

SOCIAL MEDIA PROTOCOL

Cramond Kirk Edinburgh



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Introduction

This paper is intended to encourage and support Cramond Kirk in its approach to social media. Social media is the umbrella term used to describe websites and applications that allow users to share content (that is words, images and web links) with others and/or to participate in social networking. The best-known platforms at the time of writing are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, but the term – and these guidelines – also cover online forums and blogs as well as any other platforms.

When approaching social media, it is important to see them as an extension of Church. This means that something you wouldn't feel comfortable saying or sharing in Church is also not appropriate online. It is also important to remember that everything that is posted in the name of 'Cramond Kirk' is seen as the voice of the Church. The same is true for elders, employees and members of the Church. When posting to, commenting on or responding to social media posts of Cramond Kirk and/or other related pages such as the Church of Scotland, you do so in your capacity as elder, employee or member of the church. More information can be found on the [Church of Scotland website](#)¹.

Basic principles

1. The golden rule: Remember you are a representative of Cramond Kirk and The Church of Scotland– therefore it is important that you are a responsible ambassador for Christ, the Church and your part in it. In essence, if you wouldn't say it in a loud voice in your local pub on a Saturday night, wearing a very big badge saying: 'I'm a member of The Church of Scotland,' then don't say it online. Please.
2. If you have **any** known public role within the Kirk (elder, employee) you post or comment on social media as a representative of the Kirk. This applies to whether you're posting in an official capacity on a Church account or on your personal account – you are still representing the Church. What you say privately (and social media is far from being a private forum!) will reflect on you and the wider Kirk.
3. Although it may appear that the internet has little or no regulation, all content is subject to the same laws that apply in the 'real' world. You are completely responsible for the things you post and so could fall foul of the laws relating to libel, defamation and copyright.
4. There is an internet code of conduct. Although not an exclusive list, some specific examples of legally prohibited social media conduct include posting commentary, content or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libellous, or any material that could be seen to create a hostile environment.

¹ The Church of Scotland. 2020. *Safe Use Of Social Media And Telephone Support*. [online] Available at: <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/covid-19-coronavirus-advice/covid-19-safe-use-of-social-media-and-telephone-support>[Accessed 22 April 2020].

5. Should any post attract wider media interest then all enquiries, both positive and negative should be directed to the Minister, Kirk Office or Session Clerk.
6. Social media is fast-paced and therefore it is important to stay present and active – monitor your output, keep it fresh and up-to-date and regularly review information about the Church. Aim to post/update content regularly to encourage people to engage with what you are posting, draw them in and to keep them coming back for more. On Facebook you can ‘schedule’ posts to appear throughout the week ahead.
7. When communicating via social media, Cramond Kirk aims to:
 - convey a sense of welcome and inclusiveness.
 - celebrate the contributions made by many people to the life and worship of the Kirk.
 - reflect the fellowship enjoyed through Kirk activities.

Standard Requirements

- There should be at least two people appointed to manage all official social media accounts. Bear in mind that these people will become the ‘voice’ of the Church online. There should always be at least one member of the ministry team as ‘Admin’ i.e. linked to the account and able to manage the account, on all social media accounts at all times.
- All social media accounts must be linked to the email cramond.kirk@blueyonder.co.uk and **not** a personal email as they are church social accounts, not personal accounts.
- The Technology Convener, Session Clerk, Kirk Secretary and Minister will make up the ‘Monitoring Group’ to ensure that all social accounts are in keeping with the parameters of this account.
- Passwords for all social media accounts must be kept centrally and securely by the Kirk Secretary.

Some Do's and Don'ts

Do:

- Do ensure people adhere to the code of conduct found under the 'About' banner on the Facebook Page.
- Do be respectful of theological viewpoints you do not agree with. Public slanging matches between Christians are never a good thing.
- Do respond to queries quickly – you might find that newcomers to your area are looking for a place to worship and therefore would welcome a timeous response. Be welcoming.
- Do be credible, fair and honest.
- Do respect the privacy of your congregation. The discussion of pastoral care in relation to individuals is NOT for a public forum.
- Do **ONLY use** first names on photographs/videos of children in order to protect their privacy and security.
- Do use social media to share good news of Church life.
- Do post or share (on Facebook) and/or retweet (on Twitter) appropriate stories, reflections and prayers marking key events in the Christian calendar/ life of the denomination etc.
- Do monitor the social media accounts to ensure posts and comments are quickly removed that are visibly offensive, threatening or indicative of bullying and the person who posted such content is either given a warning or blocked. *The 'Monitoring Group' have the final responsibility and say over this.*
- Do stay within the legal framework and make yourself aware of safeguarding issues; respect copyright, libel and defamation and data protection laws.
- Do bear in mind that what you post has the potential to be misinterpreted or misread: emotions and attitudes are hard to convey in print – so be careful how you phrase things.

Don't:

- Don't respond censoriously to every little remark just because you don't like it! Make a judgement call between someone who is expressing a view that you or Cramond Kirk doesn't hold and someone who is writing abusive comments.
- Never make any comments that could be considered racist, sexist, or homophobic, or engage in any other conduct that would be considered unacceptable within Cramond Kirk or The Church of Scotland.
- Personal photos taken at events by individuals must be of their own (grand)child(ren). The sharing of photographs on social media which show anything or anyone else other than your own (grand)child(ren) is not permitted.
- Never engage with people who are being deliberately hateful. Remove the post in keeping with the code of conduct and warn/block the user.
- Don't neglect the wider community who may be genuinely interested in Cramond Kirk or new to the area and looking for their next place of worship.
- Don't gossip or engage in conversations about personal/pastoral matters that directly relate to individuals. Do not disguise gossip as 'prayer points.' If it's not your story to tell, then don't tell it! Remember that there are data protection and safeguarding considerations, and that anything published online is subject to libel laws.
- Don't engage in verbal aggression via social media; it's ugly and has no place on a social media site run by a Church. You can correct wrong information but do so with grace. Remember, people are entitled to their opinions, but they are not entitled to share abusive or derogatory opinions and comments on our social media channels.

Sharing

It is important to share content from other sources on our social media accounts such as, but not limited to, the Church of Scotland as well as having original content. Cramond Kirk encourages the sharing of content from other denominations as long as it is in keeping with the guidelines outlined in this paper.

Permission

Before posting any photos and or videos online, permission must be given by the participants. For children, make sure you have the child's agreement **AND** the written permission of parents/guardians. If photos are to be sent to other external organisations, written permission must be given for this. However, the sharing of Cramond Kirk posts **IS** encouraged.

If written consent is not available for an adult, verbal consent is acceptable but only as a last resort. When verbal consent is received, the person receiving it should record this in writing - i.e. name of person, nature of consent and purpose for which photo or whatever is to be used.

Safeguarding 2

The Church of Scotland Code of Good Safeguarding 2018 says;

1. The Church of Scotland is committed to ‘Ensuring a Safe Church for All’. Use and display The Church of Scotland Safeguarding Policy Statement agreed by the General Assembly, May 2010.
2. Paid staff and volunteers, through the provision of safe and appropriate standards of care, will minimise the likelihood of harmful situations occurring.
3. The Church will respond to the needs of victims of harm or abuse as appropriate and ensure, as far as possible, that the person feels safe in the Church community.³

This of course translates into the online world as well. There are a few key things to bear in mind for social media.

Using images of people: Ensure that you ask the permission of the child/parent/carer before taking pictures/videos of children and ensure that the parent/carer signs consent forms. It is advisable to use group photographs of children rather than individuals. When captioning photos/videos of children, do not include any personal details about them, use only first names.

The policy of Cramond Kirk is **not** to include group photos without the express permission of all clearly visible faces, both adults and children, within any publications including online. As such large group photos should be avoided, unless taken from behind. Regardless of age, permission must be obtained from all present.

‘Friending’ children on social media: Social media is not the place to ‘befriend’ children, either via the official accounts or on our personal pages and Kirk accounts. If children do ‘like’ our accounts, then no private messaging should take place at any time.

Private message: Social media allows people to send instant private messages. This of course has many great advantages as well as disadvantages. Messages to and from the account must NOT be deleted and replies should not be made before 8am and after 9pm. (These timings will be made public on all Social Media platforms). After an initial response all further communications should take place via an official Church channel, either via email, letter, phone, or in person.

