



# Social Media & Youth Engagement Guidelines

Youth Work Ireland

# Table of Contents

Opening Statement.....	3
Purpose of the Document .....	3
Goals of this Document.....	4
Context.....	4
Core Values of Youth Work Ireland .....	5
Organisational Account Holders & Procedures for Using and Controlling Account Information .....	6
Password Creation and Storage .....	6
Personal Digital Media Outside of Work .....	7
Personal Digital Media Usage & Young People.....	8
Reporting.....	8
Digital Engagement Platforms.....	9
Platform Suitability and Arenas of Conversation.....	9
Appendix 1. Relevant National Policies. ....	12
Appendix 2. General Definitions .....	12

# Opening Statement

Above all, we need to remember that our youth work practice along with the values and principles that guide it do not change in the digital world. This document does not change or add to good practice; rather it clarifies how the practice and procedures that currently exist translate into digital engagement.

Digital engagement within Youth Work Ireland and its member services comprises at least three areas:

- Communicating, which includes both providing information to and receiving information from a broad audience of stakeholders to promote and develop the work of the entire organisation through Social Media, Blogs Photo-sharing and static websites.
- Communicating, both to and receiving information from targeted groups and individuals the specific activities of projects and services of the organisation through Social Media, Blogs Photo-sharing and static websites.
- The use of email and other information technologies in the everyday work of the organisation.

## Purpose of the document

This document serves as a set of guidelines to inform practice. It conforms to existing policies within Youth Work Ireland and its member services, with The Youth Work Ireland Child Protection Policy taking precedence amongst all of these, followed by local Member Youth Service staff handbooks, Human Resources Policies and Agreements. For a full list of relevant national policies, please see Appendix 1.

Putting this document in place will not only ensure that information exists to guide young people, volunteers and staff in safe digital engagement, but it will also:

- Provide a basis for the provision of the McAfee Digital Safety Programme with trained and supported Youth Work Ireland Services.
- Eventually inform the development of an agreed national policy for Youth Work Ireland and its members.
- Provide the basis for a training programme for all YWI members on the use of recommended platforms and tools.

It should be noted that this document is not designed with volunteers or young people as its primary audience. However, the principles, ethos and directions provided here are relevant to young people, volunteers, staff and contractors and 3<sup>rd</sup> parties/partners within Youth Work Ireland and its member services. As such, this document will serve as a basis for future documents that will more effectively communicate the contents of these guidelines to all stakeholders we work with.

# Goals of this document

1. The overall goal of this document is ensuring the safe and effective use of digital engagement within Youth Work Ireland and its member services and all constituents and stakeholders involved in these.
2. Defining approved arenas of conversation and how to moderate them.
3. Describing the platforms that a group would and would not like to have a presence on.
4. Ensuring that young people, volunteer, staff and contractors and 3<sup>rd</sup> parties/partners within Youth Work Ireland are provided with information and guidance to assist them in feeling comfortable and confident within their digital communication.

## Context

Over the past ten years Youth Work Ireland has produced a number of resources to support online safety for young people, youth workers and volunteers. These include:

- *Appropriate Use of Social Networking Tools: Guidelines for Youth Work Staff and Volunteers*
- *Youth Work Ireland Safe Social Networking Guidelines*
- *Youth Work Ireland Safe Surfing Guidelines*
- *Social Media Networking Learning Resource Pack*

Other policies relevant to this area include the Youth Work Ireland Child Protection Policy

[http://youthworkireland.ie/images/uploads/general/Child\\_Protection\\_Interim\\_Policy\\_final\\_draft\\_approved\\_by\\_the\\_Board\\_23\\_March\\_2013.pdf](http://youthworkireland.ie/images/uploads/general/Child_Protection_Interim_Policy_final_draft_approved_by_the_Board_23_March_2013.pdf)

Given the speed at which the online world moves, and the fact that young people are particularly active in the online world, Youth Work Ireland has a duty of care to ensure that our guidelines, resources and training in this area are up-to-date and fit for purpose.

