



## **Social Media policy, procedures and practice guidance For Clergy, Office Holders and PCCs/Benefices**

**Social Media is part of our vision 'flourishing congregations making a difference'.**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Social media is a valuable communications tool as it enables us to create a community environment in which to share information and celebrate success. It offers a vital communications channel for making a story come alive using video and photographs, and while it provides considerable opportunity, at the same time, it requires vigilance and careful management.
- 1.2 The sheer volume of social media traffic content can seem daunting, information can spread rapidly, it offers real-time reporting, however it can quickly become viral and spiral out of control. *"Social media is immediate, interactive, conversational and open-ended. This sets it apart from other forms of communication and demands a new way of thinking. As well as the many opportunities, users should also be aware of (though not put off by) the associated risks"*Church of England.
- 1.3 This social media policy intends to build on the benefits from social media whilst managing any problems that may arise. The DBF aims to increase our followers / likes / shares and increase engagement.
- 1.4 This policy sets an expectation and criteria to maintain good practice. It clearly sets out processes to be followed. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action.
- 1.5 Contents of the policy:
  - 2.0 Summary of dos and don'ts – Clergy
  - 3.0 Summary of dos and don'ts – PCCs/Benefices
  - 4.0 Failure to follow this policy
  - 5.0 Procedures for Social Media Crisis Management
  - 6.0 Procedures for Social Media Safeguarding
  - 7.0 Practice Guide for Social Media Content
  - 8.0 Social Media Glossary.

## 2 Summary of dos and don'ts – Clergy

<b>Dos</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>
Do use professional judgement when operating your own personal social media accounts. In everyday ministry, the distinction between public duties and private life is difficult to draw. It is no different online.	Do not use your personal profile in any way for official business.
There are risks associated with personal opinions being seen as public statements, a minister's private life being invaded and the difficulties of detaching from work. Therefore, do create two accounts, one for ministry and one for personal use to help set definite boundaries. In Facebook create a personal page and a business profile set as a public figure.	Do not post embarrassing material or comments that may call into question your professional status (on either account).
Do take responsibility for the things you post: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In either accounts you will be seen as having a public facing role and social media channels will be seen by the public as representative of their office. Therefore, the comments (and the amount of time spent on social media) will be viewed in an official capacity even if the intention was not as such.</li> <li>• Your posts should be consistent with your work and Christian values.</li> </ul>	Do not divulge information which is confidential to the Diocese, or those with whom we have a working relationship.
In your personal account, if you are talking about a church matter, do make it clear these are your personal reflections and not those of the Diocese.	Do not share or re-tweet a post endorsing a project or product or that might be interpreted as a Diocesan endorsement
Do make sure you set up the privacy settings on your personal social media pages to 'just friends'. However, always remember anyone who can access your site can potentially copy and paste your comment into the public domain making it visible to all.	Do not post political views in the name of the Diocese on any social media channel related to the Diocese.
Do have a neutral picture of yourself as your profile image e.g. not a logo.	

Do set the 'profanity block list' to high and the 'comments' feature disabled on any posts likely to generate unwanted content from users.	
Do report any derogatory comments about a PCC / staff member / volunteer / the diocese/ DBF to the Communications Manager. See 4.3.	
If you are unsure whether your planned posts might breach any of these policies, do speak to the Communications Manager for clarification.	

All Clergy accounts should follow the Procedures and Practice Guidance found later in this document.

### 3 Summary of dos and don'ts - PCCs/Benefices

<b>Dos</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>
Do have business accounts rather than personal accounts. (Note a personal page will be required to administer a business Facebook page).	Do not divulge information which is confidential to the Diocese, or those with whom we have a working relationship.
Do advise the Diocesan Communications Manager of their social media addresses. This will enable us to 'follow, like and share' information within our community.	Do not share or re-tweet a post endorsing a project or product or that might be interpreted as a Diocesan endorsement.
Do keep the log-in details to the account (including the password to the account and webpage/profile) securely within your organisation. This will reduce the risk of someone hacking into your online information.	Do not post political views in the name of the Diocese on any social media channel related to the Diocese.
Do appoint a Channel Manager to run each social media channel. That person is responsible for ensuring these guidelines are followed. This person is usually the administrator of the account.	
Do have two administrators on a social media business page that communicates to the youth – this ensures transparency and oversight on any messaging.	

Do monitor and track your online presence.	
Do write a social media policy.	
Do take responsibility for the things you post.	
Do report any derogatory comments about a PCC /staff member / volunteer / the diocese / DBF to the Communications Manager. See 4.3.	
If you are unsure whether your planned posts might breach any of these policies, do speak to the Diocesan Communications Manager for clarification.	

All PCC accounts should follow the Procedures and Practice Guidance found later in this document.

