



# SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

# US Social Media Policy

## Introduction

Use of social media has become an integral part of everyday life for many people. The United Synagogue (US) must embrace this for its opportunities, but also carefully manage its use, to ensure appropriate protection for all users and stakeholders. Staff and volunteers of the United Synagogue may be able to access social media services and social networking websites at work, either through company IT systems or via their own personal equipment.

Social media has the potential to bring significant benefits to the US, particularly for building relationships with current and potential members and the wider community. However, it is important that individuals who use social media within the organisation, do so in a way that upholds and enhances the Charity's standing, reputation, and prospects.

## Scope and purpose

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, consultants, honorary officers, and trustees, within all synagogues and departments, across the whole United Synagogue, who use social media while working with or for the organisation, no matter whether for business or personal reasons.

It applies no matter whether that social media use takes place on company premises, while travelling for business, or while working from home.

A misjudged post or status update can generate complaints or potentially damage the Charity's reputation. There are also security and data protection issues to consider. This policy sets out how individuals can use social media safely and effectively.

Social media sites and services include, but are not limited to:

- Popular social networks like **Twitter** and **Facebook**
- Online review websites like **Reevo** and **Trustpilot**
- Sharing and discussion sites like **Delicious** and **Reddit**
- Photographic social networks like **Flickr** and **Instagram**
- Question and answer social networks like **Quora**
- Professional social networks like **LinkedIn** and **Sunzu**

This policy also covers private messages sent over online channels such as direct messaging via Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp.

## General social media guidelines

Regardless of which social networks individuals are using, or whether they're using business or personal accounts on company time, following a few simple rules, will help avoid some of the most common pitfalls. Individuals should always:

- *Know the social network.* Spend time becoming familiar with the social network before contributing. It's important to read any FAQs and understand what is and is not acceptable on a network before posting messages or updates.

- *If unsure, don't post it.* Err on the side of caution when posting to social networks. If an individual feels that an update or message might cause complaints or offence, or be otherwise unsuitable, they should not post it. Staff can always consult the Communications Director for advice and guidance.
- *Take time to reflect.* Avoid getting drawn into arguments or heated exchanges. It is always better to take some time and calmly reflect, before responding to a particularly sensitive, provocative, or contentious social media post. Never engage on social media when intoxicated, overtired, upset, or angry.
- *Be mindful of personal security.* Users must be careful not to post information that could potentially be used to cause harm to an individual or group. For example, staff on summer camps should not post their exact location on social media, i.e. it's fine to say 'We're having a great time in Scotland', but not to say 'We're having a great time right now in the main hall of the Edinburgh Central Youth Hostel'.
- *Be thoughtful and polite.* Many social media users have got into trouble simply by failing to observe basic good manners online. Individuals should adopt the same level of courtesy used when communicating via email.
- *Look out for online threats.* Users should be on guard for social engineering and phishing attempts. Social networks are also used to distribute spam and malware. Further guidance on this is available from the US IT department by contacting [itsupport@theus.org.uk](mailto:itsupport@theus.org.uk).
- *Keep personal use reasonable.* Although the Charity believes that having employees who are active on social media can be valuable, both to those employees and to the organisation, staff should exercise restraint in how much personal use of social media they make during working hours.
- *Don't make promises without checking.* Some social networks are very public, so employees should not make any commitments or promises on behalf of the United Synagogue, without checking that the organisation can deliver on the promises. Direct any enquiries to the Communications Director in the first instance.
- *Handle complex queries via other channels.* Social networks are not a good place to resolve complicated enquiries and issues. Once an individual has made contact, employees should handle further communications via the most appropriate channel, usually email or phone.
- *Comply with the rules.* Individuals should follow the US Confidentiality and Data Protection policies and respect copyright, fair use, data protection, defamation, libel, and financial disclosure laws. Employees must not reveal confidential information about members, staff, or the Charity, or post any information that can be used to identify a members' identity or personal circumstances in any way. If an image is needed to enhance a post, a royalty free source, such as Shutterstock or similar should be used.

- *Treat online posts as public and permanent.* Be aware of the public nature and permanency of the Internet, individuals should think carefully before posting anything online. Once something is sent out, it may be permanent and unable to be retracted.

## US corporate social media accounts

The United Synagogue has several corporate accounts across some of the major social media platforms. Including.

- Twitter: [@UnitedSynagogue](#)
- Facebook: [@UnitedSynagogueUK](#)
- Instagram: [@unitedsynagogue](#)
- LinkedIn: [The United Synagogue](#)

These are used to:

- Respond to enquiries and requests for help
- Share blog posts, articles and other content created by the Charity.
- Share insightful articles, videos, media, and other content relevant to the US and its members but created by others.
- Provide followers with an insight into what goes on at the US and across its communities.
- Promote fundraising campaigns, upcoming events, and new projects or initiatives.

## Authorised users

All US social media accounts are managed by the Communications team, only individuals who have been authorised to create and use the Charity's social networking accounts may do so, authorisation is usually at the discretion of the Communications Director. Allowing only designated people in the organisation to create and use the accounts, ensures the Charity's social media presence and communications are appropriate, consistent, and cohesive.

## Engaging with members and stakeholders

Staff and volunteers that regularly use social media to engage with members and others professionally, should create separate work accounts or profiles for this purpose.

Individuals interacting with children under 18 through social media, must be particularly careful to always do so using a work profile, so that these interactions can be tracked and/or monitored if necessary. Any formal communication should always be through a parent or guardian.

Consent from a parent or guardian is also required, ideally in writing, before taking and/or posting photos or video footage of any child under 18 on social media.

## Use of personal social media accounts during work

The US recognises that for many individuals, interacting on social media is a normal part of their day, and that used properly, employees' personal social media accounts can be beneficial both for the individual and the organisation. For instance:

- Staff members can make professional contacts that may be useful in their jobs
- Employees can discover content to help them learn and develop in their role
- By posting about the Charity, staff members can help to build the Charity's profile online

The US is therefore happy for employees to spend a reasonable amount of time using their personal social media accounts at work. Provided that:

- Employees use their personal social media accounts for work-related purposes during regular hours, and ensure it is for a specific reason, (e.g. research & information gathering).
- Social media use is not excessive and does not affect their ability to perform regular duties.
- Use of social media accounts for non-work purposes is restricted to non-work times, such as breaks and during lunch.

### Talking about the US

Staff should ensure it is clear that their social media account does not represent the United Synagogue's views or opinions and may wish to include a disclaimer in social media profiles, for example, *'The views expressed are my own and do not reflect the views of my employer.'*

### Monitoring social media use

The Charity reserves the right to monitor how social networks are used and accessed through its IT systems, devices, and internet connections. All data relating to social media messaging; written, sent or received through the Charity's hardware or systems, is part of official United Synagogue records and as such, the Charity can be legally compelled to show that information to law enforcement agencies or other parties.

### Breaching this policy

Deliberate or reckless breach of this policy by an employee may lead to disciplinary action in accordance with the United Synagogue's disciplinary process.

Serious breaches of this policy by a volunteer, honorary officer, or trustee may result in the individual being asked to withdraw from their role with the organisation.

Serious breaches include but are not limited to:

- Breach of individual or corporate confidentiality.
- Flagrant and/or continued breach of copyright laws.
- Use of abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language.
- Any statement or image that could potentially damage the Charity's reputation or bring it into disrepute.

Employees, contractors, volunteers, and other users may also be held personally liable for violating this policy or any applicable legislation.

Where appropriate, the Charity will involve the police or other law enforcement agencies in relation to breaches of this policy