



Hay, Brecon & Talgarth
Sanctuary for Refugees

Social Media Policy

A comprehensive guide for social media use for Hay Brecon and Talgarth Sanctuary for Refugees [known as HBTSR] 's channels and for individuals using social media in a personal capacity as a representative of HBTSR .

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, at least once a year. HBTSR will amend this policy, following consultations with Trustees and members where appropriate.

This policy is intended for all volunteers of the charity; this includes supporters and Trustees. Before engaging in social media activity, you must read this policy, which contains guidance that will help you adhere to our standards.

Date of last review:31/3/2025

Summary

We ask all HBTSR members and supporters to abide by the following principles, please.

Those of us who have 'administrator' rights on HBTSR's website, Facebook and Twitter/X accounts, will also keep these in mind.

We also ask everyone to be mindful of the same principles when using their own personal social media, especially if they are describing HBTSR activities, or specifically identify HBTSR.

This policy applies to HBTSR website, e-mail, Facebook and to the use of any other social media (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat, etc.).

1. As part of our child protection policy:

Do not distribute or publish any photograph or image which shows children's faces and do not identify individual children in any other way. ANY exception must be agreed by HBTSR Secretary or Chair.

2. We do not usually know the specific details of those seeking asylum. To avoid compromising them in any way:

Use Initials only, not names, and/or country of origin for all those who are seeking refuge, (e.g. 'SB scored the first goal' or 'SB, from Eritrea, scored the first goal') –unless

the person has specifically agreed their name may appear. Never give anyone's address or details that might identify where they live.

3. We do not want to cause any ill feeling between individuals or groups of the people we are assisting, so we need to avoid anything which could be seen as giving preferential treatment to anyone. We should also be mindful that these may be proud people who are currently living in difficult circumstances. We need to respect that, so:

Do not publish details of gifts or grants in cash or kind, except to show that they have been of benefit and reached their intended destination. Do not identify the persons who received them.

4. HBSTR is a charity and is inspired by humanitarian principles:

Avoid using any bad language, hurtful criticism or personal diatribes against any individual. Express any disagreements in a reasoned and courteous fashion.

5. Our status as a registered charity permits us to criticise the policies and practice of national and local government and political parties. But we are not allowed to urge people to vote in a particular way, so:

Avoid advocating on behalf or against voting for or supporting any particular political party, elected official or candidate

6. Of course, it may sometimes be difficult to decide whether to write or post something. Or, you may wish to make a case for waiving one of the above principles on a particular occasion. So:

If in any doubt, consult HBSTR's Secretary or Chair before publishing.

This more detailed policy is based upon the Charity commission guidance

Introduction

What is social media?

Social media is the collective term given to web-based tools and applications which enable users to create, share and interact with content (words, images, graphics and video content), as well as network with each other through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. For the purpose of this document, we are referring to any type of interactive forum such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Whatsapp group chats

Why do we use social media and what can we use it for?

Social media is important for communicating HBSTR's work. It is important for designated volunteers to participate in social media to engage with our audiences and stakeholders, contribute to relevant conversations, and raise the profile of HBSTR's work. Some volunteers may also support the charity's work using their personal accounts, and many will have social media accounts for personal use.

Building an engaged online community can lead to more significant long-term support and involvement from supporters. [Social media guidance from the Charity Commission](#) (September 2023) conveys how social media can be a highly effective way for a charity to engage its audiences and communicate about its work.

Social media helps us to:

- ☐ Promote our campaigns
- ☐ Share our news and updates with our audiences
- ☐ Celebrate our successes
- ☐ Raise awareness of important issues and challenges
- ☐ Support our fundraising activities

- Increase our membership
- Build an online supportive community
- Raise our public profile and strengthen our reputation
- React to quickly changing situations and topics

Social media plays a vital role in movement building, celebrating the success of our work and changing hearts and minds, but there is a need to ensure that contributions are conducted in a respectful manner which do not disregard the dignity of others or lead the organisation or sector into disrepute.

Why do we need a social media policy?