The dangers of the online world are evident in news reports and in our daily conversations with the young people we work with. We live in an “always-on” culture comprising social media, networking and the risk of “over-communication”. Taken together, this “always-on” culture brings a new set of concerns for professionals working with young people. A strengths-based view of young people, however, compels us to look at the potential of the online world to empower young people and enable them as well as to protect them.

In digital engagement, as in every arena of young people’s lives, our role as youth workers is to empower young people to explore and realise their potential as individuals, as groups and as members of Irish and a global society. In doing so, our duty of care demands that we eliminate or reduce risks to the extent that is reasonable or within our power as professionals. Our approach to both empowering and protecting young people is the same in that we continuously seek to build on the strengths of young people so that they are actively involved in both their own protection and development. Likewise, our approach is deliberately informed by our own best practice and international best practice from leading providers such as McAfee.

The changing context for young people highlights and validates youth work as an approach to supporting the needs and aspirations of young people. Youth work is amenable to use through digital engagement, it can be used to support young people experiencing difficulties or who wish to take up opportunities through digital media and it is a support for young people who do not want to, or cannot engage with digital media.

Organisational, Youth Work Ireland is coming from a situation in which both nationally and in local services staff are using digital engagement tools in diverse ways. These platforms include, but are not limited to Twitter, Google+, Second Life and Facebook. The tools themselves are not uniformly used amongst Member Services and some members have been using certain tools that others are not. Likewise, some member services have been using tools in ways that others are not.

Such a situation is not consistent with best practice and these guidelines will move the entire organisation towards a standard, evidence-informed way of using digital engagement tools. In this way, these guidelines will also move Youth Work Ireland towards:

- A state of collective readiness for the roll out of the McAfee Digital Safety Programme with trained and supported Youth Work Ireland Services.
- The development of an agreed national digital engagement policy for Youth Work Ireland and its members.
- The development of training for all YWI members on the use of recommended platforms and tools.

## Core Values of Youth Work Ireland in relation to

The approach to digital engagement taken here is that the values and principles that guide youth work practitioners in their everyday practice in the real world is the basis for their behaviour in digital engagement. The contrary is true as well, what is inappropriate in youth work with young people is inappropriate in digital engagement. For this reason, the core values of the actual organisation should be reflected in their digital guidelines;

- **A commitment to a positive view of young people rights and equality.** Appropriate content is not just about ensuring that we do not offend, youth work is about positive social change and so must be our use of images and words. Images and text that we disseminate and link to through digital means must not only be consistent with our commitment to rights and equality, but also should challenge ideas that are derogatory and do not respect the rights of others.
- **Privacy of staff members, volunteers and young people.** Individuals have rights; including the right to privacy, beyond that, effective youth work relationships require active attention to appropriate boundaries that require a separation between the private lives of staff and volunteers and their engagement with young people. These boundaries need to be protected and attended to by both staff/volunteers themselves and the organisation. Importantly, the maintenance of this privacy does not give licence to behaviour in private that is contrary to the agreed values of the organisation.
- **Privacy of the organisation.** The security of proprietary information, commercially sensitive information, information that relates to the security, financial and physical safety of the organisation and the staff, volunteers and young people that comprise the organisation is the responsibility of all staff.

- **Respect for the law.** File sharing, linking to inappropriate websites etc. In accordance with employee handbooks and contracts, all staff are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with legislation and a level of common decency, grey areas in terms of copyright, legality, data protection, should be avoided rather than approached.
- **Clarity of communication.** Clarity of communication is not merely a preference, it is our duty to ensure that the information that we provide to young people and the communities that we work with can be understood by all. We also have a duty to ensure that the organisation that we represent is presented in a manner consistent with all procedures that have been set out for communicating the brand, values and beliefs of the organisation.

