



## COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the Communications Policy is to support YMCA Scotland to engage effectively internally and externally to promote the work of the YMCA with young people, volunteers, members, partners and staff. This policy applies to staff and volunteers. The guidelines contained within this policy reflect the UNCRC principles, in particular articles, 13 and 17 which promote the rights of children to express their views and to access information from the media. As such YMCA Scotland respects the rights of children to access and utilise social media and other technology whilst setting out guidelines that will protect them from any potential harm form using these communication tools.

Social media is essential to the success of communicating YMCA Scotland's work. It is important for staff and volunteers to participate in social media to engage with our audience, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of YMCA Scotland's work. Staff and volunteers should ensure they follow YMCA Scotland branding guidelines when communicating online.

These guidelines are intended to help staff and volunteers ensure that we make the best of new technologies while protecting both the young people in our care and preventing ourselves from being placed in a vulnerable position. Staff and volunteers are encouraged to share the policy with YMCA participants to ensure that they are also aware of the risks involved in using new technologies and to encourage good practice in managing these.

The internet is changing the way we live. Young people have taken to technological advances very quickly, taking advantage of the opportunities they provide to socialise, communicate and learn. However, new technologies bring new risks that we need to be aware of and manage in order to safeguard the welfare of staff, volunteers and YMCA participants.

### Policies

Staff and volunteers should use this policy alongside the Safeguarding & Child Protection policy; Cyber Security Policy to ensure staff and volunteers take appropriate measures to protect the organisations information systems/data and the Data Protection Policy to ensure data is handled correctly.

The General Guidance section provides good practice guidance covering on-line activity. There are also some specific points to note in relation to websites, social networking sites and internet and email usage. Appendix 1 provides guidelines on using YMCA Scotland social media channels.

The PR & Comms Assistant is responsible for the monitoring and management of YMCA Scotland social media channels and any questions or queries should be directed to them in the first instance. However, it is the responsibility of everyone to ensure that the aims and objectives of this policy are met.

## 2 CYBER/ONLINE BULLYING

YMCA Scotland embraces the advantages of modern technology; however, we are mindful of the potential for cyber and online bullying to occur. Cyber bullying, like all other forms of bullying, should be taken very seriously and it is never acceptable.

YMCA Scotland staff or volunteers who are found to be using these methods to bully will be subject to disciplinary procedures which may result in dismissal.

### Definition of Cyber-Bullying

Cyber-bullying is an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual using electronic forms of contact repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend himself/herself/themselves. By cyber-bullying, we mean bullying by electronic media such as:

- Bullying by texts or messages or calls on mobile phones
- The use of mobile phone cameras to cause distress, fear or humiliation
- Posting threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating material on websites, to include blogs, personal websites, social networking sites
- Using e-mail to message others
- Hijacking/cloning e-mail accounts Making threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating remarks in chat rooms

Cyber bullying can be an extension of 'face-to-face' bullying, with technology providing the bully with another route to harass their target. However, it differs in several ways from other kinds of bullying because of the invasion of home and personal space and the size of the audience, and that it can take place at any time of the day. It takes different forms:

- threats and intimidation
- harassment
- cyber stalking, e.g., repeatedly sending unwanted texts, defamation
- exclusion or peer rejection
- impersonation
- circulation of private information or images

### 3 ELECTRONIC MAIL

The use of the email system within the organisation is encouraged, as its appropriate use facilitates communication and improves efficiency. Used correctly, it is a facility that is of assistance to employees and volunteers. Inappropriate use, however, causes many problems ranging from minor distractions to legal claims against YMCA Scotland. This section sets out YMCA Scotland's view on the correct use of the email system, and explains how this can be achieved, as well as YMCA Scotland's responses to inappropriate use.

Staff should read this policy in conjunction with the Employee Handbook.

To ensure GDPR guidelines are being followed, when staff and volunteers are sending group or distribution list emails, they should use the BCC (blind carbon copy) feature.

#### **Monitoring**

**YMCA Scotland reserves the absolute right to monitor employees use of email.**

#### **Authorised Use**

The email system is available for communication on matters directly concerned with the business of the organisation. Employees using the email system should give particular attention to the following:

- the standard of presentation: the style and content of an email message must be consistent with the standards that the organisation expects from written communications
- the extent of circulation: email messages should only be sent to those for whom they are particularly relevant
- the appropriateness of email: email should not be used as a substitute for face-to-face communication; abusive emails must not be sent, while hasty messages sent without proper consideration, can cause upset, concern or misunderstandings
- the visibility of email: if the message is confidential, the user must ensure that the necessary steps are taken to protect confidentiality

- the organisation will be liable for any defamatory information circulated either within the organisation or to external users of the system; and
- email contracts: offers or contracts transmitted via email are as legally binding on the organisation as those sent on paper.

