

## **Social media policy**

**Definition:** For the purposes of this policy, social media is any type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes online social forums such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Social Media also covers blogs, and video and image-sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr. This policy extends to the delivery of online classes.

### **1. Standard:**

1.1 The use of social media is an important means of communication both to enhance the profile of Circus Central and the professional profile of individuals. This policy is intended to advise and assist staff, mentors and affiliates using social media either as part of their professional role at Circus Central or in a private capacity where boundaries between work responsibilities and home life can become blurred. It is not intended to restrict the use of the media. Neither is it intended to restrict what individuals say or do in a personal capacity, including expressing critical comments.

1.2 Employees should not spend an excessive amount of time while at work using social media websites. They should ensure that use of social media does not interfere with their other duties.

1.3 Circus Central has responsibilities to maintain the security of its systems and information and to protect its reputation. Individual staff and mentors have a contractual obligation not to misuse Circus Central's resources and not to take action that brings the charity into disrepute.

1.4 Staff, mentors and affiliates have a responsibility to ensure that they do not breach the disciplinary rules of the charity through the use of social media. Breaches of this policy, for example incidents of cyber bullying of colleagues, or social media activity causing serious damage to the organisation, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to dismissal.

1.5 Staff, mentors and affiliates may report any concerns in relation to the content and use of Circus Central's website and social media channels to the designated safeguarding officer or to the board of trustees. This may include – Content posted on any social media channel or the website – Conduct of staff/volunteers or partner organisations on social media – Comments made in relation to Circus Central on social media channels

### **2. Guidance for mentors and staff who use social media as part of their role**

2.1 Those using social media as part of their role are representing Circus Central, they need to ensure that their content and tone is on-topic, professional, and in line with Circus Central policies (e.g. equal opportunities, safeguarding, anti-bullying etc). Best practice encourages mentors, staff and affiliates to check their post with a member of staff before posting.

2.2 Mentors, staff and affiliates should not set up sites, groups or pages that purport to be official Circus Central sites, groups or pages or use official branding without permission.

2.3 All statements made must be true and not misleading. If mentors, staff or affiliates speak about other providers they should ensure comments are factually correct and that they do not disparage the provider. Unnecessary or unproductive arguments should be avoided.

2.4 Mentors staff and affiliates must ensure that they do not disclose any confidential information and maintain standards required in Data Protection legislation. Examples include: financial information, funder discussions, future business performance or plans, or departure of staff.

2.5 Posts should not contain defining information e.g. school jumpers, geographical tags/handles

2.6 If a post contains an error, the mistake should be acknowledged and corrected. The post should not be taken down.

2.7 If content is modified after being posted, for example editing a blog, a note should be added to state when the post was edited and why.

2.8 Mentors, staff and affiliates must not post photographs of people unless they have their permission (any photographs of children and young people under the age of 16 should have parental permission). See Use of Images policy.

2.9 Mentors, staff and affiliates must not tag people unless they have their permission

### **3. Personal use of social media**

3.1 Conduct outside of work may affect employment if the conduct could be said to bring Circus Central into disrepute or where the conduct outside of work compromises their ability to carry out their role effectively or affects work colleagues.

3.2 The same guidance applies for personal use as in points 2.4 and 2.7

3.3 Staff, mentors and affiliates should be aware of breaching data protection requirements, for example, e.g “Joe Bloggs was off sick today” is a breach of the Data Protection Act requirements about the use of sensitive data

3.4 Staff, mentors and associates are discouraged from using social media to express discontent about work. Where complaints arise, individuals are encouraged to speak to a manager, or the board of trustees. The Grievance and Whistleblowing policies should be followed. Individuals are free to express views about Circus Central and will not be liable to any breach of the disciplinary rules so long as they ensure that:

- a) they make it clear that they are “speaking” from a personal perspective
- b) statements are true and can be substantiated
- c) they do not breach confidentiality or other legal requirements

3.5 Concerns regarding the use of social media and how this affects employment should be disclosed to a manager, the board of trustees, or a trade union representative

3.6 Staff, mentors and affiliates should consider their own privacy and check a site’s privacy statement to see what they are signing up to and set privacy settings appropriately. Social network pages, blogs etc are public. They should not put information on them that they do not want others to see.

3.7 ‘Checking in’ Circus Central recommends individuals do not automatically check-in to places and requests you do not check-in to member offices, premises or new pitches in ‘real-time’.

3.8 Despite their professional affiliation with Circus Central, personal use of social media does not represent the official position of the Circus Central and should be considered the product of each individual as a private citizen.

