

Social Media Policy

Social media is essential to the success of communicating Gympanzees' work. It is important for designated staff and volunteers to participate in social media to engage with our audiences and stakeholders, contribute to relevant conversations, and raise the profile of Gympanzees' work, using the charity's corporate accounts. Some staff and volunteers may also support the charity's work using their personal accounts, and many will have social media accounts for personal use.

Building an engaged online community can lead to more significant long-term support and involvement from supporters. [Social media guidance from the Charity Commission](#) (September 2023) conveys how social media can be a highly effective way for a charity to engage its audiences and communicate about its work.

Why do we need a social media policy?

Social media is a fast-moving online world, where nuance and context can be easily lost. While social media brings the charity to a wide audience, it can also present risks. We want to ensure that all staff and volunteers using social media represent and reflect Gympanzees in the best way possible. It is also important to mitigate risks (such as reputational or legal issues) associated with the use of social media to protect our supporters, staff and volunteers, work and reputation.

While we encourage the use of social media to support our communications strategy or plans, we have important standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe and adhere to. The difference between a personal and professional opinion can also be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to Gympanzees work. Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations and is subject to the same laws as other kinds of publication or commentary in the public domain.

Failure to comply with this policy could expose Gympanzees to reputational damage as well as putting staff, volunteers, services users and members at risk.

Application

This policy applies to all social media platforms used by staff (including consultants, and freelancers) and volunteers (including trustees) in a professional and personal capacity.

This policy also applies to online blogs, wikis, podcasts, forums, and messaging-based apps, such as WhatsApp. Social media can be accessed in various ways, including from a desktop or laptop computer, tablet or smartphone. This policy applies to the use of all such devices.

Internet access and monitoring usage

There are currently no access restrictions to any of our social media sites in the Gympanzees office. You are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of personal social media activity in line with this policy during your breaks. But usage should not be excessive or interfere with your work.

Point of contact for social media and authority to post on Gympanzees social media accounts

Our Head of Marketing is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our social media channels. If you have questions about any aspect of these channels, please speak to the Head of Marketing. No other staff member or volunteer is permitted to post content on Gympanzees official channels without the permission of the Head of Marketing.

Rules for use: full list

Using Gympanzees Social Media Channels — Appropriate Conduct:

1. Know our Social Media Guardians

The Marketing Team is responsible for setting up and managing Gympanzees social media channels. The Marketing Team has overall ownership of these accounts and only those authorised to do so by the Head of Marketing will have access to these accounts.

The Marketing Team will uphold best practices for channel security with secure passwords that regularly change. Never give out the passwords for our channels without express permission from the Head of Marketing.

2. Be an Ambassador for our Brand

Staff and volunteers must ensure they reflect Gympanzees values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Please note only the Marketing Team is permitted to respond to comments on our social media posts on behalf of the organisation. All posts and comments should be attributed to the charity and not an individual. In special cases it may be appropriate for a staff member or volunteer to make an individual comment as themselves, but this should be under the supervision, and with the approval, of *the Head of Marketing*.

3. Always pause and think before posting

When posting from Gympanzees social media accounts, you must respond to comments in the voice of our charity and not allow your own personal opinions to influence responses. Staff and volunteers must not reveal their personal opinions via our accounts by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'reposting' as Gympanzees, unless it is clear that you are doing so as an individual staff member or volunteer as part of an approach agreed with the Marketing Team (e.g. as part of a 'takeover' of the charity's account). If you are in doubt about Gympanzees position on a particular issue, please speak to the Head of Marketing.

4. Ensure Brand Consistency

Staff or volunteers must not create or manage any other social media channels, groups or pages on behalf of Gympanzees *without express permission from the Marketing Team. This is to ensure brand consistency for users and the appropriate safeguarding and monitoring processes are in place.*

5. Remember the Bigger Picture and Focus on the Benefit

Staff and volunteers must make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for Gympanzees to further our charitable purposes (either directly or indirectly, by engaging stakeholders and building our brand using our strategy). All content must accurately reflect Gympanzees *agreed position*.

6. Bring Value to our Audience(s)

Those responsible for the management of our social media accounts should answer questions as swiftly as possible to help and engage with our service users and supporters.

7. Seek Permission to Share

If staff or volunteers outside of the Marketing team wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should obtain guidance and permission from either the Head of Marketing, Digital Marketing Officer or Marketing Assistant.

8. Obtain Consent

Staff and volunteers must not post content about supporters, service users or partners without their, or their guardian's, express permission. If staff or and volunteers 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 Gympanzees. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff and volunteers must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.

9. Put Safety First

It can be challenging working on social media and there may be times where staff or volunteers could be subject to unpleasant or abusive comments directed at the charity, our work or people. We encourage everyone who is on social media on behalf of the charity to be aware of our safeguarding and wellbeing practices to deal with online abuse and consult with the Head of Marketing where necessary.

It is also vital that Gympanzees does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials in pursuit of social media engagement. For example, a video of a stunt or visiting an unsafe location.

