



*Developing young people through  
personal challenge*

## **Social Media Policy**

Social media is 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. This policy is primarily focussed on work undertaken by those directly associated with the Youth Groups, however, it also applies to all YoCO employees and volunteers.

Any new social media apps or platforms must be approved by the Operations Manager, together with a designated Trustee, before a YoCO profile is created.

### **The risks associated with social media:**

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

### **Managing these risks:**

In practice, a thorough risk assessment would be carried out for face to face 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 or apps, the Trustees will assess the risk and modify this social media policy accordingly.

### **Employee and Volunteer behaviour guidelines:**

When using social media, employees and 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 employee's and volunteer's role is always to be a positive role model.

It must be made clear to young people that accounts are professional profiles and if young people make contact with employees or volunteers regarding anything outside the YoCO programme,

then they should reply to explain that they are only able to discuss YoCO related issues. Employees and volunteers must not 'follow' Young People's personal accounts.

## **Facebook**

YoCO has an official Facebook page managed by the Operations Manager. Each group may have its own Facebook Page for the duration of their programme, to be managed by the Group Leaders and the Youth Group Manager. At the end of the programme it is archived and members are invited to join the Alumni Page which is managed by the Operations Manager. There should be no other YoCO accounts on Facebook.

Employees and Volunteers using YoCO Facebook pages:

- must ensure settings are set so that 'timeline and tagging' activity is always reviewed by employees or volunteers before posts appear on the group timeline.
- must avoid any discussions about themselves and the young people that they are interacting with.
- will not 'trawl' through young peoples' news feed looking for information and will 'unfollow' young people that they are friends with to avoid their information appearing in their newsfeed.
- will not tag young people in posts or photographs on a YoCO page unless with parental permission and never in a personal capacity.
- will not 'like' or comment on young peoples' posts or news feeds, with the exception of posts and comments that mention or contains a tag of the group's name or names projects or staff.
- will not ask young people about personal information that they have seen online
- will use the same language that would be used face to face with young people when communicating 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'. Emojis such as '☺' should be used with caution as they can be misinterpreted.
- should not friend young people but inform young people of their group account. When telling young people about their group Facebook account it should be made clear that this is a professional account and advise the young person to limit what they enable others to see via their own privacy settings.
- must state the 'confidentiality statement' as they would in a face to face setting with young people if a young person engages them in a personal conversation that is anything more than small talk. 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 Youth Group Manager.
- must decline any approach by a young person on their personal page. A personal message can be sent outlining why they cannot be added and they can then be directed to the relevant page for their group.
- will include another employee or volunteer when sending private messages where appropriate. Private messages must only be used in a professional capacity. Under no circumstances should correspondence with young people be deleted.
- are discouraged from 'friending' fellow colleagues, although this can be done at their own discretion.

- must not make any links between professional and private profiles, for example, YoCO Facebook accounts will not 'friend' personal accounts.

### **Group Facebook Pages**

The leaders of YoCO groups, in conjunction with the Youth Group Manager and Operations Manager, can set up and manage a group page only for the specific group of young people that they are currently working with. The aim is for the group members to update each other on activities and fund raising in their group but the activity on these pages must be checked regularly. Young people can like the page and add comments and posts once they have been reviewed by a page manager. All Group Facebook page login details are sent to and held by the Operations Manager.

- Only YoCO Facebook accounts can be attached to this group.
- One person, usually a Group Leader, must be designated as the page manager and two others, including the Youth Group Manager and 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 posts before they appear on the page. Comments deemed inappropriate MUST be removed.
- In settings, ensure that the 'Profanity Filter' is set to 'strong'.
- Photographs may be posted with the aim of promoting activities 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.
- Photographs of the group may be shared within the group with young people's permission.
- No young people will be personally 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.
- Once the Group Leaders have finished working with that group of young people, they will be required by the Youth Group Manager to remove themselves from this group.

### **Twitter**

- Tweets may be posted by a designated Trustee or the Operations Manager with the aim of promoting YoCO and its work, but the correct permission must be given before the posting of any photographs. 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 the groups Social Media outlets.
- The group will not tag ( @ ) young people in posts on Twitter.

### **WhatsApp**

- A WhatsApp group may be set up to allow easy communication between the group. It should be managed by one of the Group Leaders, the Youth Group Manager'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.

- Consent must be given for all numbers, including young persons, before adding them to the group.

### **Instagram**

- Photographs and stories may be posted on Instagram by a designated Trustee or the Operations Manager, with the aim of promoting YoCO and its work.
- The correct permission must be given prior to the posting of any photographs. 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 Group Leaders 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.
- 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 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 and Facebook have thorough help pages that are full of information about security and privacy. <https://support.twitter.com/> <https://www.facebook.com/help>

**This policy was adopted by the Trustees on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

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

**Date for review:** March 2022