Cries for help: Take seriously any messages, comments or posts on safeguarding issues such as suicide, abuse, self-harm, intent to hurt. Respond to the message, comment or post sensitively, informing them that the ministry team will be in contact soon. Contact the Ministry Team **immediately**. One of them will get in contact with the person, following appropriate safeguarding guidelines.

² See the appendix on page 9 of this document, for the Church of Scotland guidance for all paid and volunteer staff on the use of social media.


³ Churchofscotland.org.uk. 2018. *SAFEGUARDING HANDBOOK 1*. [online] Available at: https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/7105/Safeguarding_handbook_1.pdf Appendix 2 [Accessed 26 April 2020].

Copyright

It is important that you do not use content that is subject to copyright. Please take great care in everything you publish – and never publish items that you do not have permission to publish (e.g. poems, prose extracts, songs/hymn lyrics). If you do want to publish something that is protected by copyright, please seek written (or emailed) permission from the copyright holder before you post it.

Do not download images from the web and assume it will be ok, it almost certainly won't be! A good place for free images with no or little copyright stipulations is www.pixabay.com or www.unsplash.com for example. Of course, you can always use your own photos.

Never download a picture you have seen on social media and repost it as something Cramond Kirk has made.

Whenever images are 'created' by a representative of Cramond Kirk, using Canva or other appropriate software, it is good practice to include the image below to signpost people back to our page:  @ C R A M O N D K I R K 2

Finally

- KEEP IT UPDATED! Three or four posts per week is the **minimum**
- Keep an eye on your "Insights" on the page and see what works for you.
- If you want to publicise things wider do not be ashamed to tag the Presbytery or national Church of Scotland accounts.
- Occasionally the 'delete post' option is your friend.
- Block people if you need to.
- Always read posts before you share them.
- Make sure there is a good line of communication between the entire team.
- Ensure there are the appropriate social media feed(s) on the website so "the not on social media" can see the content.
- Likewise, the Grapevine magazine should not be the only source of important news and announcements, and neither should social media. It should all work together to create a cohesive whole.
- When someone likes a post but hasn't liked the page, use the 'Tools' to invite them to 'like' the page. Do this without shame.
- If in doubt about ANYTHING, contact a member of the monitoring team for clarification before acting.
- And finally, the world is no longer either online or offline; it moves seamlessly between the two, and as a Church we need to strive to do the same.

Appendix4

Safeguarding Handbook 4, The Church of Scotland, version: October 2018, Page 9-11, 14-15

Social Media Guidelines

GUIDANCE FOR PAID STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS ABOUT THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

(Page 9-11) Introduction

The phrase ‘social media’ refers to the developing range of web-based and mobile telephone technologies and Internet-based applications that allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Enabled by widely available and accessible mobile electronic devices, social media has substantially changed the way organisations, communities, and individuals communicate. Whilst it can be both an essential and valuable communications tool for those providing services for people in the Church, it also presents significant challenges if the user is to avoid what can be quite significant pit-falls in practice.

Most of these challenges revolve around maintaining the professional boundaries between work and private life with a view to protecting both the providers of services and those who use or receive them. In being aware of this, it is vital to remember that some of the challenges relate to how the conduct of paid staff and volunteers in formal roles in the Church might be perceived as potentially harmful or inappropriate. The perceptions of an individual or an organisation are governed by beliefs, values, attitudes, life and professional experience etc. Consequently what may look or sound OK to one person may be misunderstood or misconstrued by another and might well be considered harmful and inappropriate. The following guidance is written from a safeguarding perspective and seeks to identify good practice with a view to preventing harm or abuse to children and adults at risk or minimising the likelihood of it happening. The guidance supplements more detailed information about keeping children, young people, adults at risk and paid staff and volunteers in churches safe. It identifies a number of underpinning principles (things that are important or right to do) and these have been used to generate a set of questions that workers and volunteers should ask themselves. It is not possible to produce a definitive list of ‘dos and don’ts’.

Consequently the questions are designed to be used as a checklist to be used before any type of social media is used or to review its ongoing use. This checklist should be considered as a generic safeguard for using mobile phones, Facebook and other social networking sites, weblogs, mobile ‘phone text messaging, the taking of digital photographs or recording videos etc. and it should be a spur to staff and volunteers to make a judgement about keeping themselves (as workers) and those they are working with (children and adults at risk) safe. Ideally the checklist should be used in safeguarding training and this would enable it to be used with a variety of different scenarios involving the use of different types of social media.