10. Stick to the Law

Staff and volunteers must 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.

11. Remain Politically Neutral

Gympanzees is not associated with any political organisation or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We can express views where appropriate on policies that impact our work and service users, but it is essential that Gympanzees remains, and is seen to be, politically neutral.

We cannot endorse a political party or candidate. We must carefully manage the risk that we are perceived to have any party-political bias and should carefully consider any posts which might be perceived as such, for example, posts which talk about individual politicians or parties rather than policies.

12. Check Facts and be Honest

Staff and volunteers should not automatically assume that material that's shared or included in any post 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 you've made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it. But think first about how to manage any risk to the charity and its brand in doing so by consulting with the Marketing Team to craft the response.

13. Seek Advice for Complaints

If a complaint is made on Gympanzees social media channels, staff and volunteers should seek advice from the Head of Marketing before responding. If they are not available, then staff and volunteers should speak to the Chief Operations Officer.

14. Know what to do in a Crisis

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: a child is injured in Gympanzees equipment.

The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity or our people. The Marketing Team regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of Gympanzees 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 Head of Marketing will do the following:

- Start drafting initial messaging and copy
- Agree media strategy and response and circulate briefing via email to wider team members
- If needed: convene a cross strategy and statement with any industry equipment company which may be involved in the incident - establish a joint narrative and message

Please see the PR, Crisis Management and Incident Policy

If any staff or volunteers outside of the Marketing team becomes aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on Gympanzees social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the Head of Marketing immediately. It is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to report complaints or comments that could escalate into a crisis or have serious implications for the charity. Only the Marketing Team is permitted to amend or delete content in a crisis.

See further guidance from CharityComms regarding [crisis communications and best practice](#).

15. Timings, Schedules and Rotas

The Marketing Assistant responds to comments Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, and we have a social media out-of-hours rota for evenings and weekends, covered by the whole communications team.

16. Use AI Appropriately

AI can be a valuable tool that can support our communications activities. However, staff and volunteers must ensure AI created content adheres to our brand message and tone. You must seek permission from the Head of Marketing before using AI to generate content for social and only use approved AI tools and processes.

17. Handover Ownership if your role changes

You must hand over ownership of the group/page/account you manage to another appropriate staff member (or volunteer) if you change roles or if you leave Gympanzees.

Use of Personal Social Media Accounts — Appropriate Conduct

Personal social media use by staff and volunteers can sometimes be attributed to the charity or bring other risks for the charity or individual staff or volunteers. This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media, but instead flags up those areas in which risks or conflicts might arise. Gympanzees staff and volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are considerate of Gympanzees values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Separate your Personal Views

Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive Gympanzees. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Gympanzees.

2. Take care when publishing personal views (particularly trustees and senior staff)

Those in senior management including trustees and public-facing or 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 Gympanzees view.

For senior roles, we expect you to take additional steps, such as:

- Being aware of your duties and responsibilities.
- Consulting your charity's messaging and crisis plans, being particularly cautious in how your communications as a leading figure for Gympanzees may be interpreted.
- Avoiding posting any material which might be construed as contrary or conflicting with to the charity's charitable mission or work.

3. Discuss Risks and Conflicts of Interest

Staff and trustees who have a personal blog, social media profile or website which indicates in any way that they work at Gympanzees should discuss any potential risk or conflicts of interest with their line manager and the Marketing Team. Similarly, staff or trustees who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work for Gympanzees should discuss any potential risk or conflicts of interest with their line manager and the Marketing Team.

4. Protect your Personal Reputation

Think about your personal reputation as well as the charity'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 the first to correct your own mistakes.

Remember that if you have a public profile with the charity, your personal social media accounts could be looked at by critics of the charity, and bear this in mind when posting.

5. Use your Common Sense and Good Judgement

Be aware of your association with Gympanzees and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to *the public, colleagues, and funders*.

6. Don't Approach VIPs Directly

Gympanzees works with several high-profile organisations and individuals, including *celebrities, journalists, politicians and major donors*. Please don't approach high profile people or organisations from your personal social media accounts to ask them to support the charity, as this could hinder any potential relationships that are being managed by the Marketing or Fundraising Team. This includes asking for reposts about the charity.

If you have any information about high profile people or organisations that have a connection to our cause, or if there is someone who you would like to support the charity, please speak to the Head of Marketing to share the details.

7. Refer Press Enquiries

If a staff member or volunteer is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to Gympanzees, they should talk to the Head of Marketing immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.

8. Keep your Political Activity Separate from the Charity

When representing Gympanzees, staff and volunteers are expected to uphold Gympanzees positioning. Staff and volunteers who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from Gympanzees and understand and avoid potential risks and conflicts of interest. Staff should also inform their line manager and the Senior Management Team about any such political activity, and trustees should inform the Chair. As set out in point two above, senior staff and trustees should take particular care.

9. Protect your Privacy

Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information. Remember that a simple 'like' can draw attention to your personal accounts. What you publish is widely accessible and could be around for a long time, so do consider the content, and your privacy, carefully.