#### **4 Failure to follow this policy**

- 4.1 Failure to follow this policy, particularly in a way that could expose the Diocese to liability, will be subject to disciplinary procedures, subject to your role.
- 4.2 If you are unsure whether your planned actions might breach any of these policies, speak to the Diocese Communications Manager for clarification.
- 4.3 If anyone notices any derogatory comments about a PCC / staff member / volunteer / the diocese / DBF or under any comments or posts, do report this to the Diocesan Communications Manager who will take appropriate action:
  - A senior staff member will speak to the person responsible for the post / comment, to discuss their opinion or to ask them to remove it.
  - The Chief Executive Officer, Director of Communications, Bishop, and/or other members of his Senior Staff Team will be alerted as appropriate.
  - Those receiving such a report retain the right to inform relevant legal authorities.

#### **5 Procedure for Social Media Crisis Management**

- 5.1 If an account is hacked this should be reported to your Line Manager and the Diocesan Communications Manager immediately.
- 5.2 If it is still possible to do so, an official comment should be posted which should follow the following format... "We apologise that our Facebook/Twitter/etc account appears to have been hacked. We are currently working with the relevant authorities to resolve the situation."

- 5.3 If a message is posted which is factually incorrect, or turns out to be, the original post would not normally need to be deleted, however, a correction should be issued as soon as possible detailing clearly that the original post contained an error.
- 5.4 Do not delete problematic tweets (as this can create more of a firestorm than leaving them live) but do apologise/clarify as quickly as possible afterwards. There are exceptions to our "don't delete" policy, especially if we have published something with legal ramifications (e.g. defamation, contempt). The Diocesan Communications Manager should be made aware of any social media activity which is likely to generate 'interest' from public or the press.
- 5.5 If something inappropriate is inadvertently posted this should be removed immediately, particularly if children's safety or well-being is at risk. It may be appropriate to publish an apology, but this is not always the case. The Diocesan Communications Manager should be notified and can issue further advice.
- 5.6 If the communication is being carried out under the Crisis Management policy:
  - The Diocese will not proactively distribute communications through social media but will monitor social media for relevant posts by others. The Diocesan Communications Department will reply to these posts with the official Press Release statement as appropriate.

## **6 Procedure for Social Media Safeguarding**

- 6.1 We understand that for many children and young people, using the Internet is a regular part of their lives and that it has a significant impact on their social development. However it is important that we have in place the necessary rules to protect ourselves and to highlight the laws and Diocesan safeguarding policies that apply in your communications with vulnerable people, children and young people.
- 6.2 It is best practice to have two administrators on a social media business page that communicates specifically to the youth – this ensures transparency and oversight on any messaging.
- 6.3 People (children or adults) should never be 'tagged' in photo-posts by Channel Managers. They may of course, choose to tag themselves.
- 6.4 Keep all communications public or to groups. You should not exchange private messages with young people via social media and should not accept "friend requests" from young people on your personal accounts.
- 6.5 Please be aware that sharing photographs of children and young people online can put them at risk of harm. If in doubt, don't.
  - Photographs of those under 18 should only be used if the channel manager has specific written consent from the parent / guardian.
  - if a child is named, do not use their image
  - if an image is used, do not name the child

- You must never include a child's surname or refer to their home town.
- 6.6 Don't ask users to divulge any personal details - including home and email addresses, schools or mobile numbers - that may help locate a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- 6.7 If a video features anyone under 18 years of age, use YouTube video as opposed to Facebook to avoid the potential for tagging.
- 6.8 Never share or re-tweet a post from anyone obviously under the age of 18.
- 6.9 Never 'follow' or 'like' social media accounts / pages which might belong to children (under 18) or vulnerable adults.
- 6.10 Never use personal messages to engage with someone who might be a child or vulnerable adult.
- 6.11 Don't promote your social media account to those who are under the minimum requirement age for the social networking service.
- 6.12 Don't accept 'friend' requests from children under the minimum age for the service.
- 6.13 Be familiar with the Safeguarding reporting procedures. If you see potentially illegal/abusive content or activity, including child sexual abusive images and online grooming please contact the police, without delay, and inform the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser email [david.butcher@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:david.butcher@cofesuffolk.org).
- 6.14 If you have concerns about a young person or vulnerable person and their online presence contact David Butcher, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, email: [david.butcher@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:david.butcher@cofesuffolk.org)

## **7 Practice Guide for Social Media Content**

- 7.1 Although social media accounts are not monitored 24-7 and comments will not necessarily be responded to the Channel Manager should reply to any comments or messages whenever possible as this builds engagement and a sense of community.
- 7.2 The Channel Manager should check regularly for inappropriate or offensive comments as well as any messages which require an official diocesan response.
- 7.3 In practice anything posted on the internet will be there forever and is no longer in your control. Remember when something is on the internet even if you remove it, it may have already been 'snapshotted' by a 'web crawler' and so will always be there.
- 7.4 Use a cover picture for your account that reflects the content of your account.
- 7.5 All status updates should be written 'natively', that is written specifically for Facebook/Twitter rather than by using an automatic feed or information pulled in from other social media channels.
- 7.6 Your posts should be consistent with your work and in keeping with the Christian ethos. You take responsibility for the things you post.

7.7 Don't overshare personal information. Never publish detailed personal information such as your address or telephone number, unless in a private message to someone you know and trust.

