Social media, press and public communications approval v.1.1 (draft)

Document owner: Communications Lead or designated spokesperson ·

Approval: Committee · Date:

Review: Annually Date:

1. **Purpose**

This policy ensures that public communications are accurate, inclusive, consistent with the group's aims and respectful of members' privacy and safety.

It works on the process of Draft versions of any communications being provided to the group for feedback before publication and the way this should be approved.

It establishes who can speak on behalf of the group, how posts and press statements are approved, and how urgent or sensitive communications are managed.

2. **Who may communicate on behalf of the group?**

The committee will designate:

- A Communications Lead, responsible for coordinating routine posts and publicity.
- An authorised spokesperson, normally the Chair or another named committee member, responsible for press enquiries.
- A deputy, who can act when the primary contact is unavailable.

These roles may be combined in a small group. However, no individual has unlimited authority to make public statements on behalf of the group.

All volunteers may express their own personal views. They must not imply that those views represent the group unless authorised to do so.

3. **Approval levels**

Routine

One authorised approver

Examples: previously agreed event reminders, meeting dates, approved service information and reposting previously approved material.

The Communications Lead or delegated volunteer may publish these within agreed guidelines.

Sensitive

Two-person approval

Examples: photographs identifying members, personal stories, statements about local controversies, comments on discrimination incidents, or posts likely to attract significant attention.

Approval must include the Communications Lead and one other authorised committee member. Explicit consent must be obtained where personal identification or disclosure is involved.

Formal consent/ high risk

Committee approval

Examples: major policy statements, responses to serious public incidents, political or campaigning statements made in the group's name, substantial criticism of another organisation, or communications with significant legal, financial or reputational implications.

The committee should approve the wording of Draft versions before publication wherever practicable. In the case of urgency to post / send a communication, a reasonable, short time line will be provided, after which, no response will be considered agreement.

A designated spokesperson may respond immediately to an urgent safety issue using agreed holding wording, but must inform the committee as soon as reasonably possible.

4. **Press enquiries**

Any volunteer receiving a press enquiry should:

1. Record the journalist's name, publication, contact details, deadline and subject.
2. Forward the enquiry promptly to the authorised spokesperson.
3. Avoid giving an unauthorised comment, speculating or sharing confidential information.
4. Refer requests for an official statement, interview or organisational position to the spokesperson.

The spokesperson will establish the facts, agreee the intended message and seek further committee approval where required. Where time permits, sensitive statements should be reviewed by at least two authorised people.

If a volunteer is approached informally in a personal capacity, they should make clear that they are not speaking for the group unless authorised.

5. **Social media publishing process**

1. **Draft**: The content creator prepares the text, images, links and intended publication date.
2. **Check**: The designated approver checks accuracy, tone, accessibility, consent, confidentiality and potential risks. The internal communications policy should be adhered to to keep all communications polite, friendly and civil.

3. **Approve**: The approver confirms approval in the designated channel. Sensitive or high-risk content receives the additional approval specified above. The committee is required to comment on the content if time permits; following the internal communications policy guidance. A reasonable time line will be provided, after which, no response will be considered agreement.
4. **Publish**: Only authorised account administrators publish on official accounts. Final content should follow the group's agreed approval process to ensure that public communications are accurate, consistent, and reflect the group's agreed position.
5. **Monitor**: The Communications Lead monitors responses and escalates threats, abuse, misinformation or sensitive disclosures.
6. **Correct or remove**: Errors, privacy breaches or harmful content are corrected or removed promptly, with the committee informed where appropriate.

Approval should be recorded in a simple log or message thread. A lack of response does not count as approval.

6. **Privacy, consent and safeguarding**

1. Never identify someone as LGBTQ+ without their explicit, informed permission.
2. Obtain consent before publishing identifiable photographs, personal accounts or sensitive information, and explain where the material may appear.
3. Do not assume that attending an LGBTQ+ event means someone consents to being photographed or identified publicly.
4. Offer a practical way for people to opt out of photographs.
5. Do not publish information that could identify a person indirectly through their role, location, family relationships or circumstances.
6. Use secure account access, strong passwords and multi-factor authentication where available.
7. Do not publish private committee discussions, internal correspondence or unapproved minutes.

Consent to be photographed is not automatically consent to be named, tagged or described as LGBTQ+.

7. **Personal accounts and online conduct**

Committee members and volunteers should not present personal opinions as official group positions. They must not use the group's accounts to pursue personal disputes or disclose confidential information.

The group will not require volunteers to endorse every organisational position through their personal social media accounts.

Any concern about online conduct should be assessed fairly, taking account of context, privacy, freedom of expression and any genuine impact on the group.

8. **Handling abuse or a public controversy**

Where the group receives online abuse, threats or hostile press attention:

- Preserve relevant evidence securely.
- Avoid escalating arguments or responding impulsively.
- Restrict comments, block accounts or report content where appropriate.
- Assess any credible threat to a person's safety and seek appropriate support.
- Agree a consistent response through the authorised spokesperson.
- Inform affected members privately where necessary and appropriate.
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The group will not disclose a member's identity or personal circumstances to defend itself publicly