



# Social Media Policy

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## **Summary**

A comprehensive guide for social media use for Note-Orious Choir's channels and for individuals using social media in a personal capacity as a representative of the Note-Orious Choir.

This policy will be reviewed on an on-going basis, at least once a year. Note-Orious Choir will amend this policy, following consultations where appropriate.

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

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## **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 Note-Orious Choir's 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 Note-Orious Choir's 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:**

- Share our news and updates with our audiences
- Celebrate our successes
- Support our fundraising activities
- Increase our membership
- Build an online supportive community
- Raise our public profile and strengthen our reputation

### **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 Note-Orious Choir 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 trustees, free-lancers 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 Note-Orious Choir'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 Note-Orious Choir to reputational damage as well as putting staff, volunteers, services users and members at risk.

## **Responsibilities and breach of policy**

Everyone is responsible for their compliance with this policy.

Participation in social media on behalf of Note-Orious Choir 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. Trustees, free-lancers and volunteers who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach policies should seek advice from the Communications Manager or the Chair.

## **Setting Out the Social Media Policy**

### **Application**

This policy applies to all social media platforms used by 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.

### **Point of contact for social media and authority to post on Note-Orious Choir's social media accounts**

Our committee 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 Committee Chair. No other staff member or volunteer is permitted to post content on Note-Orious Choir's official channels without the permission of the committee.

### **Which social media channels do we use?**

Note-Orious Choir uses the following social media channels:

<https://www.instagram.com/noteoriouschoir/>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN9Cs-QXr-xuvQGOHRB3xgw>

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100082365215667>

Note-Orious Choir use the above social channels to share choir news, increase our membership and raise awareness of our upcoming concerts and events.

### **Policy Ownership**

The committee are responsible for authoring and updating this document. The policy must be approved by the trustees and reviewed every 3 years, 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 Note-Orious Choir and its services

## **Using Note-Orious Choir's Social Media Channels — Appropriate Conduct**

### **1. Know our social media guardians**

The Communications Manager is responsible for setting up and managing Note-Orious Choir's social media channels. The committee has overall ownership of these accounts and only those authorised to do so by them will have access to these accounts.

The Communications Manager 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 Communications Manager.

### **2. Be an ambassador for our brand**

Staff and volunteers must ensure they reflect Note-Orious Choir's values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Please note only Committee members are 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 Communications Manager.

### **3. Always pause and think before posting**

When posting from Note-Orious Choir's 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 Note-Orious Choir, unless it is clear that you are doing so as an individual staff member or volunteer as part of an approach agreed with the committee (e.g. as part of a 'takeover' of the charity's account). If you are in doubt about Note-Orious Choir's position on a particular issue, please speak to the Communications Manager.

### **4. Ensure brand consistency**

Staff or volunteers must not create or manage any other social media channels, groups or pages on behalf of Note-Orious Choir without express permission from the Communications 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 Note-Orious Choir to further our charitable purposes (either directly or indirectly, by engaging stakeholders and building our brand using our strategy). All content must accurately reflect Note-Orious Choir's 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 Committee who wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should obtain guidance and permission from Communications Manager.

## **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 Note-Orious Choir. 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 Communications Manager and Committee where necessary.

It is also vital that Note-Orious Choir 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**

Note-Orious Choir 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 Note-Orious Choir 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 Communications Manager to craft the response.

## **13. Seek advice for complaints**

If a complaint is made on Note-Orious Choir's social media channels, staff and volunteers should seek advice from the Communications Manager before responding. If they are not available, then staff and volunteers should speak to a member of the Committee.

## **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.

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 Communications Manager regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of Note-Orious Choir 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 Committee will meet immediately to agree the actions required.

If any staff, members or volunteers outside of the Committee becomes aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on Note-Orious Choir's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to Communications 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 Committee Members are 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**

There are no set timings for social media content.

## **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 is used appropriately.

## **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 Note-Orious Choir.

## **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. Note-Orious Choir staff and volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are considerate of Note-Orious Choir's 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 Note-Orious Choir. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Note-Orious Choir. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about Note-Orious Choir's work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "Views are my own" or "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent Note-Orious Choir's positions, policies or opinions."

