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3	Contact details updated and 'further information' expanded	Nicola Boon

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is 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 Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok and Snapchat.

1.2 Why do we use social media?

Social media is a fact of life for most of us today, especially young people. Research shows that among 16-to-25-year-olds in the UK, as many as 99% use social media every day. Children aged 12 and under are below the age limit for opening a social media account, but despite this research has found that 75% of them have one.

The Youth Sport Trust (“YST”) has an active social media following. On a typical day there will be dozens of individuals and organisations sharing details of their work with us on social media platforms. We believe that, used positively, this can play an important part in enhancing our impact and building support for our charitable mission. Many of YST’s staff and networks are active on social media and use this as a way to promote and discuss our work.

1.3 Why do we need a social media policy?

The difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to YST'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, carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain.

It is well documented that the advance of social media has had negative side effects among young people. These can include stress and addiction, sedentary behaviour and opportunities for bullying and harassment. Used in the wrong way, information inappropriately shared on social media can pose a threat to young people’s safety. It is, therefore, vital that organisations like YST take a proactive approach to ensure that our use of social media does not put young people at risk of harm.

1.4 YST’s corporate social media accounts

YST uses the following social media channels:

- Twitter - twitter.com/YouthSportTrust
- Facebook - facebook.com/YouthSportTrust
- Instagram - instagram.com/youthsporttrust/
- LinkedIn - linkedin.com/company/youth-sport-trust/
- Youtube - youtube.com/user/YouthSportTrust

YST also has accounts with the following channels, which are not currently used:

- TikTok - tiktok.com/@youthsporttrust
- Flickr - flickr.com/photos/youthsporttrust/

2. PURPOSE

This policy is intended for all employees, workers, volunteers, ambassadors, trustees and contractors (collectively, our “staff”) who work for or with YST. It applies to content posted on social media about YST’s work and sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of YST, and the use of social media by staff, whether on one of YST’s corporate accounts or through an individual’s personal account(s).

The policy outlines what staff need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to protect YST and its reputation and prevent any legal issues. It promotes the positive use of social media and other forms of electronic communication, including precautions to ensure that young people’s safety or wellbeing are not inadvertently put at risk.

This document sits alongside the wider YST Code of Ethics and Conduct, Safeguarding and Image Use policies, which are required reading for all employees.

Before engaging in any work-related social media activity, all staff must read this policy. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action if you are an employee of YST or jeopardise your future involvement with YST if you are a volunteer, ambassador, trustee or contractor.

3. PRINCIPLES

3.1 YST social media principles

Across all of our social media channels, we commit to ensuring that we:

- Are positive and encouraging in tone;
- Take an inclusive approach, which recognises and celebrates diversity;
- Protect the privacy and safety of young people and adults at risk;
- Adhere to the YST Code of Ethics and Conduct, Safeguarding and Image Use policies; and
- Live up to YST’s values and mission.

3.2 Access to corporate accounts

The YST Corporate Communications (“Comms”) team is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of all of our corporate social media channels. No-one else can post content on YST’s official channels without the permission of the Chief Brand Officer.

Occasionally, specific staff may be given access to a corporate account(s) on a temporary basis, for example, to share content from an event if a member of the Comms team is unable to attend. In these instances, temporary login details will be shared with a limited number of individuals who will receive a briefing from the Comms team on the safe use of social media.

Staff should not set up other social media accounts on behalf of YST. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, our Comms team can ensure consistency of brand and focus on building a strong following.

3.3 Individual accounts – appropriate conduct

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

1. Regardless of whether you use your social media account for professional purposes, you should take care not to post anything which could undermine the integrity of YST, bring the organisation into disrepute or break the law – for example by breaching copyright or data protection regulations, breaking confidentiality or publishing anything discriminatory.

2. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive YST. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of YST. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about YST's work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent YST's positions, policies or opinions."
2. Staff who have, or want to start, a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they work at YST should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and the Comms team.
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 YST's view.
4. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with YST 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. YST 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 YST, as this could hinder any potential relationships that are being managed by YST. This includes asking for retweets about YST.

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 YST, please speak to the Comms team to share the details.

7. If a staff member is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to YST, they should talk to the Comms team immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.
8. YST 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 YST, staff are expected to hold YST's position of neutrality. Staff who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from YST and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.
9. Never use YST's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the Comms team.
10. Always protect yourself and YST. Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information.
11. Think about your reputation as well as YST's. 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 tweets and posts that YST have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support YST 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.

4. ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ONLINE

4.1 General

Engagement with young people online must adhere to the spirit of YST's safeguarding policies and our social media principles. Any engagement with individual young people through social media or other

forms of electronic communication should be in a public forum and reactive (i.e., conversation initiated by a young person).

Children aged 12 and under are below the age limit for opening a social media account. Staff should therefore not engage with any posts from accounts where a young person is thought to be younger than 13.

4.2 Following and befriending

Following is defined as when one social user 'subscribes' to another social media user's feed. This is the model for Twitter and Instagram. If you have an open account on one of these platforms, people can follow you without you needing to give permission.

Befriending is defined as being where one social media user has to send a friend request to be able to follow another user's feed. If the friend request is accepted, both users now follow each other.

If you have an open social media account, this means that young people will be able to follow it.

You should not:

- Accept any friend or follow requests from young people if you have a closed account;
- Send friend requests to young people; or
- Send follower requests to young people if their account is closed.

Young people are, however, able to follow and befriend YST's corporate social media accounts.

