THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Social Media policy (including Live streaming), Good Practical Guidance and Advice for Clergy, Office Holders, and PCC/Benefices

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 and real-time communications channel for making a story come alive using text, video and photographs. Therefore, whilst it provides considerable opportunity, at the same time, it requires vigilance and careful management.

 "Social media is a very public way of enabling us as Christians to live out our calling to share the good news of Jesus Christ. One of its many joys is that it is immediate, interactive, conversational and open-ended." Church of England website 2 November 2022.

1.2   This social media policy intends to build on the Church of England Digital Charter and reap the benefits of social media, whilst managing any problems that may arise.

1.3   Employees and volunteers of the DBF are required to follow this policy and failure to do may result in disciplinary proceedings. This document also contains good practice guidance to help you comply with the policy and use social media well.

1.4   This policy includes references to safeguarding as its purpose is to keep one another safe in this context.

1.5   **Contents:**

2.0   Policy

2.1 The Diocese has adopted the Church of England's and Archbishops' national social media following policy, in the box below. This is now the diocesan policy, and you must follow it at all times

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- **Be safe.** The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained. If you have any concerns, <u>ask the diocesan safeguarding officer</u>.

- **Be respectful.** Do not post or share content that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful.

- **Be kind.** Treat others how you would wish to be treated and assume the best in people. If you have a criticism or critique to make, consider not just whether you would say it in person, but the tone you would use.

- **Be honest.** Don't mislead people about who you are.

- **Take responsibility.** You are accountable for the things you do, say and write. Text and images shared can be public and permanent, even with privacy settings in place. If you're not sure, don't post it.

- **Be a good ambassador**. Personal and professional life can easily become blurred online so think before you post.

- **Disagree well.** Some conversations can be places of robust disagreement and it's important we apply our values in the way we express them.

- **Credit others.** Acknowledge the work of others. Respect copyright and always credit where it is due. Be careful not to release sensitive or confidential information and always question the source of any content you are considering amplifying.

- **Follow the rules.** Abide by the terms and conditions of the various social media platforms themselves. If you see a comment that you believe breaks their policies, then please report it to the respective company.

2.2 Failure to follow this policy, particularly in a way that could expose the Diocese to liability, could be subject to disciplinary procedures, depending on your role.

2.3 If you are unsure whether your planned actions might breach any of these policies, speak to the Diocese Communications Manager for clarification.

2.4 If anyone notices any derogatory post/comments about a PCC / staff member / volunteer / diocese /DBF, do report this to the Archdeacon and 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 the issue or to ask them to remove it.
- The Diocesan Secretary, 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.

3.0 Good Practice Guidance

Whilst you must adhere to the policy in section 2.0, the following good practice guidance offers a greater depth of understanding, to help you comply with the policy set out above. They are not part of the policy as such they are not 'must dos' but offer guidance and support, to help you comply with the policy.

3.1   For clergy

- 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.
- 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, it is best practice to create two accounts, one for ministry and one for personal use to help set clear boundaries. For example, in Facebook you can create a personal page and a business profile set as a public figure.
- Take responsibility for the things you post:
  - In any accounts you will be seen as having a public facing role. All social media channels are seen by the public as representative of your 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.
  - Posts should be consistent with your work and Christian values.
  - Posts must follow the rules for GDPR and you must handle yours and others personal data appropriately.
  - In your personal account, if you are talking about a church matter, do make it clear these are your personal reflections, rather than those of the Diocese.
- Be aware of your privacy settings on your social media pages and check if you are posting to 'just friends' or to everyone openly. However, always remember anyone who can access your content can potentially copy and paste your comment into the public domain making it visible to all.
- Consider using pictures of yourself as your profile images. Do consider the image you are projecting if you choose a logo/flag or theme-based badge/image.
- Do not post on any account material or comments that may call into question your professional status.
- Do not make personal statements on your business/ministry account.
- Do not divulge information which is confidential or of a personal nature.
- Do not post political views in the name of the Diocese on any social media channel related to the Diocese.

3.2   For PCCs/Benefices

- Have business accounts rather than personal accounts where possible.
- Please advise the Diocesan Communications Manager of your social media addresses. This will enable us to 'follow, like and share' information within our community.
- 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.
- Appoint a Channel Manager to run each social media channel. This person is usually the administrator of the account.
- Have two administrators on a social media business page especially one that communicates with young people – this ensures transparency and oversight of safeguarding – see section 4.2.
- Monitor and track your online presence.
- Write a social media policy or adopt the policy in section 2.0.
- Take responsibility for the things you post.
- Do not divulge information which is confidential or of a personal nature, or of those with whom you have a working relationship.
- Do not share or re-tweet a post endorsing a project or product that might be wrongly interpreted as being endorsed by the parish church, the Diocese or the Church of England.
- Do not post party political views in the name of your Church.

4.0 Practical advice to using social media in your church

The following section sets out practical advice for using social media in your setting.

4.1 Procedures for Social Media Crisis Management

4.1.1 If an account is hacked this should be reported to your Line Manager and the Diocesan Communications Manager immediately.

4.1.2 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."

4.1.3 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.

4.1.4 Crisis management policy advises not to delete problematic content (as this can create more of a firestorm than leaving it 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) or the post does not conform to the guidelines in this policy. The Diocesan Communications Manager should be made aware of any social media activity which is likely to generate 'interest' from the public or the press.

4.1.5 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. Please see the Diocesan guide 'How to deal with a media crisis' available on our website here.

4.2 Procedures for Social Media Safeguarding

4.2.1 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 and young people.

4.2.2 Where possible it is best practice to have two administrators on a social media business page that communicates specifically to those under 18 years old – this ensures transparency and oversight on any messaging.

4.2.3 People (children or adults) should never be 'tagged' in photo-posts by Channel Managers. They may of course, choose to tag themselves.

4.2.4 You should not exchange private messages or knowingly accept 'friend requests' from those who are too young to legally have an account on the platform.

4.2.5   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 13 should only be used if the channel manager has specific written consent from the parent / guardian.
- Photographs of those under 18 and over 13 years old should only be used if the channel manager has specific written consent from the parent / guardian and child.
- Avoid using a child's surname or referring to their hometown.

4.2.6   Don't ask users to divulge any personal details - including home and email addresses, schools or mobile numbers – on public content that may help locate a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

4.2.7   Please be aware that videos on Facebook can be tagged. YouTube may be preferrable.

4.2.8   Do not share posts from anyone obviously too young to legally have an account on the platform. Be cautious about sharing posts from anyone under the age of 18.

4.2.9   Be cautious when 'following' or 'liking' social media accounts / pages which might belong to children (under 18) or vulnerable adults.

4.2.10 Don't promote your social media account to those who are under the minimum requirement age for the social networking service.

4.2.11 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. If you have concerns about a young person or vulnerable person and their online presence contact Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser on safeguarding@cofesuffolk.org

4.3   Practice Guide for Social Media Content

4.3.1   Although social media accounts may not be monitored 24-7, comments should be responded to as soon as possible to build engagement and a sense of community.

4.3.2   The Channel Manager should check regularly for inappropriate or offensive comments as well as any messages which require an official diocesan response.

4.3.3   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 could always be there.

4.3.4   Use a cover picture for your account that reflects the content of your account.

4.3.5   It is advisable to write updates 'natively', for example content that is written specifically for the media, rather than by using an automatic feed or information pulled in from other social media channels.

4.3.6   Posts should be consistent with your role and in keeping with the Christian ethos. You take responsibility for the things you post.

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

4.3.8   Don't rush in, use 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 must prove that their comments were justified. The plaintiff only must 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.

4.3.9   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 posts in advance.

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

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

4.3.12   Ask questions and encourage debate.

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

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

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

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

4.3.17 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.

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

4.3.19 If in doubt reply with… "This account is not monitored 24 hours a day".

4.3.20 Make sure that 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 how others may respond to it - make sure you are contributing in an appropriate way.

4.3.21 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."

4.3.22 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.

4.3.23 Do not harass or discriminate against colleagues, fellow employees or volunteers.

4.4   Social Media and Livestreaming

Livestreaming services often uses social media platforms to broadcast and as such there are some relevant key points:

4.4.1   It is important when a service or event is being live streamed that everyone attending is made aware it is being filmed and where it will be broadcast/posted.

4.4.2   Clear signage should be displayed at every entrance informing that the service will be broadcast.

4.4.3   The celebrant should inform members of the congregation at the beginning of the service that it is being livestreamed.

4.4.4   By law those appearing in film or photography must give written consent, because attendance at a church service reveals religious belief, which is a special category data under Data Protection Act (2018) UK GDPR. You should specify on the consent form exactly what aspects of the service you intend to film.

4.4.5   Those who do not give their consent to be in a video or photo do not need to sign the consent form. Please create a film free area within your church building where they may sit.

4.4.6   Congregants should not be filmed entering or leaving the church.

4.4.7   Communion, personal prayers are times of particular privacy and intimacy. Individuals in the congregation may have given consent, however, may still not want to be the focus of filming at this time. You should specify on the consent form exactly what aspects of the service you intend to film.

4.4.8   Sunday School and those people under the year of 18 should not be filmed unless written permission has been obtained from parents/guardians and the child as well if they are over 13 years old.

4.4.9   It is also advisable to obtain written permission from clergy, choir members, servers and readers prior to broadcasting or video recording a service.

Appendix One: Church of England - Digital Charter

This charter is produced by the Church of England and is a voluntary pledge. We recommend you sign up to the charter. You can sign up here: Digital Charter | The Church of England

Church of England Digital Charter

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

This is a voluntary pledge that we're encouraging individual Christians as well as churches to sign to help make social media and the web more widely positive places for conversations to happen.

The digital landscape has changed so much in the last few years and will continue to do so as technology develops.

It's important to think about how the conversations we're having can help change someone's newsfeed for the better.

What does it look like to be a Christian online? Everyone's engagement is different. Whether you're a member of clergy using Twitter or a churchgoer replying to the comments on a blog, we all have different views, histories and areas of interest that will affect how we perceive things, and our responses to those events. The comments we make can reach thousands and even millions of people both in this country and around the world very quickly. However, there are a number of ways we can make the digital world as loving and generous as we would when speaking face to face:

- Truth - we should hold ourselves to high ideals of checking that what we post online is fair and factual.
- Kindness - we are all different and that makes the world an interesting place – and at times a challenging one. Think the best of people, whether they share our views or are speaking against them and aim to be constructive in the way we engage.
- Welcome - in the language we use and the way we interact. It's easy for Christians to speak in another language using words that those outside the Church might not relate to.
- Inspiration - we are called to be witnesses of our faith and to use social media in a way that genuinely engages others.
- Togetherness - we are one Church and other members of this Church are our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is crucial we treat those around us in this way.
- Safeguarding - if you have any concerns about the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults, please contact the relevant diocesan safeguarding adviser.
- Agree to the Church's and Archbishops' social media guidelines.

If you agree with the above, you can sign up to the national digital charter here:
Our Digital Charter | The Church of England

Sign up to our Digital Charter

CHURCH OF ENGLAND DIGITAL CHARTER

SIGN UP TODAY

SIGNED UP

I've signed up to the Church of England's Digital Charter.

Find out more at churchofengland.org/charter

#CofECharter

Appendix Two: Social Media Glossary

Analytics: the gathering of data relating to site activity (eg: 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

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