



2025

Social media and website Policy

Social Media Policy

A comprehensive guide for social media use for Central Oxford Mosque Society (hereinafter referred as COMS) channels and for individuals using social media in a personal capacity as a representative of the COMS.

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, at least once a year. Central oxford mosque society (COMS) will amend this policy, following consultations with trustees of the organisation along with the social media team head where appropriate.

This policy is intended for all staff and volunteers of the charity; this includes [employees, consultants, trustees and volunteers]. Before engaging in social media activity, you must read this policy, which contains guidance that will help you adhere to our standards.

Date of last review: 30th April 2025

Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
What is social media?	4
Why do we use social media and what can we use it for?	4
Social media helps us to:	4
Why do we need a social media policy?	4
Responsibilities and breach of policy	5
SETTING OUT THE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY	5
Application	5
Internet access and monitoring usage	5
Point of contact for social media and authority to post on Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS) social media accounts	5
Which social media channels do we use?	5
Policy ownership	5
Code of conduct headlines	6
Using COMS social media channels — appropriate conduct	6
Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct	8
FURTHER GUIDELINES: USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN A PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL CAPACITY	8
Defamation	8
Copyright law	8
Confidentiality	8
Discrimination and harassment	8

INTRODUCTION

What is social media?

Social media is the collective term given to web-based tools and applications which enable users to create, share and interact with content (words, images, graphics and video content), as well as network with each other through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. Examples of social media platforms include Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, Twitch and TikTok.

Why do we use social media and what can we use it for?

Social media is essential to the success of communicating COMS 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 COMS 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.

Social media helps us to:

- ☐ Promote our campaigns
- ☐ Share our news and updates with our audiences
- ☐ Engage in important conversations with stakeholders
- ☐ Celebrate our successes
- ☐ Raise awareness of important issues and challenges
- ☐ Advertise job and volunteering opportunities
- ☐ Support our fundraising activities
- ☐ Increase our membership
- ☐ Build an online supportive community
- ☐ Raise our public profile and strengthen our reputation
- ☐ React to quickly changing situations and topics

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 COMS 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 are discussing issues relating to organisation's 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 COMS to reputational damage as well as putting staff, volunteers, services users and members at risk.

Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for his or her compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of central oxford mosque society (COMS) is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect.

Breaches of policy or inappropriate behaviour may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue. Staff and volunteers who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach policies should seek advice from the HR lead.

SETTING OUT THE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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 webpage, 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 COMS office(s). However, when using the internet at work, it is important that staff and volunteers make reasonable and appropriate use of personal social media activity in line with this policy during your breaks. However, usage should not be excessive or interfere with your work.

Point of contact for social media and authority to post on Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS) social media accounts

Our social media team 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 social media manager. No other staff member or volunteer is permitted to post content on COMS official channels without the permission of the social media manager.

Which social media channels do we use?

Central oxford mosque society (COMS) uses the following social media channels:

<https://www.coms.org.uk>

https://www.instagram.com/oxford_central_mosque

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/CA5K1xfTLhGzn9DgDNyl6>

<https://www.facebook.com/CENTRALOXFORDMOSQUEOFFICIAL>

Policy ownership

The social media head is responsible for authoring and updating this document. The policy must be approved by the trustees and reviewed every year, unless a significant change requires the organisation to check the policy before the next review date. All staff and volunteers will be notified of updates.

Code of conduct headlines

- I will not insult, harass, bully or intimidate individuals or organisations
- I will respond to others' opinions respectfully and professionally
- I will not do anything that breaches my terms of employment/voluntary role
- I will acknowledge and correct mistakes promptly using provided guidance
- I will disclose conflicts of interest where I am able
- I will not knowingly post inaccurate information
- I will link to online references and original source materials directly
- I will be considerate, kind and fair
- I will always ensure my activity does no harm to the organisation or to others
- I will champion central oxford mosque society (COMS) and its services

Using COMS social media channels — appropriate conduct

1. Know our social media guardians

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

Social media 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 trustees.

2. Be an ambassador for our brand

Staff and volunteers must ensure they reflect central oxford mosque societies values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Please note only social media manager or his/her appointee 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 social media manager.

3. Always pause and think before posting

When posting from COMS 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 COMS, unless it is clear that you are doing so as an individual staff member or volunteer as part of an approach agreed with the media team. If you are in doubt about central oxford mosque societies position on a particular issue, please speak to the social media manager.

4. Ensure brand consistency

Staff or volunteers must not create or manage any other social media channels, groups or pages on behalf of COMS without express permission from social media manager and training. 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 COMS to further our charitable purposes (either directly or indirectly, by engaging stakeholders and building our brand using our strategy). All content must accurately reflect central oxford mosque societies' 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.

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 COMS. 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 social media manager or team where necessary.

It is also vital that COMS 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

COMS 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 COMS 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 is 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 have made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it. However, think first about how to manage any risk to the charity and its brand in doing so by consulting with social media manager or team head to craft the response.

13. Seek advice for complaints

If a complaint is made on COMS social media channels, staff and volunteers should seek advice from the social media head before responding. If they are not available, then staff and volunteers should speak to the media team member.

14. Know what to do in a crisis

Sometimes issues can arise on social media, which can escalate into a crisis because they are sensitive, or risk serious damage to the charity's reputation. 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 [team name] regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of COMS so we can catch any issues or problems early.

If any staff or volunteers outside of the social media team becomes aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on COMS social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the team or social media manager 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 social media team is permitted to amend or delete content in a crisis.

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 policy you must seek permission from social media manager before using AI 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 central oxford mosque society (COMS).

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. COMS staff and volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are considerate of COMS values and policies, both online and in real life.

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 Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS) 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 Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS) 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 Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS) 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 admins.

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 and the admins.

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 or sexual orientation, played a part in a recruitment decision. This is in line with Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS) *Equal Opportunities Policy*.

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 admins 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, staff should ensure the online relationship with Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS) follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship. Staff should ensure 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. Staff should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the young person and Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS) content and other content is appropriate for them. Please refer to our *Safeguarding Policy*.

Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS) is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect. For staff, breaches of policy may incur

disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue. Please refer to our *HR policy* 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 admins.

Public Interest Disclosure

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, if a staff member releases information through Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS) social media channels that is considered to be in the interest of the public, Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS) policies must be initiated before any further action is taken.