

# POLICY AND PROCEDURE

## Media Policy

### Category:

***Service User/Staff/Volunteer/  
Human Resources***



SoLO  
Life  
Opportunities

38 Walnut Close,  
Chelmsley Wood,  
Birmingham,  
B37 7PU

Charity No. 1102297  
England Company No.  
5025939

## Introduction

SoLO Life Opportunities (SoLO) is an established and highly respected organisation with a strong reputation for providing high quality professional services. SoLO enjoys a strong relationship with its staff, volunteers & members (referred to hereon as SoLO representatives) as well as their families, the local community, sister organisations and the local authority.

The media can play a significant role in building perceptions of an organisation and can provide SoLO with an opportunity to profile, promote and increase support for its services, members and achievements in a positive way. However, these benefits are tempered with risks associated with information given to the media.

Furthermore, with advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the availability of the internet and social networking sites/social media, the platform for information dissemination has increased multiple times over, increasing the organisation's exposure to this risk.

SoLO recognises the benefits of social networking, particularly for people with a learning disability who may be isolated. The widespread availability and use of social networking applications also bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with our audiences in new ways.

However, SoLO acknowledges that social networks are in the public domain and, used inappropriately, can be dangerous to the members and cause damage to the organisation. For example, use of social networking applications has implications for the duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

It is important that staff are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly whilst ensuring they balance this with their duties to SoLO members, partners, legal responsibilities and the reputation of the organisation as a whole. The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- SoLO is positioned to take advantage of and make the best use of the opportunities presented by the media/ social media for the benefit of SoLO and SoLO's representatives;
- SoLO is not exposed to legal and governance risk;
- SoLO's reputation is not adversely affected;
- SoLO's users are able to clearly distinguish information provided via social networking applications that is legitimately representative of the organisation;
- SoLO staff have a clear understanding of the implications for themselves and the members of using the media and social networking

## Scope

This policy applies to all SoLO representatives and covers SoLO's requirements with regards to all communications with the media and media representatives including, but not limited to, online and offline broadcast, electronic and print media.

It also includes SoLO's position and requirements with regards to all uses of social networking applications by SoLO representatives for any purpose and regardless of whether the applications are hosted by SoLO or not. These must also be considered where SoLO representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations or are communicating with others where SoLO is their primary connection.

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to:

- Blogs
- Online discussion forums
- Chat rooms
- Media sharing services, for example YouTube and Flickr
- Applications, for example Twitter and Tweets
- Social Networking sites, for example Facebook

**All staff and volunteers will be given a copy of the media policy with their letter of appointment.**

## Policy Statement

Project Leaders, Support Workers and Volunteers do not have authorisation to liaise or communicate with the media in any form, format or platform in relation to SoLO or any aspect of SoLO including, but not limited to, SoLO's activities, representatives, donors, competitors, partners and sector without prior permission from the CEO.

Project Leaders, Support Workers and Volunteers also do not have the authority to set up representative social networking groups for the organisation without prior permission from the CEO.

Project Leaders, Support Workers and Volunteers:

- **must not** approach the media for any purpose directly or indirectly relating to SoLO;
- **must not** respond to media requests for information/ confirmation of information relating to any aspect of SoLO;
- **must not** give statements – verbal or otherwise - to the media on behalf of SoLO;
- **must not** communicate in any form/ format or via any platform, channel, application or tool on behalf of SoLO.

Any breach of this policy will be dealt with using SoLO's disciplinary process.

## Procedures

### a. The Media (Broadcast, Electronic & Print - Online & Offline)

All media calls/ communications must be referred to the CEO, Chair, Secretary or Treasurer, who in this capacity will be referred to as the organisation's **Spokesperson**.

If the issue is contentious the Spokesperson should consult with at least one other authorised person to agree a response. If it is deemed a complex contentious issue, it may be necessary to consult with other Trustees or staff members.

In the case of SoLO issuing a news release, briefing papers will be issued to relevant members of staff who will then be authorised to speak to the media to the extent of the content of the briefing paper.

SoLO cannot prevent the filming or photographing of common areas outside of its own facilities such as public car parks and walkways. However, no-one can access or enter SoLO's facilities for the purposes of filming or taking photographs without prior written approval from the CEO. In addition, the media cannot block the entrance to SoLO's facilities, prevent or inconvenience people from entering SoLO's facilities or conducting business as usual.

