

## Using social media

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Social media is increasingly becoming part of our everyday lives and is the number one reason we use the internet. For many people, more than a quarter of the time spent online is spent checking and updating social media profiles.

A number of branches and groups are already using social media. This guide is a basic introduction to help you take the first steps to promoting the work of your branch or group online using social media.

### What is social media?

Social media is all about instant communication – sharing information and connecting with people online. Social media channels work alongside, and compliment, more traditional channels of communication (magazines, newsletters, websites etc).

Social media focuses on three things:

- What users produce themselves (content) – from short messages to pictures or videos
- How content is shared with other individuals or groups online
- How users interact with each other – by 'liking' each other's posts, sharing them or commenting on them.

We use social media to share our latest news and the achievements of our supporters. We have over

**44,000 likes on Facebook**

**32,000 followers on Twitter**

**7,000 followers on Instagram**

**3,800 subscribers on YouTube**

(Oct 2020)

# Type of social media

There are numerous types of social media, however the ones we recommend using are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr. Each one has a slightly different focus and potential value for your branch or group.

## Facebook

The most prolific social network, allowing users to create personal profiles and 'friend' other individuals, or 'like' organisation/ company profile pages. 'Liking' your organisation page allows that person access to your full profile and updates.

By having a Facebook page, you are giving your branch or group a shop window to promote what you do online.

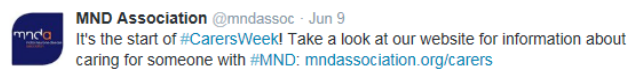
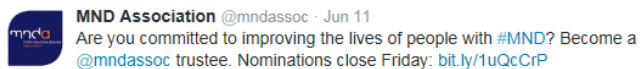
Here are some examples of Facebook pages:

- [www.facebook.com/mndassociation](http://www.facebook.com/mndassociation)
- <https://www.facebook.com/MNDANorwichWaveney/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/cambridgeshireMND/>

## Twitter

This online "micro blogging" service allows you to send short (maximum 140 character) posts referred to as "tweets". Registered users can "follow" you enabling access to your updates. In return you may choose to "follow" them back.

Below are two examples of tweets from our @mndassoc account:



Twitter is one of the best ways to engage with new and existing branch/group supporters.

Visit:

- [www.twitter.com/mndassoc](http://www.twitter.com/mndassoc)
- [www.twitter.com/SYMNDA](http://www.twitter.com/SYMNDA)
- [www.twitter.com/mndsouthlondon](http://www.twitter.com/mndsouthlondon)

## YouTube

The most popular video-sharing website in the world. Our YouTube channel is a good source of information and campaign videos. It is also used to store videos which are embedded into our website.

Visit: [www.youtube.com/mndassociationuk](http://www.youtube.com/mndassociationuk)

## Flickr

Flickr is a popular image and video sharing social network. Users upload and store their media online and share them with others, either on Flickr with tagging or by embedding them elsewhere on the internet (on our website homepage for example).

Visit: [www.flickr.com/mndassociation](http://www.flickr.com/mndassociation)

# The benefits of using social media

Using social media increases your presence on the web, giving people more ways of finding out about your branch or group.

Other benefits include:

- You can control access to information about your branch or group by deciding what's shared and when - you don't have to rely on the timescales of local media. It means getting your message out direct to your audience
- It's easy - very little technical skill is needed (you don't have to be an I.T. expert to do the basics well).
- It's flexible - it can take up as much or as little time as you want.

## What can you use social media for?

- Promote local fundraising events (walks, bucket collections etc)



- Share your successes (photos, videos, and fundraising totals)
- Remind people about your support meetings, and thank those who came for attending

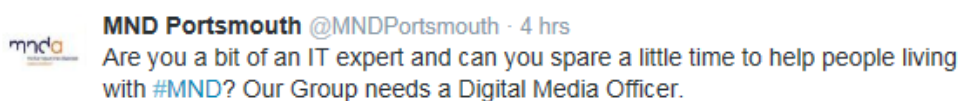


Our next #mnd patient and carer drop in session is tomorrow 8th jan , 14h00 at Guildford cathedral. All welcome



Thanks to everyone for the 'Second Thursday' meeting. Excellent evening with Prof Adrian Wills and a record. 43 people in attendance. Great!

- Engage with the local community by sharing your plans / achievements
- Recruit new volunteers



## How to create your branch/group Facebook page

We strongly recommend that you set up a branch/group **page** and not a group. A public-facing page will allow you to share your activity to a whole new audience. The multimedia nature of Facebook means it is ideal for hosting the broadest range of content.

- A page is open to anyone, meaning that any Facebook user can "like" your page. "Liking" your means they'll get updates or alerts on their own Facebook timeline every time you add anything to your page.
- A Facebook group is a closed page that can only be seen by those who have requested, and been accepted, to join the group. It will therefore not allow you to share your news publicly, however, could be used as by your committee as a place to "talk".

To create a page on Facebook, visit [www.facebook.com/pages/create.php](http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php) and follow the step-by-step instructions.

Please use the official logo that we can provide you with as your page “profile picture” and use an appropriate “cover picture” that is relevant to your branch or group.

Facebook doesn’t have a particularly easy search function, so when choosing a name, we suggest you use a format such as:

- MND Northants Branch
- MND Hull Group

With Facebook, people have to come to you. They may find out about your page through a link on your website, or newsletter, or because their friend shared one of your stories.

## Using Facebook

Facebook is based on simple status updates allowing you to share stories, photos and videos that your audience will find interesting, and want to share with their Facebook “friends” too.

