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YOUTH SPORT TRUST	**Social Media**	

v.	Latest Amendment Details	Authorised by
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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 X, 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. A 2020 report by the Edge Foundation found that 65% of teachers use Twitter (now X) for work-related activities and 31% use Facebook for work. A 2026 report by Savanta, on behalf of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) found that social media is a huge part of life for most young people in the UK. Nearly every teenager has a smartphone and 96% said they used social media.

A new age limit, banning under 16-year-olds from accessing social media is expected to come into force in Spring 2027.

The Youth Sport Trust has an active social media following. On a typical day there will be hundreds 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 Youth Sport Trust's networks are active on social media and use this as a way to promote and discuss our work and our shared mission.

1.3 Why do we need a social media policy?

The difference between a personal and professional profile and opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to the work of the charity.

While we encourage staff to engage with the brand and profile of the Youth Sport Trust on social media, it's important to remember that there are risks involved. There are many case studies from other companies where an employee's activity on social media has led to brand and reputational damage for the company, and in extreme cases there may even be legal implications. Organisations like the Youth Sport Trust have the right to protect their reputation and workplace environment, and posts that are detrimental to either can lead to disciplinary action, including termination.

To help reduce this risk, and to support staff to engage with our work, the Youth Sport Trust has developed standards which are 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 Youth Sport Trust take a proactive approach to ensure that our use of social media does not put young people at risk of harm.

1.4 Youth Sport Trust's corporate social media accounts

Youth Sport Trust uses the following social media channels:

- Facebook - facebook.com/YouthSportTrust
- Instagram - instagram.com/youthsporttrust/
- LinkedIn - linkedin.com/company/youth-sport-trust/
- Youtube - youtube.com/user/YouthSportTrust
- Threads - https://www.threads.com/@youthsporttrust
- TikTok - tiktok.com/@youthsporttrust
- BlueSky - @youthsporttrust.bsky.social

Youth Sport Trust also has accounts with the following channels, which are not currently used:

- X - X.com/YouthSportTrust (use of X is currently on pause, since January 2026, following controversy regarding the platform's Grok AI).
- Flickr - flickr.com/photos/youthsporttrust/ (whilst Flickr presently contains archive images from the School Games National Finals, it no longer meets Cyber Security standards and therefore must not be used for storage of future commissioned imagery).

1.5 School Games corporate social media accounts

Youth Sport Trust also operates the following social media accounts in relation to the School Games programme which we manage and run on behalf of DCMS and DHSC and the School Games National Finals which we run on behalf of Sport England:

- Facebook – facebook.com/yourschoolgames2/
- Facebook – facebook.com/SchoolGames **(National Finals)**
- **Instagram - instagram.com/yourschoolgames/**
- Instagram – instagram.com/schoolgames/ **(National Finals)**
- YouTube - youtube.com/@YourSchoolGamesOfficial
- X – @YourSchoolGames (Use of X is currently on pause, since January 2026, following controversy regarding the platforms Grok AI).
- X – @_SchoolGames **(National Finals)** (Use of X is currently on pause since January 2026 following controversy regarding the platforms Grok AI).

2. PURPOSE

This policy is intended for all employees, workers, volunteers, ambassadors, trustees and contractors (collectively, our "staff") who work for or with Youth Sport Trust. It applies to content posted on social media about our work and sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of the charity, and the use of social media by staff, whether on one of Youth Sport Trust'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 Youth Sport Trust 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 Youth Sport Trust 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 Youth Sport Trust or jeopardise your future involvement with Youth Sport Trust if you are a volunteer, ambassador, trustee or contractor.

3. PRINCIPLES

3.1 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 Youth Sport Trust's Code of Ethics and Conduct, Safeguarding and Image Use policies; and
- Comply with relevant legislation including UK GDPR and the Code of Fundraising Practice
- Live up to Youth Sport Trust's values and mission.