⁴ Churchofscotland.org.uk. 2020. *SAFEGUARDING HANDBOOK 4*. [online] Available at: https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/13283/Safeguarding_handbook_4.pdf [Accessed 22 April 2020].

The use of social media is open to different interpretations and perceptions of what is appropriate and what is not. It can involve the transmission of words, sounds, moving and still images, all of which have the potential to be harmful in a safeguarding sense, hence the importance about making joint decisions and seeking advice.

Types of Social Media

Email and messenger services.

Facebook, Google + and other social networking sites, YouTube.

Mobile phone text messaging.

Twitter and weblogs (commonly known as 'blogs').

Digital photography (cameras, video, camera phones).

Instagram and similar photo sharing sites.

Common Principles of Good Practice

Transparency/openness – tell others what it is you want to communicate and why

Keeping people safe: the worker (paid and volunteers) and the child/adults at risk or service users

Consent: get permission from all involved (or their parents/carers) if their words or images are to be transmitted and made public or shared with a selected group of people. Refer to the Photography and Video Good Practice Guidelines and the Media Consent form on the Key Publications section of the Safeguarding Service website.

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/safeguarding_service/key-publications

Privacy – respect for individuals' personal information

Separate the private (home) from the professional (paid or voluntary work): explicitly maintain boundaries. Often the perceived problem is that of the 'suggestion' of or actual blurring of boundaries and the risk of actions being viewed as harmful rather than actual harmful conduct from a safeguarding point of view

Christian principles – respect, dignity, truthfulness etc.

Checklist before using Social Media Questions

WHAT information do you want to capture, store, transmit, communicate or use?

WHY did you choose this particular type of media?

WHAT is the purpose of using this social media?

WHAT privacy settings and controls have you set for the media?

WHO is the target audience? (a defined group of people or everyone?)

WHO can see the information posted – anyone or have safeguards or tools been used to set limits e.g. Facebook group rather than Facebook page?

WHO is identified (images/words/sounds) in the communication?

WHOSE consent is required? (if any).

HOW will you get their consent?

HOW may others interpret the information? Can the information you want to share be easily misunderstood or misinterpreted. If in doubt check with your line manager and get a second opinion. Re-read before sending/ posting.

Checks

Is the information you are about to share personal/confidential? Can the person be identified (by words or images)? If yes – get permission. Consent must be provided.

Do the people you work with have access to personal information about you? e.g. via Facebook?

What type of personal information is available and how may that affect perceptions about you in your ‘professional’ (work) role? Could this be perceived to be damaging to you personally or in your work role?

As a worker, make sure your line manager is fully aware of what media you use in work. If in doubt discuss it with them.

Whatever social media you are using in work: Is it clear that you are representing the church?

Generally you should not use your personal mobile phone, email address or Facebook account, or similar, to communicate with children, young people or adults at risk.

Any photographs/videos taken while carrying out your professional role should not be posted on your personal Facebook account or any other social media site.

What is your gut feeling about the communication? If you feel even slightly uneasy about something you are about to publish, then you probably shouldn’t publish it. If in doubt, discuss it with your line manager first.

Conclusion

There may be exceptions to the advice contained in this guidance. If you have unanswered questions (or if in doubt) get advice from your line manager and/or The Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service. Most importantly keep a dated and signed written record of any decisions made by you and your line manager about the use of social media where there may be room for misunderstandings or misinterpretation. In short keep an audit trail of all communications, e.g. don’t delete records of phone and email communication. Finally in relation to the use of any type of social media: if in doubt don’t use it.

(Page 14-15) Facebook

Having a Facebook page that advertises the work being done by your Congregation is a good initiative. The page could provide details such as, what the youth group does, when it meets and who it is for.

The following advice is offered, not to discourage the use of social media, but to ensure that children are kept safe:

Facebook privacy controls should be set up so that only children and their families have access to any videos and photographs.

What parental/carer permissions have been sought? e.g. do all parents know that images/videos appear on the page and are they content with this – most are likely to be but not all. Those who are not need to be able to have their children opt out of appearing on the page.

Explore setting up a Facebook Group rather than a Facebook Page which would enable more control over who sees and can download information and images.

