



SOCIETY OF AFRICAN MISSIONS

Social Media Policy



This policy has been approved by the SMA Safeguarding Committee on: 31/03/2025

This policy has been approved by the Trustees on: 11/06/2025

This policy will be reviewed as often as is necessary by Law/Regulation/Operations and will be updated/amended as required.

Disclaimer: This document does not represent legal advice or purport to be a legal interpretation of legislation or regulation. Whilst every effort is made to ensure that information is accurate, responsibility cannot be accepted for any liability incurred or loss suffered as a consequence of relying on any material published herein.

Appropriate professional advice should be taken before acting or refraining to act on the basis of this document.

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1.0 Introduction

The Society of African Missions recognises the impact, involvement and influence that social media sites such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram have on the lives of adults and young people (under 18 years). We also acknowledge their role in the way in which especially young people interact with each other.

There is great potential in the utilisation of these platforms to aid Communities/Parishes/SMA Dromantine Camp in deepening relationships, encouraging faith, and promoting opportunities and events. Our utilisation of these social media platforms will also aid in promoting positively the work that is actively being done by the Society of African Missions and Youth Ministry.

However, we acknowledge the dangers and potential risks these platforms can pose to Members of the Society, adults, young people and to our Communities/Parishes/SMA Dromantine Camp. Therefore, we recognise that the safeguarding of all must be at the heart of our social media usage.

2.0 Guidelines for Communities/Parishes /SMA Dromantine Camp Using Social Media Platforms with Young People (Under 18's).

***It is essential to get signed consent from parent / guardian of any person under 18 years old that you may be using or communicating with on social media platform.**

*** When messaging any person, do not use the disappearing message function, were it is available.**

2.1 Facebook / Messenger

Any Community/Parish /SMA Dromantine Camp Facebook account must be used for Community/Parish /SMA Dromantine Camp **purposes only** and not as a personal account. All messages must be saved and kept, (both incoming and outgoing) and 'instant messenger' must not be used for one on one communication with young people or vulnerable adults. All contact with young people / vulnerable adults using Facebook must be kept appropriate. What is deemed as appropriate communication will be set out below. The Facebook account must not be utilised after 11pm.

All one to one communication with young people / vulnerable adult/s must be kept in the public eye in order to safeguard both the person and the worker. Communications must be done through the 'Timeline' formally called the 'wall' function and it is advised that this is utilised to reply to any private messages which young people / vulnerable adults may have sent to the page. Messenger must not be used for individual or group chats. In all communications Emoji's must not be used e.g. LOL, BRB and 😊 as these may be misinterpreted. A reference guide can be found at www.smartsocial.com

In the event that a public Timeline post is inappropriate for responding to a young person / vulnerable adult then the Community/Parish /SMA Dromantine Camp Management Team should respond in the following ways;

- Contact the parent/guardian.
- Contact the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).
- In an emergency contact the appropriate authorities.

Members of the Society/Parish /SMA Dromantine Camp Management Team personnel are not permitted to direct message or accept/send friend requests to young people / vulnerable adults from their own personal Facebook account unless known to them personally outside of their role within the Society of African Missions.

2.2 X (formerly Twitter) and other similar accounts, such as Bluesky etc.

Official X (formerly Twitter) accounts must only be used by the person who is appointed as the administrator of X in the Community/Parish /SMA Dromantine Camp. Parish X Accounts must only be used by the allocated person responsible for the management of any social media account. Posts (formally known as Tweets) sent from these accounts must be in line with the ethos and guiding principles of the Society of African Missions. It is not to be utilised to endorse or promote the Community/ Parish /SMA Dromantine Camp personnel own interests. All Posts (formally known as Tweets) must be saved and not deleted. All communication must be kept appropriate. The X (formerly Twitter) account must not be utilised after 11pm.

