

Social Media Policy and Guidance

Primary Principle

Remember you represent Scouting at the local and national level. Anything you publish will reflect on Scouting.

Take care that nothing you publish online could be construed as discriminatory, abusive, oppressive, harassing, bullying, victimising, offensive or otherwise incompatible with Scouting principles.

Ensure all aspects of safeguarding are considered before publishing photographs or any other identifiable information on a young person.

Ensure you do not publish any information that might undermine your own reputation or that of Scouting or might run the risk of damaging public confidence in Scouting.

Purpose

1. The intention of this policy and guidance document is to support all adult members and young people at all levels within Northants County Scouts to use social media on behalf of the Scouts, effectively and securely.
2. The points covered below will encompass all types of social media (Facebook, X, TikTok, Instagram etc) and other online communication tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Policies which should also be referred to:

3. Safeguarding Policy
4. Anti-Bullying Policy
5. EU General Data Protection Regulation "GDPR"
6. Zoom Joining a meeting
7. Zoom running a secure meeting

Reasons for using social media

- Sharing local and County Scout news
- Raise awareness of Northants County Scouts and local Scouting
- Adult member recruitment
- Young Person recruitment
- Publicise events
- Celebrating Scouting achievements

Guiding principles – Rules

8. Photographs and/or personal information that can identify a young person must not be published on social media/websites without the expressed written permission of the young person and their parents/guardians.
9. When you have parental/guardian permission to use a photo, only use the young person's first name in any caption.
10. Young people under 13 are not allowed on most social media sites so do not encourage them to join.
11. Make sure your content is appropriate and accurate.
12. Do not use private accounts or emails for creating pages/accounts.
13. Do not use private accounts for responding to questions raised etc.
14. All official Scout accounts must be clearly identifiable as such.
15. Conduct yourself in an appropriate way as you would face to face - be aware of what you say and how you say it.
16. Don't engage in one-to-one conversations with young people via chat facilities or instant messaging-this is the same as going into a private room with a young person and closing the door.
17. Don't use your personal social networking account to communicate with young people.
18. Never give out your password.
19. Direct media inquiries to the appropriate person. Media inquiries coming through social media should be referred to the Scout executive or a designee for an official response.
20. Do not offering personal opinions when using the official Scouts social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting' another organisation/person's account unless directly relevant such as County liking and retweeting a District's Facebook post.
21. It is critical that you 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. Do not reuse an image that another organisation/individual has used without permission – they may hold a licence. Do not trust Google's search for image with no copyright feature.
22. Do not add a location to your posts/tweets.

Guiding principles – Good Practice

23. Each entity within Northants Scouts should have a maximum of one official account with each social media platform, e.g. Northants County Scouts has one Facebook account and one Twitter account.
24. Regularly update your social media accounts (and website), it will not portray a good image of your Scout Group if the most recent information is two years old.
25. Social media must be monitored. An authorised volunteer should have the responsibility of monitoring social media channels daily, and backup administrators/monitors should be designated so there is no gap in the monitoring.
26. When disagreeing with others' opinions, remain appropriate and polite. If you find yourself in a situation online that looks as if it's becoming antagonistic, do not get overly defensive and do not disengage from the conversation abruptly. Ask your Scout executive or the designee for advice on how to disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner that reflects well on the Scout Association.
27. Be human and engaging.

28. Take care with the presentation of content. Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors. Also check the quality of images.

Guiding Principles - Hints

29. Use the social media's facility to report abuse posts/tweets.
30. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
31. Remember, although you may be able to delete a post, they are never totally removed. If another person has retweeted etc you cannot control who then sees your post.