## Organisational Account Holders and Procedures for Using and Controlling Account Information

Organisational Account Holders and Procedures for using and controlling account information with member youth services;

- Ensure that a regular audit (at least once a year) takes place to identify all existing social media used by your service.
- Decide on and document an organisational strategy regarding which platforms the organisation will use and what personnel will have administration rights/passwords to these platforms. A full list of all accounts and passwords should be compiled and held centrally (see below in relation to passwords).
- Remove any unauthorised accounts or duplicate accounts.
- Ensure the platforms you use are appropriate for the young people concerned – i.e. do not use Facebook to communicate with a junior youth group who are under 13.
- Ensure that at least two youth workers are responsible for any given account or suite of accounts.
- Ensure that all communication is under the identity of the organisation and not any individual

## Password Creation & Storage

Passwords are an important aspect of computer security, particularly on online social media platforms. All staff with access to Youth Work Ireland accounts or who are responsible for managing and updating social media sites on behalf of Youth Work Ireland are responsible for taking the appropriate steps, to select and secure passwords.

### Password Creation

- Passwords should have at least six characters.
- Passwords should use at least three of the four available character types: lowercase letters, uppercase letters, numbers, symbols and space
- Passwords should not contain the creator's name or any personal details.
- Passwords should not contain easily remembered numbers such as street address or phone numbers.
- Passwords should not use common words or reverse spelling of words in part of your password.
- Passwords should not use commonly used acronyms.

- The same passwords should not be used for multiple accounts.
- It is recommended that passwords have a Maximum of 60 days and a minimum age of 2 days

### **Passwords Storage**

- Passwords must be held in an encrypted document with access limited to those members of staff with authorisation
- Passwords must not be held in a file on computer system or mobile devices (phone, tablet) without encryption.
- Passwords must not be shared with anyone unless they are authorised to access said account or have manager/editor status, as with social media.
- Passwords must not be inserted into email messages or revealed over the phone to anyone.
- It is recommended users do not use the "Remember Password" feature of applications (for example, web browsers).
- Any staff member suspecting that his/her password may have been compromised must report the incident immediately and change all passwords.

## **Personal Digital Media – Using your own digital accounts outside of work time**

As a rule, be aware that anything that you do online could potentially be seen by anyone. There is no such thing as a truly secure form of communication; any digital media can be accessed by others. Staff should also be aware that some communication may be subject to Freedom of Information requests.

- Do your homework; align your digital engagement with guidelines doc on how to best represent yourself in the use of the recommended digital engagement tools.
- Even though your personal account will not be used in your work activities, you must be conscious that the internet is not a closed system. Think before you post on personal accounts. The context of your post may not be apparent to others, especially young people.
- There is a potential for vicarious engagement in age inappropriate activities through social media.
- Remember that when using your own personal digital accounts, you are communicating as an individual not as your parent organisation. Under normal circumstances it is difficult to foresee an individual being asked to communicate on behalf of your organisation through your personal account. Therefore, an individual should only ever communicate on behalf of your organisation if given explicit authorisation to do so.
- In your own use of personal digital media, you can assist the organisation by being vigilant for negative feedback online re: persons or clubs, or other information relevant to the work context and report appropriately.
- Inappropriate personal content should be moderated. Ensure privacy settings and content control does not compromise your affiliated role in the organisation.

Groups and personal profiles this section refers to using group/project pages to communicate to participants rather than using personal pages from the point of view of the worker

Make sure all your networking efforts pass the six judgments. How you look, how you act, what you say, how you say it, where you say it, with whom you say it.

## Personal Digital Media Usage & Young People

Vocabulary of social media platforms is generally difficult for a youth to navigate or reconcile. Some basic concepts that young people should be made aware of and that youth workers should be prepared to communicate to young people are:

- **Friends** - The concept of a friend and the innate values of friendship should be understood by young people and youth workers are in an ideal position to assist young people to explore this. In discussing the concept of “friends” in the context of social media, youth workers should make it clear that the vocabulary used by social networks promotes the ideas of “friends, likes, sharing” to promote positive connotations. This is essentially a false sense of security and can lead to young people lowering their guard in their online life in ways they would never lower their guard in the real world by over sharing and expressing themselves in potentially harmful ways. Young people should be encouraged to ensure that they realise that social network "friends" are not necessarily their real friends. Remember that your online friends are not really your friends. You may like them, think they understand the real you, and even connect. But unless you know them offline, they are not real friends. They are just cyber friends. People who are smarter than you have been tricked. Do not become a victim!
- **Unfriending** - Social networks deliberately use “unfriend, block and delete,” harsh nouns and adjectives to dissuade users from breaking connections. It is important that young people understand that this language, while purposely used by social networks to seem like harsh and inappropriate behaviour, is the most appropriate way to behave towards people who are not their friends, or do not behave like friends.
- **Trolls and dealing with them** - A “Troll” is a person who uses the internet as a tool to deliberately upset people. Like all bullies they are looking for a fight. A troll hides behind the illusion of Anonymity. The best way of dealing with a troll is to simply ignore it.