### **Unauthorised Use**

The organisation will not tolerate the use of the email system for any of the following:

- any message that could constitute bullying harassment or other detriment (e.g., on the grounds of sex, race or disability)
- grooming – whereby a staff member or volunteer uses electronic messages with a view to establishing an inappropriate relationship with children and young people
- accessing pornography; sending sexually explicit pictures/images; possessing, making, viewing or distributing indecent images of children and young people
- improper personal use, e.g., chain letters, on-line gambling, downloading or distributing copyright information and/or any software available to the user
- inappropriate level of personal communication

Unauthorised or inappropriate use of the e-mail system may result in disciplinary action which could include summary dismissal.

## **4 INTERNET**

### **Policy**

The use of the internet within YMCA Scotland is encouraged, as its appropriate use provides access to a wide range of useful information. Used correctly it is a facility which can be of valuable assistance to the organisation and to employees in the performance of their jobs. Its inappropriate use, however, causes many problems, ranging from excessive costs for the organisation to possible legal claims against the organisation.

### **Monitoring**

**YMCA Scotland reserves the absolute right to monitor employees use of the internet.**

### **Authorised Use**

- Access to the internet is provided to employees for matters directly concerned with the business of the organisation. You should be aware that:
- spending long periods of the working day on the internet means normal work is not being done or colleagues are picking up an unequal share; and
- telephone records and system records may be used to monitor your use of the internet
- reasonable personal use of the internet during breaks only

### **Unauthorised Use**

The organisation will not tolerate the use of the internet system for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including:

- accessing/downloading pornography or other illegal or obscene material
- no downloading of unauthorised software or screensavers
- inappropriate level of personal communication
- accessing an unreasonable level of on-line personal services such as holidays, shopping, banking within agreed break times
- creating and/or operating a personal web site
- This is not an exhaustive list

Unauthorised or inappropriate use of the internet may result in disciplinary action which could include summary dismissal.

## 5 **COMPUTER SOFTWARE**

- Because of potential virus infection and consequent damage to the business, you must not load any software into any computer without the prior approval of management. Approval will only be given after virus checking
- Virus protection software is maintained and periodically updated
- Under no circumstances must you load games or free issue software onto organisation equipment
- If a specific application programme is necessary for your work, then it will be purchased by the organisation for your use
- You must not make 'pirate' copies of organisation owned software for use by other persons either inside or outside the organisation. This not only breaks organisation rules, it is an illegal practice.

## 6 **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 Facebook, X (Twitter), LinkedIn and Instagram.

The difference between personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to YMCA Scotland's work. While we encourage the use of social media, guidelines (Appendix 1) are in place which set out what you need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to help staff and volunteers support and expand our official social media channels, while protecting the charity and its reputation and preventing any legal issues.

Before posting online consider the following:

- Be smart in what you say and do
- Be genuine
- Be honest
- Protect the company's private information
- Be respectful

## 7 **SOCIAL NETWORKING GUIDELINES**

### **General Guidance Issues for Social Networking**

Social networking sites which are updated on behalf of YMCA Scotland will be subject to review to ensure published information does not bring YMCA Scotland into disrepute and are in compliance with YMCA Scotland's core values.

### **Contacting young people by email or social networking**

- Young people under 16 cannot give permission themselves for their contact details to be shared. Parents and guardians must give written permission on their behalf. This means that if you email anyone under the age of 16 you should have written permission from their parent or carer to do so

- Think about the content of any message that you send – ensure that you use appropriate language; try not to include any words or phrases that could be misinterpreted; if you are sending images, make sure that they are appropriate; ensure that any external hyperlinks you include do not lead to inappropriate content.
- Always copy another adult into any message that you send to a member under the age of 16

### **Sharing information online**

When a social networking site is being used for a YMCA programme, participants should be encouraged via an on-screen notice to set privacy settings at a high level

### **Sharing photos and/or video**

- Photos or videos of young people under 16 participating in YMCA activities should not be uploaded onto general websites, general social networking sites or specialist media-sharing sites like YouTube.
- If you do want to share photos or videos of young people under the age of 16 participating in YMCA activities on YMCA Scotland sites make sure you have written permission from their parent or carer before going ahead and avoid mentioning their full names or including other information that could inadvertently reveal their identities. See Appendix 2 attached.