7.8 Don't rush in, THINK (True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, Kind):

- Is this post suitable? Would I want to see this on the front cover of a newspaper?
- Is this my story to share? If you heard the information in confidence, do not put it on social media.
- Give a thought to how you might feel if you read it.
- By law anything written that is read by more than one person is considered published – and therefore subject to legislation - libel, defamation and copyright:

**Libel** In libel cases, the defendant has to prove that their comments were justified. The plaintiff only has to prove that their reputation was damaged.

**Defamation** this is a civil matter and the law in England currently states that each time a web page is viewed, it becomes a published entity. Anyone defamed has 12 months from that point to bring an action.

**Copyright** For the protection of others as well as yourself, it is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others, including the Church of England's own copyrights and brands. This includes material from other Diocesan websites. You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work. It is good general practice to link to others' work.

7.9 Updates should be made regularly. Managing social media accounts is time consuming so allow time to update the feeds regularly. It is recommended to schedule tweets in advance.

7.10 The use of audio, video and pictures are actively encouraged.

7.11 All messages should adopt an informal and friendly approach. We should ensure that all posts are relevant and interesting.

7.12 Ask questions and encourage debate.

7.13 Check your spelling, grammar and do not use 'text speak'.

7.14 Use # to link to current trends i.e. #suffolkchurches.

7.15 Use '@ addresses' to link to other organisations (The Diocese is @cofesuffolk).

7.16 Seek out and follow other similar communities in your area and share/retweet their content when relevant.

7.17 Write in sentences and ensure your feed makes sense without the assistance of a link. Ensure it would make sense to those beyond the Christian community ie. Avoid Christian terminology/acronyms to ensure your message is accessible to all.

7.18 Personal messages (i.e. those that are not in the public domain) should be avoided.

- 7.19 If in doubt reply with... "This account is not monitored 24 hours a day. Please email [dbf@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:dbf@cofesuffolk.org) if you require a response."
- 7.20 Make sure that your online postings and communications reflect your level of expertise, and that you limit your comments to your area of knowledge. Before posting content, take the time to review the context and think what about how others may respond to it - make sure you are contributing in an appropriate way.
- 7.21 But be careful not to express personal opinions on matters of controversy that could be construed as representing an official statement from the Diocese. If unsure state: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent the views of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich or the Church of England."
- 7.22 One will occasionally encounter people who debate with you in an angry or offensive manner, whether because they have an anti-Church agenda or simply enjoy trolling. It is sometimes important to respond to these people, given the public nature of social media debates. Rise above any temptation to respond in kind. Keep a level head and avoid sinking to their level. Avoid engaging in arguments that could tarnish your credibility and reputation; if you choose to disagree with others online, do so respectfully and objectively. Be respectful to all others in the online community.
- 7.23 Do not harass or discriminate fellow employees or volunteers.

## 8 Social Media Glossary

**Analytics:** the gathering of data relating to site activity (Facebook Insights).

**Blocking:** a useful way to keep a troublesome user out of your page and stops them leaving messages. On Twitter an explicit signal that you do not want their content. However, Twitter cannot prevent anybody from seeing your public Tweets. If you want to keep your Tweets private, then use a protected account.

**Cover photo:** the large, horizontal image at the top of your Facebook profile or page.

**Channel Manager:** the person with overall control of social media content.

**Defriend:** stopping from seeing your posts on your private account.

**Facebook Insights:** the gathering of data relating to site activity (Analytics).

**Facebook Live:** share live video with your followers.

**Friend:** connection between two personal profiles.

**Follower:** a person following your posts.

**Hashtag:** words or phrases prefixed with the hash sign (#) and provides a means of grouping messages together such as trends.

**Impressions:** represent the number of times a specific post has been displayed (number of times it has been seen).

**Like/Reactions:** a feature in social media outlets that allows users to express enjoyment or support about certain content that is displayed by another user.

**Mention:** A link to a company or organisation i.e. @cofesuffolk

**News Feed:** a broadcast of a user's social media posts. In Facebook, for example, the News Feed represents the user's Facebook timeline or main page.



**Profile page:** a visual display of a social media user’s personal page with a collection of data and social media activities specific to the user, including posts, photos, videos, and online activities.

**Promoted/Boosted:** ability to pay to advertise a post.

**Reach:** the total number of people who have received impressions of a post. The same person reading a post multiple times will create further impressions but will not impact reach.

**Retweet:** the act of sharing the tweet of someone with all of the user’s followers. Similar to Share on Facebook.

**Share:** the act of re-posting the content on one’s own social media page, this allows content to go viral.

**Tags:** refer to keywords, people or links to other social media users that are added to photos, videos, blogs and other entries in order to find related topics and connect different users to tagged social media content.

**Trending:** the phenomenon whereby a topic, person, or event becomes popular on social media at a given moment.

**Trolling:** making a deliberately offensive or provocative post.

**Tweet:** a Twitter message often including a Hashtag or Mention.

**Viral:** the phenomenon whereby content posted by one person is quickly shared with, and by, millions of social media users.

**For further information on the use of social media, please contact Leonie Ryle, Diocesan Communications Manager via [leonie.ryle@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:leonie.ryle@cofesuffolk.org)**

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