3.2 Access to corporate accounts

The Youth Sport Trust Corporate Communications ("**MarComs**") 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 Youth Sport Trust's official channels without the permission of the Chief Brand Officer.

Access to Youth Sport Trust's social media account is controlled and manager via the MarComs- Social vault on 1Password and is protected via MFA and a one-time password. No-one will be granted access to Youth Sport Trust social media accounts without the express permission of the Chief Brand Officer. When any member of the MarComs team who has access to Youth Sport Trust social media accounts leaves, all passwords are reset via 1Password.

Staff should not set up other social media accounts on behalf of Youth Sport Trust. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. Having official social media accounts in place is important to ensure consistency of brand and focus on building a single, strong following. If a third party, such as a funder, requests a separate social media account(s) to be set-up to support a specific programme initiative that the Youth Sport Trust is involved in, permission to proceed should be sought through the Chief Brand Officer and approved through ratification at Tech and Digital board.

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. Youth Sport Trust staff ("**you**") are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with Youth Sport Trust's values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Except for management of the corporate Youth Sport Trust accounts, when Youth Sport Trust employees are using social media, it should be clear that they are acting as themselves and not on behalf of the charity at any point. Given how easy it is to find people on social media using first and last name search, staff should take care to keep their personal and professional identities distinct. It is not mandatory for staff to make their personal social media accounts private; however, it is recommended that they do so should they wish to protect any personal information that they would not want young beneficiaries, professional colleagues or customers to know.
2. Regardless of whether your social media accounts are private or public you should take care not to post anything which could undermine the integrity of the Youth Sport Trust, bring the organisation into disrepute or break the law – for example by breaching copyright or data protection regulations, breaking confidentiality or publishing anything discriminatory.

3. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive Youth Sport Trust. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Youth Sport Trust. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about Youth Sport Trust's work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent Youth Sport Trust'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 Youth Sport Trust should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager initially who will escalate it to the Chief Brand Officer if further discussions are required.
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 Youth Sport Trust's view.
4. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with Youth Sport Trust 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. Youth Sport Trust 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 Youth Sport Trust, as this could hinder any potential relationships that are being managed by the charity. This includes asking for retweets of Youth Sport Trust's posts.

   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 Youth Sport Trust, please speak to the MarComs team to share the details.
7. If a staff member is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to Youth Sport Trust, they should talk to the MarComs team immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.
8. Youth Sport Trust 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 Youth Sport Trust, staff are expected to hold Youth Sport Trust's position of neutrality. Staff who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from Youth Sport Trust and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.
9. Never use Youth Sport Trust's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the MarComs team.
10. Never download images from Resource Space or lift any Youth Sport Trust images from any other means to use on your social media. Only Youth Sport Trust accounts have permission to use Youth Sport Trust images. The only safe way to share images of Youth Sport Trust work is by resharing a post that has already been shared on corporate social media channels. This ensures that Youth Sport Trust are recognised as the IP and Image (data) controller.
11. Always protect yourself and Youth Sport Trust. Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information.
12. Think about your reputation as well as Youth Sport Trust'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.

13. We encourage staff to share tweets and posts that Youth Sport Trust have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support Youth Sport Trust 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.
14. When using your personal social media profiles, do not act as, or on behalf of, the charity or your role within the charity. This blurs the line between your personal and professional identities. This would include such scenarios as answering a question directed at Youth Sport Trust on social media. If you think the corporate account needs to be made aware of and/or respond to a post, please drop the MarComs team a message via email, teams or on the platform inbox to highlight the post and your proposed response.

4. ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ONLINE

4.1 General

Engagement with young people online must adhere to Youth Sport Trust's safeguarding policies and our social media principles. On personal profiles, staff should not engage directly on social media with any young person (under the age of 18) with whom their primary relationship is professional through the charity. The only exception here would be where a staff member has a preexisting personal relationship with that young person prior to them getting involved with the charity; this might include a relative, for example.