### **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 Note-Orious Choir's view.

### **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 Note-Orious Choir should discuss any potential risk or conflicts of interest with their line manager and the Committee. Similarly, staff or trustees who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work for Note-Orious Choir should discuss any potential risk or conflicts of interest with the Committee.

### **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 Note-Orious Choir and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the general public.

### **6. Refer press enquiries**

If a staff member or volunteer is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to Note-Orious Choir, they should talk to the Committee immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.

### **7. Keep your political activity separate from the charity**

When representing Note-Orious Choir, staff and volunteers are expected to uphold Note-Orious Choir's positioning. Staff, members and volunteers who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from Note-Orious Choir and understand and avoid potential risks and conflicts of interest. Members and trustees should inform the Chair. As set out in point two above, senior staff and trustees should take particular care.



## **8. 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, members and volunteers who wish to engage with any of Note-Orious Choir's 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.

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, members 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 Note-Orious Choir and the work we do. Where appropriate and using the guidelines within this policy (and taking into consideration the information above), we encourage staff, members 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 Committee who will respond as appropriate.

## **11. Avoid logos or trademarks**

Never use Note-Orious Choir's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos must be requested from the Committee and any content created must adhere to our brand guidelines. If permission is granted, content must be approved by Communications Manager 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 Committee where necessary.

Staff, members 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 Note-Orious Choir. Staff and volunteers should be wary of fake accounts that may claim to be Note-Orious Choir and should immediately notify Communications Manager.

Care must also be taken to ensure that any links to external sites from our social media accounts are appropriate and safe. For more information, please see our data protection and retention policies.

Please consult our relevant policies and procedures for the safeguarding of our staff, members and volunteers.

## **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 Note-Orious Choir 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 Note-Orious Choir 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. Please refer to our [*policy name i.e. confidentiality policy*] for further information.

### **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 Note-Orious Choir 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 Note-Orious Choir's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, we endeavour to ensure our social media is as accessible as possible. This includes:

- Using plain English, 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

You can view more guidance on the government website: [planning, creative and publishing accessible social media campaigns](#).

For accessibility best practices, visit the CharityComms resource: [Accessible communication - a starting point to foster more inclusive comms](#).

## **The Lobbying Act**

Charities are legally allowed to campaign to bring about a change in policy or law to further their organisational purpose but can never be party political. In most cases, spending on charity campaigns that are in accordance with charity law will not be regulated under electoral law (often known as the 'Lobbying Act'<sup>1</sup>).

Under the Lobbying Act, organisations (including charities which spend more than £10,000 across the UK on 'regulated activity' during the regulated period need to register with [the Electoral Commission](#) within the outlined windows for elections.

## **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 or volunteer considers that a person / people is / are at risk of harm, they should report this to the Committee immediately.

## **Public Interest Disclosure**

Under [the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#), if a staff member releases information through Note-Orious Choir's social media channels that is considered to be in the interest of the public, Note-Orious Choir's [policy name i.e. 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 Committee where possible or advise the team of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed.

## **Related policies, laws and guidance**

- Data Protection & Retention Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Trustee Conflict of Interest

## **Further external guidance**

- [The Charity Commission guidance for charities on social media](#)
- [The Charity Commission checklist for developing a social media policy](#)
- [National Cyber Security Centre's guidance on social media and how to use it safely](#)
- [National Cyber Security Centre's guidance on protecting your published content](#)
- [The Charity Commission guidance on campaigning and political activity guidance for charities](#)
- [Government guidance on the Online Safety Bill](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Set out initially in the [Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000](#), as amended by [the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014](#) and [the Elections Act 2022](#).

- [Bates Wells website](#)

## **Note-Orious Choir Social Media Policy Agreement**

### **Staff Agreement**

I have read and understood the Note-Orious Choir social media policy. I agree to abide by the rules set out in this policy and I understand that failing to abide by this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Name:

Role:

Signed:

Date: