



MARCHES COUNSELLING SERVICE:

## **Social Media Content**

**Includes guidance on:** posting content on behalf of MCS and maintaining MCS social media pages

[www.marchescounselling.org](http://www.marchescounselling.org)

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**Responsible Group:** Board of Trustees, Clinical Management Team, admin team

**Date Ratified:**

**Where this is to be held:** in the main MCS office, digitally

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**1. Introduction**

As part of our marketing strategy MCS considers the use of social media a helpful tool to advertise our services to people, both potential clients & other professionals who might want to work with us or access the training we offer.

In addition it is widely accepted that having a presence on social media helps ensure that MCS stays in the consciousness of the increasing population of people whose first method for finding out about an organization or finding a service is via social media or via a website search. A further factor is that people from generations that are familiar with social media will check the validity of an organization by reviewing its online presence.

With the above context in mind a baseline strategy is to ensure that MCS is visible on the most popular social media sites. Because these operate on the basis of changing content, in order to stay visible, it is useful for us to post fresh content regularly. In order for this to be achievable a number of people need to be involved in updating content. This protocol gives brief guidance to staff & volunteers who undertake to be active on behalf of MCS on the social media sites we use.

## **2 General guidance**

- 2.1 All users will post content from the MCS accounts on each of the sites concerned, not from personal accounts.
- 2.2 The login details – username & password – are not to be shared with others & if written down kept somewhere that cannot be accessed by others who are not authorized to login on behalf of MCS
- 2.3 All staff who have login details for social media sites are asked not to continue to use this information to access MCS sites once they are no longer working with the organization.
- 2.4 The passwords will be changed from time to time to maintain security

## **3 Guidance for people posting content**

- 3.1 Content must always be general & not disclose a bias that could be deemed as associating MCS with a particular political agenda or ideology
- 3.2 Further to the above, social media users should avoid personal opinions in comments they might make on behalf of MCS
- 3.3 Content should not identify any individual associated with MCS unless there is prior permission, & in this case must not disclose any personal associated information about the person concerned. (A user might post details of a training event that names the facilitator but not something they know about the person even if this is done in the spirit of endorsing the said event). A good guide with information of this nature is to check whether it is available in the public domain.
- 3.4 Keeping a social media presence involves re-posting, re-tweeting & liking content posted by others. It is also in the spirit of social media to connect online with other organisations. When involved in such activity MCS users will be selective to ensure that the sharing of such content or linking with an organisation by “following” or connecting as “friends” is in line with the general ethos of MCS (in particular) & the good standing of the therapeutic professions (in general). Thus whilst sharing a news story is not in itself an endorsement of its content people need to be careful (see 3.1) not to occasion an assumed association with such views.
- 3.5 With the above in mind all users should be circumspect so as to avoid any content that is contentious, offensive or discriminatory. Likewise online communities, forums or organisations associated with offensive or discriminatory views & positions should not be accepted as contacts, connections or friends.

- 3.6 Any comments or content posted by people visiting our social media pages that are deemed offensive or otherwise inappropriate, for example breaching someone's right to privacy, should be removed & if in breach of social media site rules, reported.
- 3.7 In general we should hold ourselves to high ideals of fairness and factuality when considering what we post online.
- 3.8 It is an entirely personal choice whether you 'follow', 'like', 'post' or 'tweet' content from the MCS social media page from your own account. But do be aware that if you do so your profile on the social media platform concerned will be informally linked & noticed by a wider audience. It is your responsibility to think about how you might appear online in relation to your professional standing & what you are happy for the public to know.
- 3.9 MCS staff are invited to create blogposts and other content that can be used on our website news page and on social media pages. We very much value such contributions as a means for promoting MCS as a charity and the benefits of psychological therapies generally. All such content should be forwarded to the marketing group for review before posting. For detailed guidelines for writing 'posts', including longer blogposts and short social media posts see Appendix 1.

## **Guidelines for blog posts**

Below are some pointers when writing a themed post that aims to create interest in MCS within the public domain – our website or social media.

This is a broad guideline. The spirit is one of valuing diversity whilst avoiding the potential pitfalls that attend posting material online.

Long blog posts, as a guide, should

- Be around 500-600 words, equivalent to one side of A4 (12pt Times New Roman)
- Make relevant links between the theme (e.g. an international awareness day), and the aims of MCS and/or the practice of therapy.
- Be a considered piece of writing and therefore acknowledges different points of view
- Not be overtly partisan or supportive of a political view. Some awareness days may be seen to be political so issues need to be thought about sensitively to avoid alienating people who might not align with the ‘cause’ that the awareness day refers to.
- not mention anyone in a way that would personally identify them.
- Avoid self-disclosure. A simple question to ask yourself when writing a post is “would I be comfortable with one of my clients associating this with me”. There is great value in writing from the perspective of personal experience but this can be done in a way that avoids self-disclosure. And in a blog post for MCS you don’t need put your name to it, we can post it with the introduction, “One of our counsellors reflects on.....”
- Be well informed but not full of jargon. Remember posts are for a general readership.
- Not represent a view that could be interpreted as critical of MCS or that undermines the charities objectives or otherwise misrepresents the service.
- Not use unattributed quotes

Short posts:

Should not be longer than one or two paragraphs of no more than 70 words in total and be written in line with the guidelines for longer blog posts above

Short posts are ideal for social media which maximises the marketing potential of bite size and easily digestible written material and/or images/info-graphics

Short posts might include

- An inspiring quote you have encountered in your reading or perhaps in the news that relates to the theme (of an international awareness day)
- A brief book review or news item
- A quote (as above) with a sentence about why it inspires you
- An image that illustrates a dimension of the theme (e.g. of an awareness day) with a sentence to clarify in what way and links to MCS aims/practice of therapy