Social media is a fast-moving online world, where nuance and context can be easily lost. While social media brings the charity to a wide audience, it can also present risks. We want to ensure that all volunteers using social media represent and reflect HBTSR in the best way possible. It is also important to mitigate risks (such as reputation or legal issues) associated with the use of social media to protect our supporters and volunteers, work and reputation.

While we encourage the use of social media to support our communications or plans, we have important standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe and adhere to. The difference between a personal and professional opinion can also be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to HBTSR's work. Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations and is subject to the same laws as other kinds of publication or commentary in the public domain.

Failure to comply with this policy could expose HBTSR to reputation damage as well as putting volunteers, services users and members at risk.

Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their compliance with this policy.

Participation in social media on behalf of HBTSR is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect.

Volunteers /Supporters who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach policies should seek advice from the Chair or Secretary.

Setting out the social media policy

Application

This policy applies to all social media platforms used by volunteers (including trustees) in a professional and personal capacity.

This policy also applies to online blogs, wikis, podcasts, forums, and messaging based apps, such as WhatsApp. Social media can be accessed in various ways, including from a desktop or laptop computer, tablet or smartphone. This policy applies to the use of all such devices.

Point of contact for social media and authority to post on HBTSR's social media accounts

Our Trustees are responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our social media channels. If you have questions about any aspect of these channels, please speak to them. Contact via hbts4refugees@gmail.com.

Which social media channels do we use?

HBTSR uses the following social media channels:

Facebook, Instagram [and was on X until spring 2025]

HBTSR has a Facebook account which it uses to share news with supporters and to encourage people to become involved in our work. It is used to amplify campaigns for fair humane Asylum laws and practices.

HBTSR has an Instagram account which it primarily uses to share news but may augment other groups campaigning.

Policy ownership

The Trustees are responsible for authoring and updating this document. The policy must be approved by the trustees and reviewed every year unless a significant change requires the organisation to check the policy before the next review date. All volunteers will be notified of updates.

Rules for use: headlines

Code of conduct headlines

- I will not insult, harass, bully or intimidate individuals or organisations
- I will respond to others' opinions respectfully and professionally
- I will not do anything that breaches my voluntary role
- I will acknowledge and correct mistakes promptly using provided guidance
- I will disclose conflicts of interest where I am able
- I will not knowingly post inaccurate information
- I will link to online references and original source materials directly
- I will be considerate, kind and fair
- I will always ensure my activity does no harm to the organisation or to others
- I will champion HBTSR and its services

Rules for use: full list

Using HBTSR's social media channels — appropriate conduct

1. Know our social media guardians

The Trustees are responsible for setting up and managing HBTSR's social media channels. In practice this is devolved to the people named in the annual reports and re-elected at the AGM.

2. Be an ambassador for our brand

volunteers must ensure they reflect HBTSR's values in what they post and use our tone of voice. We should aim to be kind, Inclusive, accessible and approachable.

3 Always pause and think before posting

When posting from HBTSR's social media accounts, you must respond to comments in the voice of our charity and not allow your own personal opinions to influence responses.

4. Ensure brand consistency

Staff or volunteers must not create or manage any other social media channels, groups or pages on behalf of HBTSR without express permission from Trustees. This is to ensure brand consistency for users and the appropriate safeguarding and monitoring processes are in place.

5. Remember the bigger picture and focus on the benefit

Staff and volunteers must make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for HBTSR to further our charitable purposes. All content must accurately reflect HBTSR 's agreed position.

6. Bring value to our audience(s)

Those responsible for the management of our social media accounts should answer questions as swiftly as possible to help and engage with our service users and supporters.

7. Obtain consent

Staff and volunteers must not post content about supporters, service users or partners without their, or their guardian's, express permission. If volunteers 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 HBTSR.

If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff and volunteers must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.

9. Put safety first

It can be challenging working on social media and there may be times where staff or volunteers could be subject to unpleasant or abusive comments directed at the charity, our work or people. We encourage everyone who is on social media on behalf of the charity to be aware of our safeguarding and wellbeing practices to deal with online abuse and consult with the chair or Secretary where necessary.