Social media platforms

Facebook

32. Facebook is an online social networking site with an estimated 3.07 billion monthly active users, of which approximately 39.5 million are in the UK. The average age demographic is increasing year on year, with the largest demographic group being 25-34 years old.
33. Each Facebook user has a personal profile where they can add content to via posts and photograph albums, and add other users as friends.
34. Facebook users can create common interest Pages and Groups. Pages are good for things such as a District Scout, or an event such as a Gang Show. Information can be added by authorised individuals but Facebook will show the name of the page as the author. Other Facebook users can follow your page and will then automatically see your posts.
35. Groups can be open, private (you can request access which will be considered by the admin) or secret (you have to be invited). These are best for individual groups such as Scouts and for closed events such as camps.
36. Facebook has an excellent help facility, found by clicking the blue question mark icon. In addition, there is plenty of help available on the internet if you have a specific problem.
37. Guidance:
 - i. Use a Facebook page (where view access is unrestricted) where the published information is for general consumption. An example is the Northants County account and the individual District accounts that are used to publicise the Scouts.
 - ii. Update the security settings to suit your needs, e.g. whether you wish for other people to be able to post direct to your page etc
 - iii. Regularly review these settings as Facebook do add different controls from time to time
 - iv. Use a Private or Secret Group where access is controlled and permission has to be given by the account admin to individuals to join the account.
 - v. The minimum age to use Facebook is 13.
 - vi. Designate at least two administrators who will have the ability to ensure the page is kept updated, and provide back-up cover
 - vii. Do not create official Facebook pages or Groups using private emails – if the person leaves the scout group, that page will be lost. If needed, create an appropriate generic email using one of the free email providers.

X

38. X, formerly known as Twitter, is a micro-blogging site, that is users can add short pieces of information of a maximum 280 characters (called tweets). A maximum of four photographs can be attached to a tweet. Other users can add comments to tweets.
39. Twitter is second to Facebook with number of users, with the largest age group of users being between 24 and 34 years old. Posts are visible to everyone, but if you follow an X account you will automatically see their posts.
40. Many companies and high-profile individuals use X.
41. X is an excellent platform for promoting the general ethos of Scouting, to show off the great opportunities that our young members enjoy, and showcase the fantastic work that our adult members do.
42. X has a comprehensive help facility, found by clicking the grey question mark icon. Dependent upon the computer you are using, it may be hidden within another icon that has three dots on denoting more options. In addition, there is plenty of help available on the internet if you have a specific problem.
43. Guidance:
 - i. Use a generic email address to create your X account with. Do not use a personal email address as the X account will be lost if that person leaves Scouting.
 - ii. Designate at least two administrators who will have the ability to ensure the page is kept updated, and provide back-up cover, allow them to login using the X @name rather than the email address.
 - iii. The minimum age to use X is 13.

Instagram

44. Instagram is a photograph and video sharing platform. Unlike X and Facebook, it is about the visual images rather than any text. Users upload images and can add key words (hash tags), and tag their followers.
45. Instagram has over 3 billion users.
46. Instagram has a comprehensive help facility, found by clicking the grey question mark icon. Dependent upon the computer you are using, it may be hidden within another icon that has three dots on denoting more options. In addition, there is plenty of help available on the internet if you have a specific problem.
47. Guidance:
 - i. Use a generic email address to create your Instagram account with. Do not use a personal email address as the Instagram account will be lost if that person leaves Scouting.
 - ii. Designate at least two administrators who will have the ability to ensure the Instagram is kept updated, and provide back-up cover, allow them to login using the instagram @name rather than the email address.
 - iii. The minimum age to use Instagram is 13.
 - iv. Always add hashtags to your posts, e.g. #Scouts #GlendonScouts as this will help promote your posts, as Instagram works best with hashtags
 - v. Use a recognisable image, such as a logo, for your bio page.
 - vi. Instagram posts that include images with faces are known to attract a third more likes. However be careful about using images featuring young people.

48. WhatsApp

- 49. WhatsApp is a popular free messaging service. It allows you to send messages, photographs and videos, as well as make voice and video calls over the internet.
- 50. As well as communicating with individuals, you can create WhatsApp groups (maximum number of people 256), which allows you to send one message, photo or video to multiple people with one click.
- 51. The main issue with WhatsApp is it only fully works on smart phones.
- 52. The minimum age for WhatsApp is 13 years old.
- 53. It is also a useful tool to keep in touch with adults and leaders.

