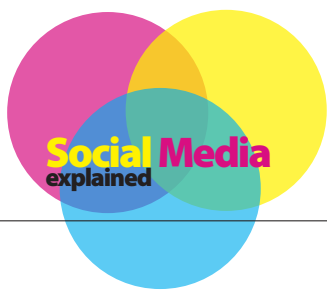




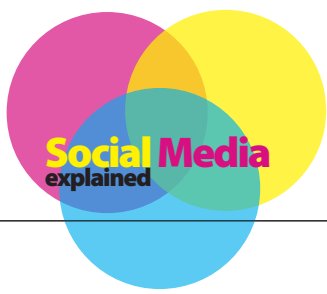
**ENGAGING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA
PART 1**

**Social Media
explained**



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Introduction

Social media is here to stay and it is changing the way millions of people communicate.

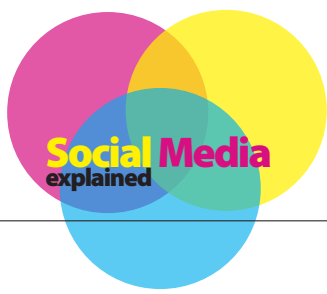
If you have not yet joined **Facebook** or **Twitter**, or watched **YouTube**, you may well wonder what it is all about.

But for most young people using social media is second nature, so as professionals at the heart of youth engagement, it is important to understand it and be part of it.

With this in mind, this guide is specifically for you, youth project managers, with the following aims:

To explain social media technologies and functions using simple language.

To provide you with the tools to increase interest and attendance at your project by working with young people and promoting your activities through social media.



What is social media?

In its simplest form social media is about online conversations. Instead of just having a website where people come to you, social media allows you to be proactive and to start or join in a two-way conversation.

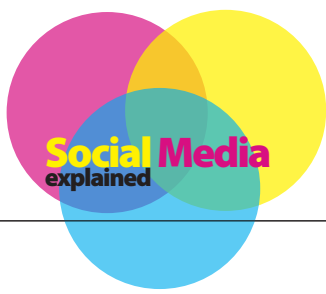
Think of the internet as a giant party with millions of small conversations happening in different corners. There are two options. You can sit in a corner with your website and hope that people will come over and talk to you. Or you can get out and mingle, share your stories and join in the conversations. This is exactly what happens on social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, media-sharing sites like YouTube (video) and Flickr (photographs), and blogs (online diaries) including Twitter.

The great thing about social media is that it enables other people to comment on your conversations, exchange images and videos, share group spaces, and use 'tags' to connect their conversations to yours. Each social network has its own privacy settings – you can use these to control who has access to your information.

The introduction of web-enabled mobile phones over recent years means that social media platforms can now be accessed at any time, anywhere. The technology allows users to keep their Facebook friends, or in the case of Twitter, 'followers', instantly updated on their movements and experiences. Mobile phone users can also create videos or photos and upload them straight onto their social media platform without needing to be near a computer.

If your youth project already has a website, you can link it easily to your social media 'group' or account. If you do not have a website you do not need to be a computer expert to set up a social media presence. Once you have talked to your members about what you want to achieve through social media, setting up a group or account on Facebook or Bebo (a similar one) takes just a few minutes. Whether you have a social media presence or not you can still easily tap into services such as the government-supported activities website Plings to help you promote your activities across a range of social media platforms.

Ensuring that your safety measures are as robust online as they are offline is crucial, and the latter part of this guide identifies some of the key safety areas you will want to consider before you get going. But while safety should be a primary consideration, it should not stop you from getting involved. In fact the more responsible adults engage with young people through social media, the safer the environment will become for all concerned.



How does it relate to me as a youth worker?

Children and Young People's Services, run by local authorities, are required to make information about activities for young people available and accessible, using social media effectively can help achieve this.

Young people are already using social media, joining them in this space is much more effective than expecting them to find you.

Social media allows you to create an identity for your project online – so you can communicate as a group without the need to be physically face to face.

You can promote specific events, courses and activities, driving attendance and attracting new members.

If you have an existing website, social media will enable you to raise its profile through web links and shared content.

Social media enables users to pass on content to their friends easily – this provides a great opportunity to gain greater visibility of content, through videos and photographs, of your project's activities. However it does mean that your content needs to be of good quality and relevant to a wide youth audience.