All staff and volunteers who wish to engage with any of Gympanzees social media platforms are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy. All staff and volunteers should keep their passwords confidential and change them often. Staff should not 'friend' or personally connect with *service users* via social media unless explicit permission is given by the Head of Marketing.

In their own interests, staff and volunteers should be aware of the dangers of putting personal information onto social networking sites, such as addresses, home and mobile phone numbers.

10. Help us to Raise our Profile (where appropriate)

We encourage staff and volunteers to share posts that we have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support Gympanzees and the work we do. Where appropriate and using the guidelines within this policy (and taking into consideration the information above), we encourage staff and volunteers to do this as it helps users connect to us and raises our profile.

However, please take care to think about the reputation of the charity. If your personal social media account is not professional or otherwise appropriate for our audiences, please do not use it to amplify or promote the charity, as to do so brings risks both to you personally and to the charity. Similarly, if the content is controversial or misrepresented, please highlight this to the Head of Marketing *who will respond as appropriate*.

11. Avoid Logos or Trademarks

Never use Gympanzees *logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos must be requested from the Marketing Team* and any content created must adhere to our brand guidelines. If permission is granted, content must be approved by the Head of Marketing before publishing.

12. Staying Safe Online

It can be challenging working on social media and there may be times where staff and volunteers could be subject to unpleasant or abusive comments directed at the charity, our work or people.

We encourage everyone who is on social media to be aware of our safeguarding and wellbeing practices to deal with online abuse and consult with the Head of Marketing and Chief Operations Officer where necessary.

Staff and volunteers should be vigilant regarding suspicious content or links and must not reveal personal, confidential or sensitive information about themselves, other staff members, volunteers or supporters of Gympanzees. Staff and volunteers should be wary of fake accounts that may claim to be Gympanzees and should immediately notify the Marketing Team.

Care must also be taken to ensure that any links to external sites from our social media accounts are appropriate and safe. Please consult our relevant policies and procedures for the safeguarding: <https://www.gympanzees.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Safeguarding-Policy-2024.pdf>

Further guidelines: using social media in a professional and personal capacity

Defamation

Defamation is when a false statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published in print (such as in media publications) or online (such as Instagram Story, Facebook Live, Snapchat post). Whether staff or volunteers are posting content on social media as part of their job or in a personal capacity, they should not bring Gympanzees into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

Copyright Law

It is critical that all staff or volunteers abide by [the laws governing copyright](#), under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, when representing the charity. 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 and volunteers make must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that Gympanzees is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date, or information from people who the charity has worked with which is private.

Discrimination and Harassment

Staff and volunteers should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official Gympanzees 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.

Accessibility

In line with Gympanzees [equality, diversity and inclusion policy](#), we endeavour to ensure our social media is as accessible as possible. This includes:

- Using accessible fonts and avoiding small text sizes
- Using contrasting colours
- Using subtitles where appropriate
- Using alt text for videos and images
- Explaining text contained in an image in the copy that accompanies it

Use of Social Media in the Recruitment Process

Recruitment should be carried out in accordance with the [Gympanzees Safe Recruiting Policy](#), and associated procedures and guidelines. Any advertising of vacancies should be done through the Executive Secretary and Chief Operations Officer *and promoted through approved channels*.

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 or radicalisation. Where known, when communicating with vulnerable or young people under 18-years-old via social media, staff and volunteers should ensure the online relationship with Gympanzees follows the same rules as offline.

Staff and volunteers should be aware that children under the age of 13 should not be encouraged to create their own personal social media accounts or engage with others and are not legally allowed to use social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram or X.

Staff and volunteers should ensure that vulnerable and young people have been made aware of the risks of communicating and sharing information online and given guidance on security and privacy settings as necessary. Staff and volunteers should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the vulnerable or young person and Gympanzees content and other content is appropriate for them. Please refer to our [Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for Children, Young adults and Adults at risk.](#), and our [e-Safety Policy](#)

All staff members and volunteers have a responsibility to do everything possible to ensure that vulnerable and young people are kept safe from harm. If you come across anything online that could mean someone is at risk, you should follow Gympanzees safeguarding policies.

[The Online Safety Act 2003](#) has introduced measures to ensure children are protected online.

Public Interest Disclosure

Under [the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#), if a staff member releases information through Gympanzees social media channels that is in the interest of the public, Gympanzees [Whistleblowing Policy](#) must be initiated before any further action is taken.

Please note: While all attempts have been made to cover an extensive range of situations, it is possible that this policy may not cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the standards outlined in this document.

It is expected that in these circumstances staff will always consult with the Senior Management Team where possible or advise the team of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed.

Disciplinary Action

1. Employees whose conduct breaches this policy in any way will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the organisation's disciplinary procedure up to, and including, summary dismissal.
Any blog entries made inside or outside the workplace that are defamatory, derogatory, or discriminatory about the organisation, its customers, suppliers or employees will be investigated as gross misconduct. If substantiated, such conduct may lead to summary dismissal after the due process of the organisation's disciplinary procedure has been followed.

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