ZOOM

- 54. Zoom is a video communications app (also available via zoom website). It enables virtual meetings take place face-face, and has a number of features such as mute, breakout rooms, webinars etc. It has features where you can share your screen so everyone can view a PowerPoint presentation, or see what you are looking at etc
- 55. Generally Zoom does not allow under 16 year olds to use it, however there is a Zoom for Education subscriber category.
- 56. In June 2020 Zoom and The Scouts Association negotiated a deal that allows Zoom to be used by scout groups at a discounted fee.
- 57. There are a number of known security flaws with Zoom, however the company has been working hard to address these. If you are planning to run a Zoom meeting read our document “Zoom Running a Meeting” that shows you how run your meeting securely. There is another document “Zoom Instructions” that is aimed at individuals wishing to join a zoom meeting.
- 58. The following are the key points for anyone running a Zoom meeting.
 - i. You may need a licence to run Zoom meetings (depending on expected number of attendees and length of meeting).
 - ii. Never send the meeting ID and Password in the same communication.
 - iii. Use the Waiting Room, as this will enable you to vet each individual as they request to join.
 - iv. Do not allow participants to share their screen (this can be turned on/off during the meeting as required).
 - v. Use the “Register for meeting” facility when scheduling your meeting as this will enable you to control who gets given access.

YouTube

- 59. Northants County Scouts has a YouTube channel, therefore Districts and Groups should not need their own.
- 60. All County, District and Group videos should be sent to the County Media Manager for submission to YouTube.
- 61. The County Media manager will do a final check to ensure the appropriateness of the video.

Microsoft Teams

- 62. Microsoft Teams is part of the Microsoft 365 package. It is designed to enable online meetings, sharing of documents, file storage and online chats. Microsoft Teams has the same features as Zoom such as screen sharing, mute etc.

63. There is a free version of Microsoft Teams that provides the above features.
64. As with Zoom, Microsoft Teams can either be accessed via the internet or downloaded as an app.
65. Microsoft Teams is a more secure system than Zoom, but is also more rigid and less intuitive than Zoom.
66. Microsoft Teams has an age restriction of 16, however as with Zoom, there is a Schools feature that allows students of any age to be taught via Microsoft Teams. Parental consent via Microsoft may be required to authorise a child under 16.
67. Before a virtual meeting can be hosted, a Team needs to be created.
68. Teams can be private (closed to anyone other than a Team member although individuals can request to join), or public (open to anyone).
69. Each Team is automatically given a General Channel which is good for general announcements, Create individual channels for events.
70. Key points about running Microsoft Teams:
 - i. Before creating a Team, check to see if the same team has already been created
 - ii. Use strong naming convention. Give the team a prefix to denote which District, and include Group and Section – check to see how other teams have been named.
 - iii. Unless there is a specific reason to have a public team, always ensure the team is set to be private.
 - iv. Create a Channel for each event as this will keep all information in a logical place.
 - v. Use the General channel for broadcasts etc.

Amendment History

Date	Detail
October 2020	Approved by F&GP
October 2023 5	Header changed from County Executive Committee to County Trustee Board
November 2025	References to Twitter changed to X. 32 – Facebook statistics updated. 38-43 - References changed from Twitter to X, and Tweets changed to Posts. 45 – Number of Instagram users updated. 52 – WhatsApp user age has changed from 16 to 13 years.

Photograph Permission Form

..... County/District/Group

The following consent options concern photography, video and audio footage of the young person in this form being published via the following: Group internally controlled publications and communication channels, such as online news, email, websites, newsletters, at the Group meeting place, Group social media channels, Group advertising and/or promotional material including press. Photos, video or audio of the young person in this form will not be used unless you and the young person give us consent below.

Young Person's Name	
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To be completed by the young person:

- ☐ I am happy for photos, video and audio to be published of myself in this form whilst undertaking Scouting activities across all channels; or
- ☐ I do not want any photos, video or audio to be used.

Signature	
Name (print)	
Date	

To be completed by the parent/guardian:

- ☐ I am happy for photos, video and audio to be published of the young person in this form whilst undertaking Scouting activities across all channels; or ☐ I do not want any photos, video or audio to be used.

Signature	
Name (print)	
Date	

Additionally other Scout Groups, Districts, Counties/Areas/Regions and UKHQ may request consent independently as part of event registrations or other Scouting activities.