



*Developing young people through  
personal challenge*

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Social media proves to be useful for engaging with young people in youth work practice. Online engagement is often accompanied by fear around boundaries. However, fundamentally, the fears/risks surrounding social media use are similar to those encountered in everyday youth work, and can be overcome by applying the same ethical principles.

The main risks are:

- 1) Youth Worker 'hearing' things about young people, mainly through news feeds
- 2) The young person feeling that the youth worker is violating their privacy
- 3) The youth worker being 'on shift' with young people outside of work hours
- 4) Informality confusing young people about boundaries
- 5) Young people sharing personal information with volunteers
- 6) Witnessing safeguarding incidents
- 7) Safeguarding disclosures
- 8) Misinterpretation of language, including symbols and abbreviations by young people and parents/carers

Managing these risks:

In practice, a thorough risk assessment will be carried out for work with young people and the same applies online. By following simple steps these online risks can be managed. Before joining any new social media sites, the Project Director will assess the risk and modify this social media policy accordingly.

### **Volunteer behaviour guidelines**

When using social media, volunteers must maintain professional communication. Language must be managed in the same way that it would be when working directly with young people and the volunteer's role is always to be a positive role model.

If volunteers wish to set up a professional Facebook profile it must be separate to their personal profile.

Volunteers must make it clear to young people that accounts are professional profiles and if young people make contact with volunteers regarding anything outside their project work, then they should reply to explain that they are only able to discuss work related issues.

## **Facebook**

For general Facebook use:

Any young person who approaches you on your personal profile must be declined and a personal message can be sent outlining why you cannot add them. You can point them towards your work profile.

- Volunteers are discouraged from ‘friending’ fellow colleagues, although this can be done at their discretion
- Links between professional and private profiles should not be made, for example, YoCO Facebook accounts will not ‘friend’ personal accounts.
- Volunteers must avoid any discussions about personal matters about themselves and the young people that they are interacting with.
- Volunteers will not ‘trawl’ through young peoples’ news feed looking for information. Volunteers will ‘unfollow’ young people that they are friends with to avoid their information appearing in their newsfeed.
- Volunteers will not tag young people in posts or photographs unless with parental permission.
- The same language that would be used face to face with young people is appropriate online. For example, do not include ‘x’ on messages and use no terms of endearment such as ‘hun’ and no abbreviation or text talk such as ‘lol’. Emoji’s such as ‘😊’ should be used with caution as they can be misinterpreted
- Do not ‘like’ or comment on young peoples’ posts or news feeds with the exception of post and comments that mention or contains a tag of the groups name or names projects or staff.
- Do not ask young people about information that you have seen online
- Volunteers should change their password at least every two months and send this password to the Project Director (This is only for professional pages not personal ones).
- When sending private messages, include another volunteer where appropriate. Volunteers can engage in private messages in a professional capacity only. Under no circumstances should volunteers delete message correspondence with young people.

## **Facebook account**

- Volunteers should not friend young people, they should inform young people of their group account. When telling young people about their group Facebook account, volunteers should be clear that this is a professional account and advise the young person to limit what they enable volunteers to see via their own privacy settings.
- If a young person engages a volunteer in a personal conversation that is more than ‘small talk’ the volunteer must state the ‘confidentiality statement’ as they would in a face to face setting with young people

- Contact with young people via Facebook should be treated with the same level of vigilance as face to face work. Any concerns or issues that arise should be discussed with the Project Director.
- Settings must be set to ensure that ‘timeline and tagging’ activity is always reviewed by volunteers before posts appear on the group timeline.

### **Facebook Page**

The leaders of YoCO groups can set up a page to advertise their projects, but the activity on these pages must be checked regularly. Pages are set up for promoting projects and sharing information only. Young people can like the page and write comments on the wall once they have been reviewed by the page manager.