## Reporting

In every member service, staff/volunteers should know how to record and report any concerns about young people's safety to their line managers, or, where relevant, how to report any child protection concerns to the relevant authorities. This should be covered within the organisations Child Protection.

### **Identify clear paths of reporting for incidents.**

- Over-engagement of staff with youth and vice versa.
- Bullying behaviour on digital platforms i.e. Cyberbullying
- Inappropriate content or suggestions, sexual, racial etc.
- Personal safety, threats to youth themselves, other youths or staff members.

# Digital Engagement Platforms

These are the main platforms that the organisation will support and will employ in its digital engagement:

## **Facebook**

Facebook is a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them. People use Facebook to keep up with friends, to share links, to share photos and videos of themselves and their friends, and to learn more about the people they meet.

## **Twitter**

Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that allows its users to send and read other users' updates (otherwise known as tweets), which are text-based posts of up to 140 characters in length. Updates are displayed on the user's profile page and delivered to other users who have signed up to receive them. Twitter has become very popular with celebrities thus giving it a lot of media publicity in recent times. Senders can restrict delivery of their messages and updates to those in their circle of friends. Users can receive updates via the Twitter website, SMS, RSS, or email, or through a range of its applications such as TwitterMobile, Tweetie, Twinkle, TwitterFox, Twitterrific, Feedalizr, and also Facebook.

## **YouTube**

YouTube is a free video sharing website that lets registered users upload and share video clips online at the YouTube.com website. To only view videos you are not required to register. It was launched in 2005 by former PayPal employees and the site was acquired by Google Inc. in October 2006. YouTube is not for young people under the age of 13.

# **Platform Suitability and arenas of conversation**

A fundamental principle of communication is that the way information is communicated has more of a profound effect on the person receiving the information than the information itself. A resignation letter written on a post-it note will not be taken seriously. Using the most appropriate form of communication is a key decision.

With regard to what platforms a youth service should use, it is important to be aware of the nature and characteristics of each platform. In this high-speed technological world, new apps/platforms appear every day; therefore, our engagement with such requires appropriate discernment.

Various platforms that are available are associated with negativity, bullying and inappropriate content. Therefore, as a professional organisation we should avoid using such sites/platforms.

This section is a more in-depth look at the suitability of particular platforms and outlines the roles each participant has on a platform and which elements are appropriate depending on the actor.

## **Facebook**

### *Role of the organisation*

The organisation should aim to create and manage organisational and/or project pages and encourage workers to communicate with young people/participants via these profiles and not via the individual identify of the worker.

### *Role of individual youth workers/youth project*

A youth worker may have Personal and Professional page. It is important that staff keep these pages separate and do not allow young people to link to or view their Personal page through their Professional page.

When staff interact with young people directly over a digital platform it is best practice to keep the conversation open and transparent. To this end, private messaging may not be used.

### *Role of Volunteer/Youth Club*

A youth club or volunteer can have a presence on club social media using a generic alias – i.e. volunteers should not be fully identifiable and ensure that they can't be connected with as private individuals through the club social media presence. Club volunteers should also refrain from interacting directly with young people through private messaging.

### *Role of Young People*

A young person should only participate if age appropriate and consent is given, etc.

## **Twitter**

### *Role of the organisation*

The organisation could use this platform on the basis of organisation/project accounts and not have staff communicating on behalf of the organisation via personal accounts.

### *Role of individual youth workers/youth project*

A youth worker may have Personal and Professional pages kept separate. Interacts with youth group directly over digital platform but keeps conversation open and transparent.