Where a young person engages with the corporate Youth Sport Trust channels online, then the corporate profile can engage back but only via a public forum and in a positive, reactive way. For example, responding to a question or liking a comment. The Youth Sport Trust Comms team will never communicate with any persons thought to be under the age of 18 via private social messaging. In the case of accidental engagement on private messaging (for example if the profile appeared to be an adult or an organisation), this will be flagged to Safeguarding immediately.

Children aged 12 and under are currently below the age limit for opening a social media account; this age limit will increase to 16 from Spring 2027. Staff should, therefore, not engage with any posts from any accounts where the account holder is thought to be younger than 18 years of age.

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 Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. 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 aged under 18, with whom your primary relationship is through the Youth Sport Trust, if you have a closed account;
- Send friend requests to young people aged under 18 with whom your primary relationship is through the Youth Sport Trust; or follow the accounts of young people aged under 18 with whom your primary relationship is through the Youth Sport Trust, irrespective of whether their account is private or public. Young people are, however, able to follow and befriend our corporate social media accounts.

4.3 Commenting, liking and sharing

Where a young person has posted about their involvement with the work of Youth Sport Trust from an open account, it is acceptable for the corporate Youth Sport Trust account to comment, like or share the post in a manner in keeping with Youth Sport Trust's values and social media principles. You should never engage with young beneficiary content from your own personal account(s).

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

4.4 Tagging in posts

The Youth Sport Trust corporate accounts will never tag young people's social media handles in anything they post proactively. Full names should also be avoided in social media posts, using first names only to protect the identities of young people.

In some instances, school accounts may be tagged.

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 the Youth Sport Trust, you should never be involved in any private conversations with any of the young people you come into contact with through your work with the Youth Sport Trust (young beneficiaries). 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 Youth Sport Trust safeguarding lead.

This is both for your safety and the safety of the young people the charity supports. Any member of staff who is found to have engaged with a young beneficiary, privately on social media, will be subject to disciplinary action and may possibly face dismissal and referral to other authorities such as the police. The safety and wellbeing of all young people is our primary concern across all our work.

4.6 Engagement examples

Examples of **acceptable** engagement with young people from Youth Sport Trust's corporate account(s) include:

- ✓ Liking a positive post from a young person about their engagement with Youth Sport Trust;
- ✓ Posting a supportive comment - in keeping with our s tone of voice - in response to a post about a young person about their engagement with Youth Sport Trust or
- ✓ Sharing a young person case study produced and published by Youth Sport Trust.

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

- X Accepting a follower or friend request from a young person known through Youth Sport Trust 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 Youth Sport Trust
- 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 Youth Sport Trust Image Use Policy which details any permissions that must be obtained. All staff have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with this policy.

Staff must not use their personal devices to capture any form of imagery from a Youth Sport Trust event. If they are capturing imagery on behalf of the Youth Sport Trust on a Youth Sport Trust device, they must ensure they comply with the latest Image Use Policy, including ensuring parental permissions are in place, alongside making both the Event Safeguarding Lead and the MarComs team aware upfront.

As outlined in the Image Use Policy, permission to post Images taken on YST devices directly to social media platforms, including but not limited to Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn, Threads and Bluesky, is strictly limited to members of the YST Corporate Communications team who are administrators of social media accounts and granted access via the Comms Vault on 1Password. After posting, the Images must be retrospectively uploaded into ResourceSpace for traceability.

Staff should never post Youth Sport Trust images, or images taken on a personal device, on their own personal social media. The only safe way to share images from an event, or of young people, is by sharing them from an original post on Youth Sport Trust corporate accounts. The YST MarComs team is responsible for keeping and maintaining the central, Youth Sport Trust image library ("**ResourceSpace**").

6. MONITORING SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

The YST MarComs team has responsibility for monitoring our corporate social media accounts, including any mentions of Youth Sport Trust 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 the Youth Sport Trust. If a post attracts any negative comments, staff should immediately report this to the YST MarComs 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; 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)

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