

MS-UK social media policy

A guide for staff on using social media to promote the work of MS-UK and in a personal capacity

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 MS-UK's social media include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube and WhatsApp.

Why do we use social media?

Social media is essential to the success of communicating MS-UK'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 MS-UK'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 MS-UK'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 carry 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 an MS-UK device and a personal device. Before engaging in work-related social media activity, staff 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 MS-UK, 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 MS-UK office. However, when using the internet at work, it is important that staff refer to this 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 communications team 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 communications manager. No other staff member can post content on MS-UK's official channels without the permission of the communications manager.

Which social media channels do we use?

MS-UK uses the following social media channels:

- [Facebook](#) - MS-UK's main demographic of 42-52-year-old females can be found on Facebook
- [Twitter](#) - We only broadcast news and important information on Twitter.
- [Instagram](#) - If we were looking to target a younger audience we would use Instagram.
- [LinkedIn](#) – is used for corporate messaging
- [YouTube](#) - YouTube is where we host all of our video content.
- [WhatsApp](#) – This service is used and monitored by the MS-UK Helpline team

How we use WhatsApp

The MS-UK Helpline monitor and respond using WhatsApp. This service is available during office hours between 10am-4pm, Monday-Friday. During these hours the helpline team will respond as soon as possible. We do not accept images sent on WhatsApp and if we receive any we will instantly delete them. The service is intended for those aged 18+.

WhatsApp is not monitored outside of the office hours stated above. If we receive notification outside of office hours the helpline team will aim to reply to any messages received on the next working day (not including bank holidays).

One week after a chat has ended we will delete the conversation from our records. It is the clients choice whether they delete or archive the conversation.

WhatsApp is a third-party service and MS-UK cannot accept any liability for data held by WhatsApp or breaches of that data. Messages are end-to-end encrypted, meaning no one outside of the chat, not even WhatsApp, can read them.

You can find out how MS-UK manages your data in our [privacy policy](#).

You can also read WhatsApp's privacy policy and [terms of service](#).



Guidelines

Using MS-UK's social media channels — appropriate conduct

1. The communications team is responsible for setting up and managing MS-UK's social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the Communications Manager will have access to these accounts.
2. Our Social Media and Email Marketing Officer responds to comments Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm. Social media is checked on evenings and weekends by the Communications Manager and Social Media and Email Marketing Officer.
3. Be an ambassador for our brand. Staff should ensure they reflect MS-UK'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 MS-UK's social media channels.
4. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for MS-UK, and accurately reflects MS-UK's agreed position.
5. Bring value to our audience(s). Answer their questions, help and engage with them. If you are not sure how to answer a question please consult the communications team in the first instance who will be able to advise you on how to answer.
6. Take care with the presentation of content. Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors. Also, check the quality of the images. Never post a low-quality pixelated 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 outside of the communications team wish to contribute content for social media, they should speak to the communications team 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 MS-UK. If using interviews, videos or photos that identify a child or young person, staff must ensure they have the written 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 to the communications team who will support you to rectify it.

12. Staff should refrain from offering personal opinions via MS-UK's social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting'. If you are in doubt about MS-UK's position on a particular issue, please speak to the communications manager.

13. It is vital that MS-UK does not encourage others to risk their 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 MS-UK. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, the communications team can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following.

16. MS-UK is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. MS-UK is a charitable organisation that has every right to express views on policy, including the policies of parties, but we do not tell people how to vote.

17. If a complaint is made on MS-UK's social media channels, staff should seek advice from the communications manager before responding. If they are not available, then staff should speak to Amy Woolf, CEO. This should be dealt with and recorded in keeping with MS-UK's complaints procedure.

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: Someone is making racial, sexual, insulting or offensive comments on a social media post. In the first instance this should be brought to the attention of the communications manager, who will then discuss and deal with the situation appropriately. This may vary from messaging the person and asking them to remove their comments, to deleting the comment immediately and issuing an apology to those affected. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity.

The communications team regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of MS-UK 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 communications team will follow MS-UK's Crisis Communications Plan.

If any staff outside of the communications team become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on MS-UK's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the communications 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. MS-UK staff are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with MS-UK's values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive MS-UK. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of MS-UK. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about MS-UK's work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent MS-UK's positions, policies or opinions."
2. Staff who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they work at MS-UK should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and the communications team. Similarly, staff who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work for MS-UK 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 MS-UK's view.
4. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with MS-UK and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the general public, colleagues, partners and funders.
5. MS-UK may work with high profile people, including celebrities, journalists, politicians and major donors. 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 communications team. 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 communications team to share the details.
7. If a staff member is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to MS-UK, they should talk to the communications manager immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.

8. MS-UK will never endorse products or brands in receipt of payment on social media. Any products or brands shared on our social media will be as reviewed and recommended by the MS community.
9. MS-UK 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 MS-UK, staff are expected to hold MS-UK's position of neutrality. Staff who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from MS-UK and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.
10. Never use MS-UK's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the communications manager.
11. 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. You can find more information on your responsibilities when using our computer systems in our Employer Responsibilities Policy and Charity Rules.
12. 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.
13. 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 MS-UK 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.

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 MS-UK 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 MS-UK is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date. Please refer to our Data Privacy policy for further information.

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 MS-UK 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 that 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 communications manager.

Use of social media in the recruitment process

Recruitment should be carried out in accordance with the Recruitment and Selection Policy, and associated procedures and guidelines. Any advertising of vacancies should be done through HR and the general manager. Vacancies are shared routinely on all social media channels including LinkedIn.

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 MS-UK's Equality and 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 their line 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 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 MS-UK 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 MS-UK 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 MS-UK 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. Please refer to our Disciplinary Policy for further information on disciplinary procedures. Staff who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy should seek advice from the communications manager.

Public Interest Disclosure

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

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