



Updated: May 2025
Next update due: May 2027

Social Media Policy

A guide for staff on using social media to promote the work of The Pearl Exchange and in a personal capacity.

INTRODUCTION

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 Facebook, X, LinkedIn and Instagram.

WHY DO WE USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media is essential to the success of communicating The Pearl Exchange's work. It is important for staff to participate in social media to engage with our audience, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of The Pearl Exchange's work.

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 The Pearl Exchange'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.

This policy is intended for all staff *members of all levels, volunteers and trustees*, and applies to content posted on both a *The Pearl Exchange* device and a personal device. Before engaging in work-related social media activity, staff must read this policy. For the purposes of this document, 'Staff' refers to both PAYE & where applicable, self-employed individuals.

SETTING OUT THE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of The Pearl Exchange, and the use of social media by staff in both a professional and personal capacity. It sets out what you need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to help staff support and expand our official social media channels, while protecting the charity and its reputation and preventing any legal issues.

INTERNET ACCESS AND MONITORING USAGE

There are currently no access restrictions to any of our social media sites in The Pearl Exchange office. You are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of personal social media activity during your lunch breaks. But usage should not be excessive and interfere with your duties.

POINT OF CONTACT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Our Programme & Marketing Coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our Instagram, Facebook and TikTok accounts. Our Partnerships Manager is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our LinkedIn account. If you have specific

questions about any aspect of these channels, speak to the Programme & Marketing Coordinator or the Partnerships Manager. Other staff members however can also post content on The Pearl Exchange's official channels without the permission of the Programme & Marketing Coordinator/Partnerships Manager in cases when the Programme & Marketing Coordinator/Partnerships Manager is not available. E.g. on annual leave, not on duty, on sick leave etc.

WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS DO WE USE?

The Pearl Exchange uses the following social media channels:

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/the.pearl.exchange/>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/PearlExchange>

LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/68959522>

Tik Tok - <https://www.tiktok.com/@the.pearl.exchange>

The Pearl Exchange has a Facebook account, which it uses to share news with supporters (mostly secondary audience, age over 35) and promote programmes, events and free counselling offered to young adults age between 18 and 35 in Cornwall and Devon).

Our Instagram account is used to reach our existing and new target audience age between 18 and 35, promote the programmes, events and free counselling The Pearl Exchange offers. It is also used to communicate through messaging, research interest and share feedback.

Our LinkedIn account is used to connect and network with businesses, funders and projects with the objective of forming partnerships that are mutually beneficial and help sustain The Pearl Exchange.

TikTok is an account that is not currently in use on a day to day basis.

GUIDELINES

USING THE PEARL EXCHANGE'S SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS — APPROPRIATE CONDUCT

1. The Programme & Marketing Coordinator is responsible for setting up and managing The Pearl Exchange's social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the Managing Director will have access to these accounts.
2. The Programme & Marketing Coordinator monitors and *responds to comments and messages Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays during working hours and schedules content for out of hours.*
3. Be an ambassador for our brand. Staff should ensure they reflect The Pearl Exchange values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Our brand guidelines set out our tone of voice that all staff should refer to when posting content on The Pearl Exchange's social media channels.
4. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for The Pearl Exchange, and accurately reflects The Pearl Exchange's agreed position.
5. Bring value to our audience(s). Answer their questions, help and engage with them.
6. Take care with the presentation of content. Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors. Also check the quality of images.
7. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
8. If staff outside of the Marketing Team wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should speak to the Marketing Team about this.

9. Staff shouldn't post content about supporters or service users without their express permission. If staff 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 The Pearl Exchange. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.

10. Always check facts. Staff 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.

11. 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.

12. Staff should refrain from offering personal opinions via The Pearl Exchange's social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting'. If you are in doubt about The Pearl Exchange's position on a particular issue, please speak to the Management Team.

13. It is vital that The Pearl Exchange does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials. For example, a video of a stunt.

14. Staff 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.

15. Staff should not set up other Facebook groups or pages, X (Twitter) accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of The Pearl Exchange. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, the Marketing Team can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following.

16. The Pearl Exchange 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.

17. If a complaint is made on The Pearl Exchange's social media channels, staff should seek advice from the Management Team before responding. If they are not available, then staff should speak to the Managing Director.