Simply type your story, event information or a link you want to share in the “What’s on your mind?” box to share it with anyone who likes your page. They can then comment, like or share your status.

Facebook has a number of extra features that make it stand out from other social networking sites. Each lets you accessorise your branch/group page and give supporters a unique insight into what you do, for example you can upload photos of your events and organise them into albums.

## How to create a branch/ group Twitter account

To set up an account for your branch or group go to [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and follow the sign-up instructions.

Your username will be visible to other users across Twitter. To maintain consistency across the Association, please follow the format: @MNDNotts, @MNDSouthLondon, @MNDNorthWilts.

In your description, which sits on your Twitter profile, we recommend starting with something like: “MND South London Group, volunteers working in support of the MND Association”.

The small image representing you is called your “avatar”. For most charities, this is simply your logo. Your avatar will appear very small on people’s feeds, so keep it clear and simple. Please contact the Volunteering Team for a suitable logo.

## Using Twitter

Tweet about your events, activities and your latest news. Share (re-tweet) content from our Association account or other branch/ group accounts but remember that people follow you for content specific to your area.

### Top tips:

- Hashtags (#) “tag” your tweets as searchable content making it easier for people to find themes and topics. Hashtags can be specific to people, events and organisations and are also a good way of keeping within the 140 character because they can abbreviate longer names easily:
- e.g. #MND (motor neurone disease), #VMLM2019 (Virgin Money London Marathon 2019)
- A “DM” is a Direct Message and is a way of communicating with another Twitter account privately. Direct messages cannot be seen by the public.
- A “RT” or “re-tweet” is sharing another user’s tweet by putting it on your own timeline. Only re-tweet if it is relevant to your branch/group.
- Directing a tweet at someone/mentioning them is done by using “@” symbol, with the name of the user immediately following. Examples include @mndassoc, @mndcampaigns and @MNDSouthLondon (no gaps or it won’t work!). It is a bit like a “cc” in an email and is a good way of directing your followers to something interesting and relevant and will help you increase your branch/group following.

Spread your tweets throughout the day, if possible, and avoid re-tweeting lots of tweets in a short space of time as this may frustrate your own followers.

The more conversations you have, the more relationships you will develop. Just like in the offline world, if you talk to someone from a particular organisation or industry again and again, you will develop a good rapport.

Strong relationships with supporters old and new, supporters who will help you create a buzz and bigger audience locally.

## What makes 'good' social media content?

- People like pictures. Photos are therefore the focus of almost all social media. Although every photo tells a story, don't forget to add some accompanying text, explaining (amongst other things) who is in the photo and why. If you are talking about a bakeit! event, it's simple enough to include a picture and thank people for attending
- Questions are a great way to trigger a conversation and engage with your followers. For example, you could ask: "Is anyone free to volunteer for us on...?"
- Re-tweeting useful information and the achievements of others helps your branch/group to be seen as a reliable source of information. People you re-tweet will appreciate the additional exposure you have given them.
- Remember: your branch/group is the voice of the Association locally. Tweet from events, promote the work of local fundraisers and thank people for their contributions.

## Top Tips

- Familiarise yourself with the channel you are using (play and learn!)
- Decide, with other members of the branch/group, what your objectives are, even if it's just to try something new.
- There's no true anonymity on the internet, so always respect the confidentiality of others.
- Update your networks regularly and respond to queries in a timely manner.
- Avoid using social media as a soapbox to air grievances. Whatever you write will be accessible online for a long time, even if deleted.
- Look and see what other branches/groups and charities are discussing.
- Be clear and use simple English – it's important that people can understand your message, read your posts and understand why you have uploaded that particular photo.
- Try to be interesting and provide useful information. People are excited by new content that is relevant to them. This kind of thing will help your branch/group account get noticed.
- Be succinct and respect the limitations of each platform (140 characters on Twitter and a couple of paragraphs on Facebook).
- Be transparent and honest - never misrepresent yourself, your intentions or those of the branch/group/Association you represent.
- Try to have a human approach, even if you're tweeting as a branch/group.
- Engagement is the key to success; have conversations with, not at people.
- Try to connect with people in a strategic fashion rather than just following or "friending" anyone. A scattergun approach rarely works

## Safety and security on social media

To maintain consistency and control, you should nominate one or two people to look after the social media accounts for your branch/ group. Please let us know the contact details of that person, as well as details of any accounts set up.

Ensure that more than one person holds the usernames and passwords to your social media account(s) so if someone from your branch/group leaves, you are still able to access the accounts.

## Etiquette and Problem Solving

Because social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook, is public facing, you might be faced with negative comments or difficult questions. If you are, remember to:

- Respond quickly.
- Never show anger or engage in negative conversation
- Work towards a resolution and talk offline when necessary
- Provide feedback

## Confidentiality

You should never discuss the details of any person without their permission. While it might be okay to talk about MND in general, you should never discuss anything that could identify an individual to an external audience without their agreement.

## Personal Privacy

Privacy is an issue for anyone sharing content online, regardless of their role within the Association.

A sensible approach is to remember that all interactions on your social media account are public.

Ensure you protect your passwords and account information.

## Case Study

Robert Maguire is the social media co-ordinator for the West Yorkshire Branch and manages the branch's Facebook page and Twitter account.

Robert says: "For our branch and for the MND Association it's a good way to engage with people who are following us on Facebook or Twitter but haven't ever actually been involved in the branch. It's a good way to engage with volunteers who might be willing to give up some time to get involved. Aside from social media there wouldn't really be any other way to get in touch."



Robert, with his wife Paula, at the Ice Bucket Challenge celebrations.