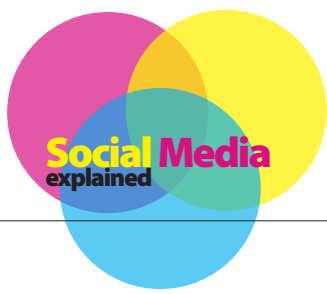
By establishing an online discussion you can consult on developments to your project, allowing members to give feedback online in their own time.

By checking other social media sites you can see who is talking about positive activities for young people in your area and what they are saying. This is extremely useful as it can help you shape your online and offline activities, making them more effective.

And perhaps most importantly, it offers you the opportunity to harness and build on the skills and talents of group members, allowing them to play a key role in creating and maintaining an online community for the project.

Securing access to social media platforms

Some youth projects do not have access to social media platforms due to local authority policies. While clearly this is a barrier to establishing a social media presence, many projects have successfully tackled the issue by clearly explaining to their local authority colleagues the benefits and opportunities social media offers.



Ask your managers to help you gain access to the sites you need. You may have to write a short business case outlining why using social networks could help you reach young people, and showing that you have carried out a risk assessment for using the networks you are considering.

The main social media platforms

Social networking sites

There is a vast number of social networking sites but the three largest are Facebook, MySpace and Bebo. For an extensive list of social networking sites go to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites

Social networking sites allow users to create a personal profile – this usually includes a photo of the user and details of their interests. Once a user has a profile, he or she can start creating and joining virtual friendship groups and communities of people with the same interests online.

By creating a social networking group for your project you can use it to communicate with members in various ways:

Blog about what is going on at your project and flag up future dates and activities. You could use the Facebook 'wall' to do this or the dedicated MySpace blog space.

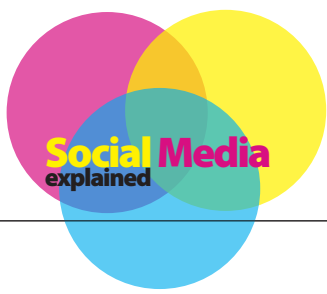
Send invites to specific events or performances with all relevant details. Sites such as Facebook enable you to keep track of who is coming easily.

Share videos and photos of recent fun activities and show other people what your project is all about. Video also offers the opportunity to create short films focusing on important issues or original and creative storylines that your project members have developed. You could use YouTube to ask for feedback from your group members on a particular issue – getting them to video their response and post it.

Ask for feedback on your project and its programme of activities by initiating a debate in the discussion area of Facebook. What did they enjoy? What could be improved for the future?

Post favourite or useful web links in the group space and ask group members to do the same.

Social media enables users to comment on all aspects of content – from photos to



blog entries. And other users can then comment on them, starting a wider discussion that can spread through young people's networks.

Some people or groups also use their social networking profile as a cost effective and interactive public website – for example, many musicians use MySpace, enabling fans to listen to their songs and view tour dates without needing their own MySpace profile.

Many social networking sites also enable social media users to incorporate external applications or 'apps'. This gives them new ways to share information online. For example, this might be a survey which ranks local youth activities, an interactive game or a bespoke youth activity promotion tool such as the 'Boredometer' (see the following pages for more details).

The features, appearance and privacy settings will be different for each social networking site.

facebook

Facebook

Facebook is the leading social networking site, with an estimated 300 million users. It is the number one photo sharing website. Members can post video, photos, blogs and comments.

There are three main ways of connecting with young people through Facebook:

Profiles have 'friends'. You will need to create a professional profile to manage any engagement on Facebook, but you do not necessarily have to accept friend requests from young people.

Groups have 'members' and provide a discussion and media sharing space. Groups can be public, private or invite only. As the creator of a group you can moderate members. Groups work well when there is a clear shared interest or sense of community between group members. You can message all the members of a group direct to their Facebook inbox.

Pages have 'fans'. A page is similar to a profile, but pages are for organisations and projects rather than for people. They are a good tool for sharing information and getting feedback by allowing comments on the content you share. You can add Facebook applications and additional features to your pages to make them more interactive.

Given its popularity, creating a **group** or **page** on Facebook is perhaps the most obvious way of setting up a social media presence for your project. As the 'creator' you will be able to manage the privacy and moderation settings and appoint 'admins' who can also invite/remove members, make changes to the group description, change settings etc. This is a great way to involve specific project members in running and maintaining your group.

