



Volunteer Social Media Policy

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Purpose of Policy:

Social Media Policy for Volunteers

Each one of us is an ambassador for Guide Dogs. Every word we say whether it is written or spoken, has the power to make a direct and positive influence on the lives of the people in the UK living with sight loss. Social media is a fantastic way to do just that.

Guide Dogs uses social media in its work and recognises that those who are involved in its work may also use social media either as part of their role or in their private lives. A written policy is therefore required for all employees, volunteers, and stakeholders on the acceptable use of social networking.

Guide Dogs encourage the responsible use of social media. The purpose of this policy is to set out what Guide Dogs expect from our volunteers when using social media. It is important to remember that we are all ambassadors for the charity and that social media is never private. Private or Group messages or posts sent by volunteers about the organisation, services users, other volunteers, and staff must follow our behaviours and Volunteer Agreement. You should never share your personal data or personal data of other people on social media platforms.

This policy is solely for volunteers and aims to:

- give clear guidelines on what volunteers can and cannot say about the organisation online.
- Comply with relevant legislation and protect volunteers.
- help volunteer managers manage performance effectively.
- help volunteers distinguish between their private lives and their volunteering.

- protect Guide Dogs against liability for the actions of volunteers.
- Guide Dogs monitors social media. Any inappropriate use will be addressed through our relevant processes.

Definitions:

This policy covers volunteers including Trustees. There is a separate policy for employees.

Policy Statements

1. Policy statement

Guide Dogs recognise that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on topics relevant to our work using a wide variety of platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, blogs and wikis, etc. This policy aims to protect individuals volunteering with us in any role and to encourage individuals to take responsibility for what they write and to exercise good judgement and common sense. If you read content online that you are uncomfortable or disagree with, consider other mechanisms you can pursue this through rather than engage on social media i.e., your volunteer manager.

Online safety content/cyberbullying links below:

[Keeping safe online \(guidedogs.org.uk\)](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/keeping-safe-online)

[Safety online for parents and children \(guidedogs.org.uk\)](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/safety-online-for-parents-and-children)

- 1.1 Inappropriate use of social media can pose risks to our confidential and proprietary information and reputation and can jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations. To minimise these risks, to avoid loss of work time and to ensure that our IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate business purposes, we expect volunteers to adhere to this policy.

2. Scope and purpose of the Policy

- 2.1. This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Email, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and all other social networking sites, and all other internet postings, including blogs.
- 2.2. It applies to the use of social media both for volunteering and personal use that may bring Guide Dogs into disrepute. For clarity this includes an individual posting on a group page or another's personal page. It applies to an individual posting on their own personal page even in a closed

group where that post is brought to Guide Dogs attention (i.e., moves out of a private conversation). Should you have any concerns please discuss with your volunteer manager.

- 2.3. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using our IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to volunteers.
- 2.4. If a volunteer does not follow the guidance set out in this policy their volunteer manager will address this using the Volunteer Procedure for resolving issues of Behaviour, Attitude or Ability.
- 2.5. Volunteers may be required by Guide Dogs to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy.
- 2.6. This policy links to all other policies therefore social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies such as equal opportunities, data protection etc; this list is illustrative, not exhaustive. Please refer to the Volunteer Information Point or your volunteer manager for further guidance on other policies and procedures.

3. Personal responsibility for implementing the Policy

- 3.1. All volunteer managers have a specific responsibility for ensuring that all volunteers understand what is expected of them and take action whenever this policy requires. They have responsibility for deciding what is appropriate behaviour for their volunteer and discussing this with the volunteer if it is not at the standard required.
- 3.2. All volunteers should ensure that they take the time to read and understand this policy and relative information in the volunteer agreement. Any misuse of social media or questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be discussed with their volunteer manager.
- 3.3. Any content which raises a safeguarding concern must be reported to the Safeguarding Team and/or your volunteer manager in line with the Safeguarding policy.

4. Guidelines for responsible use of social media

The following sections of the policy provide volunteers with an outline of how we expect you to use social media responsibly and safely.

