



# Social Media Guidelines

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*For staff and volunteers using  
Social Media in relation to  
their work or promoting/  
discussing KBC events or  
activities.*

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## Purpose

Staff member and volunteer's social media presence and interactions become a reflection on the church, whether or not the church is specifically discussed. These guidelines aim to encourage healthy usage of social media whilst protecting the personal safety of staff, volunteers and the reputation of KBC.

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*A staff member and volunteer's social media presence and interactions become a reflection on the church, whether or not the church is specifically discussed.*

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## Terms & Scope

- For the purposes of these guidelines, "Social Media" (SocM) means any facility for online publication and commentary (including without limitation blogs, wiki's, social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr, online newspapers and YouTube)
- These guidelines complement existing or future policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail and the internet. There are also laws that affect this area, including (but not limited to): Defamation, which covers libel (being defamation in a permanent form) and slander (being defamation in a transitory form i.e. usually oral) and The Data Protection Act 2018. (direct quote from <https://www.dmaglobal.com/about/policies/social-media/>)
- These guidelines concern SocM use by employees of KBC when posting identifiably as staff members (other than as an incidental mention of place of employment in a personal blog on topics unrelated to KBC). It also has application to SocM use by volunteers too.
- It is hoped that in their personal usage of SocM (e.g. a personal Facebook profile) staff team and volunteers will also aim to follow good practice. It should be noted that inappropriate comments which damage the reputation of the church or cause a breach of confidentiality, may constitute a disciplinary matter which can result in a formal written warning even when they take place outside of the ministry center by staff or may constitute a one on one discussion with a team leader when related to a church member.
- CCPAS Online Safety definition: Online safety is the collective term for safeguarding involving the use of electronic devices and applications to communicate and access the Internet; often referred to as Information and Communications Technology. An online safety guideline should be adopted and adapted to reflect all communications between church/organisation's staff, volunteers and children (those under 18 years of age).

## Summary

The same principles that guide our offline conversations as Christians (e.g. Col 4:6 "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt...") should apply to those that take place online. Interacting through SocM does not change our understanding of confidentiality, responsibility and Christian witness. Where posting in an official capacity, we represent the church and affect its reputation whether we are directly commenting on church matters or not.

## Guidelines

### **1. Don't rush in**

Be thoughtful and wise; be cautious in interactions online. Comments or postings are easy to make in the heat of the moment, but they last. If you make an error, admit your mistake and correct it quickly. If you modify an earlier post, make it clear you have done so. If accused of posting something improper deal with it quickly. Take advice from a minister or the operations manager if you are asked to comment on the church by the press or media.

### **2. Remember that updates are transient yet permanent**

Consider the long-term consequences of every post. Assume that what you say is permanent and public. Even if you delete an online comment, it could already have been seen by other people and/or re-published on other unconnected sites.

### **3. You're an ambassador for KBC.**

Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue, or misleading. It should go without saying that there should be no racial slurs, offensive comments, defamatory comments, personal insults, obscenity, etc. This is supported by the Telecommunications Act 2001 S127((b). Be cautious on topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory. Make sure what you say about others is factual and that it does not disparage that party. Be clear if you're using an identity online that is personal or in an official capacity. Before engaging in KBC-related social media, you must obtain permission from one of the KBC Facebook administrators who will provide you with a KBC admin password.

### **4. Don't hide behind anonymity**

If posting in an official capacity then identify that you are posting on behalf of KBC. E.g. if you are posting in an official capacity on our facebook page, advertising something then ensure you're doing so as a KBC administrator.

### **5. Think about the blurring of public/private life boundaries**

Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see. Take personal conversations off-line. In your personal postings, we encourage you to be sensitive with personal comments that could be contrary to good Christian practice.

### **6. Remember the medium affects the message**

Be yourself, but do so respectfully. Avoid arguments. Don't try to settle scores or goad friends or contacts or others into inflammatory debates. Think about the tone you use. Without visual cues, humour can easily be misinterpreted online. Make sure you are not attempting to pass off offensive comments through attempts at humour. Treat your colleagues with respect and do not 'sound off' online. As a rule of thumb, ask yourself:

- Would I be happy for my mother to read this?
- Would I be happy for God to read this?
- Would I be happy with this on the front page of a national newspaper?

In what context is point 6 being spoken about? Is it referring to posts/tweets etc about KBC or is this referring to any post/tweet that a person may publish?

