Social Media Policy

For Youth Café

March 2024

West Monkton Parish Council recognises that Youth Café staff, volunteers, helpers, young leaders, and young people have greater access to social media than ever before. Whilst social media proves to be useful for engaging with young people in youth work practice, online engagement is often accompanied by fear around boundaries. However, fundamentally, the fears/risks surrounding social media use are similar to those encountered in everyday youth work, and can be overcome by applying the same ethical principles.

This policy does not aim to curb freedom of speech, nor to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, to establish a framework for achieving an effective working relationship between all parties, whether internally or externally.

What are the risks?

1. Risk of team member 'hearing' things about young people and/or their family, mainly through a news feed.

2. Risk of young person/family feeling like the youth work team are violating their privacy.

3. Risk of the youth work team being 'on shift' with young people outside of 'working' hours.

4. Risk of informality confusing young people about boundaries.

5. Risk of young people sharing personal information with team members.

6. Risk of witnessing safeguarding incidents.

7. Risk of safeguarding disclosures.

8. Risk if misinterpretation of language, including symbols and abbreviations by young people, parents, and carers.

These guidelines cover all social media platforms – the places online where people can have a dialogue or contribute content. These include:

- Social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, MySpace, Bebo)
- Video and photo sharing websites (Flikr, Youtube, TikTok)
- Micro-blogging sites (X)
- Blogs (including corporate or personal blogs)
- Forums and discussion boards (Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups)
- Online encyclopaedias (Wikipedia)
- Geo-location services (Facebook Place, Gowalla, Forsquare)

As these technologies are constantly evolving, this policy will be updated regularly. Team members should keep themselves up to date with any changes.

Member confidentiality

Disclose only publicly available information. Never talk about confidential organisational or member information on social media. If in doubt, do not post it. Ask for clarification.

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Transparency
If you are talking about something West Monkton Parish Council – Youth Cafe, a client, or similar is doing publicly, you must be transparent and disclose your relationship to the club.

Designated Expert
If you are positioning yourself as an expert on either a West Monkton Parish Council – Youth Cafe or personal social media account but wishing to state you are from West Monkton Parish – Youth Cafe, you must discuss this with the Assistant Clerk (Community)/Youth Leader, Parish Council, or clerk. If you receive media enquiries for comment on your subject of expertise, you must refer this before you can comment notable if you are likely to refer to your position at the club.

Kickbacks and Gifts
Never talk about a product or organisation in exchange for cash. If you have received a product or service to review, you must disclose it in your post or review and have approval of the Clerk or a Parish Council.

How do we manage these risks?
A thorough risk assessment is carried out for your work with young people. The same applies online. By following simple steps you will be managing these online risks.

Behaviour Guidelines
When using social media for West Monkton Parish Council – Youth Café purposes, staff and volunteers or other team members should maintain professional communication. Language should be managed in the same way that would be when working directly with young people and their families. Your role is to always be a positive role model.

Never use language that is, or could be perceived as, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful to another person or organisation.

Plagiarism
Always refer to the sources of work if you are quoting directly from them. Do not be afraid of quoting or RT (re-tweeting) information but never take credit for others' work. Respect copyright, privacy, and other laws.

Facebook

- Team members should make it clear that the West Monkton Parish Council accounts are professional profiles and contact via these will receive only work related replies. In so far as is possible, the use of social media chats (i.e.: Facebook messenger) should be limited with signposting to email addresses in order to keep clearer paper trails of communications.
- Any young person who approaches you on your personal profile must be declined. A message can be sent outlining why you cannot add them. Direct them to the West Monkton Parish Council accounts.
- Any parent/carer who approaches you on your personal profile must be treated with caution and only accepted if you understand the potential risk (i.e.: able to see all your future posts). There is a fine line when parents are also on the committee but this is generally left to individual team members to use their judgement.

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- Team members must avoid youth cafe discussions on personal accounts if it is of a personal nature. It is appreciated that quick contact and sharing of content is often easiest via a messenger service however.
- Team members must not trawl through young peoples' news feed looking for information and should unfriend members that they are friends with to avoid their information appearing in their newsfeed.
- Young people must NOT be tagged in posts or photographs and names only used in line with GDPR consent form replies.
- The same language used face to face with young people is usually the most appropriate online. Do not include an 'x', use terms of endearment such as 'hun/honey', no abbreviations or text talk such as 'lol' (laugh out loud or lots of love), and be wary of emojis that can be misinterpreted.
- Do not 'like' or comment on young people's posts or news feeds with the exception of posts and comments that relate to West Monkton Parish Council – Youth Cafe.
- Do not ask young people about information you have seen online.
- Facebook is not a main form of contact. Email comes first and is where the majority of communications should be sent from.
- Messages, especially where contact with young people has occurred, should not be deleted under any circumstances.

At the time of writing this policy, there are no Facebook accounts for the Youth Café however we do have a general West Monkton Parish Council account. Team members do have personal accounts but have facebook settings set to private and do not add young people from the Youth Café.

X/Instagram

- There is not an Instagram or X account for the Youth Cafe and team members are not permitted to hold their own Instagram or X account on behalf of the Youth Cafe.

Cyberbullying

West Monkton Parish Council – Youth Cafe does not tolerate any form of cyberbullying and any concerns will be shared with the Safeguarding Lead who will make a decision about any actions that may need to be taken.

Signed on behalf of West Monkton Parish Council:

Name: Amy Shepherd - Clerk

Signature: *A Shepherd*.

Date: 24th February 2026

Name: Kate Welsh - Assistant Clerk / Youth Leader

Signature: *K Welsh*.

Date: 24th February 2026

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(This policy will be reviewed annually)

Document version history	**Author:** Kate Welsh, Assistant Clerk (Community)/Youth Leader

Version	**Date**	**Amendments**	**By whom**
1	17/3/25	First Draft	KW
2	24/2/2026	Final approved	AS