It is also vital that HBTSR does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials in pursuit of social media engagement. For example, visiting an unsafe location.

10. Stick to the law

Staff and volunteers must 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.

11. Remain politically neutral

HBTSR is not associated with any political organisation or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We can express views where appropriate on policies that impact our work and service users, but it is essential that HBTSR remains, and is seen to be, politically neutral.

We cannot endorse a political party or candidate. We must carefully manage the risk that we are perceived to have any party-political bias and should carefully consider any posts which might be perceived as such, for example, posts which talk about individual politicians or parties rather than policies.

12. Check facts and be honest

Staff and volunteers should not automatically assume that material that's shared or included in any post is accurate and should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification – for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation. If you've made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it. But think first about how to manage any risk to the charity and its brand in doing so by consulting with The Chair or Secretary to craft the response.

13. Seek advice for complaints

If a complaint is made on HBTSR's social media channels, volunteers should seek advice from the Trustees before responding.

14. Know what to do in a crisis

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.

The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Best practice is to always avoid conflict online and do not respond to or engage with antagonistic comments. These battles are rarely ever won.

If you see something offensive or misinformed, take a quick break from your screen.

Spur of the moment, reactive interactions online tend to be the ones we later regret.

Remember to take sanctuary for yourself.

Advice from City of Sanctuary - 'If the comment is clearly intended to provoke a response, and the user has no clear connection to City of Sanctuary or the refugee sector, we recommend blocking them.

On Twitter/X this means that user will no longer be able to see or interact with your posts.

If the post is abusive we recommend that you report the user to Twitter and block them.

Social media is fast moving, the vast majority of unpleasantness will never be seen by a large audience, and will quickly be lost amongst the enormity of content, so remember to keep things in perspective, don't take things personally, and when in doubt, do not engage.

See further guidance from CharityComms regarding [crisis communications and best practice](#).

17. Handover ownership if your role changes

You must hand over ownership of the group/page/account you manage to another appropriate Volunteers as agreed by Trustees if you change roles or if you leave

Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct

Personal social media use by volunteers can sometimes be attributed to the charity or bring other risks for the charity or volunteers. This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media, but instead flags up those areas in which risks or conflicts might arise. HBTSR's volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are considerate of HBTSR's values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Separate your personal views

Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive HBTSR. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of HBTSR. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about HBTSR work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "Views are my own" or "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent HBTSR's positions, policies or opinions."

2. Take care when publishing personal views (particularly trustees)

Those in senior positions such as trustees and public-facing or 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 HBTSR's view.

3. Discuss risks and conflicts of interest

Trustees who have a personal blog, social media profile or website which indicates in any way that they work at HBTSR should discuss any potential risk or conflicts of interest

4. Protect your personal reputation

Think about your personal 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 the first to correct your own mistakes.

5. Use your common sense and good judgement

Be aware of your association with HBTSR and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself

6. Refer press enquiries

If a volunteer is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to HBTSR, they should talk to the Chair or Secretary immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.

7. Keep your political activity separate from the charity

When representing HBTSR volunteers are expected to uphold HBTSR's positioning. Volunteers who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from HBTSR and understand and avoid potential risks and conflicts of interest.

8. Protect your privacy

Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information. Remember that a simple 'like' can draw attention to your personal accounts. What you publish is widely accessible and could be around for a long time, so do consider the content, and your privacy, carefully.

In their own interests, volunteers should be aware of the dangers of putting personal information onto social networking sites, such as addresses, home and mobile phone numbers.

9. Staying safe online

It can be challenging working on social media and there may be times where volunteers could be subject to unpleasant or abusive comments directed at the charity, our work or people. We encourage everyone who is on social media to be aware of our safeguarding and wellbeing practices to deal with online abuse and consult with our Chair or Secretary where necessary.

Staff and volunteers should be vigilant regarding suspicious content or links and must not reveal personal, confidential or sensitive information about themselves, other volunteers or supporters of HBTSR.

