

## **COWBRIDGE u3a SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE PUBLISHING POLICY**

### **1. Purpose and Scope**

This policy governs the use of social media platforms (currently Facebook and Instagram) by Cowbridge u3a. It applies to all official Cowbridge u3a social media accounts and content posted by designated Social Media Officer(s) on behalf of the Cowbridge u3a. It also applies to the Cowbridge u3a website.

#### **Cowbridge u3a Details:**

- Cowbridge u3a, charity No 1072693
- Members: 271 (September 2025)
- Platforms: Facebook and Instagram
- Designated Officers: 1. Social Media Officer 2. Publicity and Liaison Officer
- Cowbridge u3a website
- Designated Officer: Website Administrator

### **2. Objectives**

Our social media and website presence aims to:

- Promote Cowbridge u3a activities and events to members and non-members
- Share information about interest groups and learning opportunities
- Celebrate member achievements and Cowbridge u3a milestones
- Connect with current and potential members
- Showcase the positive impact of u3a in our community.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Social Media Officers**

- Create and publish content in line with this policy
- Monitor comments and messages on official accounts
- Respond appropriately to public enquiries and comments
- Report any policy breaches or serious issues to Cowbridge u3a Committee
- Take responsibility for content they create and post.

#### **Website Administrator**

- Create and publish content in line with this policy
- Report any policy breaches or serious issues to Cowbridge u3a Committee
- Take responsibility for content they create and post.

#### **Cowbridge u3a Committee and Chair**

- Enforce this policy
- Handle escalated issues or complaints
- Review and update the policy as needed
- Support Social Media Officers and the Website Administrator in policy implementation.

## 4. Content Guidelines

### 4.1 Appropriate Content

#### DO post:

- Information about Cowbridge u3a activities, events, and interest groups
- Educational and informative content relevant to our members
- Positive stories and achievements from Cowbridge u3a activities
- General information about u3a's mission and values
- Photos from events (with appropriate consent - see GDPR section)
- Updates about Cowbridge u3a news and developments
- Community-relevant information that benefits our members
- information from other local u3as when relevant to Cowbridge u3a.

#### DO NOT post:

- Personal opinions on political matters
- Religious content that could be divisive
- Commercial advertisements (unless directly related to u3a activities)
- Personal information about members without consent (see Section 5)
- Controversial or inflammatory content
- Content that could bring the Cowbridge u3a or u3a into disrepute
- Copyrighted material (including photographs) without permission
- Anything that discriminates against any group or individual.

### 4.2 Tone and Style

- Maintain a friendly, welcoming, and inclusive tone
- Use clear, accessible language
- Languages: Posts will be in English but posts in Welsh and English are welcome
- Be positive and encouraging
- Reflect u3a values of learning, laughing, and living
- Keep posts relevant to our audience of adults in their third age
- Be professional. Avoid jokey, sarcastic or personal descriptions.

### 4.3 Social media and internet non-users

As far as possible, do not disadvantage or exclude members who are unable to use, or choose not to use, the internet or social media from essential information. Use additional means of communicating essential information.

### 4.4 u3a Legal Advice and Policy Documents

All posts should adhere to the u3a's relevant legal advice and policy documents, which are available from the Member's area of the u3a website: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/edocman-downloads/advice>

## **5. Legal Compliance and GDPR**

### **5.1 Data Protection**

- Photos and Images: Only post photos where individuals have given oral or written consent or where people cannot be identified
- Personal Information: Never share personal details (names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses) without explicit written consent
- Event Photos: When posting photos from events, ensure attendees were informed that photos might be taken for social media use.
- Member Privacy: Respect members' right to privacy - not everyone wants to be featured on social media. If someone refuses permission, ensure that they are not included in any published photos.

### **5.2 Verification of Information**

- Verify all factual information before posting
- Ensure event details (dates, times, locations) are accurate
- Check with relevant interest group leaders before posting about their activities
- Confirm contact details and booking information are correct.

### **5.3 Copyright and Intellectual Property**

- Only use images and content that are copyright-free, properly licensed, or created by the Third Age Trust (TAT- u3a) or Cowbridge u3a
- Credit sources where appropriate. All photos taken by Cowbridge u3a Committee members and interest groups leaders do not require attribution. Photos provided by individual members or third parties should normally have attribution
- Avoid using copyrighted music in videos without proper licensing.

## **6. Dealing with Mistakes**

### **6.1 Immediate Action**

- If you notice an error in a post, correct it immediately
- If someone else notifies you of an error, verify the correct information urgently
- For factual errors: Edit the post if possible, or delete and repost with correction
- For serious errors: Delete the post immediately and create a new, accurate version.