### *Role of Volunteer/Youth Club*

A youth club or volunteer can have a presence on a generic alias, communicates club related activities and promotes events. No direct interaction with individuals.

### *Role of Young People*

A young person should only participate if age appropriate and consent is given, etc.

## **YouTube**

### *Role of the organisation*

The organisation can utilise this platform to good effect for PR purposes and for evidencing the work. Content should always be kept age appropriate with regard to posting content and when using other content from the platform.

*Role of individual youth workers/youth project*

A youth worker may have Personal and Professional pages kept separate. Interacts with youth group directly over digital platform but keeps conversation open and transparent.

*Role of Volunteer/Youth Club*

A youth club or volunteer can have a presence on a generic alias, communicates club related activities and promotes events. No direct interaction with individuals.

*Role of Young People*

A young person should only participate if age appropriate and consent is given, etc.

## **Appendix 1. List of relevant national policies.**

Youth Work Ireland Child Protection Policy

[http://youthworkireland.ie/images/uploads/general/Child\\_Protection\\_Interim\\_Policy\\_final\\_draft\\_approved\\_by\\_the\\_Board\\_23\\_March\\_2013.pdf](http://youthworkireland.ie/images/uploads/general/Child_Protection_Interim_Policy_final_draft_approved_by_the_Board_23_March_2013.pdf)

Youth Work Ireland Youth Participation Policy

[http://youthworkireland.ie/images/uploads/general/Youth\\_Work\\_Ireland\\_Participation\\_Policy\\_Final.pdf](http://youthworkireland.ie/images/uploads/general/Youth_Work_Ireland_Participation_Policy_Final.pdf)

## **Appendix 2. General Definitions**

### **A**

- Avatar – An avatar is an image or username that represents a person online, most often within forums and social networks.

### **B**

- Bio – A bio on social media refers to a short bit of explainer text that explains who the user is. Often used on Twitter.
- Blog – Blog is a word that was created from two words: "web log." Blogs are usually maintained by an individual or a business with regular entries of content on a specific topic, description of events, or other resources such as graphics or videos. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning *to maintain or add content to a blog*.
- Bookmarking – Bookmarking online follows the same idea of placing a bookmark in a physical publication; you're simply marking something you found important, enjoyed, or want to continue to read later. The only difference online is that it is happening through websites using one of various bookmarking services available.

### **C**

- Chat – Chat can refer to any kind of communication over the internet but traditionally refers to one-on-one communication through a text-based chat application, referred to as instant messaging [IM] applications.
- Comment – A comment is a response that is often provided as an answer or reaction to a blog post or message on a social network.

### **D**

- Direct Message – Also referred to as "DMs," direct messages are private conversations that occur on Twitter. Both parties must be following one another to send a message.

## **F**

- Fans – This is the term used to describe people who like your Facebook page.
- Favourite – Represented by the small star icon on Twitter, favouriting a tweet signals to the creator that you liked their content or post.
- Follower – In a social media setting, a follower refers to a person who subscribes to your account in order to receive your updates.
- Friends – This is the term used on Facebook to represent the connections you make and the people you follow. These are individuals you consider to be friendly enough with you to see your Facebook profile and engage with you.

## **G**

- Geotag – A geotag is the directional coordinates that can be attached to a piece of content online. For example, Instagram and Facebook users often use geotagging to highlight the location in which their photo was taken.

## **H**

- Handle – This is the term used to describe someone's @username on Twitter.
- Header Image – This refers to the large photo displayed at the top of your profile on Twitter. The header image is also commonly referred to as the banner image on LinkedIn or the cover image on Facebook.
- Hashtag – A hashtag is a tag used on a variety of social networks as a way to annotate a message. A hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by a "#." Social networks use hashtags to categorise information and make it easily searchable for users.

## **I**

- Instagram – Instagram is a photo sharing application that lets users take photos, apply filters to their images, and share the photos instantly on the Instagram network and other social networks like Facebook, Flickr, and Twitter. The app is targeted toward mobile social sharing, and has gained more than 300 million users.
- Instant Messaging – This is a form of real-time, direct text-based communication between two or more people. More advanced instant messaging software clients also allow enhanced mode of communication, such as live voice or video calling.

