

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

A guide for volunteers on using social media to promote the work of SOE and in a personal capacity

### **Introduction**

#### **What is social media?**

Social media is the term given to web-based tools and applications which enable users to create and share content (words, images and video content), and network with each other through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. Examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

#### **Why do we use social media?**

Social media is essential to the success of communicating SOE's work. It is important for some volunteers to participate in social media to engage with our audience, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of SOE's work.

#### **Why do we need a social media policy?**

The difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to SOE's work. While we encourage the use of social media, we have certain standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe. Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain.

This policy is intended for all volunteers and trustees (SOE presently has no employees or contractors, but should this change, this policy will apply equally), and applies to content posted on both a *SOE* device and a personal device. Before engaging in work-related social media activity, volunteers must read this policy.

#### **Setting out the social media policy**

This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of SOE, and the use of social media by volunteers (which includes trustees) in both a professional and personal capacity. It sets out what you need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to help volunteers support and expand our official social media channels, while protecting the charity and its reputation and preventing any legal issues.

#### **Internet access and monitoring usage**

[Currently this clause is in abeyance as there is no SOE office, but if this were to change, this clause would immediately become active]

There are currently no access restrictions to any of our social media sites in the SOE office. However, when using the internet at work, it is important that volunteers refer to our appropriate IT Policy. You are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of personal social media activity during your lunch breaks. But usage should not be excessive and interfere with your duties.

### **Point of contact for social media**

One or more of our trustees are responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our social media channels. If you have specific questions about any aspect of these channels, speak to the named trustee(s) who are also the Social Media official Admins. No other volunteer can post content on SOE's official channels without the permission of an Admin.

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

SOE uses the following social media channels:

- Facebook
- Instagram

These are both used to share news of our day trips, our social impact, and to encourage people to become involved in the charity's work. Guidelines

### **Using SOE's social media channels — appropriate conduct**

1. Sally Goodman and Stephanie Haithwaite are responsible for setting up and managing SOE's social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the above will have access to these accounts.
2. As both the above named people are volunteers, we will attempt to monitor these channels at least once daily and respond to comments or requests to post promptly. We will not necessarily be able to monitor or respond in the evenings or across weekends.
3. Be an ambassador for our brand. Volunteers should ensure they reflect SOE values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Our brand guidelines set out our tone of voice that all volunteers should refer to when posting content on SOE's social media channels.
4. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for SOE, and accurately reflects SOE's agreed position.
5. Bring value to our audience(s). Answer their questions, help and engage with them
6. Take care with the presentation of content. Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors. Also check the quality of images. Each post should also have an appropriate number and set of hashtags which relate to the content and the audience that we wish to reach.
7. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
8. If other volunteers wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should speak to one of the trustees about this.
9. Volunteers shouldn't post content about supporters or service users without their express permission. If 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 SOE. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or

young person, volunteers must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.

10. Always check facts. Volunteers should not automatically assume that material is accurate and should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification, for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation.

11. Be honest. Say what you know to be true or have a good source for. If you've made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it.

12. Volunteers should refrain from offering personal opinions via SOE's social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting'. If you are in doubt about SOE's position on a particular issue, please speak to a trustee.

13. It is vital that SOE does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials. For example, a video of a stunt.

14. Volunteers should 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.

15. Volunteers should not set up other Facebook groups or pages, Twitter accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of SOE. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, the trustees can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following.

16. SOE is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We have every right to express views on policy, including the policies of parties, but we can't tell people how to vote.

17. If a complaint is made on SOE's social media channels, volunteers should seek advice from the trustees before responding. If a trustee cannot be contacted immediately, it is acceptable to respond by acknowledging the complaint and tell the complainant that it has been referred to the trustees, and that they will respond as soon as possible.

18. 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: an accident on or around the boat witnessed by members of the public who then post videos to social media in and around Skipton. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity.

We do monitor social media spaces for mentions of SOE 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 nominated trustees will issue appropriate statements on social media and ensure that those statements are followed up with updates as appropriate. They will also contact admins of any community sites which have carried the 'news' to ensure that inaccurate comments are removed or countered.

If any volunteers outside of the trustees become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on SOE's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to one of the nominated trustees immediately.

### **Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct**

This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media but instead flags up those areas in which conflicts might arise. SOE volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with SOE's values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive SOE. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of SOE. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about SOE's work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent SOE's positions, policies or opinions."
2. Volunteers who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they work at SOE should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with one of the nominated social media trustees. Similarly, volunteers who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work for SOE should discuss any potential conflicts of interest in the same manner.
3. Those in senior management, and 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 SOE's view.
4. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with SOE and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the general public, volunteer colleagues, charity partners of SOE and funders.
5. SOE will potentially seek to work with high profile people both on and off social media. If you have any information about high profile people that have a connection to our cause, or if there is someone who you would like to support the charity, please speak to one of the nominated social media trustees to share the details.
7. If a volunteer is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to SOE, they should talk to one of the nominated social media trustees immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.
8. SOE is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. When representing SOE, volunteers are expected to hold SOE's position of neutrality. Volunteers who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from SOE and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.
9. SOE's logos or trademarks should not be used unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from one of the nominated social media trustees.

10. Always protect yourself and the charity. Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so do consider the content carefully.

11. Think about your 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 polite and the first to correct your own mistakes. To be clear: volunteers who publish disrespectful comments or posts, or act as 'keyboard warriors' will be asked to leave the charity.

12. We encourage volunteers to share tweets and posts that we have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support SOE and the work we do. Where appropriate and using the guidelines within this policy, we encourage volunteers to do this as it provides a human voice and raises our profile. However, if the content is controversial or misrepresented, please highlight this to one of the nominated social media trustees who will respond as appropriate.

Further guidelines

### **Libel**

Libel is when a false written statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published online or in print. Whether volunteers are posting content on social media as part of their job or in a personal capacity, they should not bring SOE into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

### **Copyright law**

It is critical that all volunteers abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. 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 volunteers make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that SOE is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date. Please refer to our Confidentiality Policy for further information.

### **Discrimination and harassment**

Volunteers should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official SOE 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. SOE is politically neutral and will undertake no campaigning activity during national elections.

## **Use of social media in the recruitment process**

Recruitment (for volunteers as well as employees) should be carried out in accordance with the Recruitment of Volunteers Policy, and associated procedures and guidelines. Any advertising of vacancies should be done through the nominated social media trustees.

## **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 volunteers member considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the nominated social media trustees 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, volunteers should ensure the online relationship with SOE follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship. Volunteers 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. Volunteers should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the young person and SOE 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 SOE is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect. For volunteers, 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. Volunteers who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from the [job title].

**Public Interest Disclosure**

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, if a volunteers member releases information through SOE's social media channels that is considered to be in the interest of the public, SOE's Whistleblowing Policy must be initiated before any further action is taken.

**Policy Review**

This policy shall be reviewed for adoption by the trustees in July 2023 and reviewed for re-adoption every 2 years thereafter.