



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

A guide for staff on using social media to promote the work of Huntingdonshire
Volunteer Centre and in a personal capacity

Signed

Review

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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, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Why do we use social media?

Social media is essential to the success of communicating Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's work. It is important for some staff to participate in social media to engage with our audience, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's 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 Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's work. 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 of all levels, volunteers and trustees, and applies to content posted on both a Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre device and a personal device. Before engaging in work-related social media activity, staff & 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 Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre and the use of social media by staff 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 Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre office. 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 General Manager and Ramsey Area 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 the General Manager or Chairman. No other staff member can post content on Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's official channels without the permission of the General Manager or Chairman.

Which social media channels do we use?

Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre uses the following social media channels:

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/huntingdonshirevolunteercentre>

X (formally known as Twitter)

@HuntingdonVc

Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre uses these social media accounts to share news and local volunteering opportunities, to promote the work of our charity and to encourage volunteering within Huntingdonshire.

Guidelines

Using Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's social media channels — appropriate conduct

1. The General Manager is responsible for setting up and managing Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the General Manager will have access to these accounts.
2. Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre checks social media and will respond to comments during Monday to Thursday 9am – 3pm. Any comments made out of these hours, during evenings and weekends will be responded to as soon as possible by the General Manager or Ramsey Area Manager.
3. Be an ambassador for our brand. Staff should ensure they reflect Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Our brand guidelines set out our tone of voice that all staff should refer to when posting content on Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's social media channels.
4. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre and accurately reflects Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's 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.
7. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
8. If staff wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should speak to the General Manager or Chairman about this.
9. Staff shouldn't post content about supporters or service users without their express permission. If staff 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 Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff must ensure they have the consent 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.
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 should refrain from offering personal opinions via Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting'. If you are in doubt about Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's position on a particular issue, please speak to the General Manager or Chairman.
13. It is vital that Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre 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 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, Twitter accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, the General Manager or Chairman can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following.

16. Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre 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 Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's social media channels, staff should seek advice from the General Manager or Chairman before responding. If they are not available, then staff should speak to a Trustee.

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: personal details of a volunteer or client may be posted online. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity.

The General Manager and Ramsey Area Manager regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre 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 or Chairman will take appropriate action.

If any staff become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the General Manager or Chairman 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. Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre staff are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's values and policies, both online and in real life.

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

2. Staff who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they work at Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with the General Manager or Chairman. Similarly, staff who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work for Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with the General Manager or Chairman.

3. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the general public.

4. Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre works with several high profile people, including Town Councils. Please don't approach high profile people 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 General Manager or Chairman. This includes asking for retweets about the charity.

If you have any information about high profile people that have a connection to our cause, or if there is someone who you would like to support the charity, please speak to the General Manager or Chairman to share the details.

7. If a staff member is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre they should talk to the General Manager or Chairman immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.

8. Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre 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 Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre staff are expected to hold Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's position of neutrality. Staff who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.

9. Never use Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the General Manager or Chairman.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. We encourage staff to share tweets and posts that we have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre 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 General Manager or Chairman who will respond as appropriate.

Further 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 Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre 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.

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 Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date.

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 Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre 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 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 General Manager or Chairman.

Use of social media in the recruitment process

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. This is in line with Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's Equality & Diversity Policy.

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 considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the General Manager or Chairman 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.

Where known, when communicating with young people under 18-years-old via social media, staff should ensure the online relationship with Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre 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 Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre content and other content is appropriate for them. Please refer to our Safeguarding Policy.

Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre 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 who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from the General Manager or Chairman.

Public Interest Disclosure

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, if a staff member releases information through Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's social media channels that is considered to be in the interest of the public, Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre must be initiated before any further action is taken.

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

This policy was approved by the Trustees of Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre

Signed: *Mile Bush* Chairman

Date: *5th August 2025*

Date of next Review: