



for disabled children
and young people in Sussex

AMAZE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Amaze recognises that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on a variety of topics. This has multiple benefits for both us as an organisation and as individuals. However, employees' use of social media can also pose risks to our confidential and proprietary information and our reputation.

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

This policy serves as a guide for staff (including bank staff) and volunteers on using social media both to promote the work of Amaze and in a personal capacity. It covers content posted both on an Amaze and personal device and inside and outside of working hours.

DEFINITION OF 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 but aren't limited to Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram, WhatsApp, Threads, Snapchat, Tumblr and Pinterest.

GUIDELINES FOR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

The communications and marketing teams are responsible for setting up and managing Amaze's social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will have access to these accounts. If staff outside of the communications and marketing teams wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should speak to the Head of Fundraising and Marketing in the first instance.

The communications and marketing teams will respond to comments during their working week. On evenings and weekends, we have a social media out-of-hours rota. Should staff have any concerns with posts on social media out of hours, they are encouraged to contact the person on this rota, or a member of the senior leadership team. The communications and marketing teams regularly monitor social media for mentions of Amaze 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 Head of Fundraising and Marketing will lead on a response.

If any staff outside of the communications and marketing teams become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on Amaze's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the member of staff on call. Staff should not comment or respond to the post directly. For further details on crisis communications, see the crisis communications plan.

USE OF PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media but instead flags up those areas in which conflicts might arise. Amaze staff and volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with Amaze's values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive Amaze. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Amaze.
2. Staff who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they work at Amaze should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and the Head of Fundraising and Marketing. Similarly, staff who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work for Amaze should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and the Head of Fundraising and Marketing.
3. Those in senior management, and specialist roles where they are well known in their field of expertise, must take particular care as personal views published may be misunderstood as expressing Amaze's view.
4. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with Amaze 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. Amaze works with several high-profile people, including celebrities, journalists, politicians and major donors. 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 that are being managed by the Senior Leadership Team or Fundraising Team. This includes asking for retweets about the charity. 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 Senior Leadership Team to share the details.
7. If a staff member is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to Amaze, they should talk to the Head of Fundraising and Marketing immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.
8. Amaze 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 Amaze, staff are expected to hold Amaze's position of neutrality. Staff who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from Amaze and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.
9. Never use Amaze's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the Head of Fundraising and Marketing.
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 at work, it is important that you do so safely. You can find more information on your responsibilities when using our computer systems in our IT Policy
11. Think about your reputation as well as that of the charity. 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 staff to share posts that we have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support Amaze and the work we do. Where appropriate and using the guidelines within this policy, we encourage staff 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 Head of Fundraising and Marketing who will respond as appropriate.
13. Staff should not set up other social media channels on behalf of Amaze. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, the communications and marketing teams can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following.

14. If a complaint is made on Amaze's social media channels, staff should not comment themselves but highlight the complaint to a member of the Senior Leadership Team or communications and marketing teams before responding.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AT WORK

There are currently no access restrictions to any of our social media sites in Amaze offices. However, when using the internet at work, it is important that staff refer to our **IT Policy**. You are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of personal social media activity during your lunch breaks. But usage should not be excessive and interfere with your duties.

USE OF WHATSAPP / FACEBOOK GROUPS

WhatsApp (or equivalent online messaging service) and Facebook groups are a convenient and flexible way to stay in touch with a group of people. They are used by Amaze staff, volunteers and users in a variety of ways. We need to apply our usual Amaze values and good practice to these groups including our data protection, confidentiality, equalities and safeguarding policies. We need to be particularly clear about the status of any group and the expectations that apply because these groups feel informal, and people may post in or look at them outside the working day or a work setting.

It is for these reasons we have a specific procedure for use of these groups:

1. All groups should have a clear code of conduct which contains expectations about confidentiality, safety and safeguarding, equalities, bullying, use of language, boundaries and a measured approach to talking about services and professionals. The code of conduct should also highlight when a moderator may intervene and how members can raise a concern about behaviour or attitudes in the group. The agreement should be sent to all new members and circulated to group participants at least annually. A draft group agreement can be found in the social media procedures guidance.

2. Official Amaze-supported groups must have a name that makes this status clear and a description in the Group Info section that includes the following information:

- This is an Amaze group
- By joining, a member consents to sharing their phone number (or Facebook profile) with all group members
- Members agree to follow a group agreement/code of conduct
- Names of the group admins/moderators
- What to do if a group agreement is breached or otherwise feels unsafe

3. All groups that involve users must have one or more staff members as moderators, depending on the size of the groups. Where groups are run in association with another organisation a member of staff from the partner may share the moderation role. Trusted and experienced volunteers can also take responsibility for moderation but cannot be the only moderators. For further guidance on moderating groups, please see the social media procedures guidance.

4. Staff members and volunteers may be part of groups that include users as part of their work or volunteering, but they may also at times want to be part of a group in a personal capacity. They must remember that they will still be seen as representing Amaze and behave accordingly. If they want to express a more personal view in a group, they should state clearly that on this occasion they are doing this in a personal capacity. We recommend that staff join WhatsApp groups with a work rather than a personal mobile number.

5. Groups that are not run and supported by Amaze should not use the name Amaze or any project or service. Any staff or volunteers who become aware of an unofficial group that is using a name that means it

could be confused with a group Amaze runs and moderates should tell their manager so we can approach them and ask them to change this to avoid any misunderstanding.

