



SoLO  
Life  
Opportunities

38 Walnut Close  
Chelmsley Wood  
Birmingham  
B37 7PU

Charity No. 1102297  
England Company No.  
5025939

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **Communication Policy**

**Category:** staff and volunteers

#### **Policy Statement**

SoLO recognises that communication is the life blood of any organisation. If communication is good the results are:

- Engaged and happy workforce who are committed to shared aims and vision
- Safe consistent practice
- Informed wider public who have clear understanding of what SoLO does
- Efficient and effective processes

Poor communication, however, can mean that:

- Workforce feel devalued, disengaged and not signed up to the core values of the organisation
- Wider public do not understand what SoLO does and consequently they miss out on opportunities that are on offer
- Time is wasted on misunderstanding and work is duplicated or missed.
- Reputations are damaged and people are put at risk

SoLO strives to ensure that communication channels are understood by all and have sensible boundaries and framework for people to work within.

#### **Clarification of Communication**

This policy covers communication in all its forms:

- Verbal (or signed)
- The written word – emails, letters, memoranda etc.

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Reviewed: Feb 2017  
Next Review Date: Feb 2019

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- Social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. remove any ambiguity
- Website
- Publicity and Marketing

SoLO staff and volunteers are at all times expected to communicate in a fashion that reflects the principles and values of the organisation. This Communication Policy outlines staff and volunteer responsibilities when using the communication tools provided by SoLO. SoLO reserves the absolute right to monitor employees' use of all forms of communication to ensure this policy is being adhered to.

Any communication within the organisation and outside should reflect SoLO's values of respect and excellence. The organisation has an ethos of active fun and this should also be reflected within any communication. This approach to fun should be balanced by presenting ourselves in a professional manner, and recognise personal preferences. Humour is a great way to portray active fun, however, as it can have an element of risk it is advised that staff obtain a second view on what is being communicated and always adhere to agreed protocols regarding sign off.

All communication should reflect SoLO's corporate image ensuring consistent messages are given both verbally and pictorially. This policy should be read in conjunction with SoLO's branding guidelines as well as the marketing and communication plan which gives guidance on focus, timing and permissions.

### Accessibility

It is SoLO's policy to maximise the accessibility of information to its intended audience. Easy read versions of key documents such as policies and procedures, letters and promotional material should be made available if requested wherever possible.

In general communication fonts used will be based on audience, taking into account good practice guidance such as the RNIB and UKAAF clear print guidance.

## Procedures

### 1. Use of photos

Parent or carer permission is required for photos used in any communication. Additional notification should be given if anything will appear in the press or on a public leaflet.

## 2. Common language

To be used on all communications

<b>Word</b>	<b>Description</b>
Members	People who access SoLO's services
Staff Members	Paid staff/workers
Volunteers	People giving their time for no remuneration
Project	Where a service is provided in one fixed place
Services	In respect of other services – e.g. Personal Assistants, Plan4U
<b>Word</b>	<b>Description</b>
Subs/Subscriptions	Payments given by members to access a project or service
Holiday Activities	Projects/services for children during the holidays
Bases	The two buildings used by SoLO to deliver some services/projects
Personal Assistant	A SoLO staff member who supports a person with a learning disability on a one to one basis under the personal assistants service
Learning Disability	Defines the type of person that we work with predominately.
Moderate	Lower level of support required
Severe	Higher level of support required
Profound /Multiple	Severe learning disability and physical disability

## 3. Website

The SoLO website is the front face of the organisation and provides one of the most important ways (second only to word of mouth) that we communicate our message to the wider public.

It contains:

- Home page – giving general information, links to relevant pages, testimonials and senior staff information
- What we do – information about projects and services
- About – vision, value and history
- Help SoLO - Volunteering/Fundraising

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- Events – fundraising or general
- Blog – weekly update from CEO or other
- News – the most up to date important information
- Corporate – policies
- Annual reports
- Photo gallery – a range of photos from across the organisation
- Trustees

Senior Managers are responsible for the information on the website ensuring that it is up to date, accurate and photos are refreshed regularly for their area of responsibility. They can delegate the updating to competent project managers and administrative staff, according to priorities and agreed workload. Information must be checked for relevance every Friday when communication bulletin is released by administrative staff.

Senior Administrative Staff are responsible for ensuring that events are publicised in a timely manner and removed immediately after the event.

The CEO has responsibility for a weekly blog and has overall authority on any significant changes to the structure of the website, including the embedding of DVDs.

