

# **Barking Buds Limited Social Media Policy**

## **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this Social Media Policy is to provide clear guidance for staff and volunteers of Barking Buds Limited when using social media platforms, whether on behalf of the organisation or in a personal capacity. This ensures that all online behaviour aligns with our values, protects our reputation, and safeguards the people we support.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, and anyone representing Barking Buds Limited, both during and outside of working hours.

It covers all forms of social media and online platforms, including (but not limited to):

- Facebook
- Instagram
- TikTok
- X (formerly Twitter)
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- WhatsApp and other messaging apps
- Blogs, forums, and websites

## **3. Guiding Principles**

- **Be respectful:** Treat all individuals with dignity and respect. Avoid language or content that could be considered offensive, discriminatory, or harmful.
- **Maintain professional boundaries:** Do not engage in personal relationships with clients or adult-at-risk individuals via personal social media accounts.
- **Protect confidentiality:** Never post confidential, personal, or sensitive information about clients, staff, or the organisation.
- **Uphold Barking Buds' values:** Ensure any content shared aligns with our values of inclusivity, professionalism, and animal welfare.

## **4. Official Use of Social Media**

Only authorised individuals may post on behalf of Barking Buds Limited through our official accounts. This includes marketing, communications, and designated staff.

When posting on behalf of Barking Buds Limited, users must:

- Follow brand and communication guidelines
- Obtain written consent before posting identifiable images or stories involving clients
- Avoid sharing any unverified information or making public statements about policies, complaints, or ongoing investigations
- Use respectful, inclusive, and professional language at all times

All official communications must be approved by the Managing Director where appropriate.

## **5. Personal Use of Social Media**

We understand that staff and volunteers use social media in a personal capacity. However, when identifying yourself as connected to Barking Buds Limited, or when your content could reasonably be linked to the organisation, you must:

- Make it clear that your views are your own
- Never imply that you are speaking on behalf of the organisation unless authorised
- Avoid engaging in online behaviour that could damage the reputation of Barking Buds Limited
- Refrain from sharing any internal or confidential information
- Not post photos or content involving clients or client dogs without explicit written consent and organisational approval

## **6. Boundaries with Clients and the Public**

To protect both staff/volunteers and clients, the following rules apply:

- Do not “friend,” follow, or otherwise connect with clients on personal accounts
- Do not respond to client concerns via personal messaging apps or accounts—direct them to the appropriate office contact or complaint channel
- Do not engage in private or inappropriate conversations online with adult-at-risk individuals or clients

## **7. Consent for Photos and Videos**

Photographs and videos of clients or their dogs must not be taken or shared without:

- Prior written or verbal consent from the client
- Approval from the office, ensuring use aligns with Barking Buds Limited’s branding and safeguarding standards

Where consent is given, content should still be respectful, appropriate, and in line with our mission.

## **8. Inappropriate Use**

Examples of inappropriate use of social media include:

- Sharing confidential information
- Posting discriminatory or offensive comments
- Harassment or bullying
- Uploading images or videos without consent
- Engaging in political or controversial topics while identifying as a representative of Barking Buds Limited
- Posting misleading information or fake news related to our work

Such actions may result in disciplinary action, including removal from a volunteer role or termination of employment.

## **9. Reporting Concerns**

If you see content online that could negatively impact Barking Buds Limited, or if you are concerned about a colleague's social media behaviour:

- Report it to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead** or your line manager immediately
- Do not attempt to respond or engage publicly

## **10. Breach of Policy**

Failure to follow this policy may lead to disciplinary action under the relevant procedure. In serious cases, it may also result in dismissal or removal from volunteering roles, and/or be reported to relevant safeguarding authorities.

## **11. Review and Updates**

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if needed to reflect changes in legislation, social media practices, or organisational needs.

## **12. Contact**

For questions or further guidance regarding this policy, please contact:

**Barking Buds Limited**

Email: Beth@barkingbuds.co.uk

Phone: 07842516667

Website: [www.barkingbuds.co.uk](http://www.barkingbuds.co.uk)

Safeguarding Lead: Bethany Kent – beth@barkingbuds.co.uk

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