6. Staff and volunteer groups that are official and work related should be named in a way that makes this clear. Only current staff and volunteers should be members. Groups that involve volunteers should have a group description that mentions consent to sharing phone numbers and maintaining confidentiality. Messages and pictures sent in these groups must be work related. This sort of group can be used sharing information, asking colleagues questions and for urgent but not serious messages such as “I am running late” but should not be used as the only way to report more serious or formal matters, for example to call in sick or raise a safeguarding concern. If a staff group is used to pass on work-related information swiftly, this needs to be followed up with email. Managers/colleagues must not assume people check groups regularly.

7. Although WhatsApp messages are encrypted, we must apply the same care over confidentiality and data protection we do to work emails. No users should be named. Initials or Charity Log references can be used if necessary. This should only be for brief practical messages such as “I’m contacting x” or “x has left a message for you”. WhatsApp groups must not be used for discussion of individual cases. If a longer conversation or exchange of personal information is needed it must move elsewhere. A group can be used to ask colleagues for information or advice to apply to work with a user but this needs to be anonymous or hypothetical.

8. There is no expectation that staff should look at a work-related groups outside their normal work hours. Similarly, volunteers including peer supporters and befrienders are not expected to look at a work-related group other than in the time they normally commit to volunteering. Staff moderators for groups involving volunteers need to consider how this will work for example by having volunteers who share this responsibility and would contact them or a senior manager in an emergency. For some groups it may be appropriate to suggest that messages are not put on the group outside certain hours.

9. Amaze staff and volunteers may also choose to have informal social groups. Unofficial groups of this kind must be named in a way that makes this clear. They must not use the word Amaze or the name of any service or project in the group name. Membership and behaviour in these groups is for the group members to decide. However, if a member of staff or volunteer experiences bullying or harassment from a colleague in this context, they can raise this with their manager/volunteer coordinator or a senior manager as they could if this occurred with a colleague in any other non-work setting. It is particularly important that any unofficial and more informal groups involving Amaze volunteers are named in a way that makes their unofficial status clear and that there is no moderator involved.

10. The same expectations apply to WhatsApp groups involving PCF staff and steering group members as for groups made up of Amaze staff and volunteers. The name of the group must make it clear whether a group is an official one for PCF related business or whether it is a serving less formal purpose. Any official PCF group for staff and steering group members should have a moderator who is an employed member of PCF staff. It can be agreed that other named group members share the moderation role, but they cannot be the only moderator. If steering group members form a group that does not include PCF staff, or a group that is not specifically for PCF related business as is more informal or social, it cannot operate as an official group. These groups must be named in a way that makes their unofficial status clear and that there is no moderator involved. The name PaCC or ESPCF should not be attached to these groups.

LIBEL

Libel is when a false written statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published online or in print. Whether staff are posting content on social media as part of their job or in a personal capacity, they should not bring Amaze into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

COPYRIGHT LAW

It is critical that all staff abide 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 that staff make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that Amaze is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date. Please refer to our **Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy** for further information.

DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Staff should not post anything that your colleagues or our service users, customers, clients, donors, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders would find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenity. All posts should respect equality, diversity and demonstrate our values and inclusivity, please refer to our **Equalities Policy** for further guidance.

LOBBYING ACT

Charities are legally allowed to campaign to bring about a change in policy or law to further their organisational purpose. In most cases, spending on charity campaigns that are in accordance with charity law will not be regulated under electoral law. However, the Lobbying Act, which was passed in January 2014, states that during national elections (known as regulated periods) spending on campaigning activities may be regulated.

Charities which spend more than £20,000 in England or £10,000 in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, during the regulated period, need to register with the Electoral Commission. To abide by the Lobbying Act, campaigning activities on social media must not be seen as intending to influence people's voting choice. During these periods, all campaigning activity will be reviewed by the communications and marketing teams.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN RECRUITMENT

Recruitment should be carried out in accordance with the **Recruitment Selection Policy**, and associated procedures and guidelines. Any advertising of vacancies should be done through the Senior Leadership Team and the communication and marketing teams. Vacancies are shared routinely on Facebook, Twitter and our website.

There should be no systematic or routine checking of candidate's online social media activities during the recruitment process, as conducting these searches might lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristics, such as religious beliefs or sexual orientation, played a part in a recruitment decision. This is in line with the **Equalities Policy**.

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. For example, Facebook. However, if a staff member considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the Head of Fundraising and Marketing 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, staff should ensure the online relationship with Amaze follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship. Staff should ensure that young people have been made aware of the risks of communicating and sharing information online, and given guidance on security/privacy settings as necessary. Staff should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the young person and Amaze 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. For staff, breaches of policy may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue. Please refer to our **Disciplinary Policy** for further information on disciplinary procedures. Staff who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from the communications and marketing teams.

PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, if a staff member releases information through Amaze's social media channels that is considered to be in the interest of the public, Amaze's **Whistleblowing Policy** must be initiated before any further action is taken.

COMMUNICATION OF THE POLICY

This policy will be available in the policies folder and hard copies will be available on request. New staff and volunteers will be made aware of the policy during their induction with their manager. Training will be available on request. Reminders will be given at staff meetings.

RELATED FORMS / ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

[Social media and leadership team on call rota](#)

[Crisis communications plan](#)

[Social media guidance](#)

RELATED POLICIES

Please also see the following related policies:

- Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equalities Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Impartiality Policy
- IT Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

VERSION CONTROL / RECORD OF CHANGES

Review date	Version	Section	Changes/Comments
June 2024	2	All	Full review of policy