In the event media representatives show up unannounced or staff find themselves on the receiving end of a reporter's call/media enquiry and they have not been given express permission and authority to speak to the media as outlined above, they must follow the guidelines set out here:

- **Do not** say you are not allowed to talk to them or that you need permission to talk to them.
- **Do not** let a reporter compel you to answer questions on the spot.
- **Do** refrain from talking to or responding to them, no matter how friendly they act towards you, as everything you say or do may be observed and reported on.
- **Do** conduct yourself in a professional and courteous manner.
- **Do** let them know firmly and politely that SoLO's policy is to refer all media inquiries to the organisation's Spokesperson.
- **Do** inform SoLO's Spokesperson immediately of their presence/ communication/ call including which media source they are.
- **Do** try to act quickly when approached by the media as they are usually trying to meet a deadline, and the first impression they have is often the impression they take of the organisation in general, and could be reflected adversely in their communications if it is not a positive one.

If it is impossible to contact the CEO or any of the three Officers named above (Chair, Secretary or Treasurer), then the staff member should apologise, reiterating that no comment can be made until a Spokesperson is available. SoLO expects you to show the same courtesy and professionalism to the media as to its representatives.

## **b. Social Media/ Social Networking**

All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a SoLO service (whether they are hosted by SoLO or by a third party) must be approved by the CEO in the first instance.

Any posting on SoLO's own Facebook and Twitter feed should be in compliance with the SoLO communication policy and the marketing and communication plan.

Use of social networking applications not related to any of SoLO's services must still operate in line with the requirements set out in this policy whilst SoLO representatives are actively involved with the organisation. Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct.

SoLO representatives must adhere to the following Terms of Use which apply to all uses of social networking applications by all SoLO representatives.

### **Terms of Use**

#### **SoLO corporate social networking applications:**

- **must** only be set up with the prior agreement of the CEO;
- **must** have a moderator agreed and appointed by the CEO;
- **must** contain accurate information and content in keeping with and upholding SoLO's professional reputation and corporate brand;
- **must not** contain information that is confidential to SoLO
- **must not** contain, promote or link to any content in any form which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of safeguarding, copyright and data protection policies and legislation or other claims for damages. This includes, but is not limited to, material of an illegal, discriminatory, oppressive, abusive, sexual, hateful or offensive nature that may bring SoLO into disrepute;
- **must not** be used to promote, solicit or campaign for any personal gain, interest or belief, including but not limited to, any social/ financial/ political/ religious motive.

#### **Personal social networking applications:**

- **should** make clear their relationship with SoLO;
- **should** contain disclaimers, making it clear that the views expressed are theirs and not necessarily those of SoLO;
- **should** be respectful in language, content and tone and comply with SoLO's values statement;
- **must not** contain information that is confidential to SoLO;
- **must not** contain SoLO's internal materials or logo unless written permission is given by the CEO.

- **must not** be used by staff to communicate with SoLO members unless written permission has been gained from the relevant Project Manager;

All SoLO representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to Copyright, Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with SoLO's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Members will be informed of the dangers of social networking and encouraged to obtain permission for photos to be used on their personal social networking site.

Use of social networking applications in work time for personal use is not permitted.

### **c. Still & Moving Images (Photographs/ Videos):**

The capture, process, production and publication of still and moving images are subject to laws and policies including but not limited to Copyright, Data Protection, Freedom of Information, Safeguarding, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities.

- Support Workers and Volunteers are forbidden from taking personal photos or videos whilst on projects using their mobile phones or own personal cameras. All photographs/videos must be taken using a SoLO camera/ video and only downloaded in SoLO's office.
- SoLO's media/corporate social networking communications must not contain photographs/videos of SoLO representatives unless prior written consent has been gained.
- Personal social networking sites must not contain photographs/ videos of SoLO staff, volunteers or members without the express permission of the individuals involved, including images taken outside of the work environment.

If a member of staff, volunteer or member is found to be posting inappropriate photographs, videos or comments relating to SoLO or any of its stakeholders on a social networking site, the matter will be dealt with using SoLO's disciplinary process as this will be deemed as misconduct.

## **Enforcement**

SoLO reserves the right to request the removal of any content or closure of any applications published by SoLO representatives that may adversely affect SoLO's reputation or put it at risk of legal action.

Any content or communications published with the potential to cause damage to SoLO, any of its employees or any third party's reputation may amount to misconduct or gross misconduct and will be subject to SoLO's Dismissal and Disciplinary Procedures.

In the case of inappropriate use of networking sites, in all cases, the matter should be referred to the CEO who will determine the course of action to be taken.

Any breach of the terms set out above could result in the following actions taken:

- Staff will be disciplined in line with SoLO's Dismissal and Disciplinary procedure;
- Volunteers may be asked to cease volunteering with SoLO;
- Members may lose their right to a service with SoLO.

**Linked to:**

Data Protection

Confidentiality

Communication Policy

Marketing and Communication Plan

Standards of Behaviour