

Social Media Policy

Guidelines for Carers

Summary

Life Without Barriers recognises that social media platforms offer a powerful way for people to connect, communicate, and engage with each other and that as foster carers, you may use social media in a personal capacity.

The safety and well-being of children in our care and carers, who play the vital role of supporting and safeguarding them, is a priority for Life Without Barriers. With all the benefits of social media, the unfortunate reality is there can be negative conduct and commentary.

This guide is designed to help you be aware of potential risks in using social media when you represent yourself as a carer and of your obligations. This guide will also help you exercise judgement and act responsibly when engaging on social media.

As a Life Without Barriers carer, we encourage you to consider these guidelines along with your state's Carer Code of Conduct, Rights and Responsibilities, Child Protection Legislation, and Life Without Barriers' We Put Children First guidelines to ensure the risk from negative social media is reduced as much as possible for you and that the identity of children in your care is protected.

What is social media?

Social media refers to platforms and web-based apps that allow users to freely generate and exchange content, including imagery, audio, and video, for social engagement and networking purposes. This includes blogs, chatrooms, wikis, online photo and video sharing sites, and social media applications and social media networking sites, including Viva Engage (previously known as Yammer).

Examples of social media channels

- Social networking sites, e.g. Facebook and LinkedIn, etc.
- Micro-blogging sites, e.g. X (formerly known as Twitter) or Threads.
- Video and photo sharing websites e.g. YouTube, Instagram, Flickr, or TikTok.
- Web blogs (corporate, personal, or hosted by media outlets), e.g. WordPress
- Chatrooms, discussion boards and forums, e.g. Reddit, or Yahoo!, etc.
- Instant messaging (including SMS), e.g. WhatsApp, Snapchat, or Facebook Messenger.

Social media communication

Social media communication includes material such as posts, comments, replies to comments, conversations, re-posts, blogs, photos, videos, etc., posted on social media channels.

Guiding principles**The privacy of children in care must be protected at all times**

As Carers and staff of Life Without Barriers, you deal with sensitive content. Please respect the confidentiality of children and families by adhering to the following rules:

- Do not discuss or disclose photos or other forms of identifying information about children in care and their families.
- Do not share information posted in forums, on other sites, or in other conversations.

Commenting on social media makes it a public comment

When posting information online, it is important to remember that regardless of privacy settings on social media sites, there is no such thing as a 'private' social media site. Any comment made about children in your care, other carers, staff, or Life Without Barriers on a social media site is a public comment.

Social media has a global reach

When you post a comment on a social media site, it instantly becomes accessible to a global audience. Moreover, when you attach a hashtag (#) to your post, it becomes visible globally to anyone searching for that particular hashtag.

You may be able to limit visibility by adjusting privacy settings; however, please be aware that privacy settings differ between social media channels.

Content posted online could remain online indefinitely

Content once posted is likely to remain online even if you delete it from your account. This is because your posts may be shared by other online community members or because of the information management policies of the social media channel you are posting to.

You are responsible for what you post

Employees are responsible for the communication they post on their personal social media accounts. It is recommended that you only post online what you would do or say off-line or in public. Take into consideration the Life Without Barriers Code of Conduct.

Unintentional breach of privacy or confidentiality is a serious risk

Disclosure of confidential or personal information of children and young people is a serious risk and has serious ramifications. You are encouraged to use discretion when posting on social media to avoid the risk of identifying children and young people.

Photos of children, especially foster care children and clients, should never be shared on social media – even in private settings.

What can I post as a carer?

As a foster and kinship carer with Life Without Barriers, you represent the organisation in your communities. Life Without Barriers encourages you to uphold the values you committed to when undertaking the vital role you play and engage through social media in an appropriate and respectful manner.

You are encouraged to:

- Be mindful that what you post on social media sites may be taken out of context and open you up to personal attacks or online trolling. This is particularly the case when posting in online communities that deal with sensitive topics;
- If you do want to post advice online or ask a question, try broad terms:
Instead of: Hunter (5 yrs.) has just started school at Valentine Public and won't get dressed in the morning. What have you tried that works?
Try: Our LO (little one) just started school but refuses to get dressed in the morning. What have you tried that works?
You can also use:
 - Little Miss (LM)
 - Mr Teenager
 - Miss Teenager
 - Young Adult
- ensure all communication on social media is appropriate and respectful.
- when expressing an opinion about Life Without Barriers matters, state clearly that it is your personal opinion.
- take care when sharing communication from official Life Without Barriers social media channels to your personal accounts and be mindful when adding personal commentary on a Life Without Barriers post.
- be aware of your online 'friends' and contacts and activate appropriate privacy settings on social media sites to ensure online safety and information security. This could help improve your online safety and information security, as well as that of the children and young people in your care.
- If you have posted any material in relation to your role as a carer and are unsure if you have breached the law or your obligations as a carer, please remove the material immediately and seek advice from your local Life Without Barriers office.
- Contact the Digital Content Team (digitalcontent@lwb.org.au):
 - if you become aware of complaints posted on Life Without Barriers' social media channels, and enter the details into iReport immediately so appropriate action can be taken without delay.

- to report any inappropriate or unlawful content relating to Life Without Barriers.
- Seek immediate advice from the Media Team (media@lwb.org.au) if you are contacted by the media through your personal social media accounts about matters related to Life Without Barriers.

You are advised not to:

- identify yourselves as Life Without Barriers carers, employees or volunteers when using social media sites.
- disclose information about children and young people in your care or discuss Life Without Barriers business, whether confidential or not.
- imply that your communication is authored or sanctioned by Life Without Barriers.
- imply authorisation to speak on behalf of Life Without Barriers or Life Without Barriers' endorsement of personal views.
- use the Life Without Barriers name to endorse products, causes, or opinions.
- post any trademark, logo, or copyrighted artwork of Life Without Barriers to social media.
- display any photographs or other images of children and young people in your care.
- disparage or denigrate other carers or Life Without Barriers staff members.
- attempt to defend Life Without Barriers from any negative commentary in online communities. Due to the highly complex nature of our work, sometimes Life Without Barriers may be the focus of negative media interest. At such times, your well-meaning comments could be taken out of context or expose you to personal attacks. Instead, please seek immediate advice from your local Life Without Barriers office.

If you have further questions about these guidelines, please email digitalcontent@lwb.org.au.