

THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

For Central Office Staff, Clergy & Volunteers

Version: 2020, Updated January 2022

Overview

Social Media offers users the opportunity to communicate to a worldwide audience. It can be an extremely positive, uplifting, and effective forum appealing to people of all ages and backgrounds.

The anonymity provided by the internet means that users will occasionally encounter difficult or unpleasant opinions, as well as viewpoints very different from their own. As a Catholic Diocese our online communications should champion best-practice, promoting the teachings of the Church while adopting a tone that is polite, trustworthy, sincere, honest, helpful, wholesome, and welcoming.

It is impossible to know the personal history, emotional triggers, mental and physical health or possible learning difficulties of the majority of people we interact with online. All diocesan social platforms should be respectful of others, even those people and groups we might disagree with - we must be seen to be kind in all circumstances.

Social Platforms – Clergy, Central Office Staff & diocesan Volunteers

1. Social media encompasses all forms of media that can be accessed by a worldwide audience, anywhere, it includes: websites, messaging boards, discussion forums and blogs as well as sites such as: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Issuu, Flickr, Vimeo, Tiktok and YouTube. Any form of online media that can be accessed by the public, or where access is online but limited to members or groups, is included in this definition.
2. Central Office Staff are asked not to establish new social feeds or work-based blogs, podcasts, or other online media without talking to the Communications Office and their line manager. Diocesan social platforms should be listed by department, never by individual.
3. Diocesan logos and branding should not feature in any capacity on private social media feeds. Diocesan logos and branding should not be used on public social feeds without the prior knowledge and consent of the diocesan Communications Office.
4. A number of diocesan employees and volunteers have personal profiles on LinkedIn. The professional network-centred nature of this platform necessitates listing an employee or volunteer's job title as well as the organisation they are employed by/volunteer for. The Diocese expects staff and volunteers to behave appropriately,

fully in the spirit of this policy, when interacting as an employee or volunteer of the Diocese on LinkedIn.

5. LinkedIn exempted, if employees or volunteers wish to discuss the Catholic Church on public forums; social media/ blogs/printed media etc. it must be clear that they do so in an entirely personal capacity, with the following disclaimer included in their profile bio:

“The views, thoughts, and opinions expressed on this platform are my own and not those of the Diocese.”

Where letter count is limited, this can be reduced further to ‘All views my own.’

6. Aside from LinkedIn, diocesan employees and volunteers should not list their diocesan job title or role on public or private social feeds (this clause does not apply to members of clergy, please see No.7 below).
7. Members of Clergy should be mindful not use social media platforms to criticise the Pope, his archbishops, bishops, or priests, and should avoid taking any action online that could cause embarrassment or damage to the Church.

Clergy should continue to uphold the trust placed in them by Catholic communities locally, nationally, and internationally, ensuring that they safeguard the reputation of the Catholic Church by reflecting, in their public role, the values of the Gospel in all their social media interactions.

Additional Terms & Conditions – Clergy, Central Office Staff, Volunteers

1. Breach of this policy and/or misuse of social media may result in disciplinary action, which may include summary dismissal without notice (Central Office Staff and Volunteers) or pay in lieu of notice (Central Office Staff). Breach of this policy and/or misuse of social media by an individual will, in the first instance, be dealt with by the individual’s line manager.
2. Treat all online content as you would a press release or a public statement. Members of Clergy, and Central Office Staff/Volunteers who are Catholic, are reminded of their canonical responsibility to:
 - Recognise the integrity of the Church’s teaching on faith and morals;
 - Respect the dignity of persons;
 - Acknowledge the special role of their Pastors in faith; and
 - Promote the common good of the Church.

3. The Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) and diocesan safeguarding policies and guidelines regarding social networking with children and young people are to be observed at all times. For more information see the Safeguarding section of the diocesan website: <https://www.abdiocese.org.uk/safeguarding/home>
4. The Diocese respects the right of diocesan personnel to express views on their personal social media platforms, however, criticism of named individuals or institutions should be avoided.

Anything which is broadcast in your diocesan capacity must be accessible to the diocesan Communications Office and the individual's line manager.

5. Members of Clergy, Central Office Staff and Volunteers should not - on public or private social media platforms - publish inappropriate personal comments (e.g. those that are derogatory, defamatory or offensive), or share sensitive, confidential, or inappropriate pictures or information about colleagues, or those they serve or minister to.
6. Where, in the judgement of the Bishop or his delegate, the content of a personal social media site is deemed to be in danger of causing reputational damage to the Church or the Diocese, an individual may be asked to remove said content.
7. Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of the Diocese's other policies. If an internet post would breach diocesan policies in an offline forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, you are prohibited from using social media to breach:
 - Any IT or communications systems policy or rule;
 - Obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
 - Obligations relating to confidentiality or data protection; or
 - Our Disciplinary Policy or procedures.

Or to:

- Harass or bully other staff in any way;
 - Unlawfully discriminate against other staff or third parties; or
 - Breach any other laws or regulatory requirements.
8. The Diocese reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, activities using the Diocese's IT resources and communications systems including but not limited to social media postings and activities. This is to ensure that the rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes. You consent to such monitoring by your use of such resources and systems.
 9. The Diocese may amend this policy at any time, it does not form part of an employee's contract of employment

If you have questions about this policy or would like guidance concerning the use of social media, please contact the diocesan Communications Office;

E: communications@abdiocese.org.uk

T: 01273 859714

I have read and understood the Arundel & Brighton Diocesan Social Media Policy:

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Signature | |
| Full Name (in upper case) | |
| Date | |

This policy is due to be reviewed by the end of October 2026.