



Social Media & Digital Communications Policy

A guide for volunteers on using social media and other internet-based communication systems to promote the work of Tyneside Welcomes, to communicate with the families we support, and in a personal capacity

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, at least once a year. Tyneside Welcomes will amend this policy, following consultation, where appropriate.

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Introduction

What are digital communications?

Broadly, we mean any way of communicating over the internet, whether it is volunteers, families we support, potential supporters or any other people. Examples include our own website (www.tynesidewelcomes.org), social media websites and apps like Facebook and Twitter, messenger apps like WhatsApp and Messenger (formerly Facebook Messenger), and even emails and other internet-based forms of communication like Trello.

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 digital communications?

Digital communications have become an integral part of communicating in almost every organisation. With the various apps and websites available, we can arrange meetings, project manage events, check in on the families we support and keep our volunteers up to date with our progress.

Communications tools like social media sites are essential to the success of communicating Tyneside Welcomes' work. It is important for some of us to participate in social media to engage with our volunteers and supporters, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of Tyneside Welcomes' work.

We can do all this and more, without having to meet face-to-face, whenever is convenient.

Why do we need a social media and digital communications policy?

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

This policy is intended for volunteers of all levels and applies to content posted on any digital device. Before engaging in Tyneside Welcomes related social media activity, volunteers must read this policy.

Setting out the digital communications policy

This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of Tyneside Welcomes, and the use of social media by volunteers 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 you support and expand our official social media channels, while protecting the charity and its reputation and preventing any legal issues. There is an additional communication protocol that sets out the detail of

communication between members of the Welcome Team (the small group of volunteers who will provide immediate support to the family) and the family. This group will utilise a platform that allows users to send and receive text and voice messages, make voice and video calls and share images and documents. Whatsapp is a popular cross platform service and this or another platform will be used after review of privacy policies and consultation with the family.

Point of contact for social media

Our Digital Manager, currently Melissa Wilson Crow, is 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 Digital Manager or Assistant Digital Manager (the person on the rota for monitoring email and other social media activity will also act as ADM)). No one can post content on Tyneside Welcomes' official channels without the permission of the Digital Manager.

Which social media channels do we use?

Tyneside Welcomes uses the following social media channels:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/tynesidewelcomes>

This is our primary social media account. We use this to publicise fundraising events, update followers and answer any questions people may have. We can also use Facebook to connect to other refugee sponsoring groups around the area.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TyneWelcomes>

Twitter is for short and snappy updates. We can post short videos and photos here. We can also use this to engage with more national refugee charities.

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/tynesidewelcomes/>

Our Instagram account will showcase event photographs and very short videos. Instagram is much more visual, as opposed to word-based, and so our content should reflect that.

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHLT4vWQpiNPLIAirI0-h_Q

YouTube will mostly be for hosting our videos. That means we will post our videos to YouTube and link to them elsewhere. Tyneside Welcomes videos that are to be used on social media are publicly available on YouTube. Our tutorials are also saved on YouTube, but they are set to 'unlisted', meaning you have to have the direct URL of the video to watch it. You can't just search for 'introduction to Trello' and find our video. You have to have its specific URL.

Guidelines

Using Tyneside Welcomes' social media channels — appropriate conduct

1. Digital Manager Melissa Wilson Crow is responsible for setting up and managing Tyneside Welcomes' social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the Digital Manager will have access to these accounts.
2. The Digital Manager is currently available for questions and assistance on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1pm to 5pm. Contact outside of those hours will be very limited, but she will do her utmost to support the digital Media Group (a small group drawn from the Co-ordinating Committee)¹.
 - 2a. The Media Group will put a rota in place to share social media monitoring responsibility, *e.g.* respond to questions and comments on each social media network, block abusive users, post messages on different networks and write and post updates and news items on our website blog. The frequency of postings will vary but the aim is to maintain the currency and relevance of our digital presence.
3. Being an ambassador for our organisation is crucial for a consistent tone of voice in our public posts. Anyone posting on social media must reflect Tyneside Welcomes' values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Our tone of voice is simple: we understand the gravity of what we are doing, but we approach our charity with joy and open hearts and minds.
4. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for Tyneside Welcomes, and accurately reflects Tyneside Welcomes' agreed position. Bear in mind that just being active is beneficial. That is to say, simply posting something, even if you're not sure if it's interesting, is better than not posting regularly.
5. Bring value to our audience(s). Answer their questions, help and engage with them. Help them understand why they should support us and other similar organisations.
6. Take care with the presentation of content. Do your best to ensure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors. Also check the quality of images to ensure they are as clear as possible.
7. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
8. If anyone outside of the communications team wishes to contribute content for social media, they should speak to the Digital Manager about this.
9. Volunteers shouldn't post content about supporters or service users without their express permission. If anyone is sharing anything on behalf of supporters, service users or third party organisations, this content should be clearly labelled so our audiences know it has not come directly from Tyneside Welcomes. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, volunteers