### **Making and communicating with friends online**

- Ensure that young people are aware that new friends who they meet online are really strangers, so they need to be careful who they trust.
- The only way someone can physically harm you is if you're both in the same location, so – to be completely safe – encourage young people not to meet friends they have met online in person. If they do decide to meet someone who they've contacted online it is important to tell a parent or guardian and/or take someone along. Meet in a public place in daytime.
- Encourage young people to look out for their friends too and tell a responsible adult if they think a friend is at risk.
- Encourage caution when using chatrooms. It is possible to get away from an unpleasant situation in a chatroom by logging out or by changing your screen name.
- Make sure YMCA participants know how to save a copy of their conversation. This may help if they want to report something they feel uncomfortable about to the chatroom provider or moderator.

### **Staff & volunteer personal use of Social Networking**

YMCA Scotland staff and volunteers are expected to behave appropriately and in ways that are consistent with YMCA Scotland's values and policies when online in a personal capacity. Staff and volunteers should note the following regarding personal use of social networking:

- Use of social networking during working hours should be treated in the same way as taking personal phone calls i.e., this activity will only be allowed outside working time except for exceptional circumstances (Please note when work computers are used for any computer activity YMCA management retain the right to monitor and inspect usage)
- Staff and volunteers are reminded that all work information is confidential and discussion or disclosure of such via social networking will be treated as a disciplinary matter which could be considered gross misconduct.
- Online discussion of personal views regarding work issues or fellow staff, young people, volunteers etc. can be a serious threat to team cohesion and morale. Therefore, staff and volunteers are advised to ensure they do not engage in this activity.

- Under no circumstances 'befriend' a young person who you work with on your own personal networking sites. Should a young person add you as a friend you need to discuss with them that it is not appropriate for you to do so, however, refer them to a professional page that they can link up with, e.g., YMCA Scotland Facebook page.
- Regularly check your security settings and privacy. Many people believe their site is well protected until you check for yourself (by searching for yourself when not logged in). Your site should be completely secure from people accessing information that you have not authorised.

## 8 **MOBILE PHONES AND VIDEO CALLING**

You must be aware that certain operations that may be performed on mobile phones or via video calls, for example using Zoom, Teams or Facetime may breach organisation rules and procedures. You must understand that the sending of text messages or digital images that are or could be deemed offensive is strictly prohibited.

Young people under 16 cannot give permission themselves for their contact details to be shared. Parents and guardians must give written permission on their behalf. This means that if you text or call anyone under the age of 16 you should have written permission from their parent or carer to do so.

Think about the content of any message that you send – ensure that you use appropriate language; try not to include any words or phrases that could be misinterpreted; if you are sending images, make sure that they are appropriate; ensure that any external hyperlinks you include do not lead to inappropriate content.

Always copy another adult into any message that you send to a member under the age of 16.

The photographing or filming of fellow employees, volunteers, participants, visitors or any member of the public without their consent may breach an individual's right to privacy and could in certain circumstances constitute harassment.

It is against the principles of the organisation for any person to be harassed via mobile phone, or video calls, and will not be tolerated. Any instance that comes to the organisation's attention will be investigated. Should you be found to have used harassed anyone in such a way you will be subject to the disciplinary and dismissal procedure which could include dismissal.

## 9 **ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES**

### **General**

Do not exchange private text of a personal nature, phone numbers, personal email addresses or photos of a personal nature with young people within the YMCA

### **Websites**

- Make sure you follow the general guidelines above – particularly those which relate to sharing information and photos/videos online.
- If you are planning to include a guestbook on your site, make sure that you have good security measures in place. In particular, make sure that every message is checked by an adult prior to publication and any unsuitable messages are removed immediately.
- Protect yourself legally too - if you have taken any text, images, or code from any other website, make sure you have permission from the website owners.

### **Social networking websites**

A social networking website is an online community where members interact with their friends and can make new friends. Members can chat, message, email, video, voice chat, share photos, download images and applications, blog, start discussion groups, share their interests and activities and explore new ones. Social networking sites include for example Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, Snapchat, Myspace, Xbox, PS2/PS3.

- Make sure you protect your personal details. The default is often set to disclose all information to others in your network. It is safer to limit access to people you know personally or who belong to any closed groups you join. It is also safer not to add your address/telephone number to your online profile.
- Remind young people that that new friends they meet online are really strangers. Suggest that they only accept people as 'friends' who they know already.
- If setting up a group for participants from a YMCA Programme, set it up as a 'secret' or 'closed' group.
- Ensure that participants are aware of the status of any groups they join. Some groups are 'open' to anyone who chooses to sign up. YMCA Scotland will not endorse any 'open' YMCA groups or pages and there is no guarantee that all members of an open YMCA group will be genuine participants of YMCA Programmes.
- Think carefully before accepting individuals as 'friends' on social networking sites. Is all the content of your profile page appropriate?
- If you have any child protection concerns as a result of being on any sites associated with YMCA, please report your concerns to the child protection officer at YMCA Scotland

#### **Email**

- When emailing a group of young people use the bcc (blind carbon copy) box, where appropriate, to enter the distribution list. This will ensure you don't share anyone's contact details without their permission. It will also help to protect everyone against spam.
- Be aware of the possibility of your contact details being 'sold' to another party.
- Do not forward chain emails to young people.
- If you receive an email from a young person that causes you concern, refer to your designated child protection person.

