



Social Media Policy

Policy Overview

This policy sets out our organisation's expectations on the charity's volunteers, trustees and staff use of social media and reminds all of the standards of behaviour expected of them when they are posting on social media, as well as the consequences of falling below those standards.

For the purposes of this policy, social media is any online platform or app that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes social forums such as X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, Threads, Instagram and LinkedIn. Social media also covers blogs and video and image-sharing websites such as YouTube, TikTok.

All staff, trustees and volunteers should be aware that there are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. All staff, trustees and volunteers should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use.

Policy Scope

This guidance applies to The Compassionate Friends (TCF) staff, trustees and volunteers and replaces all previous policies and guidance in respect of its subject matter as of the date of issue.

Use of social media in relation to TCF by staff, volunteers and trustees

Our organisation encourages staff, volunteers and trustees to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media as part of their roles with TCF. It is an important part of how we communicate with our beneficiaries and professionals and promote our layers of support.

Staff, volunteers and trustees may contribute to our organisation's social media activities, for example by running, writing and posting on TCF's social media pages and news feeds, and posting, commenting in and moderating TCF's Facebook supportive groups.

Staff, volunteers and trustees must be aware at all times that, while contributing to, sharing or commenting on TCF's social media activities, they are representing our organisation. Staff, volunteers and trustees who use social media as part of their roles at TCF must adhere to the following rules.

Staff, volunteers and trustees should use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of communication about TCF in the public sphere. These safeguards include;

- making sure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for our organisation;
- obtaining permission from the CEO before embarking on a public campaign using social media;

Any communications that staff, volunteers and trustees through social media must not:

- bring TCF into disrepute, for example by:
 - criticising or arguing with beneficiaries, staff colleagues, TCF volunteers, professionals, or others commenting on social media;
 - making defamatory or offensive comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or
 - posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content; for example, graphic images or traumatising written details.
- breach confidentiality, for example by:
 - sharing information about our charity which is not in the public domain;
 - sharing confidential information about an individual - such as a staff colleague, volunteer, trustee or beneficiary;
- breach copyright, for example by:
 - using someone else's images or written content without permission, unless those images or content is already in the public domain;
 - failing to give acknowledgment where permission has been given to reproduce something; or
- do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
 - making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
 - using social media to bully another individual; or
 - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content.

Excessive use of social media by staff

Staff should not spend an excessive amount of time while at work engaged in personal/non-TCF related social media. This could have a detrimental effect on staff productivity. Staff should ensure that use of social media does not interfere with their other duties.

Monitoring use of social media by staff

TCF reserves the right to monitor staff social media usage. We consider that valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage includes:

- using social media for personal/non-work related reasons when they should be working; or
- acting in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in this policy.

Access to particular social media during work hours may be withdrawn in any case of misuse.

Social media in your personal life

TCF recognises that many staff, trustees and volunteers make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of our organisation, staff, volunteers and trustees must be aware that they can damage TCF if they are recognised as holding a paid or voluntary role in the charity.

Staff, volunteers and trustees are permitted to say that they have a role within our charity, which recognises that it is natural to want to discuss TCF on social media. However, the staff member, volunteer or trustee's online profile (for example, the name of a blog, social media account or group must not contain our charity's name (The Compassionate Friends or TCF), except when the social media page or group is specifically for TCF beneficiaries. In this case, a member of staff should be consulted before setting up a Facebook or other social media page or group for TCF beneficiaries.

If staff, volunteers and trustees do discuss TCF on social media, they must include on their profile a statement along the following lines: *"The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of TCF."*

Any communications that staff, volunteers and trustees make in a personal capacity through social media must not:

- bring TCF into disrepute, for example by:
 - criticising or arguing with beneficiaries, staff colleagues, TCF volunteers, professionals, or others commenting on social media;
 - making defamatory or offensive comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or
 - posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content; for example, graphic images or traumatising written details.
- breach confidentiality, for example by:
 - sharing information about our charity which is not in the public domain;
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- failing to give acknowledgment where permission has been given to reproduce something; or
- do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
 - making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
 - using social media to bully another individual; or
 - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content.

Use of social media in the recruitment process for staff, volunteers and trustees

Unless it is in relation to finding candidates (for example, if an individual has put their details on social media websites for the purpose of attracting prospective employers), TCF staff will not, either themselves or through a third party, conduct searches on applicants on social media. This is because conducting these searches during the selection process might lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristics (for example, sexual orientation or religious beliefs) played a part in a recruitment decision. This is in line with the TCF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Exemptions to the above are where;

- a prospective employee, volunteer or trustee might claim that they have used social media in their previous role (for example, as a publicity tool); or
- a prospective employee, volunteer or trustee social media use may be directly relevant to a claim made in their application (for example, if they run a blog based around something mentioned in their CV or a skill in which they claim to be proficient).

There should also be no systematic or routine checking of prospective volunteers, trustees and staff online social media activities.

Disciplinary action over social media use

All staff, volunteers and trustees are required to adhere to this policy. Staff, volunteers and trustees should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity that might cause serious damage to TCF, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to dismissal from your role with TCF.

Conclusion

A social media policy is an essential tool for TCF in today's digital age. It not only helps protect TCF's reputation and sensitive information but also empowers staff, volunteers and trustees to use social media platforms responsibly and in alignment with TCF's values and goals.

Fostering a culture of transparency, respect, and responsibility is crucial for TCF. Staff, volunteers and trustees should be aware of the potential consequences of their online actions and be encouraged to think before they post, ensuring that their online presence reflects positively on both themselves and TCF.

It's important to remember that the social media landscape is constantly evolving, and this policy should be regularly reviewed and updated to remain relevant and effective.

TCF ensures that all volunteers, trustees and staff are informed about best practices and emerging trends in social media.

By adhering to this social media policy and embracing the principles outlined within it, TCF can use social media for positive engagement, while mitigating potential risks and challenges. Together, we can build a stronger and more responsible online presence that reflects the values and goals of our charity.

Data protection

We will process any personal data collected in accordance with our data protection and privacy guidance. Data collected is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing support.

Monitoring and review

This guidance will be reviewed periodically to ensure compliance with any changes in UK legislation and/or best practices. Any updates or amendments to the guidance will be communicated to staff, volunteers and trustees in a timely manner.

This guidance will be reviewed by Trustees every 3 years.

Revision history

Version	Type (e.g., replacement, revision etc...)	Date	History (reason for changes)	Signature/Job Title
V1	Original	01/10/2023		
V2	Replacement	01/10/2026	Legislative and compliant update	