3.9 Where a personal account is used which associates itself or impacts upon Circus Central and its campaigns or programmes, it must be made clear that the individual is not communicating on behalf of Circus Central with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy

3.10 Any content that is uploaded to personal social media accounts, or actions on social media that do not follow these expectations may result in Circus Central following its grievance policy

#### **4. Friending**

4.1 Best practice advises not to become “friends”/ follow or engage with individual vulnerable people associated with Circus Central or our members on any social media account. In this instance vulnerable people includes all young people under 18 years of age. If an invite is made, mentors and staff are advised to let the vulnerable person know that it is policy to NOT friend and/or connect with participants using social media at this time.

4.2 Some of Circus Central’s group teaching requires the use of facebook group functions. E.g. BTEC students, share information regarding intensives and course participation. Where communication with course participants is necessary via social media the following guidelines should be enacted:

- Communication between mentors and participants should be restricted to the group platforms: e.g. posts must be made in the group forum, not private messaging
- A minimum of two members of staff and or mentors must be in each group platform, best practice includes a manager in the group
- Private messaging from participants should be discouraged: ask students to post in the main forum, or if a private issue arises, ask them to meet up in person in accordance with lone-working and safeguarding policies to resolve the matter

4.3 Facebook is the only social media platform where staff and mentors may ‘friend’ vulnerable participants, and solely for the purposes outlined in point 4.2

4.4 Any safeguarding concerns or disclosures should result in the safeguarding policies and procedures being followed. A safeguarding concern should be done in person, not via social media.

#### **5 Cyber bullying**

5.1 Where cyber bullying has been alleged the anti-bullying, safeguarding and the behaviour management policies should be followed.

5.2 Circus Central reserves the right to investigate and manage any complaints where a breach of conduct is alleged

#### **6 Comments on posts/ third party posts**

6.1 The views expressed by any third parties are solely theirs and are not necessarily endorsed by Circus Central

6.2 Circus Central does not pre-moderate comments. Comments are published instantly

6.3 Circus Central reserves the right to moderate comments and remove defamatory or discriminatory posts on their social media channels, and where appropriate enact safeguarding measures to ensure the well-being of staff, mentors, affiliates and participants

6.4 Moderation will not be used to suppress legitimate, reasoned discussion

6.5 Guidelines for posts:

Posts should:

- Remain relevant and on-topic
- Respect other people: not be malicious or offensive in nature, and should not constitute a personal attack on a person's character
- Not incite hatred on the basis of race, religion, gender, nationality or sexuality or any other personal characteristic, or attack affiliated organisations
- Not reveal personal details, such as private addresses, phone numbers, email addresses or other online contact details
- Be reasonably concise, and don't constitute spamming of the site
- Not impersonate or falsely claim to represent a person or organisation
- Not be party political in nature
- Not include swearing, hate-speech or obscenity
- Be legal – this includes libel, condoning illegal activity, and breaking copyright
- Not advertise commercial products and services

## **7. Following**

7.1 Circus Central's decision to follow a particular social media user does not imply endorsement.

7.2 Circus Central will follow accounts that are relevant to our work. This could include following the accounts of companies and other commercial enterprises (and/or their employees) who comment on circus arts, education and performance related issues.

## **8. Replies and direct messages**

8.1 Circus Central will read all @replies and direct messages sent to us within 48 hours and, when possible, will respond to them.

8.2 Due to the volume of traffic on our social media channels, it is not always possible to respond. Circus Central encourages users to use other ways to contact us if their question or comment requires urgent attention.

8.3 Where a complaint or grievance is raised via social media Circus Central will respond to the message in the same location (e.g. post/ direct message) and, in accordance with the complaints and grievances policies and procedures, invite the resolution to move to a more appropriate means of communication ideally as follows:

- Via email
- Resulting in an in-person resolution

Circus Central reserves the right to keep written records relating to complaints and grievances.

## **9. Online Classes**

9.1. Best practice dictates that online classes with vulnerable people should run with two mentors in the stream. Where a second mentor or a member of management is not available to sit in on the stream the session must be recorded and sent to a member of management for review.

9.2 Mentors must ensure they deliver classes from a professional, neutral environment free from distractions and secure.

9.3 Mentors must ensure they are suitable attired for delivering their classes and maintain professional standards at all times.

9.4 All students are advised to wear suitable clothes for a class and to ensure that they take part in the class in a neutral environment.

9.5 Vulnerable students are advised to take classes in a neutral communal area such as a living room.