



## Social Media Policy

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Linked In) is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other.

Cottage Autism Network Ltd. recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation and organisational reputation.

This policy aims to encourage the safe use of social media by CAN Board of Directors, its volunteers and members.

This policy:

- Applies to all Board Members and to all online communications which directly or indirectly, represent CAN.
- Applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere.
- Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education
- Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to CAN Ltd.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a CAN account or using the CAN name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications are those made via a personal social media account. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with CAN or impacts on CAN, it must be made clear that the Board member is not communicating on behalf of CAN with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon CAN are outside the scope of this policy.

## **Procedures:**

### **1. 1 Roles & Responsibilities:**

#### Board of Directors

- Approve account creation.
- Facilitating training and guidance on Social Media use.
- Developing and implementing the Social Media policy
- Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents.
- Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving the full BOD in the process.

#### Social Media Admin:

- Create the account following BOD approval
- Store account details, including passwords securely
- Be involved in monitoring and contributing to the account
- Control the process for managing an account in the event that the admin has left the organisation (closing or transferring)

#### Volunteers

- Know the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies
- Attending appropriate training
- Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming CAN.
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### **1.2 Process for creating new accounts:**

CAN is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work, e.g. increase membership or awareness. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present their application to the Board of Directors to include the following:-

- The aim of the account
- The intended audience
- How the account will be promoted
- Who will run the account (at least two Board Members should be named)
- Will the account be open or private/closed

Following consideration by the BOD an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the BOD must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of CAN has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly involved with the CAN BOD including volunteers or parents.

### **1.3 Monitoring:**

CAN's Social Media accounts must be monitored continuously and rigorously (preferably 7 days a week, including during holidays). Any comments, queries or complaints made through those

accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or on the next working day if received at a weekend) even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a CAN social media account.

#### **1.4 Behaviour:**

- Cottage Autism Network Ltd. requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies.
- Digital communications by directors and volunteers must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy. BOD/volunteers will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments. CAN social media accounts must not be used for personal gain. Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they finish their involvement .
- Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to CAN activity.
- Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the BOD and will be dealt with accordingly.
- The BOD will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the BOD will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the BOD will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies.

#### **1.5 Legal considerations**

Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.

Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

#### **1.6 Handling abuse**

When acting on behalf of CAN, handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.

If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, CAN admins should block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken

If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse through use of a social networking site, then this action must be reported using the agreed protocols.

#### **1.7 Tone**

The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. Key words to consider when composing messages are:

Engaging

Conversational

Informative

Friendly (on certain platforms, e.g. Facebook)

## **1.8 Use of images**

Use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to.

- Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought from members and/or facilitators. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.
- Under no circumstances should BOD or volunteers share or upload member's pictures online other than to CAN's social media accounts unless permission has been granted.
- BOD and volunteers should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on the CAN accounts. Members should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any list of children whose images must not be published.
- If a member of the Board or volunteer inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.

## **2. Personal use:**

### **2.1 Board of Directors:**

Personal communications are those made via a personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with CAN or impacts on CAN, it must be made clear that the person involved is not communicating on behalf of CAN with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon CAN are outside the scope of this policy.

### **2.2 Volunteers/Members**

Volunteers/Members are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about CAN. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, CAN will ask the volunteer/member to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, refer volunteer/member to CAN's complaints procedures.

### **2.3 Monitoring posts about CAN**

As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to pro-actively monitor the Internet for public postings about CAN.

CAN should effectively respond to social media comments made by others according to a defined policy or process.

## **3. Managing CAN's Social media accounts**

### **The Do's**

- Check with a another Board Member before publishing content that may have controversial implications for the school
- Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views
- Make it clear who is posting content
- Use an appropriate and professional tone
- Be respectful to all parties
- Ensure you have permission to 'share' other peoples' materials and acknowledge the author
- Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner
- Think before responding to comments and, when in doubt, get a second opinion

### **The Don'ts**

- Don't make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring CAN into disrepute
- Don't publish confidential or commercially sensitive material
- Don't breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation
- Consider the appropriateness of content for any audience of CAN supporters, and don't link to, embed or add potentially inappropriate content
- Don't post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing or discriminatory content
- Don't use social media to air internal grievances

### **Social Network Policy Agreement:**

I have read and understood this Social Network Policy and agree to abide by it:

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(Printed Name)

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(Signature)

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(Date)

**Policy updated May 2023**