

# Policy – Social Media & Safe Use of Technology Policy

## 1 Introduction

The Muscle Help Foundation Social Media and Safe Use of Technology Policy outlines the charity's expectations of how Trustees, staff, volunteers and users conduct themselves online.

Social media is an increasingly important way for the charity to reach the Muscular Dystrophy community, including beneficiaries and their families, hospices, and partner organisations. The charity uses social media platforms, emails, and text messages to communicate with these stakeholders and to promote the work of the charity.

This policy will be reviewed and updated regularly in recognition of the ever-evolving digital world, as will guidance issued to all Muscle Help Foundation UK staff and volunteers.

**It is Muscle Help Foundation policy that no Trustee, member of staff or volunteer should be participating with a child in any direct private contact via text message, email, online or social media platforms. The misuse of electronic communication to make contact with or groom children is forbidden.**

The charity recognises that there may be communication from Trustees, staff, volunteers, or external consultants with vulnerable adults including past beneficiaries, through its social media platforms, mobile phones, and texts, and that this takes place with the knowledge of the parent/carer.

## 2 The Charity's Responsibilities

The NSPCC has developed good practice guidelines for children using social networking sites and text messages which the Muscle Help Foundation adheres to:

- Understand the safety aspects including what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on a social networking service.
- Follow relevant legislation and good practice guidance when engaging with social media companies.
- Engage with social networking companies to ensure that they adhere to relevant legislation and good practice guidelines.
- Ensure that online safeguarding issues are fully integrated into their existing safeguarding strategy, policies, and procedures.

Further information can be found [here](#).

## 3 Risks of Social Media, Mobile Phones, Texting and Email

The charity recognises the risks for children and vulnerable adults, including:

Personal details:

- Inappropriate access to, use or sharing of personal details.
- Posting personal information that can identify and locate a young person offline
- Theft of personal information

Abuse and exploitation:

- Bullying by peers and people they consider 'friends'
- Online bullying by peers (including "Trolling")

- Unwanted contact with young people by adults with ill intent
- Sexual grooming, luring, exploitation, and abuse contact with strangers
- Being sent offensive or otherwise inappropriate material
- Exposure to racist or hate material
- Exposure and interaction with others who encourage any forms of self-harm

Influencing:

- Risk taking activities
- Encouragement of violent behaviour
- Glorifying activities such as drug taking or excessive drinking
- Involvement in making or distributing illegal or inappropriate content
- Harm in making video content, such as enacting and imitating stunts
- Leaving and running away from home as a result of contacts made online

## 4 Social Media

The use of social media platforms for direct, private contact with children by Trustees, staff, volunteers, and external consultants is expressly forbidden. Social media posts (including photos, blogs, vlogs etc.) should reflect the professional relationship between the Muscle Help Foundation member of staff or volunteer and the beneficiary family. Social media must never be used for any other reason or in any other way.

Social media can be a useful means of contacting beneficiary families to update them on information about the charity's programmes, events, and activities. The content should relate solely to Muscle Help Foundation activity or event.

## 5 Mobile Phones & Texting

The use of personal mobile phones for sending texts to children from Trustees, staff, volunteers, and external consultants is expressly forbidden. However, there may be exceptional circumstances in which it is justified, subject to appropriate safeguarding considerations. In such circumstances, texts sent to children must only be from the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL, who have Enhanced DBS checks.

Group or individual text messages can be a useful means of contacting beneficiary families to update them on information about an activity or event. The content of such text messages should relate solely to Muscle Help Foundation activity or event.

Messages should reflect the professional relationship between the Muscle Help Foundation member of staff or volunteer and the beneficiary family. Text messages and mobile phones must never be used for any other reason or in any other way.

Communication about Muscle Dream programmes, events and activities are with parents/carers when the beneficiary is under 18 years of age.

## 6 Email

In order to safeguard Trustees, staff, volunteers and external consultants sending emails, as well as the child or vulnerable adult receiving them, the Muscle Help Foundation will adopt the same guidelines as for texting.

The sending of an email to a child from a Trustee, member of staff, volunteer, or external consultant, from a personal email address, is forbidden. Any emails must be sent from a Muscle Help Foundation email address and copied to the parent/carer.

The charity recognises that there may be email communications with vulnerable adults from Trustees, staff, volunteers, or external consultants, with the knowledge of parents/carers.

## 7 Measures taken by the Charity

The charity takes measures to protect children and vulnerable adults from the risks of social media and technology. Such measures include:

- Constant monitoring of the charity's social media platforms to ensure that content is in accordance with the charity's guidelines
- The [charity's website](#) and its social media platforms will have a clearly visible CEOP button so that users can safely report any concerns about sexual abuse they may have to a CEOP Advisor, in confidence, about something they have seen online
- Ensure that Trustees, staff, volunteers, and users know that any concerns about inappropriate content on the charity's social media platforms must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Ensure that Trustees, staff, volunteers and users understand their responsibility to follow the charity's Safeguarding procedures (Section 11.4 of the Safeguarding Manual), as needed
- Communicating clear expectations of how Trustees, staff, volunteers, and users are required to conduct themselves when posting content so that children and vulnerable adults are safe on the charity's social media platforms.

## 8 Expectations of users

The charity expects Trustees, staff, volunteers, and users to act responsibly and constructively, and to not use social media and technology in a way that breaches any of the charity's policies.

The same rules that apply to our messaging and communications in traditional media also apply to social media. This includes:

- Being aware that social media posts, emails and texts can be read by users other than the person they are intended for. Always pause, check and re-read a post before making it public. If you are in any doubt over how a post will be received, don't post it
- Being aware that deleted posts may have been stored and could be retrievable from other sources
- Not posting material that is aggressive, argumentative, obscene, profane, discriminatory, defamatory, threatening, harassing, abusive or hateful
- Not disclosing any confidential, personal, sensitive, proprietary information about staff, volunteers, beneficiaries or families and charity/hospice partners
- Not sharing the charity's financial or confidential information, or any current or future confidential or sensitive Muscle Dreams or events, unless directed by the charity's CEO
- Ensuring that personal data is processed for the charity's purposes and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. This is addressed in further detail in the Muscle Help Foundation's Privacy notices, which are available on the [charity's website](#).

## **9 Breach of the policy**

If this policy has been breached, advise the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) at the earliest opportunity. The DSL is responsible for taking prompt and appropriate action to keep children and vulnerable adults safe online.

Staff who breach this policy will be subject to the Muscle Help Foundation's Disciplinary procedures and may have their contract with the charity terminated, depending on the nature of the breach. Any serious breach of this policy may constitute gross misconduct.

Volunteers, third party suppliers and independent contractors are expected to act in accordance with this Policy, as outlined in their respective agreements with the charity.