- One person, usually a group leader, must be designated as the page manager and 2 others, including the Project Director and usually the second group leader should have access to the page as administrators to ensure that at least three people have page admin access.
- In settings, ensure that ‘Posting Ability’ is set so that volunteers review all posted before they appear on the page. Comments deemed inappropriate MUST be removed.
- In settings, ensure that the ‘Profanity Filter’ is set to ‘strong’
- No young people will be tagged in posts on a page. The page manager will ensure that ‘Tagging Ability’ settings for the page will be set so that only page managers can tag in posts.
- Photographs may be posted with the aim of promoting projects but YoCO must have the permission for their photographs to be used in this way and volunteers will not tag young people. If the young person is under the age of 18, parental consent is required. For those over the age of 18, volunteers can obtain oral consent. Always ensure that the photo subjects are aware that their image will be posted onto the groups Social Media outlets.

### **Facebook group**

This may be set up by group leaders only for their specific group of young people that they are currently working with. The aim for this group is for members to update each other on progress towards their fund raising, information sharing and planning events.

- Only YoCO Facebook accounts can be attached to this group
- Once the group leaders have finished working with that group of young people, you might be required by the Project Director remove themselves from this group
- Volunteers can engage in private messages in a professional capacity only
- If a young person engages a group leader in a personal conversation that is more than ‘small talk’ they must state the ‘confidentiality statement’ as they would in a face to face setting with young people
- Photographs of the group may be shared within the group with young people’s permission

### **Twitter**

- Photographs may be posted with the aim of promoting projects but YoCO must have the permission for their photographs to be used in this way. If the young person is under the age of 18,

parental consent is required. For those over the age of 18, staff can obtain oral consent. Always ensure that the photo subjects are aware that their image will be posted onto club or groups Social Media outlets.

- The group will not tag ( @ ) young people in posts via Twitter

### **Whatsapp**

- A group Whatsapp may be set up to allow easy communication between the group. It should be managed by one of the group leaders, the Project Director's YoCO number must be included and all the messages must be appropriate for the whole group. If a young person does not use the correct language they must be removed from the group.

### **Instagram**

- Photographs may be posted on Instagram by the Project Director with the aim of promoting projects but YoCO must have the permission for the photographs to be used in this way. If the young person is under the age of 18, parental consent is required. For those over the age of 18, volunteers can obtain oral consent. The Project Director will always ensure that the photo subjects are aware that their image will be posted onto YoCO groups Social Media outlets.

### **Snapchat**

- Snapchat is not to be used by YoCO or the YoCO groups for any form of communication

### **Zoom**

- When face-to-face meetings are not possible e.g the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown. YoCO will use Zoom for virtual group sessions which the young people can join from home, and for other YoCO meetings.
- There are reports that Zoom is unsafe and has Malware issues, though it is widely used by organisations, the NHS and the government and if used in the correct way is an effective means to continue meeting.
- YoCO will only use private meetings which require a meeting ID and password to protect the participants. The link will be shared privately using a group message function or email.
- YoCO suggests that everyone using a computer or laptop, should have up-to-date virus security.
- There MUST be at least 2 adults present during each virtual group meeting.
- Participants will be held in Zoom's virtual 'waiting room' to be accepted into the chat once the host (leader of the group) confirms the participant's identity (removing the risk of being hacked or 'zoom bombed').
- Security settings will be adjusted by the Project Director so that only the host of the meeting (a group leader or YoCO member of staff or trustee) can change or modify any meeting functions.

### **Cyber Bullying**

Please refer to the Oxfordshire County Council Cyber Bullying Toolkit

[http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/schools/files/folders/folders/documents/antibullying/cyberbullying/Oxfordshire\\_Cyberbullying\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/schools/files/folders/folders/documents/antibullying/cyberbullying/Oxfordshire_Cyberbullying_Toolkit.pdf)

For more information, Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest have thorough help pages that are full of information about security and privacy. <https://support.twitter.com/> <https://www.facebook.com/help>  
<https://help.pinterest.com/en/articles>

**This policy was adopted by the Trustees via agreement by email on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

**Signed on Behalf of the Board of Trustees** Jane Cranston (Chairman)

**Date for review;** April 2021