Reassess what the purpose of the Facebook page/group is. It is useful to consider the following when setting up a web page or a Facebook page/group: what personal or group information do you want to share and with whom and why? Is it everyone, just the children, just the Church or just the children and their families or friends?

Facebook privacy controls enable information to be shared with defined group: friends, friends of friends or everyone.

As a general rule, do not allow children to give out personal information such as school, home address, phone number, photos, etc. in chat rooms, on bulletin boards and especially not to strangers.

Online Safety

Bullying can take place online in environments where there is little or no adult supervision. You have an important role to play in explaining your child's rights and responsibilities when using smart phones, laptops or games consoles to communicate. Knowing how to identify when they or others are bullying someone, or being bullied by someone online will help with building a safe environment. Children and young people are spending more and more time in online environments, with smart phones, laptops and hand-held devices allowing them to communicate in different ways. They can still experience name calling, being left out and having rumours spread about them online, through social media sites, online chat, or through gaming platforms. And it's worth remembering that most of the friends children and young people interact with online, are the same people they interact with on a daily basis at school or where they live.

You need to be mindful that online spaces are just another 'place' young people go to, to socialise and meet up with friends. In order to help keep them safe you have to take an active interest in what they're doing, where they're going and who they're interacting with – in the same way that you would if they were going into town, to the sports centre, or any other physical place.

And that means having an understanding of their online environment and how to make it safe. You can't abdicate responsibility to software or service providers, you need to make sure you're switched on to the ways young people are communicating with each other so that if they tell you they're being bullied, you know how to react.

<http://respectme.org.uk/adults/online-bullying>

Photography and Video Guidelines

Congregations should ensure that good practice is adhered to when photographing or videoing children and adults at risk during church activities and may find the good practice guidelines produced by the Safeguarding Service helpful. Photography and video includes, that recorded on mobile phones and devices.

As an agency committed to caring for and protecting all vulnerable groups, we must ensure our actions and those of our congregation are appropriate. These guidelines provide only a framework for good practice and might be interpreted in slightly different ways depending on the situation.

No video or photographic footage should be publicly displayed (i.e. notice-board, local press or internet) without prior notice being given by the group and an opportunity for objection to be received.

Neither names nor any personal information should be displayed alongside any photographs.

Mobile phones can be used to take photographs and videos which can be immediately uploaded onto the internet or social networking sites without permission. Therefore, group leaders should discourage the use of mobile phones during church activities. Group leaders must also not post photographs or videos taken while carrying their professional role on their personal social media site etc. The group may wish to produce a mobile phone code of conduct to ensure safe usage. The safeguarding service also produced social media guidelines.

During large events, arrangements can be made by the host to provide video or photographic stills of the participants in action. This allows the performance to go ahead with limited interruption, and allows the participants who are not to be photographed to take part.

An open “photo shoot” can be held at the end of the performance (sensitively distracting any children not to be photographed) to allow families to take their own private shots.

Special consideration should be given where taking photographs or video footage might be misinterpreted, or the images could be seen as provocative (e.g. beach trip or gymnastics display etc.). It is not to say, however, that with the right planning, these events cannot be recorded and enjoyed.

Responsibility of storage and destruction of photographic material should be taken at sessional level and written agreement should be made for this purpose.

Photography and video recording are important methods of recording social activity and providing an historic record – illustrating and validating important moments in people’s lives. This process is a powerful and personal one, and therefore, we must respect the rights of everyone to make the choice whether or not to be photographed.

It is always good practice to seek written permission from a parent or carer before taking any photographs or video footage of children or adults at risk. The Safeguarding Service has produced a Media Consent form (SG19), which can be downloaded from the Key Publications section of the Safeguarding Service website.

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/safeguarding_service/key-publications

Please refer to the Law Department Circulars website for the ‘Live Streaming’ and online publication of worship and other events document.

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/law_circulars

Safeguarding (SG) Forms

A variety of forms are used for Safeguarding purposes, including applications, notifying appointments, obtaining permissions, and recording a variety of information. They are all subject to periodic amendment and subsequently are not reproduced in this or any of the other Safeguarding Handbooks, but are available for download from the Safeguarding Service Key Publications section on The Church of Scotland website.

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/safeguarding_service/key-publications