¹ Membership of Media Group consists of Melissa Wilson Crow (Digital Manager), Jane (Mary) Young, Sally Mitchison and Lindsay Brigham.

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

10. Always check facts. You 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. Make sure to check your links and the organisations your information comes from. Everything posted should comply with the values of Tyneside Welcomes *i.e.* be inclusive and non-discriminatory.
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. Most social media storms die away straight away when a sincere apology is offered.
12. Volunteers should refrain from offering personal opinions via Tyneside Welcomes' social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting'. If you are in doubt about Tyneside Welcomes' position on a particular issue, please speak to a trustee or another Coordinating Committee member.
13. It is vital that Tyneside Welcomes 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. No one should set up other Facebook groups or pages, Twitter accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of Tyneside Welcomes. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, the Media Group can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following.
16. Tyneside Welcomes 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 Tyneside Welcomes' social media channels, seek advice from the Digital Manager before responding. If they are not available, then speak to the Assistant Digital Manager, trustee or Coordinating Committee member.
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: expressing partisan support relating to a conflict that could be interpreted as racist, misogynistic or otherwise biased and negative. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity.

The Media Group regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of Tyneside Welcomes 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 communications team will do the following:

1. Delete the offending post.

2. Apologise sincerely - and not in a way that suggests it's other's fault for being offended.

If anyone outside of the Media Group becomes aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on Tyneside Welcomes' social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the Digital Manager immediately.

19. These guidelines also apply to our conduct across other digital communications platforms when we are using them on behalf of Tyneside Welcomes.

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. Tyneside Welcomes volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with Tyneside Welcomes' values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive Tyneside Welcomes. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Tyneside Welcomes. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about Tyneside Welcomes' work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent Tyneside Welcomes' positions, policies or opinions."
2. Volunteers who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they volunteer at Tyneside Welcomes should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with the Media Group. Similarly, volunteers who want to start blogging and wish to say that they volunteer for Tyneside Welcomes should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with the Media Group.
3. Those in specialist roles or who are well known in their field of expertise, must take particular care as personal views published may be misunderstood as expressing Tyneside Welcomes' view.
4. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with Tyneside Welcomes and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the general public, colleagues, partners and funders.
5. Please don't approach high profile people from your personal social media accounts to ask them to support the charity, as this could hinder any potential relationships. This includes asking for retweets about the charity.
6. 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 the trustees to share the details.
7. If a volunteer is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to Tyneside Welcomes, they should immediately talk to the trustees or Coordinating Committee members and under no circumstances respond directly.

8. Tyneside Welcomes 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 Tyneside Welcomes, volunteers are expected to hold Tyneside Welcomes' position of neutrality. Those who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from Tyneside Welcomes, and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.
9. Never use Tyneside Welcomes' logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the organisation at a regular Tyneside Welcomes meeting.
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. When you are using social media sites in a volunteering capacity, it is important that you do so safely.
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.
12. We encourage everyone 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 Tyneside Welcomes 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 the Media Group 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 Tyneside Welcomes into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

Copyright law

It is critical that everyone abides 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 made in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that Tyneside Welcomes is not ready to disclose yet, such as a news story that is embargoed for a particular date.

We must also be respectful of the privacy of the families we are helping and must not disclose details that could be used to identify their names, where they live or other personal information.

Discrimination and harassment

Volunteers should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or contribute to the bullying or harassment of any individual, on either an official Tyneside Welcomes 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

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, e.g., Facebook. However, if someone considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the trustees or Coordinating Committee members 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 and other digital communications tools, volunteers should ensure the online relationship with Tyneside Welcomes follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship. Young people must be 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 Tyneside Welcomes' 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 Tyneside Welcomes is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect. Breaches of policy may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue. Please refer to our Grievance Policy for further information on disciplinary procedures. Anyone who is unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy should seek advice from the Digital Manager.

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