Further guidelines: using social media in a professional and personal capacity

Defamation

[Defamation](#) is when a false statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published in print (such as in media publications) or online (such as Instagram Story, Facebook Live, Snapchat post). Whether volunteers are posting content on social media as part of their job or in a personal capacity, they should not bring HBTSR into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

Copyright law

It is critical that all volunteers abide by [the laws governing copyright](#), under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, when representing the charity. 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 volunteers make must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that HBTSR is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date, or information from people who the charity has worked with which is private.

Discrimination and harassment

Volunteers should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official [*charity name*] 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.

Accessibility

In line with good practice on equity, diversity and inclusion we endeavour to ensure our social media is as accessible as possible. This includes:

- Using plain English, accessible fonts and avoiding small text sizes
- Using contrasting colours
- Using subtitles where appropriate
- Using alt text for videos and images
- Explaining text contained in an image in the copy that accompanies it

You can view more guidance on the government website: [planning, creative and publishing accessible social media campaigns](#).

For accessibility best practices, visit the CharityComms resource: [Accessible communication - a starting point to foster more inclusive comms](#).

The Lobbying Act

Charities are legally allowed to campaign to bring about a change in policy or law to further their organisational purpose but can never be party political. In most cases, spending on charity campaigns that are in accordance with charity law will not be regulated under electoral law (often known as the 'Lobbying Act'¹).

Under the Lobbying Act, organisations (including charities which spend more than £10,000 across the UK on 'regulated activity' during the regulated period need to register with [the Electoral Commission](#) within the outlined windows for elections.

¹ Set out initially in the [Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000](#), as amended by [the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014](#) and [the Elections Act 2022](#).

Regulated activity is any activity which could reasonably be seen as intended to influence people's voting choice, either for parties or candidates (which a charity could never do) or for categories of candidates (e.g. female candidates, or candidates who support Net Zero). During these periods, all campaigning activity will be reviewed by the the Chair and secretary.].

Use of social media to support fundraising activities

Our social media platforms play a role in our fundraising efforts and engaging with our donors. Before using our social media channels for fundraising purposes, staff and volunteers should adhere to [The Code of Fundraising Practices](#).

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 volunteer considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the Chair or Secretary immediately.

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 or radicalisation. Where known, when communicating with vulnerable or young people under 18-years-old via social media, volunteers should ensure the online relationship with HBTSR follows the same rules as offline.

volunteers should be aware that children under the age of 13 should not be encouraged to create their own personal social media accounts or engage with others and are not legally allowed to use social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram or X.

All volunteers have a responsibility to do everything possible to ensure that vulnerable and young people are kept safe from harm. If you come across anything online that could mean someone is at risk, you should follow HBTSR 's safeguarding policies.

[The Online Safety Act 2003](#) has introduced measures to ensure children are protected online.

Engaging on emotive topics

HBTSR may be involved in issues that provoke strong emotions. The emotive content we share via our social media channels can engage our audiences and help us achieve our communications goals. However, it is important to plan appropriately and consider potential reputational risks to the charity. For more information, visit [the government resource called charities and social media](#).

Please note: While all attempts have been made to cover an extensive range of situations, it is possible that this policy may not cover all eventualities. There may be times when judgements are made in situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the standards outlined in this document.

It is expected that in these circumstances consultation with the Chair or Secretary will happen where possible or

Related policies, laws and guidance

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- Data Protection Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy
- Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Policy
- Reporting [serious incidents](#) to the Commission, police or other regulators
- safeguarding procedures
- Volunteer policy

Further external guidance

- [The Charity Commission guidance for charities on social media](#)
- [The Charity Commission checklist for developing a social media policy](#)
- [National Cyber Security Centre's guidance on social media and how to use it safely](#)
- [National Cyber Security Centre's guidance on protecting your published content](#)
- [The Charity Commission guidance on campaigning and political activity guidance for charities](#)
- [Government guidance on the Online Safety Bill](#)
- [Bates Wells website](#)

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