## **7. Respect confidentiality**

Avoid identifying and discussing others (eg. especially pastoral details or personal stories or comments) without specific written permission. Obtain permission before posting pictures of others when posting pictures of KBC events. i.e funerals, Alpha nativity etc Do not disclose or distribute information or intellectual property that is confidential or proprietary to KBC. Be very careful when copying others into an email which has gone backwards and forwards a couple of times – there may be confidential information earlier in the correspondence. As much as possible, use a Bcc( blind carbon copy) when emailing a group so you are not sharing others email address unintentionally.

## **8. Be respectful to others**

We aim to recognise Christ in one another despite differences over theological / ethical issues and to model how Christians can work together in love. Our aim should be to be honest with one another face-to-face and loyal to the church in public.

**KBC SocM Safeguarding Policy - Children and Young People the bullet points below are helpful**

- The law and the KBC Safeguarding Policy apply in your communications with children and young people.
- Maintain clear boundaries.
- Do not accept “friend requests” from young people without due consideration. E.g. Do not accept friend requests from anyone under the recommended age for the social media platform.
- If it is appropriate in your own setting that your youth work includes an element of social media, where possible keep communications public and send messages to groups, rather than to individuals.
- Be aware that sharing photographs of children and young people online can put them at risk of harm. If in doubt, don’t – and if a parent or young person asks for a picture to be removed from a website/SocM site church policy is to do so without delay or debate.
- Generally, maintain good and open relationships with parents and carers regarding communication with them and their children.
- Use an appropriate tone: friendly, but not over-familiar or personal.
- Be warm and friendly, but do not suggest or offer a special relationship.
- Be clear and explicit about information that you need to share.
- Be circumspect in your communications with young people to avoid any possible misinterpretation of your motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming.
- Do not share any personal information with young people, or request or respond to any personal information from a child other than that which might be appropriate as part of your role.
- Only give personal contact details to young people that are within the public domain of the church / organisation, including your mobile telephone number.
- If young people want you to have their mobile phone numbers, e-mail addresses or similar, and communicate with them this way, make sure that their parents know and have agreed.
- Only make contact with young people for reasons related to the work of the church/organisation and maintain a log of all electronic contact with individuals or groups including messaging and texting.
- Respect a young person’s right to confidentiality unless abuse/harm is suspected or disclosed.
- Email should only be used to communicate specific information. (e.g. times and dates of

- events). It should not be used as a relationship building tool.
- Email History should be kept and dated.
- When using email/internet for communication with young people, it is advised that it should take place between the hours of 8am-9pm for 1st-3rd years, 8am-10pm for 4th-6th years.
- Use of Zoom and any other web camera or visual communication via the internet without parental permission is generally not permitted. With parental permission, conference calls are considered appropriate if a project or group uses a video call in a group environment for project purpose, and has clear aims and objectives for its use. Only for exceptional purposes (e.g. a pastoral meeting with a young person) can one-to-one video calls be made, but for such meetings specific parental permission should be obtained and workers should also inform the ministry supervisor prior to the meeting.
- All social media interaction between workers, paid or voluntary, and children under 18 shall be subject to the acceptable use policy.
- Any private messages connected to KBC activity shall be recorded for safeguarding purposes. Administrators of the official Facebook account should not delete any private messages as a way of storing them for future reference.
- Any safeguarding concerns/allegations arising from social media shall be referred onto the safeguarding co-ordinator.
- All users of social media must be above the minimum age limit i.e. 13 for Facebook.
- Workers should ensure their social media accounts do not display any sensitive information or inappropriate comments or images.

### Consent for photographic images and videos online

- Photographs that include children will be selected carefully and will endeavour to prevent children from being easily identified.
- Children's full names will not be used on the website in association with their photographs.
- Permission will be sought before any images are taken or displayed and images will only be used for the specific purpose for which permission was sought for and how the image will be stored if not destroyed. If the intention is to use an image on the internet this must be clearly stated and further permission must be acquired if an image is to be used in a way not originally stated.
- Use of images will reflect diversity of age, ethnicity and gender of the activity.
- Live streaming of events must be clearly advertised. Where the event is not advertised as being stream live, then photographs of children should only be taken and posted online when permission has been sought.

### Enforcement

Staff members who ignore the guidelines will be followed up by the safeguarding team / team leader and depending on the situation, this may lead to disciplinary action.

If a volunteer ignores the guidelines, then it may result in a pastor/operations manager speaking to that individual to ask them to take down the offensive post/comment.