

# Archdiocese of Southwark



## Social Media Policy

November 2017

Diocesan personnel are advised to reflect carefully on Pope Francis' guidance on the use of social media. In particular, the Holy Father has noted: *"The speed with which information is communicated exceeds our capacity for reflection and judgment, and this does not make for more balanced and proper forms of expression. ... We need, for example, to recover a certain sense of deliberateness and calm. This calls for time and the ability to be silent and to listen."*

1. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and the Diocese may amend it at any time. Although geared to employees of the Diocese we require anyone working within the Diocese (e.g. self-employed and volunteers) to adhere to its' principles. Clergy are also covered by these principles but have their own code of conduct in addition.
2. It is important to stress that the use of social media can be a very positive way to communicate the message of the Church not only to people in the Diocese, but also beyond the boundaries of the Church. It is one way in which we can share the message of the Gospel.
3. Social media includes all forms of online media that can be accessed by a wide audience from anywhere. They include, but are not limited to such sites as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Issuu, Flickr, Vimeo, YouTube, and Instagram. They also include websites, messaging boards, discussion forums, and blogs. In other words, any form of online media that can be accessed by the public, or where access is online but limited to members or groups, is included in this definition.
4. At all times, the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) and the Diocesan Safeguarding Office (SGO) Policy and Guidelines regarding Social Networking with Children and Young People are to be observed by all. For more information see the Diocesan website – [www.rcsouthwark.co.uk](http://www.rcsouthwark.co.uk) and look on the Safeguarding pages.
5. Use of social media in your official role should be treated in exactly the same way as any interaction with the mass media. In other words, treat all content as you would a press release or a public statement. Anything which is broadcast in your diocesan capacity must be accessible to the Diocesan Communications Office and your line manager.
6. The Diocese respects the right of diocesan personnel to express views on their personal social media sites. However, you should not (on either your open or restricted social media) publish inappropriate personal (e.g. derogatory, defamatory or offensive) comments, information and/or pictures about colleagues or those whom you serve or minister to, or about your work for the Diocese.
7. We would hope that all Diocesan personnel would support the values below, but for those who are Catholics it is their canonical responsibility to:
  - Recognise the integrity of the Church's teaching on faith and morals;
  - Respect the dignity of persons;
  - Acknowledge the special role of their Pastors in faith; and
  - Promote the common good of the Church

The above applies always and everywhere, including on personal media sites.

8. Personal social media accounts may only be accessed through personal devices. Diocesan personnel who proffer opinions on any topics related to Church teaching on their personal media should specifically state that their views are entirely their own. Personal sites may not carry diocesan logos and diocesan job titles may not be used as primary headings on personal sites. Where, in the judgement of the Archbishop or his delegate, the content of a personal social media site is deemed to be in danger of causing reputational damage to the Church or the Diocese, the individual may be required to remove any indication of their diocesan connection on their personal social media and may be requested to remove the content. This may also lead to disciplinary action.
9. Content should be positive whenever possible, and criticism of individuals or institutions is to be avoided.
10. Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of the Diocese's other policies. If an internet post would breach any of our policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, you are prohibited from using social media to:
  - (a) breach any IT and communications systems policy or rules;
  - (b) breach obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
  - (c) breach any obligations relating to confidentiality or data protection;
  - (d) breach our Disciplinary Policy or procedures;
  - (e) harass or bully other staff in any way;
  - (f) unlawfully discriminate against other staff or third parties; and
  - (g) breach any other laws or regulatory requirements.
11. Anything arising from problems with, concerns about, breach of this policy and/or misuse of social media by an individual will, in the first instance, be dealt with by the individual's line manager. Breach of this policy and/or misuse of social media may result in disciplinary action, which may include summary dismissal without notice or pay in lieu of notice. Similar action will be taken for those who are not employees and this may result in closure of a contract for services or requiring a volunteer to stand down.
12. The Diocese reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, activities using the Diocese's IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that the rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes and you consent to such monitoring by your use of such resources and systems. The Staff Handbook contains guidance on IT usage.

**If you have any questions or would like guidance with regard to the use of social media, please contact the Diocesan Communications Officer or HR Manager.**

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