4.3 Commenting, liking and sharing

Where a young person has posted about their involvement with the work of YST from an open account, it is acceptable to comment, like or share the post in a manner in keeping with YST's values and social media principles. If in any doubt, speak to the Comms team.

We should not engage with posts from young YST beneficiaries where the posts have no connection to YST's work, values or mission.

4.4 Tagging in posts

You should not tag young people's social media handles in anything you post proactively. Young people who have a locked account should never be tagged.

Where possible, it is better to tag social media handles from school social media accounts.

4.5 Private conversations

Many social media platforms include the functionality for private messaging – posts which can only be viewed by the selected individual(s) they are sent to.

As a representative of YST you should not be involved in any private conversations with any of the young people you come into contact with through your work with YST. This includes through other forms of electronic media.

If you do receive any private correspondence from young people, these must be shared in full, with the YST safeguarding lead.

This is both for your safety and the safety of the young people YST supports.

4.6 Engagement examples

Examples of **acceptable** engagement with young people include:

- ✓ Liking a positive post from a young person about their engagement with YST;
- ✓ Posting a supportive comment - in keeping with YST's tone of voice - in response to a post about a young person about their engagement with YST; or

- ✓ Sharing a young person case study produced and published by YST.

Examples of **unacceptable** engagement with young people would include:

- X Accepting a follower or friend request from a young person known through YST if your account is closed;
- X Any form of private conversation (e.g., personal and direct messaging) which cannot be seen publicly;
- X Liking, sharing or commenting on posts which have no connection with the young person's work with YST;
- X Commenting on a young person's appearance, or anything which falls outside our social media principles; or
- X Sharing identifying details about a young person such as their home address, email address or telephone number.

5. USE OF IMAGES

The use of any images on social media of recognisable individuals must be in accordance with the YST Image Use policy, which details any permissions that must be obtained. All staff have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with this policy.

If staff are intending to capture any form of imagery from a YST event, they must make the Event Safeguarding Lead and the Comms team aware.

In line with the YST social media principles, any images and videos shared should be celebratory, positive and encouraging in tone. They must not compromise the safety or integrity of an individual or put them at risk in any way.

The Comms team is responsible for keeping and maintaining the central, YST image library ("**ResourceSpace**"). Once any images have been posted and/or shared with the Comms team, they must be deleted from an individual's device(s).

6. MONITORING SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

The Comms team has responsibility for monitoring our corporate social media accounts, including any mentions of YST and its work on wider social media, and escalating any concerns and issues, including those related to safeguarding.

It is the responsibility of staff to monitor responses and interactions with anything they post in relation to their work with YST. If a post attracts any negative comments, staff should immediately report this to the Comms team.

7. CONTACT

If you have specific questions about any aspect of social media, please contact:

- Nicola Boon, YST Chief Brand Officer - 07825 065179
nicola.boon@youthsporttrust.org

If you have any safeguarding-related concerns associated with social media, please contact:

- Helen Shuttleworth, YST Assistant Director of HR and Lead Safeguarding Officer - 07921 684817
helen.shuttleworth@youthsporttrust.org

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

Recommended resources and contacts for further information about the safe use of social media:

NSPCC is the UK's leading charity for children and young people. They provide free resources, advice, guides and workshops for children and young people, families and professionals working with children at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

You can also contact the NSPCC directly by calling 0808 800 5000 or emailing help@NSPCC.org.uk. The voice helpline is currently running on a limited timeframe. You can still email help@NSPCC.org.uk at any time for free.

Childline is a charity set up to help anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through. Children and young people can talk about anything whether it's something big or small with Childline trained counsellors.

Childline is free, confidential and available any time, day or night: by calling [0800 1111](tel:08001111); by [email](#); or through [1-2-1 counsellor chat](#).

Childline provides resources and advice for young people on online safety on their website at:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/>

UK Safer Internet Centre (UKSIC) was established in 2011 and is a leading global partnership helping to make the internet a great and safe place for everyone. They provide support and services to children and young people, adults facing online harms, and professionals working with children. The centre is formed of three charities, [Childnet](#), [Internet Watch Foundation](#) and [SWGfL](#), working together to identify threats and harms online and then create and deliver critical advice, resources, education and interventions that help keep children and young people, and adults, safe. More information is available at: www.saferinternet.org.uk

Childnet is a UK-based charity which empowers children, young people, and those who support them in their online lives, and its mission is to work with others to make the internet a great and safe place. Childnet works directly with children and young people from the ages of 3-18, as well as parents, carers, teachers and professionals. They offer resources you can access at: <https://www.childnet.com/>

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) is a law enforcement agency helping to keep children and young people safe from sexual abuse and grooming online. CEOP help, provide advice and provide a reporting platform if you are worried about online sexual abuse or something has happened online which has made you or someone you know feel unsafe, scared or worried. They can be contacted at: [CEOP Safety Centre](#)

Thinkuknow is The National Crime Agency's CEOP Education team aiming to help protect children and young people from online child sexual abuse. They provide education programmes, training, resources and information for professionals working with children, young people and their families at: [CEOP Education \(thinkuknow.co.uk\)](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

Ineqe Safeguarding Group empowers people to stay safer through education and the use of innovative technology. As a leading independent safeguarding organisation, they provide an online safety hub providing education and resources for children, young people, families and professionals working with children and young people at: [Online Safety - Ineqe Safeguarding Group](#)

Internet Matters supports parents and professionals with comprehensive resources and expert guidance to help them navigate the ever-changing world of child internet safety at: www.internetmatters.org