For users under 18, profile information and content is only visible to friends, friends of friends, and people in any networks they have joined.

Facebook has a good range of privacy settings but they often change, so check that they reflect your needs.

Minimum age: 13

MySpace

The second largest social media platform globally behind Facebook and one of the first.

Very popular with young people, this is the ideal site to showcase musical talent. MySpace enables you to upload and share video, audio and image files as well as create a blog.

Minimum age: 14



twitter

Twitter

Twitter is known as a 'micro-blog' and is currently the fastest growing social networking site in the world.

As a user you are limited to messages of 140 characters or less (similar to a text message) to 'Tweet' about whatever it is you are doing, or whatever interests you.

Tweeting via mobile phones enables you to update your followers immediately.

Other Twitter users can choose to follow you. When they do, your Tweets appear as extra posts on their Twitter page, or, depending on their mobile operator, as a text message direct to their phone.

You can reply to Tweets or you can send a message to a specific Twitterer you are following.

Twitter becomes more useful the more followers you have – which in your case might be the youth centre members and interested parties.

Local politicians, councillors and other community figures are increasingly using Twitter – so it can be a good tool to communicate with adults about the activities you provide.

It is a good way to make frequent and brief contact with people with relevant information.

Searchable through Google.

No minimum age

bebo

Bebo

Owned by AOL, Bebo, short for 'blog early, blog often', is a popular site with young people.

With Facebook and MySpace it is one of the most successful networking platforms in the UK and the world.

Your presence on Bebo centres around your profile, which can have blogging, photo sharing and message wall features added to it.

For users under the age of 18 all profile information is private by default and can only be shared with friends and other group members.

Minimum age: 13



Ning

Ning is a network of social networks.

It is highly customisable which allows you to create an individual look and feel for your group.

Although young people are unlikely to use Ning as their only social media profile, it is a good platform for creating an open or private group.

You can use the domain extension .ning to form a domain name for your project, for example www.bristolrun.ning.com, or www.manchesterspin.ning.com etc.

You need to be aware that Ning carries a wide range of advertising – some of which may not be suitable for young people.

Minimum age: 13

Photo sharing sites

These websites have become popular with amateur and professional photographers. As the image quality of digital cameras improves, so does the growth of photo sharing sites. The value of these sites is that they allow you to create online photo albums which you can then link to your website, blog, etc. Most of the sites are free with the option of upgrading to a premium account if you plan on uploading large quantities of high resolution photos.



Flickr

Flickr is a photo sharing site with built in social networking features. It can be linked to your blog for publishing your latest photos.

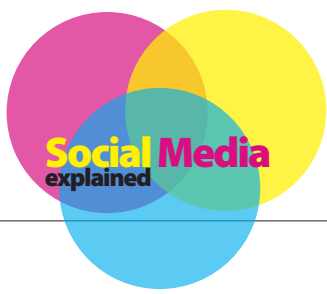
You can upload photos from a computer, via email or direct from a mobile phone.

You can organise photos into 'albums' and add titles, descriptions and 'tags' to connect your images to similar images tagged with the same word. This will help other people find them more easily.

Other users can subscribe to get updates about your photos as well as comment on them.

You can upload 100MB of images per month for free. You can also upload videos (100MB limit), but you must upgrade from the free version and pay a small annual subscription.

No age limit



Video sharing sites

For many people, video is a key reason why they use social media. It is fun and engaging and accessible for most people given that the majority of mobile phones now have video functionality. YouTube is also the third most popular search engine on the web, behind Google and Yahoo.

YouTube

One of the most visited sites on the entire internet providing the best opportunity for your videos to be found and seen.

It is easy to set up an account, upload and share video clips. Videos can be viewed on mobile phones, websites, blogs and email.

You can customise your 'channel' home page, providing information about your youth project and link to your website or Facebook group or page.

YouTube converts most types of video into a format that can play easily online.

You can comment on, rate and make video responses to your favourite videos.

YouTube allows you to build playlists of favourite videos to watch later and to subscribe to get updates about new videos from particular users.

Users can add titles, descriptions and tags to their videos so that they can be linked to other people's videos about similar issues.

You can add sub-titles and text annotations to your videos to make them understandable in different languages, or for people with accessibility needs.