Young people are free to 'follow' the Society's /Parish /SMA Dromantine Camp X (formerly Twitter) account however Members, Parishes or SMA Dromantine Management Team cannot 'follow' any young person back.

The accounts that the Members/Parish /SMA Dromantine Management Team are allowed to 'follow' must be organisations or official X accounts e.g. @Pope Francis, @Alpha.

All communication with young people / vulnerable adults via X must be done publicly and on the 'X feed'. X direct messaging must never be utilised. In all posts Emoji's and acronyms must not be used e.g. LOL, YOLO, ☺ as these may be misinterpreted. However, the use of appropriate 'hash-tags' is allowed, e.g. #EasterSunday, #theLordisrisen.

It is advised that those in a position of authority in their Communities/ Parishes /SMA Dromantine Camp Management Team do not direct message or accept/send friend requests to young people / vulnerable adults from their own personal Social Media accounts.

2.3 Instagram

Any Instagram account must only be used by the appointed administrator/s in their Community/ Parish /SMA Dromantine Camp Management Team. Photos uploaded onto the Instagram must be in line with the ethos and guiding principles of the Society of African Missions. It is not to be utilised to showcase the Community/Parish /SMA Dromantine Camp Management personnel's own interests. All photos uploaded to Instagram must be saved in a folder on the computer's hard drive. All uploads must be appropriate in content, i.e. in school uniform or ceremonial clothes and appropriate dress, we need to be conscious that parental permission is essential and that any photo upload could be taken and manipulated by others. Full names should never go with any photo and where possible take group photos and avoid individual photos.

The Instagram account is not to be utilised after 11pm.

Young people/ vulnerable adults are free to 'follow' any Communities/Parishes /SMA Dromantine Camp on Instagram however Members of the Society/Parish/SMA Dromantine Camp Management Team cannot 'follow' any young person/ vulnerable adult back. The accounts the SMA Dromantine Camp are allowed to 'follow' must be organisations or official Instagram accounts e.g. Net Ministries.

Replying to comments on Instagram should be restricted. Members of the Society/Parish /SMA Dromantine Management personnel may reply to a comment on the relevant Instagram post only if it is a query about an event. Replying to general comments is not allowed. Any replies in the comments section must not contain Emoji's or acronyms as these may be misinterpreted by parents, guardians or other young people. Appropriate 'hash tags' are allowed, e.g. #Christmas.

Employees are not permitted to 'follow' young people / vulnerable adults from their own personal Instagram account unless they are known personally to the employee outside of the Society of African Missions.

2.4 Snapchat

The use of Snapchat by any Members of the Society/Parish /SMA Dromantine Management Team is not permitted. Snapchat is a picture and video sharing app with an ephemeral nature. This means that the pictures/videos taken and shared are only viewable for up to 10 seconds before they disappear from the recipient's phone – images and messages cannot be saved on the app. Because of its nature it is impossible to safeguard the use of Snapchat, hence the decision to implement a no use policy in relation to this social media app.

2.5 WhatsApp

The Age Requirement to use WhatsApp has been lowered in 2024, you must be at least 13 years old to use WhatsApp.

WhatsApp can be a great tool for creating group messages between young people however when doing this make sure you have sought written parental permission first.

If the youth group is made up of both over and under 18's – a separate WhatsApp chat group should be set up for both age groups.

At least 2 adults (who have been Garda vetted) must be part of a WhatsApp group chat. Only vetted leaders can be part of a group with u18's.

As a young person leaves the youth group, they should immediately be deleted off the group WhatsApp chat.

When using WhatsApp group chats you should be aware that adding people to the group discloses their mobile number to the rest of the group.

WhatsApp allows you to back up your chats, as a leader we stress that you do this.

You should never use the disappearing function on WhatsApps.

