments taken out of context, posts that could be interpreted differently than intended, posts linked to emerging real time world events. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the Diocese.

The Communications team regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of the Diocese so we can catch any issues or problems early. If there is an issue that could develop or has already developed into a crisis, the Communication Team will monitor the situation, provide guidance as appropriate and escalate the situation to the Diocesan Secretary and Directors.

If any staff become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on Diocesan social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the Head of Communications immediately.

## Policy – personal channels

### 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. Diocesan staff are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with Diocesan values and policies, both online and in real life.

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

2. Staff who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they work at the Diocese should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and/or their director. Similarly, staff who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work for Diocese should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and the Communications Team.

3. Those in senior management, and 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 the Diocesan view.

4. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with the Diocese and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to your colleagues, network, and public.

6. If a staff member is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to Diocese, they should talk to the Communications Team immediately and under no circumstances respond directly until guidance given.

6. The Diocese is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. Staff who are politically active in their spare time, need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from the Diocese, and understand and mitigate any potential conflicts of interest.

7. Never use the Diocese's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the Communications Team.

8. Always protect yourself and the Diocese. 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 Diocese's. Express your opinions and deal with differences of opinion respectfully. Do not 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 to share tweets and posts that resonate with them. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support the Diocese and the work we do. Where appropriate and using the guidelines within this policy, we encourage staff 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 Communications Team who will respond as appropriate.

## Reporting a breach

### Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy and awareness of how to use social media responsibly and seriously. New staff will be asked to read these policies and drop in sessions held periodically for all staff. For staff, breaches of this policy will be addressed through the Disciplinary policy (part of the [employee handbook](#)) which may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal depending on the severity of the breach. Staff who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from the Head of Communications.

### Handling complaints

The Guildford Diocesan Board of Finance recognises that from time-to-time complaints might arise from members of the public, from parishes or from trustees. We are committed to listening to those who express concerns and to responding swiftly and appropriately. You can find more information on how a complaint can be made and the actions taken in our [Complaints Policy](#).

## Additional guidelines

### Libel

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

### Copyright law

It is critical that all staff 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. It is not sufficient to cite the source if images are not royalty-free.

### Confidentiality

Any communications that staff make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality, for example, information meant for internal use only or information that the Diocese is not ready to disclose yet.

### Discrimination and harassment

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

You can read the Guildford Diocesan Board of Finance [\[Dignity at Work Policy\]](#) for more information.

Where staff find themselves at the receiving end of harassment or discriminatory behaviour, they should immediately flag this behaviour to the platform that it is occurring on. Each social media platform are expected to manage antisocial behaviour. They can then seek further support and guidance from the Communications Team.

### 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 or £10,000 in Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland, 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 Diocesan Secretary.

### **Use of social media in the recruitment process**

Recruitment should be carried out in accordance with the [Recruitment Policy](#), and associated procedures and guidelines. Any standard advertising of vacancies should be done through the People Team and as appropriate the Communication Team. [Vacancies are shared routinely on our website, through Charity Jobs and staff can reshare those across their networks as appropriate.]

There should be no systematic or routine checking of candidate's 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.

### **Protection and intervention**

The responsibility for measures of protection and intervention lies first with the social networking site itself. Make sure you are aware of the ways to seek support on social media and how to escalate situations for help. However, if a staff member considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the [Safeguarding Advisor](#) 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, of publishing sensitive and personal information on their profiles, or of becoming targets for online grooming.

Where known, when communicating with young people under 18-years-old via social media, staff should ensure the online relationship with the Diocese follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship. Staff 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 should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the young person and the Diocese of Guildford content and other content is appropriate for them. Please refer to our [Safeguarding Policy](#).