



Social Media Policy

A guide for team members on using social media to promote SOUL Church and in a personal capacity.

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, at least once a year. SOUL Church will amend this policy, following consultation, where appropriate.

Introduction

SOUL Church Values:

Christ Centred
People Empowering
Outward Focused
Life Giving

Our mission statement is simple: Love in Action

What is social media?

Social media is the term given to web-based tools and applications which enable users to create and share content (words, images and video content), and network with each other through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. Examples of social media include Facebook, X, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Why do we use social media?

Social media is essential to the success of communicating SOUL Church's work. It is important for some team members to participate in social media to engage with our audience, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of SOUL Church's work.

Why do we need a social media policy?

The difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to SOUL Church's work. While we encourage the use of social media, we have certain standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe. Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain.

This policy is intended for all team members of all levels and those serving, and applies to content posted on both a SOUL Church device and a personal device. Before engaging in work-related social media activity, everyone must read this policy.

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Setting out the social media policy

This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of SOUL Church, and the use of social media by team members in both a professional and personal capacity. It sets out what you need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to help everyone support and expand our official social media channels, while protecting the church, its reputation and preventing any legal issues.

Point of contact for social media

The Head of Communications (HoC) is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our social media channels. If you have specific questions about any aspect of these channels, speak to the media team. No other team member can post content on SOUL Church's official channels without the permission from HoC, who will handle correspondence with the General Manager where applicable if content needs to be authorised before posting.

Which social media channels do we use?

SOUL Church uses the following social media channels:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/soulchurchuk/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/soulchurchuk/>

X: <https://twitter.com/SoulChurchUK>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/c/SOULChurchUK/videos>

Guidelines

Using SOUL Church's social media channels — appropriate conduct

1. The media team is responsible for setting up and managing SOUL Church's social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the HoC will have access to these accounts.
2. All social media channels will be checked and responded to within the working hours of Tues-Fri 9:00 to 17:00 and during all Sunday services. We will endeavour to check and respond to comments made outside of these hours, especially during events and other church related activities, but the response may be slower.
3. Be an ambassador for our brand. Team members should ensure they reflect SOUL Church's values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Our brand guidelines set out our tone of voice that all team members should refer to when posting content on SOUL Church's social media channels.
4. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for SOUL Church, and accurately reflects SOUL Church's agreed position.

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5. Bring value to our audience. Answer their questions, help and engage with them
6. Take care with the presentation of content. Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors. Also, check the quality of images and that no photos are released without prior consent from the audience captured.
7. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
8. If staff outside of the media team wish to contribute content for social media, they should speak to the HoC first about this.
9. Team members shouldn't post content about supporters or service users without their express permission. If team members are sharing information about supporters, service users or third-party organisations, this content should be clearly labelled so our audiences know it has not come directly from SOUL Church. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.
10. Always check facts. Team members should not automatically assume that material is accurate and should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification, for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation. If in doubt over any content please refer to HoC.
11. Be honest. Say what you know to be true or have a good source for. If you've made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it.
12. Team members should refrain from offering personal opinions via SOUL Church's social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting'. If you are in doubt about SOUL Church's position on a particular issue, please speak to the HoC.
13. It is vital that SOUL Church does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials. For example, a video of a stunt.
14. Team members should not encourage people to break the law to supply material for social media, such as using unauthorised video footage. All relevant rights for usage must be obtained before publishing material.
15. Team members should not set up other Facebook groups or pages, X accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of SOUL Church. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, the media team can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following.
16. SOUL Church is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We have every right to express views on policy, including the policies of parties, but we can't tell people how to vote.

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17. If a complaint is made on SOUL Church's social media channels, team members should seek advice from the HoC and the Complaints Policy and Procedure before responding. If the HoC is not available, then team members should speak to the General Manager.

18. Sometimes issues can arise on social media which can escalate into a crisis situation because they are sensitive or risk serious damage to the charity's

reputation. Examples might include: sharing content of vulnerable parties, not gaining prior consent and using content not authorised. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to SOUL Church.

The media team regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of SOUL Church so we can catch any issues or problems early. If there is an issue that could develop or has already developed into a crisis situation, the media team will do the following:

- Raise the issue with the HoC as the first point of call.
- Where necessary escalate to the General Manager and refer to the appropriate team where necessary.
- Ensure all action steps are documented for evidence trail.

If any team members outside of the media team become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on SOUL Church's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the HoC immediately.

Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct

This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media but instead flags up those areas in which conflicts might arise. SOUL Church team members are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with SOUL Church's values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive SOUL Church. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of SOUL Church. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about SOUL Church's work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent SOUL Church's positions, policies or opinions."

2. Team members who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they work or serve at SOUL Church should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and the social team. Similarly, team members who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work or serve at SOUL Church should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and the media team.

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3. Those in senior management, and specialist roles where they are well known in their field of expertise, must take particular care as personal views published may be misunderstood as expressing SOUL Church's view.

4. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with SOUL Church and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself.

5. SOUL Church has associations with several high-profile people and organisations. Please don't approach high profile people from your personal social media

accounts to ask them for support, as this could hinder any potential relationships that are being managed by the church. This includes asking for retweets about the church.

6. If a team member is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to SOUL Church, they should talk to the HoC immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.

7. SOUL Church is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. When representing SOUL Church, team members are expected to hold SOUL Church's position of neutrality. Team members who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from SOUL Church, and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.

8. Never use SOUL Church's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the HoC.

9. Always protect yourself and the church. Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so do consider the content carefully. When you are using social media sites at work, it is important that you do so safely.

10. Think about your reputation as well as the church's. Express your opinions and deal with differences of opinion respectfully. Don't insult people or treat them badly. Passionate discussions and debates are fine, but you should always be respectful of others and their opinions. Be polite and the first to correct your own mistakes.

11. We encourage team members to share tweets and posts that we have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support SOUL Church and the work we do. Where appropriate and using the guidelines within this policy, we encourage staff to do this as it provides a human voice and raises our profile. However, if the content is controversial or misrepresented, please highlight this to the HoC who will respond as appropriate.

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Further guidelines

Libel

Libel is when a false written statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published online or in print. Whether team members are posting content on social media as part of their job or in a personal capacity, they should not bring SOUL Church into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

Copyright law

It is critical that all staff abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Never use or adapt someone else's images or written content without permission. Failing to acknowledge the source/author/resource citation, where permission has been given to reproduce content, is also considered a breach of copyright.

Confidentiality

Any communications that staff make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that SOUL Church is not ready to disclose yet.

Discrimination and harassment

Team members should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official SOUL Church social media channel or a personal account. For example:

- making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief
- using social media to bully another individual
- posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content

Lobbying Act

Charities are legally allowed to campaign to bring about a change in policy or law to further their organisational purpose. In most cases, spending on charity campaigns that are in accordance with charity law will not be regulated under electoral law. However, the Lobbying Act, which was passed in January 2014, states that during national elections (known as regulated periods) spending on campaigning activities may be regulated.

Charities which spend more than £20,000 in England or £10,000 in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, during the regulated period, need to register with the Electoral Commission. To abide by the Lobbying Act, campaigning activities on social media must not be seen as intending to influence people's voting choice. During these periods, all campaigning activity will be reviewed by the General Manager.

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Use of social media in the recruitment process

Recruitment should be carried out in accordance with the Recruitment Policy, and associated procedures and guidelines. Any advertising of vacancies should be done through HR.

There should be no systematic or routine checking of candidate's online social media activities during the recruitment process, as conducting these searches might lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristics, such as religious beliefs, race or sexual orientation, played a part in a recruitment decision.

Protection and intervention

The responsibility for measures of protection and intervention lies first with the social networking site itself. Different social networking sites offer different models of interventions in different areas. For more information, refer to the guidance available on the social networking site itself, for example; Facebook. However, if a staff member considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the safeguarding officer immediately.

Under 18s and vulnerable people

Young and vulnerable people face risks when using social networking sites. They may be at risk of being bullied, publishing sensitive and personal information on their profiles, or from becoming targets for online grooming.

Where known, when communicating with young people under 18-years-old via social media, the HoC and media team should ensure the online relationship with SOUL Church follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship. Ensuring that young people have been made aware of the risks of communicating and sharing information online, and given guidance on security/privacy settings as necessary. The CA will make sure that the site itself and SOUL Church content is appropriate for the young person. Please refer to our Safeguarding Policy for more details.

Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of SOUL Church is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect. For staff, breaches of the policy may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue. Please refer to our staff handbook for further information on disciplinary procedures. Staff who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from the General Manager.

Public Interest Disclosure

If a staff member releases information through SOUL Church's social media channels that is considered to be in the interest of the public due to the Public Disclosure Act 1998, SOUL Church's Whistleblowing Policy must be initiated before any further action is taken.

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