### **6.2 Reporting and Follow-up**

- Inform the other Social Media Officer, the Website Administrator and Cowbridge u3a Chair of any significant errors
- If the mistake has caused concern or confusion, consider posting a clarification
- Document what went wrong to prevent similar issues in future.

## **7. Managing Public Interaction**

### **7.1 Responding to Comments and Messages**

Positive Engagement:

- Respond promptly to genuine questions and positive comments
- Thank people for their interest and engagement
- Provide helpful information about joining or participating in activities
- Direct complex queries to appropriate committee members
- Be professional. Avoid jokey, sarcastic or personal comments.

## **7.2 Handling Negative or Abusive Comments**

### **Minor Complaints or Criticisms:**

- Respond politely and professionally
- Acknowledge concerns where appropriate
- Offer to discuss the matter privately via direct message
- Avoid getting drawn into lengthy public debates.

### **Abusive, Offensive, or Inappropriate Comments:**

- Do not engage in argument or respond defensively
- Delete comments that are:
  - Abusive, threatening, or containing offensive language
  - Discriminatory or hateful
  - Spam or commercial promotion
  - Clearly irrelevant or disruptive
- Block persistent offenders
- Report serious threats or harassment to platform administrators
- Document incidents and inform the Cowbridge u3a Chair immediately.

### **Escalation Process:**

1. Social Media Officer assesses the situation
2. For serious issues, immediately involve the Cowbridge u3a Chair
3. Cowbridge u3a Committee may be consulted for ongoing problems
4. Consider involving appropriate authorities for genuine threats.

## **8. Crisis Communication**

### **8.1 Serious Issues**

If a post generates significant negative attention or controversy:

- Stop posting new content immediately
- Do not delete the problematic post without consultation
- Contact the Cowbridge u3a Chair immediately
- Document the situation and any responses received
- Allow the Cowbridge u3a Committee to determine the appropriate response.

### **8.2 Emergency Situations**

For genuine emergencies affecting the safety of Cowbridge u3a or members:

- Only post emergency information if specifically authorised by the Cowbridge u3a Chair
- Ensure any emergency information is accurate and helpful.

## **9. Platform-Specific Guidelines**

### **9.1 Facebook**

- Use privacy settings appropriately for different types of content
- Ensure the page is set up as a Community Organisation
- Moderate comments according to this policy
- Use Facebook Events feature for Cowbridge u3a activities.

### **9.2 Instagram**

- Use relevant hashtags to increase visibility (#u3a #Cowbridge #Learning)
- Maintain visual consistency with u3a and Cowbridge u3a branding
- Use Stories feature for timely updates and behind-the-scenes content
- Ensure image quality is good and represents Cowbridge u3a positively.

### **9.3 Website**

- Maintain visual consistency with u3a and Cowbridge u3a branding
- Ensure image quality is good and represents Cowbridge u3a positively
- be aware that website content is indexed by search engines and therefore can be easily found by the public.

## **10. Review and Training**

### **10.1 Policy Review**

- This policy will be reviewed annually by the Cowbridge u3a Committee
- Updates will be made to reflect changes in legislation, platform policies, or u3a Cowbridge needs.

### **10.2 Training and Support**

- New Social Media Officers will be required to agree to this policy
- new Website Administrators will be required to agree to this policy
- Regular informal reviews will be held to discuss challenges and best practices
- External training opportunities will be considered when available.

## **11. Contact and Support**

### **For policy queries or serious issues:**

- Cowbridge u3a Chair 2025/26: Peter Carter
- Cowbridge u3a Vice Chair 2025/26: Elizabeth Eustace

### **For social media and technical issues:**

- Social Media Officer 2025-2026: Anne Thomas
- Publicity and Liaison 2025-2026: Tricia Hulse
- Website Administrator: Graham Couchman

## 12. Agreement and Implementation

By accepting the role of Social Media Officer or Website Administrator, individuals agree to:

- Follow this policy in all their social media activities for Cowbridge u3a
- Take personal responsibility for content they create and post
- Seek guidance when uncertain about policy interpretation
- Report any breaches or concerns to the appropriate committee members

This policy takes effect from Friday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2025 and supersedes any previous informal arrangements.

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### **Document Control:**

- Version: 1.0
- Created: October 2025
- Next Review: October 2026
- Approved by: Cowbridge u3a Committee on 09 October 2025
- Responsibility: Social Media Officers, Website Administrator and Cowbridge u3a Committee