## **L**

- Like – A like is an action that can be made by a Facebook or Instagram user. Instead of writing a comment or sharing a post, a user can click the Like button as a quick way to show approval.
- LinkedIn – LinkedIn is a business-oriented social networking site with over 380 million members in over 200 countries and territories. Founded in December 2002 and launched in

May 2003, it is mainly used for professional networking.

- Listed – The act of being "listed" on Twitter refers to when a user curates a custom list of Twitter users to more easily keep tabs on their tweets.
- Lurker – A lurker online is a person who reads discussions on a message board, newsgroup, social network, or other interactive system, but rarely or never participates in the discussion.

## M

- Meme – A meme on the internet is used to describe a thought, idea, joke, or concept that's widely shared online. It is typically an image with text above and below, but it can also come in video and link form.
- Mention – A mention is a Twitter term used to describe an instance in which a user includes someone else's @username in their tweet to attribute a piece of content or start a discussion.

## N

- News feed – A news feed is literally a feed full of news. On Facebook, the News Feed is the homepage of users' accounts where they can see all the latest updates from their friends. The news feed on Twitter is called Timeline.

## R

- Reddit – This is a social media news site that contains specific, topic-oriented communities of users who share and comment on stories.
- Reply – A reply is a Twitter action that allows a user to respond to a tweet through a separate tweet that begins with the other users @username. This differs from a mention, because tweets that start with an @username only appears in the timelines of users who follow both parties.
- Retweet – a retweet is when someone on Twitter sees your message and decides to re-share it with their followers. A retweet button allows them to quickly resend the message with attribution to the original sharer's name.

## S

- Selfie - A selfie is a self-portrait that is typically taken using the reverse camera screen on a smartphone or by using a selfie stick (a pole that attaches to your camera). Selfies are commonly shared on social media networks like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook using the hashtag #selfie.
- Skype - Skype is a free program that allows for text, audio, and video chats between users. Additionally, users can purchase plans to place phone calls through their Skype account.
- Snapchat - Snapchat is a social app that allows users to send and receive time-sensitive photos and videos known as "snaps," which are hidden from the recipients once the time limit expires (images and videos still remain on the Snapchat server). Users can add text and

drawings to their snaps and control the list of recipients in which they send them to.

- Snapchat Story – A Snapchat story is a string of Snapchats that lasts for 24 hours. Users can create stories to be shared with all Snapchatters or just a customised group of recipients.

## I

- Tag – Tagging is a social media functionality commonly used on Facebook and Instagram that allows users to create a link back to the profile of the person shown in the picture or targeted by the update.
- Trending Topics – These refer to the most talked about topics and hashtags on a social media network. These commonly appear on networks like Twitter and Facebook and serve as clickable links in which users can either click through to join the conversation or simply browse the related content.
- Troll – A troll or internet troll refers to a person who is known for creating controversy in an online setting. They typically hang out in forums, comment sections, and chat rooms with the intent of disrupting the conversation on a piece of content by providing commentary that aims to evoke a reaction.
- Tumblr – This is a microblogging platform that allows users to post text, images, video, audio, links, and quotes to their blog. Users can also follow other blogs and repost another users' content to their own blog.
- Twitterverse – Also referred to as the Twittersphere, Twitterverse is a nickname for the community of users who are active on Twitter.

## V

- Vine – Founded in 2012, Vine is a social video sharing service in which users create and engagement with short-form, six-second video clips. Videos published through the service are easily shared across other social platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.
- Viral – This is a term used to describe an instance in which a piece of content -- YouTube video, blog article, photo, etc. -- achieves noteworthy awareness. Viral distribution relies heavily on word of mouth and the frequent sharing of one particular piece of content all over the internet.
- Vlogging – Vlogging or a vlog is a piece of content that employs video to tell a story or report on information. Vlogs are common on video sharing networks like YouTube.

(source: <https://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/6126/the-ultimate-glossary-120-social-media-marketing-terms-explained.aspx>)

