



THE HARVEST CENTRE

Social Media Policy

General Note

Team members are encouraged to use social media to support The Harvest Centre and share their personal faith journey. All posts should reflect the church's values, respect others' privacy, and avoid divisive or inappropriate content.

What is Social Media?

Social media refers to online platforms like Facebook, X, LinkedIn, and Instagram that let people share content and connect through shared interests and conversations.

Why We Use It

Social media helps The Harvest Centre communicate its mission, engage with the community, and raise awareness of its work. Some team members may use it to join relevant discussions and share updates.

Why We Need a Policy

Personal and professional views can overlap online. To protect our reputation and ensure respectful communication, The Harvest Centre expects all team members to follow the standards outlined in this policy. Social media posts are public and should be treated with the same care as any formal publication. This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as needed following consultation.

Social media usage policy

1. General policy

- 1.1 The trustees and the leadership of The Harvest Centre recognise the distinctive contribution that social media can make in achieving the organisation's purposes.
- 1.2 Social media is essential to the success of communicating the work of The Harvest Centre. It is important for staff and volunteers, including trustees in an ambassadorial role, to participate in social media to engage with The Harvest Centre's audience, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of its work.
- 1.3 This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of The Harvest Centre, and the use of social media by staff, volunteers and members in



both a professional and personal capacity. It sets out what individuals need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to help staff support and expand official social media channels, while protecting the charity and its reputation and preventing any legal issues.

- 1.4 In constructing this policy, the trustees have considered the (*currently draft*) guidelines produced by the Charity Commission. Trustees are recommended to refer to these guidelines.

2. Responsible officials / authorised representatives

- 2.1 The authorised representatives of The Harvest Centre in respect of social media are:
- The trustees
 - The church Leadership Team
 - The church Media Team
- 2.2 No other staff member, volunteer or other person can post or delete content on the church's official channels without the permission of an authorised representative.
- 2.3 No-one may set up other Social Media pages/accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of The Harvest Centre without permission.
- 2.4 In the event of a crisis requiring urgent action, reference should be made to those listed in 2.1.

3. Guidelines for organisational social media use

- 3.1 Risks of misuse, unhelpful or adverse comments from external users and responses to inappropriate comments will be considered by authorised representatives prior to implementation of a campaign, including the issues around allowing facilitation of comments from others or posting or uploading of potentially controversial content. Where risks are considered to be significant, approval by the leadership team is required and, where appropriate, time allowed to take external advice.
- 3.2 All staff and others with social media responsibilities or posting on behalf of The Harvest Centre must follow the following guidelines:
- Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for The Harvest Centre and intentionally reflects any agreed position.
 - All those posting must refrain from offering personal opinions via The Harvest Centre's social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing', or 'forwarding'. If in doubt about The Harvest Centre's position on a particular issue, please speak to an authorised representative.
 - Everyone should ensure they reflect biblical values in what they post, and use 'tones of voice' that reflect the descriptions of appropriate care of others.



- Individuals should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on an official Harvest Centre social media channel (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).
- Express opinions and deal with differences of opinion respectfully. Don't insult people or treat them badly. Passionate discussions and debates are fine, but always be respectful of others and their opinions. Be polite and the first to correct personal mistakes.
- Be a representative and an upholder of the church, both local and universal.
- Bring value to the audience(s). Answer their questions, help, and engage with them. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner when a response is appropriate.
- Take care with the presentation of content. Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings, or grammatical errors. Also check the ownership and quality of images.
- Ensure not to post content about others without their express permission. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, everyone must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.
- Always check facts. Do not automatically assume that material is accurate. Take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification, for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation.
- Be honest. Say what is known to be true or has a reliable source. If a mistake has been made, check with those that posted but, if agreed that a mistake has been made, don't be afraid to admit it.
- It is vital not to encourage others to risk their personal safety, or that of others, to gather materials. For example, a video of a stunt.
- No-one should 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.

3.3 The Harvest Centre is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. While individuals have a right to express views on policy, this should only be done with the express authority to use a specific form of wording by an authorised representative and voting guidance/recommendation must not be made in any circumstances.

3.4 If anyone becomes aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on The Harvest Centre's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to one of the church leaders, ensuring a prompt response and establishment of ownership.



4. Responsibilities and breach of policy

- 4.1** Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of The Harvest Centre is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect.
- 4.2** For staff, breaches of policy may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue. Staff who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from an authorised representative.

5. Complaints on social media channels

- 5.1** If a complaint is made on The Harvest Centre's social media channels, advice should be sought from a church senior leader before responding.
- 5.2** The handling of formal complaints (or those that although not worded as a formal complaint but appear to be a complaint) should be in line with The Harvest Centre's Complaints Policy and Procedure.
- 5.3** Issues can arise on social media which, whether framed as a complaint or not, can escalate into a crisis because they are sensitive or risk serious damage to the organisation's reputation. All such issues should be referred as soon as possible to The Harvest Centre's leadership team.

6. Use of personal social media accounts – appropriate conduct

- 6.1** This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media but instead flags up those areas in which conflicts might arise. All staff, trustees, volunteers and others are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with The Harvest Centre's values and policies, both online and in real life.
- 6.2** All those who are associated with The Harvest Centre should be aware that any public statements could affect how people perceive our church. An authorised representative of The Harvest Centre should therefore be consulted wherever posts are considered to be at risk of being contentious or breaching the guidelines in this policy.
- 6.3** Individuals must make it clear they are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of The Harvest Centre. If using personal social media accounts to promote and talk about The Harvest Centre's work, a disclaimer must be used, to be agreed with an authorised representative.
- 6.4** Staff or volunteers who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way, or who want to start blogging and wish to say, that they work for or attend The Harvest Centre should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with an authorised representative.



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- 6.5** Those in senior leadership and trustees must take particular care as personal views published may be misunderstood as expressing The Harvest Centre's view. Where appropriate, consider adding a phrase/clause making clear the personal nature of the comments.
- 6.6** Staff or volunteers who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they work for The Harvest Centre should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual. (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). Where individuals wish to post material which could be construed as such, they should discuss this with one of The Harvest Centre's authorised representative.
- 6.7** The Harvest Centre 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 The Harvest Centre's staff, trustees and volunteers are expected to hold The Harvest Centre's position of neutrality. Staff, trustees, or volunteers who have a profile on the church website who are also politically active should be careful to be clear in separating their personal political identity from that of The Harvest Centre and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest as far as possible.

7. Adoption of this policy

- 7.1** The trustees of The Harvest Centre formally reviewed and accepted and this policy at the trustees meeting held on October 2025