Social Media policy

This policy supports the following principles:

1. Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs volunteers should be aware of the impact social media can have on those viewing it, and therefore act responsibly and with caution regarding security measures.

2. Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs volunteers should be mindful of the potential risks and impacts of social media, and this should shape how it is used and monitored.

3. Non-compliant use of social media will be noted by Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs and could result in action under the Disciplinary Policy.

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1. 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, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp and any other online communication tool.

2. Why do Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs use social media?

Social media is essential for communicating with the public about Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs purpose, values, achievements, plans, impact and day to day work. It is a crucial tool for mass market engagement, and as we discovered through The Yorkshire Vet content and can act as a lead generation and conversion tool resulting in significant engagement.

3. 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 Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs 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 carry similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain. **This policy is intended for all volunteers** and applies to content posted on both a Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs page and personal pages.

4. Point of contact for social media

We have a nominated trustee and they are responsible for the monitoring and management of our social media channels. If you have specific questions about any aspect of these channels, speak to us. Mike Withington manages our IT and any queries should be passed to him.

5. Which social media channels do we use?

National channels maintained by the Digital team:
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/JackandPalsTherapyDogs
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/jack_and_pals_therapy_dogs/
TikTok: https://www.tiktok.com/@jackandpalstherapydogs
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@JackandPalsTherapyDogs

We use these social media accounts to share news and information with our supporters and to encourage people to become involved in our work. We use each channel slightly differently as they reach different demographics of audiences.

6. Facebook groups

We also have a closed and open Facebook groups. The closed group is for paid members only and the open page is a public page. **Volunteers should not set up other Facebook groups or pages, X accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs without explicit permission in writing from the Trustees**. The reason for this, is that to do so, creates a range of potentially risky issues from confusion around messaging and brand awareness to the need for additional resource to moderate such channels. By having official social media accounts in place, we can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following.

If a complaint is made on social media about Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs, volunteers should never respond in a personal capacity. We may choose to respond from the organisational account, but this should be discussed before any action is taken, and they may decide to escalate to the Trustees. All complaint responses should come from the organisational account(s), never a personal account. Sometimes issues can arise on social media which can escalate into a crisis because they are sensitive

or risk serious damage to the group's reputation. Examples might include an accident at one of our events or negative media coverage. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity.

If you become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs social media channels or elsewhere, we encourage you to flag these soon as possible.

7. 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. Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs values and policies, both online and in real life. **If you make it public on your profile that you volunteer for Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs, you must make sure you follow the following guidelines**.

A. Be aware that anything you say could affect how people perceive jack and pals therapy dogs. **You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Jack and pals Therapy Dogs**. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs **volunteering**, you must make that clear.

B. Volunteers who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they *volunteer* with Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with us. Similarly, volunteers who want to start blogging and wish to say that they *volunteer* for jack and pals therapy dogs should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with us.

C. Uses common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with jack and pals therapy dogs and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the general public, colleagues, partners and funders.

d. Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs work with people in the public eye, including, journalists and major donors. **Please do not approach people from your personal social media accounts to ask them to support us**, as this could hinder any potential relationships that are being managed by us. This includes asking for shares about us. 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 us, please speak to the Trustees first.

e. If a volunteer is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs, they should talk to us immediately and under no circumstances respond directly. Mike Withington is our public relations and publicity trustee.

f. Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs 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 Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs, volunteers are expected to hold Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs position of neutrality. Volunteers who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.

g. Never use Jack and Pals Therapy dogs' logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested first.

h. **Do not include mention of Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs in your usernames or handles. E.g. @JohnSmithJackandpals**.

h. When using hashtags keep them short and relevant. Do not use excessively, one or two hashtags per tweet is best.

i. Always protect yourself and our organisation. 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, it is important that you do so safely.

j. Think about your reputation as well as our organisation. 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.

k. We encourage volunteers to share posts that we have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs and the work we do. Where appropriate and using the guidelines within this policy, we encourage volunteers 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 us, we will respond as appropriate.

l. If a young person you have met through volunteering asks to be “friends” or for you to follow them on social media, you should decline this request explaining (if necessary) that this is not permitted under our safeguarding policy. **For this reason, we also recommend volunteers turn off or limit their direct messaging function.**

8. Further guidelines (legal bits)

a. Libel

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

b. Copyright law

It is critical that volunteers abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. When using social media, they must 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.

c. Confidentiality

Any communications that volunteers make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date.

d. 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 Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs social media channel or a personal account. For example:

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

Volunteers should refer to the information in our bullying and harassment policy and if there are any concerns raise them with the safeguarding team, founding members.

9. Use of social media in the recruitment process

Volunteer recruitment is carried out in accordance with the volunteering recruitment guidelines. There should be no systematic or routine checking of potential volunteer's online social media activities during the recruitment process, as conducting these searches might lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristics, such as religious beliefs or sexual orientation, played a part in a recruitment decision.

10. Protection and intervention

The responsibility for protection and intervention lies first with the social networking site itself. Different social networking sites offer different models of interventions in different areas. However, if a volunteer considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the Designated Safeguarding team immediately (check the Volunteer Handbook for these details).

11. Under 18s and vulnerable people

Young and vulnerable people run risks on social networking sites. They may be at risk from being bullied, making sensitive personal information available on their profiles, or from treating anonymous online 'friends' as if they were real friends and becoming targets for online 'grooming'. When communicating with young people under 18-years-old via social media, volunteers should ensure:

• They have referred to the information in our safeguarding policy and if there are any concerns raise them with the safeguarding team.

• an online relationship with a Jack and Pals Therapy Dog volunteer and setting leader follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship

12. Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect. For volunteers, breaches of policy may trigger problem solving action, depending on the severity of the issue. Volunteers who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from us.

13. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following a serious incident, whichever comes first.

14. Adopted 1st May 2026

15. Review Date: 1st May 2027

16. Signed: Maria Cottrell
Faye Russell
Katy Russell
Mike Withington
Wendy Witington