The Access Project
Social Media Policy

Date: August 2024
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Introduction

The Access Project uses social media and recognises that those who are involved in its work may also use social media, either as part of their role or in their private lives. This policy sets out how we can all use our personal social media accounts to celebrate our achievements at The Access Project, raise awareness and encourage fundraising, while also setting out the boundaries within which we expect staff and volunteers to operate.

Social networks are invaluable in connecting us with colleagues, reaching out to other professional networks, fundraising, and spreading positive messages about the work we do. It is important to consider what you are posting, even when using private social media accounts, to ensure that anything posted does not conflict with or undermine the organisation's work and values.

The Access Project has its own presence on social media channels, and we encourage you to connect with us on these networks. Our people are best placed to share our official messages, but you must do so within the boundaries of this policy. Nothing should be posted that could bring The Access Project into disrepute.

It is important we all follow this policy while we are online, professionally or personally, to minimise any damage, reputational or otherwise, to us individually and as an organisation, and to protect ourselves from abusive behaviour online.

Scope

The policy covers the following topics:

- talking about The Access Project online;
- sharing your political opinions and other views;
- abusive language on social media;

- connecting with people working at partners or agencies;
- using social media in settings where young people are present
- how to protect yourself online; and,
- your responsibilities in safeguarding at The Access Project

Additionally, this policy explains what happens if you are found to have breached the policy in some way.

This policy is in relation to the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, X and all other social media sites, and all other internet postings, including blogs and personal websites.

This policy applies to anyone who works for and volunteers with The Access Project, including employees, volunteers, agency workers, interns, and contractors.

Principles

Many people use social media platforms personally and to network. Here are the basic principles of this policy.

- We acknowledge that some of you might want to use your social media profiles to talk about the organisation and the work that we do, and you might want to publicly let people know you work here (with consideration of the posts you might share about The Access Project's work and values).
- We respect your right to create and actively use social media platforms of your choice.
- We expect you to always be kind, courteous and respectful of others and act in a manner that is in keeping with our values and our Safeguarding Children policy
- We trust you to make good judgements about what you say and write about The Access Project in and outside of work.
- We trust you to treat people with respect on social media, and not to communicate in a way that may cause harm to others.

Using your personal social media to talk about The Access Project

We do some amazing things at The Access Project and we should be proud of them. Sharing our work and successes online can be a great way to help raise awareness and showcase the brilliant things we are doing. Our Communications team regularly suggest posts and tweets for staff to share about our work, though there is no obligation for staff or volunteers to link their personal social media to that of The Access Project.

If you do decide to post about our work, make clear in your bio on any platform you use personally, particularly if you state that you work at The Access Project, that any views you hold are your own, and not those shared by The Access Project.

We want you to help protect our business reputation. Please refrain from disparaging or defamatory statements about:

a) The Access Project
b) The Access Project students, staff, our clients, volunteers, members past or present and partners.

If you are posting about the work you do for The Access Project, you must ensure that personal details of students are not shared, and you must not post any images that could identify students unless you are resharing content posted on The Access Project organisational channels, where consent will have already been agreed.

If you are worried that your opinion in a post you make may conflict with or undermine The Access Project's work, or that you might be putting yourself or the organisation at risk, then don't share it. Always think about what you are posting online (both personally and professionally) regarding the work that The Access Project does. If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or post you are considering making, refrain from making the communication until you discuss it with the Communications team via media@theaccessproject.org.uk.

Politics and social media

As an organisation, we are politically neutral. We recognise that everyone has their own political beliefs and that some staff may be more active in politics than others.

If you are using your personal social networks to promote your political beliefs or work, and it is on your profile that you work for The Access Project, make it clear in your bio that your views are solely your own and separate from those of The Access Project.

If people are messaging you about your political opinions or views and ask for comments in relation to The Access Project, please direct them to the Communications Team without responding to the request.

Abusive Language on Social Media

The Access Project does not tolerate abusive language being used by or directed at staff, volunteers and partners. This includes sexist, racist, ableist, classist, homophobic or transphobic language - or any commentary that runs counter to the Equality Act. Each platform has their own standards to follow, please read these standards on the social media platform's website.

If you receive abuse online in the sphere of your work with The Access Project, please do not interact with the sender and inform your line manager about what has happened. You can also report any abusive content to the platform via their support pages.

Adding and interacting with people working at a partner organisation

If interacting directly online with people working for our partner organisations whilst representing The Access Project, these relationships should be kept on a strictly professional basis and should be limited to interactions on LinkedIn. To protect your personal reputation and that of the organisation, tone and content of communication should follow the same guidelines as for posting on social media.

The Access Project staff should exclusively use and share their work email address for professional communication, avoiding the sharing of personal contact details with stakeholders.

Working in/visiting and educational setting

When you are in a school, college or other setting where students are present, you are required to follow the policy of the setting you are working in or visiting, and you must not use any device for personal activity such as using your mobile phone to access social media.

We do ask our staff to send our communications team media content relating to student results on A Level and GCSE results day. Staff must follow guidance set out by the communications team, ensure only students on The Access Project who have provided media consent are included in images, and staff must not use their personal social media accounts for sharing images and stories.

Protecting yourself and others online

It is important to ensure that you protect yourself and others online from reputational damage or abusive behaviour.

Staff and volunteers must **never** accept requests to link with a student or their parent/guardian on any social media platform. If a student sends a request, ignore it and report it to the school/college the student attends, following their safeguarding reporting procedures, and to The Access Project's safeguarding team via stayingsafe@theaccessproject.org.uk.

We recommend that staff and volunteers at The Access Project should use pseudonyms on personal social media accounts to make these accounts difficult to find.

You should turn on your privacy settings to help protect you from abusive behaviour online and keep the information you share to a small pool of people. You can find your privacy settings in the settings menu on each platform - if you need guidance on how to do this, please contact the Communications team for support. Please remember, what you share online is public, even if you've set your profiles to private, so always consider this before sharing.

You must always respect confidentiality and protect confidential information. Confidential information includes things such as: full names of individuals, names of schools, unpublished details about our work, details of current projects, future projects, financial information or information held on our supporters, staff or volunteers. Do not post anything relating to your colleagues, peers or other stakeholders without their express permission.

Safeguarding

We all have a responsibility to do everything possible to ensure that children are kept safe. If you come across anything online relating to a student on The Access Project, that could mean a child is at risk, you need to report it as soon as possible to our safeguarding team and follow the process as set out in our safeguarding policy. You can contact the team via email and you can also report online safeguarding concerns to the NSPCC.

Breaching this policy

If you are found to have breached this policy, you may be asked to remove online posts, and we will follow our internal disciplinary procedures.

Contacts

Communications team – media@theaccessproject.org.uk
Safeguarding team – stayingsafe@theaccessproject.org.uk

NSPCC – 0808 800 500, help@nspcc.org.uk