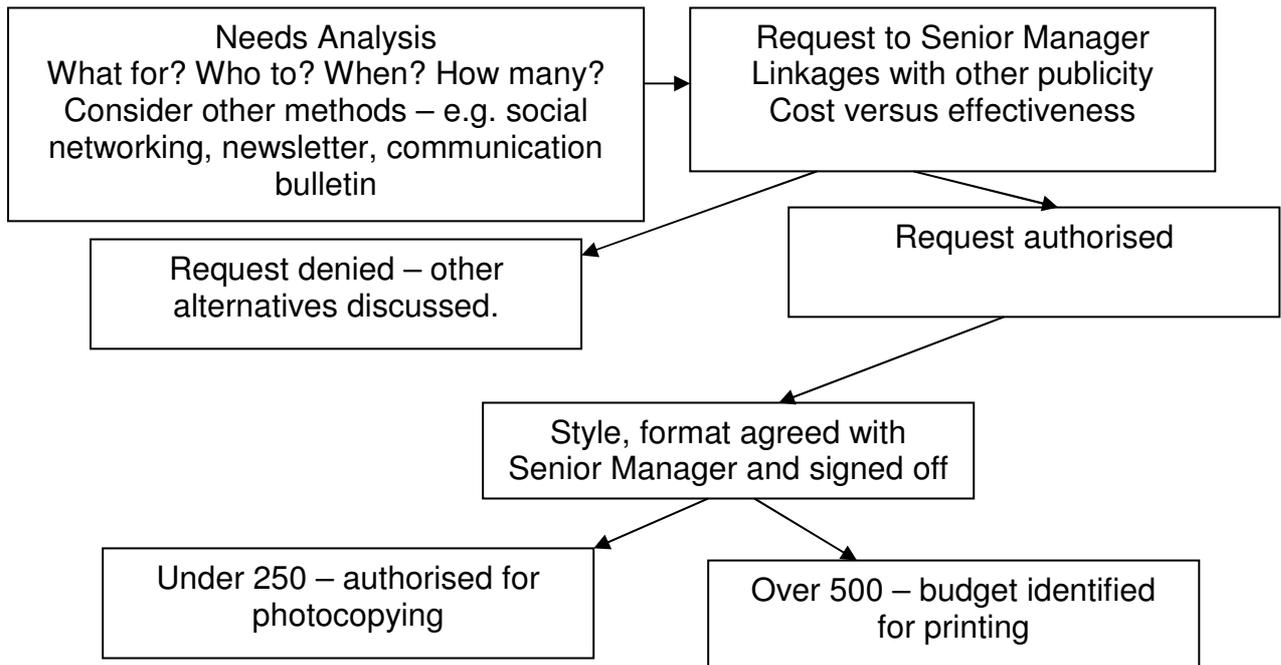
## 4. Leaflets

Leaflets are used for marketing SoLO's services as required.

Type of Leaflet	Style	Purpose
SoLO's general services leaflet	1.5 A4 trifold	Giving detail on overall specific projects on offer across Adults, Children's and person centred planning.
Personal Assistants	A4 trifold	giving information on the service
Daylight	A4 trifold	giving information on the service
Evolve	A4 trifold	giving information on the service
Plan4U	A4 trifold	giving information on the service
Volunteering	A4 trifold	Giving information on how to volunteer and benefits

Upon occasion, other A5 single sided flyers will be produced to advertise specific events.

Before printing a leaflet the following process should happen:



## Format of leaflets

Top left hand corner SoLO Logo plus strapline “embracing disability, empowering lives” (refer to branding guidelines)

All leaflets should contain:-

- Contact details (naming most appropriate person or general)
- Email address
- Telephone number
- SoLO website – [www.solihullsolo.org](http://www.solihullsolo.org)
- Fonts Arial (default) but can be changed to reflect style of communication
- Font size (minimum 12)
- Headings Bold (not underlined)

If the leaflet is to be printed internally, block colours should be avoided.

## 5. Emails

<b>Style</b>
Respectful, professional giving value to the reader
<b>Format</b>
Footer – with organisational details and contact details plus logo. Out of office response must be activated when on holiday or away from desk for more than 2 days.

<b>Use</b>
Information sharing, facts.
<b>Not suitable for</b>
Opinion, contentious issues or complex negotiations (other than to clarify specific points) General, non-specific mailings using 'send to all'

The use of the email system is encouraged as its appropriate use improves efficiency, and saves on the cost of postage and telephone calls. Used correctly, it is a facility that is of great assistance to employees. Its inappropriate use, however, causes many problems, including distractions, time wasting and legal claims.

All emails must show the subject area clearly stated in the subject line with, where appropriate, relevant information – i.e. time, date, venue etc. It is also good practice to include the purpose of the email – e.g. “for information” “for decision”

Where possible and practical, emails should be single topic – this ensures that the reader captures the whole detail and doesn't miss an important element at the end.

The use of forwarding emails and 'send to all' should only be used where it is appropriate and, under no circumstances, as a time saver for the sender.

When an email trail exceeds three communications, it is likely that a direct phone communication or face to face interchange will be more effective and efficient. Where there is a level of confusion or misunderstanding, personal contact is advised.

All office-based employees will be issued an individual email address. SoLO also operates a general information email address which is monitored by the Administrator. All email addresses are password protected and a central record of all passwords is kept on the central drive. Staff must inform the Administrator if they change their password.

As with all communication tools, SoLO email must be used for work-related purposes only. All emails must comply with SoLO communication standards, Code of Conduct and Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy. Staff should be aware that hasty messages, sent without proper consideration, can upset and cause concern or misunderstandings.

