# Softball Ulster

Social Media Policy (2021)

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## Document Details

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## Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Below is a list of terms and abbreviations used throughout this document:

| Term | Description | Abbreviation |
|---|---|---|
| Softball Ulster | Regional Council for the sport of softball in the province of Ulster | SU |
| Softball Ireland | National Governing Body for the sport of softball on the island of Ireland | SI |
| Volunteer | Any representative of Softball Ulster e.g. council member, team representative, umpire etc. | - |
| Under 18 | Any player under the age of 18 years | U18 |

# Introduction

## 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, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

## Why do we use social media?
Social media is essential to communicate and engage with our key stakeholders in order to promote events, the work of SU, and raise our profile as well as a useful mechanism to build relationships, capacity, and inform decision-making.

## Why do we need a social media policy?
The difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media. 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 carries 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 an SU device and a personal device.  Before engaging in SU-related social media activity, volunteers must read this policy.  This policy should be read in line with other relevant SU policies and current legislation.

## Setting out the social media policy
This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of SU, and the use of social media by volunteers in both a volunteer and personal capacity.  It sets out what you need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to help volunteers support and expand our official social media channels, while protecting the sport and its reputation and preventing any legal issues.

## Point of contact for social media
The Media Officer ([media@softballulster.com](mailto:media@softballulster.com)) is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our social media channels.  If you have specific questions about any aspect of these channels, speak to the Media Officer.

## Who can publish to our social media channels?
Any member of the SU Council may publish to our social media channels, although monitoring and management of these channels is the ultimate responsibility of the Media Officer.

## Administrator access to our social media channels

Only the following individuals should have 'administrator' access to the SU social media channels: Media Officer, Chairperson and Secretary. All other volunteers contributing to social media should have no greater access than 'editor'.

## Which social media channels do we use?

SU uses the following social media channels:

Facebook – www.facebook.com/softballulster
Twitter – www.twitter.com/softballulster
Instagram – www.instagram.com/softballulster

All social media channels will be used to promote events, games and relevant programming and initiatives of SU and its key stakeholders (including SI and member teams). All posts to social media channels should encourage cross-posting to other social media platforms, and include 'calls to action' (CTAs) to broaden our reach.

All social media posts should include tags and hashtags to help broaden our reach. Examples include: *@softballireland, @softballulster, @team (e.g. @belfastangels), #softballireland, #softball, #softballulster, #team (e.g. #bangorbucs), #event (e.g. #iwd2021), #health, #fitness* etc. This list is not exhaustive and may be added to depending on the circumstances of the post.

# Guidelines

## Using SU's social media channels — appropriate conduct

1. SU is responsible for setting up and managing SU's social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the Media Officer will have access to these accounts.

2. SU will aim to answer all media queries within 48 hours, although as members of the SU Council are volunteers, this may take longer.

3. Be an ambassador for our brand. Volunteers should ensure they reflect SU values in what they post and use our tone of voice when posting content on SU's social media channels.

4. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for SU, and accurately reflects SU's agreed position.

5. Bring value to our audience(s). Answer their questions, help and engage with them.

6. Take care with the presentation of content. Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors. Also check the quality of images.

7. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.

8. If volunteers outside of SU wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should speak to the Media Officer about this.

9. Volunteers shouldn't post content about supporters or service users without their 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 SU. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person under the age of 18, volunteers must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.

10. SU does not permit tagging of vulnerable adults or any child or young person under the age of 18. Any content which raises a safeguarding concern must be reported to the SI Children's Officer (safeguarding@softball.ie) in line with the reporting procedures outlined in the SI Safeguarding Policies (which SU are subject to).

10. Always check facts. Volunteers should not automatically assume that material is accurate and should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification, for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation.

11. Be honest. Say what you know to be true or have a good source for. If you have made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it.

12. Volunteers should refrain from offering personal opinions via SU's social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting'. If you are in doubt about SU's position on a particular issue, please speak to another member of the SU Council.

13. It is vital that SU does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials. For example, a video of a stunt.

14. Volunteers should 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.

15. Volunteers should not set up other Facebook groups or pages, Twitter accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of SU. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, the Media Officer can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following.

16. SU is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties.  We have every right to express views on policy, including the policies of parties, but we can't tell people how to vote.

17. If a complaint is made on SU's social media channels, volunteers should seek advice from the Chairperson before responding.  If they are not available, then volunteers should speak to the Vice-Chair.

18. If you see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on SU or our stakeholders, you should report it to the Media Officer.  All volunteers are responsible for protecting our reputation.

19. Sometimes issues can arise on social media which can escalate into a crisis situation because they are sensitive or risk serious damage to SU's reputation.  The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly.  Not acting can be detrimental to SU and/or the sport.