#### **GDPR**

GDPR must be followed at all times, details of these can be found in the YMCA Scotland Data Protection policy.

Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing

Failure to comply with the policy above will give rise to a disciplinary warning or dismissal and this could include summary dismissal. In any event YMCA Scotland reserves the right to recover the computer/laptop if there is any improper use.

#### **Responsibility for Policy –**

**Operational Practice: National General Secretary**

**Executive Responsibility: YMCA Scotland Executive Committee**

**ACCEPTED AS COMMUNICATIONS POLICY BY YMCA SCOTLAND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AT ITS MEETING ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**SIGNED** \_\_\_\_\_ **National Council Chairman**

**SIGNED** \_\_\_\_\_ **National General Secretary**

This policy will be reviewed at 18-month intervals

## **Appendix 1      Using YMCA Scotland's social media channels**

1. The PR & Comms Assistant is responsible for setting up and managing YMCA Scotland's social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the Operations Director will have access to these accounts.
2. Be an ambassador for our brand. Staff and volunteers should ensure they reflect YMCA Scotland values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Our brand guidelines set out our tone of voice that all staff and volunteers should refer to when posting content on YMCA Scotland's social media channels.
3. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for YMCA Scotland and accurately reflects YMCA Scotland's agreed position.
4. Bring value to our audience(s). Answer their questions, help and engage with them
5. Take care with the presentation of content. Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors. Also ensure all images are of a high resolution and quality.
6. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
7. If staff/volunteers outside of YMCA Scotland wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should speak to the PR & Comms Assistant about this.
8. Staff should not post content about supporters or service users without their express permission. If staff /volunteers are sharing information about supporters, service users or third-party organisations, this content should be clearly labelled so our audiences know it has not come directly from YMCA Scotland. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff/volunteers must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.
9. Always check facts. Staff/volunteers should not automatically assume that material is accurate and should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification, for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation.
10. Be honest. Say what you know to be true or have a good source for. If you've made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it.
11. Staff /volunteers should refrain from offering personal opinions via YMCA Scotland's social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting'. If you are in doubt about YMCA Scotland's position on a particular issue, please speak to the Operations Director.

12. It is vital that YMCA Scotland does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials. For example, a video of a stunt.
13. Staff/volunteers should not 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.
14. Staff/volunteers should not set up other visible Facebook groups or pages, Twitter accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of YMCA Scotland. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, the PR & Comms Assistant can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following.
15. YMCA Scotland is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We have every right to express views on policy, including the policies of parties, but we can't tell people how to vote.
16. If a complaint is made on YMCA Scotland's social media channels, staff/volunteers should seek advice from the Operations Director before responding. If they are not available, then staff should speak to the Chief Executive.
17. Sometimes issues can arise on social media which can escalate into a crisis situation because they are sensitive or risk serious damage to the charity's reputation. Examples might include child protection issues, staff dismissal, harassment. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity.

The PR & Comms Assistant regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of YMCA Scotland 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 Chief Executive will provide a response - both on social media and press.

If any staff/volunteers become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on YMCA Scotland's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the PR & Comms Assistant immediately.

## Appendix 2

### Photo consent form

I agree that my photograph can be used for:

The media (Press, TV, radio, online)

Yes ☐ No ☐

Local YMCA and YMCA Scotland published materials (e.g. fundraising bids, policy and research reports, government consultation responses, leaflets, magazines, brochures)

Yes ☐ No ☐

Local YMCA and YMCA Scotland websites and social media (including but not exclusively, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Flickr)

Yes ☐ No ☐

Name of your YMCA	
Your Name	
Date of Birth	
Email address	
Signature	
Date	
If you are under 16, then we will need your parent/guardian to sign as well	
Parent/Guardian name	
Parent/Guardian signature	

### About YMCA

YMCA Scotland is committed to processing information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The personal data collected on this form will be held securely and only used for administrative purposes. You have the right to request to see a copy of the information we hold about you, and to request corrections or deletions of the information that is no longer required. To see our full data protection policy, visit: [www.ymca.scot](http://www.ymca.scot)

If you have any questions about this consent form or how we plan to use your information, please contact: [info@ymca.scot](mailto:info@ymca.scot)