Content

- 4.1. Volunteers should avoid social communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage our reputation, directly or indirectly.
- 4.2. Keep your contributions civil, tasteful, and relevant. Do not post or send private messages that are unlawful, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, homophobic, or racially offensive. This list is illustrative, not exhaustive.
- 4.3. Volunteers must not post negative statements or comments about:
 - a. Guide Dogs or its subsidiaries.
 - b. Guide Dogs current or past staff, service users or volunteers, or company members past or present.
 - c. suppliers and vendors.
 - d. other affiliates and stakeholders.
- 4.4. Volunteers are personally responsible for what they communicate on social media (as part of their role or on personal sites); published comments or posts may be read by the public, colleagues, volunteers, future employers, social acquaintances and unless removed will remain available indefinitely.
- 4.5. Avoid posting comments about confidential Guide Dogs related topics, such as an individual complaint. Even if you make it clear that your views do not represent those of our charity, your comments could still damage our reputation and or a process underway.
- 4.6. If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from making the communication until you discuss it with your volunteer manager.
- 4.7. If you see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on Guide Dogs or our stakeholders, please report it to your volunteer manager immediately.

Platforms:

- 4.8. To ensure consistency in branding, etc. local social media pages can be created but only subject to the prior consent, agreement, and support of Guide Dogs.

- 4.9. If your social media accounts say that you are a Guide Dogs volunteer, you must also state that your views do not represent those of the organisation you are volunteering with. For example, you could write “the views in this posting do not represent the views of Guide Dogs.” You should also ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the image you present to those you work with as part of your volunteering role.
- 4.10. There is no obligation for volunteers to link their personal social media to any Guide Dogs’ social media.
- 4.11. You can only use a Guide Dogs’ email address for social media if your volunteering role involves using social media on behalf of the organisation.
- 4.12. You are responsible for the security settings of any social media sites you use and should ensure they are set to the appropriate level if you wish to limit who can see your information.
- 4.13. Remember that you must protect confidential information. You should be mindful of issues covered in the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), if in doubt speak to your Volunteer Manager or email the Data Protection Officer at dataprotectionofficer@guidedogs.org.uk. Confidential information includes things such as unpublished details about our work, details of current projects, future projects, financial information, or the personal data of our supporters, staff, or volunteers.
- 4.14. Those business contacts made during your volunteering, which may be used by you in a new role to put Guide Dogs at a disadvantage, are regarded as our confidential information, and as such you will be required to delete all such details from your personal social networking accounts should you stop volunteering with Guide Dogs.
- 4.15. A Guide Dogs publicity consent form to use third party data including photographs must be obtained prior to posting images or text of those individuals before they may be used on social media in relation to Guide Dogs. To discuss how to adhere to this in crowded places or if you need a copy of this form, please ask your volunteer manager.
- 4.16. Guide Dogs does not permit tagging of vulnerable adults, or anyone under 18. If you would like to post about anyone under the age of 18, you must ensure you have their parent or guardian’s permission to do so.

5. Personal use of social media in the office environment

We recognise that volunteers may occasionally want to use social media for personal activities if their role requires them to spend time in an office or use our computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems. We authorise such occasional use during rest breaks so long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content and does not interfere with your volunteering role or disrupt the corporate or guest Wi-Fi capability. You should not use Guide Dogs IT resources and communications systems for any matter that you wish to be kept private or confidential.

If using social media on Guide Dogs' IT equipment while volunteering, circulating chain letters or other spam is never permitted; circulating or posting commercial, personal, religious, or political solicitations, or promotion of outside organisations unrelated to Guide Dogs work is also prohibited.

Documentation

None

Permissible Exceptions

None

Related Policies or Processes

Volunteering Policy

Volunteer Agreement

Volunteer Behaviour, attitude and ability (BAA) process

Governance Review & Approval Table

When reviewing or updating this document, this document must be transferred to the new template, found on the Knowledge Hub home page, and be signed off by the relevant governance bodies and in particular safeguarding.

The table below contains two rows and five columns.

	H&S	Protection of Children & Adults	Insurance	Legal
Date Reviewed	26.10.20 18.08.21	3.11.20 09.09.21	31.08.21	18.08.21

Version Control Table

The table below contains three rows and four columns. (Only the original approval date and the most recent amendment should be included in the table.)

Date	Version	Status	Details of Change
3.11.20	4.3	complete	Cross-functional annual review
Sept 2021	4.4	complete	Template/brand change

End of document