The Media Officer regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of SU so we can catch any issues or problems early.  If there is an issue that could develop or has already developed into a crisis situation, the Media Officer will do the following: bring it to the immediate attention of the SU Council, so that a plan of action can be agreed.

If any volunteers outside of SU become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on SU's social media channels or elsewhere, they should forward these on to the Media Officer (media@softballulster.com) immediately.


## 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.  SU volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with SU's values and policies, both online and in real life.

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

2. Volunteers who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they work at SU should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with the SU Council.  Similarly,

volunteers who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work for SU should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with the SU Council.

3. Use common sense and good judgement.  Be aware of your association with SU and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the general public, members and funders.

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

5. SU 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 SU, volunteers are expected to hold SU's position of neutrality.  Volunteers who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from SU, and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.

6. Never use SU's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so.  Permission to use logos should be requested from the SU Council.

7. Always protect yourself and the organisation.  Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information.  What your publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so do consider the content carefully.

8. Think about your reputation as well as SU'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 polite and the first to correct your own mistakes.

9. We encourage volunteers to share tweets and posts that we have issued.  When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support SU 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 the SU Council who will respond as appropriate.

## Further guidelines

### Libel
Libel is when a false written statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published online or in print.  Whether volunteers are posting content on social media as part of their job or in a personal capacity, they should not bring SU 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* (UK) or *Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000* (ROI).  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 in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality.  For example, information meant for internal use only or information that SU is not ready to disclose yet.  For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date.  Please refer to our Privacy Policy for further information.

## 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 SU 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

## Religion

SU supports others' rights to hold religious values and beliefs, however the SU social media channels and website should not include content that seeks to advance religion, religious values and beliefs.

## 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 SU Council 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.

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

'real-life' relationship.  Volunteers should ensure that young people have been made aware of the risks of communicating and sharing information online, and given guidance on security/privacy settings as necessary.  Volunteers should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the young person and SU content and other content is appropriate for them. Please refer to the SI Safeguarding Policies (which SU are subject to) for more information.

## Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy.  Participation in social media on behalf of SU is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect.  For volunteers, breaches of policy may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue.  Please refer to our Complaints Policy for further information on disciplinary procedures.  Volunteers who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from the SU Council.

## Disclaimer

Reasonable precautions have been taken to ensure information in this publication is accurate. However it is not intended to be legally comprehensive; it is designed to provide guidance in good faith, without accepting liability.  If relevant, we therefore recommend you take appropriate professional advice before taking any action on the matters covered herein.

## Appendix 1: Suggested Dates to Increase Softball Visibility

SU suggest using the following dates as opportunities for softball promotion.  This list is not exhaustive, and any opportunities for the positive promotion of softball should not be missed.

| Date | Event | Potential Ideas |
|---|---|---|
| 1st January | New Year's Day | Share photos of celebrations |
| February | Black History Month | Celebrate players & volunteers of colour |
| February | LGBT History Month (UK) | Celebrate LGBT players & volunteers |
| 14th February | Valentine's Day | Share photos of couples |
| Early-March | World Book Day (UK) | Share photos of players in costume |
| 8th March | International Women's Day | Celebrate female players & volunteers |
| Mid-March | Mother's Day (UK) | Celebrate players who are mothers |
| 17th March | St. Patrick's Day | Share St. Patrick's photos & graphics |
| 21st March | World Poetry Day | Share softball-related poetry |
| 31st March | SU Anniversary | Share stories, photos and graphics |
| March/April | Easter | Share Easter-themed photos & graphics |
| 1st April | April Fool's Day | Share an April Fool's joke |
| 6th April | International Day of Sport for Development and Peace | Discuss development opportunities and promote the sport, clubs and teams |
| 7th April | World Health Day | Promote the health benefits of softball |
| Early-May | Mental Health Awareness Week | Promote the positive physical, social and mental health benefits of softball |
| 13th June | World Softball Day | Promote the sport, clubs and teams |
| Mid-June | Father's Day (UK) | Celebrate players who are fathers |
| End-June | National School Sports Week | Promote Baseball Academy & Youth |
| Early-August | Belfast Pride | Celebrate LGBT players & volunteers |
| Late-September | National Fitness Day (UK) | Promote the health benefits of softball and winter softball activities planned |
| 31st October | Halloween | Share Halloween themed photos & graphics and/or players in costume |
| 19th November | International Men's Day | Celebrate male players & volunteers |
| 25th December | Christmas Day | Share Xmas themed photos & graphics |
| 31st December | New Year's Eve | Share NYE-themed photos and graphics |