2.6 Tiktok

Any TikTok account must only be used by the appointed administrator for the Members of the Society/Parish /SMA Dromantine Management Team. Videos uploaded onto the TikTok must be in line with the ethos and guiding principles of the Society of African Missions. It is not to be utilised to showcase the Communities/Parish /SMA Dromantine Team Management personnel's own interests. All videos uploaded to TikTok must be saved in

a folder on the computer hard drive. All uploads must be appropriate. The TikTok account is not to be utilised after 11pm.

Young people are free to 'follow' any Community/Parishes /SMA Dromantine Camp on TikTok, however Members of the Society/Parishes /SMA Dromantine Management Team cannot 'follow' any young person / vulnerable adult back.

The accounts of the Communities/Parishes/SMA Dromantine Camp are allowed to 'follow' must be organisations or official TikTok accounts e.g. Net Ministries or another parish in the diocese.

Replying to comments on TikTok should be restricted. Members of the Society/Parish /SMA Dromantine Management Team personnel may reply to a comment on the relevant TikTok post only if it is a query about an event. Replying to general comments is not allowed. Any replies in the comments section must not contain Emoji's as these may be misinterpreted.

Appropriate 'hash tags' are allowed, e.g. #Christmas.

Employees are not permitted to 'follow' young people / vulnerable adults from their own personal account unless they are known personally to the employee outside of the Society of African Missions/Parish / Youth Ministry, or before they began their term of employment with the Society of African Missions.

2.7 YouTube

Any Community/Parish / SMA Dromantine Camp using YouTube must do so responsibly. When uploading any video ensure you click the most appropriate forum to upload, i.e. mark content as appropriate for children or adult.

3.0 General Guidelines

Be responsible. When in doubt about the content or tone of a post, leave it out. Although the style of social media text is informal, text should avoid sounding immature or unprofessional.

Be aware of privacy settings. Monitor postings regularly and remove posts that do not abide by site policy or National Board standards. Do not allow any obscene, harassing, offensive, derogatory or defamatory comments and images which reflect/discredit or cause embarrassment to the Society of African Missions, its employees/volunteers, affiliates, and others on any site.

There must be at least two site administrators for each site/social media app to allow for rapid response and continuous monitoring and updating.

Always comply with copyright laws and requirements when posting anything on Diocesan social media accounts.

It is recommended that the "no tagging" option be set on any and all social media (or identified by name in a photograph). Visitor's options should be limited to commenting only and not posting of pictures or videos.

While anyone is free to create and maintain personal websites and social media content, employees should be aware that employers have a right to search their social media platforms.

This policy will be updated yearly in line with changes in Social Media Platforms and legislation.

4.0 Useful websites.

Smartsocial.com-Lists of teen slang, emoji meanings, hashtags lists etc.
<https://smartsocial.com>

Fraud Smart <https://www.fraudsmart.ie>

Webwise <https://www.webwise.ie>

Common Sense Media <https://www.common sense media.org>

Cyber-crime Unit in An Garda Siochana
<https://www.garda.ie/en/crime/cyber-crime/>

Take it down <https://takeitdown.ncmec.org>

Hotline <https://hotline.ie> -to report illegal content online

Relevant legislation

Child Trafficking and pornography Act 1998

<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2020/act/32/enacted/en/print>

Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017

<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/act/2/enacted/en/html>

Data protection Act 2018

<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/7/enacted/en/html>

Digital Services Act 2024

<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2024/act/2/enacted/en/html>

Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2022

<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2020/act/32/enacted/en>

Relevant Policies

Guidance on the use of CCTV and webcams

Communications Policy

Mobile phone and photography guidance

Guidelines for use of social media to broadcast Mass and prayers.

www.safeguarding.ie

www.sma.ie/safeguarding

5.0 Version History

Version	Date Approved by the Trustees	Description: New/Review/Amendments	Owned by	Created by
1.0	11 June 2025	New	Trustees, SMA Members, Staff & Volunteers	SMA DLP (Rosarie O’Riordan) & SMA Safeguarding Committee & Christina Giliberti (CG Online Marketing).