SoLO will not tolerate the use of the email system for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including:

- A message that could constitute bullying or harassment
- Personal use, e.g. social invitations, personal messages, jokes, cartoons, chain letters or other private matters.

- On-line gambling. Accessing or transmitting pornography.
- Transmitting copyright information and/or any software available to the user.

Any unauthorised or inappropriate use of email may result in disciplinary action being taken, which could include summary dismissal.

If an email is confidential, staff must ensure that the necessary steps are taken to protect confidentiality.

Unknown files or messages should never be introduced into the system without first being checked for viruses.

Line managers are required to ensure that all new employees are supported to use the email system as part of their induction. The CEO is responsible for the email system and advice on all aspects of the email policy.

## 6. Social Media

The use of social media is a powerful tool to communicate messages through to a wide range of people with the opportunity to 'share' and 'retweet' which has the potential for messages to 'go viral'. It is very important, therefore, that SoLO staff are aware that messages that are sent out on SoLO Facebook, twitter account and any other social media represents the organisation and not an individual.



Organisational information, marketing of future events (in line with marketing plan) celebrating success, introducing new volunteers and staff.



Personal information, photos of members (unless permission has been given for social media) political statements, anything that is copyrighted elsewhere.

Use of light hearted media, fun posts and other types of communication should be balanced against the posting of important information that is important to be viewed. If the balance of trivia outweighs the more functional posts, there is a danger that the reader will stop viewing the posts and will miss important information. Equally, if all of the posts are functional – the reader is not likely to read them as they will wish to be entertained.

## 7. Letters

<b>Style</b>
Respectful, professional, accurate (use spellchecker and/or quality checked by administrative team) where possible individually focused.
<b>Format</b>
On official headed paper with date, unique contact details of the sender, e.g. name, title, email address and, where appropriate, mobile phone number. Left margin justified. Dear sir/madam....Yours faithfully. Dear (name).... Yours sincerely.
<b>Use</b>
Information sharing, facts.
<b>Not suitable for</b>
Opinion, contentious issues or complex negotiations (other than to clarify specific points) Large mail outs (unless sent via email as an attachment)

## 8. Telephone communication

**Official response** - 'Good morning/afternoon, SoLO Life Opportunities, how can I help you'

**Person not available?** Accurate message taken on telephone call sheet, time frame given (informed by Google Calendar), person alerted on next return to desk.

**Caller agitated?** Remain calm and professional, stay assertive and compassionate, and try to resolve issue.

**Caller verbally abusive?** Pass the call to a manager or senior manager. If not possible, communicate that approach is not acceptable and the call will be terminated if they continue. Write incident report form.

## 9. Media (e.g. newspaper, television, radio)

This should be read in conjunction with SoLO's media policy. From time to time, SoLO will be the subject of interest from the local media. This may be a positive experience because of some achievement or it might be a negative experience because something has gone wrong.

Whatever the reason for the media attention, SoLO staff must adhere to our media policy which outlines who is authorised to speak.

When speaking to the media, it must be remembered that there will always be a reporting angle and, depending on what this is, will influence the way in

which the article is written. It is, therefore, important to understand why the approach is being made and within what context before committing to an interview. If in doubt, it is advisable to get a second opinion.

Reporters often gather information from interviewees quickly and are meeting deadlines so it is important to recognise that they will need factual information, preferably written down, to ensure that anything that goes to print is correct. There is no editorial permission needed when an article is written and the interviewee rarely gets to see the article before it is published.

For every article that is published, particularly if it is controversial there will be millions of readers who will have an opinion. Where the article is incorrect, there will be a relative few who will read the retraction. It is, therefore, very important to represent the organisation correctly and in a good light, wherever possible and always giving true and up to date information. Always consider if the information being asked for is appropriate to be published.

When speaking on the radio it is good practice to find out exactly what the interview will focus on, research around the subject, and take to the interview some clear notes on any facts or figures that you would need to help answer accurately. Television interviews will require much research and committing facts and figures to memory to ensure that the organisation is reflected well.

## **10. Presentations**

Before agreeing to a presentation establish:

- Purpose
- Audience
- Where and When
- Duration
- Style
- Equipment required

Recommended style of presentations:

- PowerPoint – using corporate branded PowerPoint background with up to date statistics and information (check historic PowerPoints for photos – in particular if they feature anyone who has died).
- DVD – most up to date
- Spoken – use up to date case studies, anonymised.

## 11. Staff Communication

Type	Format	Use	Frequency	Comments
Communication bulletin	emailed – mailchimp  No more than 2 pages long	Information on week ahead Vacancies Fundraising events Successes Requests for help	<b>Weekly</b>	Should be periodically tracked by read receipt
Surveys	Survey Monkey	Track staff availability for high traffic areas	<b>When necessary – usually before Easter and Summer</b>	Imperative that all information is accurate
Emails	Computerised	General communication	<b>When required</b>	when response required – use read receipt and follow up with phone call
Texts	Mobile phones	Staff availability and emergency messages	<b>When required</b>	Text service to continually be reviewed and updated

### Associated Policies/Plans

- SoLO's Branding Guidelines
- Marketing Plan
- Consent
- Data Protection
- Media