

Social Media Policy

Bracknell Forest u3a (BFu3a)	Charity number: 1153789
Policy date: May 2026	Review date: May 2028

Purpose

‘Social media’ refers to websites and applications (‘apps’) that allow people to create, share and respond to user-generated content. The policy sets out BFu3a’s overall approach to social media and identifies the procedures which will support and manage the policy and provide for its safe and effective moderation to further BFu3a’s charitable objectives.

BFu3a expects to use social media in a variety of ways to further its objectives. It can be a powerful and engaging communication tool to raise awareness and help reach a much wider audience more quickly than traditional methods. But it can also introduce risks such as posting content that is illegal, inappropriate or harmful for which procedures will be required for managing those risks in order to protect the charity and its members.

The policy is intended to ensure that, in its current and future use of social media, BFu3a stays within the law, meets any requirements set by the Charity Commission and the BFu3a constitution. It provides guidance and management to BFu3a trustees, Group Co-ordinators and members (who use or are planning to use) any social media for which BFu3a bears responsibility.

Scope

The policy applies to applications which enable individual users to create, share and respond to content (words, images, sound and video) and network with each other. It covers both public pages and private groups for which BFu3a has responsibility and establishes criteria which can be applied to future platforms which are not yet available.

Principles

BFu3a acknowledges both the potential value of social media and the need to establish rules and guidance for minimising risks. BFu3a members are required to adhere to the Member Code of Conduct and not act on social media (or at all) in a way that could be considered inappropriate, offensive, defamatory, illegal or discriminatory about its members or bring the BFu3a into disrepute.

This policy should be used in conjunction with other BFu3a policies, Codes of Conduct, Guidelines on using WhatsApp, and other rules including:

- the Privacy policy in relation to responsibility for secure use of personal data and following data protection principles. Ensuring that a member’s request not to use their name or image is respected.
- the Safeguarding policy and posting content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual especially if relating to a protected characteristic.
- seek as far as possible not to disadvantage or exclude members who are unable to use or choose not to use the internet or social media, by using additional means of communicating essential information.

- the use of copyright material, trademark or others' intellectual property – using or adapting someone else's images or written content without permission or, where permission to reproduce content has been given, failing to acknowledge the source or author
- unacceptable vocabulary and when moderators should consider the use of auto moderation and spam blockers
- libel – defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups
- breaching confidentiality – disclosing information meant for internal use only or information that the source is not ready to disclose.

the Complaints policy in relation to (internal and external) complaints linked to use of social media and identifying how to put things right if something has gone wrong

Criteria for determining when and how social media and other online sites can show the BFu3a name or logo will be determined solely by the trustees. The Committee will take action against sites claiming to be affiliated to BFu3a without the express agreement of the Committee.

Procedures

1. Managing social media within BFu3a

The trustees will have overall responsibility for BFu3a's use of social media, but it will be managed and monitored solely by moderators approved by the trustees, who will report to the Chair and/or Committee as appropriate.

When considering how any communication may most effectively be achieved, the trustees will assess whether social media could be used for this purpose as an effective and safe means, either alone or in conjunction with other means. The trustees should ensure that the choice of social media platform and the way it is used are appropriate to the purpose of the communication and are consistent with the principles set out in this policy.

Group Co-ordinators must follow the Guidelines on using WhatsApp. Otherwise, if groups or members wish to use different social media directly linked to a BFu3a activity they should obtain authorisation from the Committee. Requests should be made in writing and show the purposes, the platform, who will have access, who can post and the proposed moderators (at least two). These will be private groups rather than public pages and access will be restricted to BFu3a members. Only when the Committee has approved the proposal will the group or member be entitled to refer to the site as being a BFu3a site.

2. What social media should not be used for

In general, BFu3a branded sites should not be used to share third party content or reshare from other sites outside the u3a movement; however, this restriction would not normally apply to content provided by the Third Age Trust or other u3as, nor to non-u3a educational content directly relevant to the group's activities. BFu3a sites should not be used for posting about wider issues, especially if controversial or of a religious or political nature, nor for commercial advertising or promotion. The trustees should ensure that sites bearing the BFu3a name or logo are used solely to further BFu3a's charitable object.

3. Moderators

The trustees will ensure that no social media site will be authorised without there being two approved moderators nominated by whoever has proposed setting up the site (who may also be one of the nominated moderators). Moderators are expected to be familiar with social media and with the principles and guidance set out in this policy.

4. Allowing access

In the case of public pages, read-only access is normally available to anyone unless the trustees decide if certain actions are to be restricted, for example by not allowing posts or comments by any user other than the moderators, which will be the default position.

For private groups set up by BFu3a groups or members, in their proposal to the Committee the group convenor or member will set out who can access, post or delete. For Group Co-ordinators using WhatsApp, the Guidelines for using WhatsApp must be followed.

5. Monitoring the use of social media

If the moderators identify misuse of any of the BFu3a sites by members, this will be reported to the Chair and/or Committee. Minor incidents will be dealt with informally; for more serious misuse the Committee will follow the Procedures set out in the Complaints policy.

If the Committee is made aware that unauthorised submissions have been made to non BFu3a sites using BFu3a's name or logo, it will take steps to stop this. This will count as misuse and, if perpetrated by a BFu3a member, the Complaints Policy will be followed.

6. If something goes wrong

If a complaint is made through a BFu3a social media channel, the Complaints policy will be applied.

If the issue is outside of the scope of the BFu3a Complaints Policy, then the Committee will need to consider taking appropriate steps that may include issuing an apology or corrective public statement. If potentially criminal activity or a serious safeguarding issue is suspected, informing the police or Safeguarding team. Or if necessary, closing the site.

Roles and responsibilities

The trustees will be responsible collectively for the implementation of this policy, bearing in mind that this is a new field and adjustments will need to be made as lessons are learnt.

The Groups Support Officer will ensure that Group Co-ordinators are made aware of the requirements of this policy and in particular if groups use, or propose to use, social media in connection with their u3a activity. Group Co-ordinators are responsible for identifying and appointing moderators and informing the Committee.

Where a contentious issue arises, especially if potentially a safeguarding or reputational concern, for which moderators need a rapid response, they should refer to the Chair in the first instance. The Chair will then raise the issue with the wider Committee if appropriate.

Monitoring and review

As this is a new policy area and there are frequent developments in social media, this Policy may be updated outside of the usual two yearly review.

05.2026