18. 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: perceived discrimination, negative personal experience etc. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity.

The Programme & Marketing Coordinator regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of The Pearl Exchange 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 Programme & Marketing Coordinator will do the following: Alert the Management team or the Managing Director. Pull the content that sparked criticism, issue a statement/apology if appropriate. Reassure that more care will be taken, training conducted etc. (as appropriate) to avoid similar situations in the future.

If any staff outside of the Marketing Team become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on The Pearl Exchange's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the Marketing Manager immediately.

USE OF PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA 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. The Pearl Exchange staff are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with The Pearl Exchange's values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive The Pearl Exchange. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of The Pearl Exchange. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about The Pearl Exchange's work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent The Pearl Exchange's positions, policies or opinions."
2. Staff who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they work at The Pearl Exchange should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and the Marketing Team. Similarly, staff who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work for The Pearl Exchange should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and the Marketing 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 The Pearl Exchange's view.
4. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with The Pearl Exchange 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. The Pearl Exchange may work with high profile people e.g. *celebrities, journalists, politicians and major donors* etc. Please don't approach high profile people from your personal social media accounts to ask them to support the charity, as this could hinder any potential relationships that are being managed by the Marketing Team. 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 the charity, please speak to the Marketing Team to share the details.
7. If a staff member is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to The Pearl Exchange, they should talk to the Management Team immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.
8. The Pearl Exchange 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 The Pearl Exchange, staff are expected to hold The Pearl Exchange's position of neutrality. Staff who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from The Pearl Exchange, and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.
9. Never use The Pearl Exchange's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the Marketing Team.
10. Always protect yourself and the charity. Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so do consider the content carefully. When you are using social media sites at work, it is important that you do so safely.
11. Think about your reputation as well as the charity'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 we have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support The Pearl Exchange 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. However, if the content is controversial or misrepresented, please highlight this to the Marketing Team who will respond as appropriate.

FURTHER GUIDELINES

LIBEL

Libel is when a false written statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published online or in print. Whether staff are posting content on social media as part of their job or in a personal capacity, they should not bring The Pearl Exchange into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

COPYRIGHT LAW

It is critical that all staff abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Never use or adapt someone else's images or written content without permission. Failing to acknowledge the source/author/resource citation, where permission has been given to reproduce content, is also considered a breach of copyright.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any communications that staff make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that The Pearl Exchange is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date.

DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Staff should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official The Pearl Exchange social media channel or a personal account. For example:

- making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief
- using social media to bully another individual
- posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content

LOBBYING ACT

Charities are legally allowed to campaign to bring about a change in policy or law to further their organisational purpose. In most cases, spending on charity campaigns that are in accordance with charity law will not be regulated under electoral law. However, the Lobbying Act, which was passed in January 2014, states that during national elections (known as regulated periods) spending on campaigning activities may be regulated.

Charities which spend more than £20,000 in England or £10,000 in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, during the regulated period, need to register with the Electoral Commission. To abide by the Lobbying Act, campaigning activities on social media must not be seen as intending to influence people's voting choice. During these periods, all campaigning activity will be reviewed by the Managing Director.

PROTECTION AND INTERVENTION

The responsibility for measures of protection and intervention lies first with the social networking site itself. Different social networking sites offer different models of interventions in different areas. For more information, refer to the guidance available on the social networking site itself. For example, Facebook. However, if a staff member considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the Safeguarding Lead* immediately. *(this is Fliss Loxley)

UNDER 18S AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Young and vulnerable people face risks when using social networking sites. They may be at risk of being bullied, publishing sensitive and personal information on their profiles, or from becoming targets for online grooming.

Where known, when communicating with young people under 18-years-old via social media, staff should ensure the online relationship with The Pearl Exchange follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship. Staff should ensure that young people have been made aware of the risks of communicating and sharing information online, and given guidance on security/privacy settings as necessary. Staff should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the young person and The Pearl Exchange content and other content is appropriate for them. Please refer to our *Safeguarding Policy*.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND BREACH OF POLICY

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of The Pearl Exchange is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect. For staff, breaches of policy may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue.

Date created: July 2024

Date reviewed: July 2025

Date of next review: July 2026