As YouTube is owned by Google it is more likely that your video will turn up in searches. Videos must be less than 10 minutes in length and no more than 2GB.

Minimum age: 13

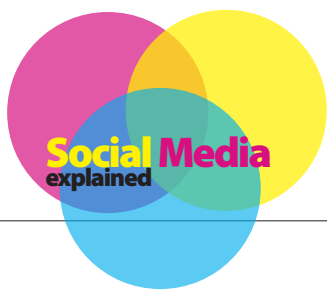
Vimeo

Vimeo is a video sharing social networking site that has around 2 million members.

Vimeo is aimed at more serious film-makers and you can only post videos you have created yourself, so it attracts original content.

The quality of the videos are excellent and if you upgrade to VimeoPlus, it is possible to embed videos on your blog without the Vimeo logo.





The Terms and Conditions of Vimeo specify that you cannot upload content of a commercial nature nor embed any video on a website that contains advertising (even GoogleAds).

The basic account limits users to 500MB of uploads per week and up to 10 uploads per day. By upgrading to the VimeoPlus account, you can upload up to 5GB per week.

Blogs

The word blog comes from 'web log', and it is essentially just that: a log of activities, experiences and thoughts. Blogs are usually text based but can also include other content such as photos, music and videos. Importantly they also offer the reader the opportunity to respond to a blog post, thereby creating a discussion thread. Adding to or commenting on a blog is called 'blogging'.

The most recent blog post will appear at the top.

People blog about absolutely everything. Whatever you are interested in, there will be someone out there 'talking' about it. Whether anyone 'listens' depends on the quality of the content and how regularly the blog is updated.

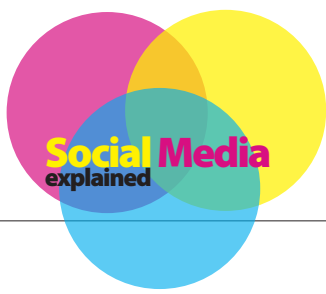
Blogs are easy and quick to create but need regular updates in order to keep people interested and engaged.

Updating blogs, especially on platforms such as Twitter, is increasingly done from mobile phones – people are sharing their experiences instantly.

Young people do not have to sign-up to view a blog as they are public content on the internet. A blog can therefore be a good place to post 'authoritative' updates about your project.

Blogs also create 'RSS' (Really Simple Syndication) feeds, which you can use to automatically post headlines from your blog to your social network pages. In Facebook, the 'Notes' feature, available from your page or profile settings, will let you link your Facebook presence with your blog so that whenever you post new content on your blog, it will appear shortly afterwards on Facebook. This is also possible on MySpace and Bebo using add-on applications.

There are many blog servers but the two most popular ones are www.blogger.com and www.wordpress.com. Both offer free software and hosting



and enable you to not just create a blog but an actual web presence by developing extra pages. If you do not already have a website this is a cost effective solution. Another option is to use the blogging functionality of your social networking platform, for example MySpace has a specific blog area.

Blogger

Owned by Google, it is a free blog that links in with your Google account and is good for uploading photos and videos from your phone.

Full control over your blog template design – great for some but may be tricky if you have not done something similar before.

Wordpress

There are two types of Wordpress – wordpress.com (free hosting, but more limited customisation) and wordpress.org – hosted by a server of your choice.

Wordpress.com is the easier of the two to create and manage if you have limited time. Wordpress.org requires some knowledge of web design, a domain name and a web host, but has huge flexibility and thousands of customisable themes to choose from.

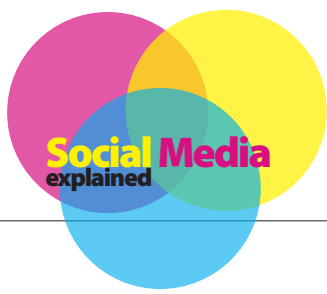
Bespoke applications

Bespoke applications, or 'apps', allow users to add new functions to their social media profile, for example surveys and games. Apps are an increasingly prominent feature of social networks as they can be easily shared and downloaded, without the need to distribute and install software. There will be applications, accessible from within social networks, and mobile phones that can support you in your work e.g. the Boredometer below.

Boredometer

The Boredometer is an app for Bebo and Facebook that helps young people find positive activities in their area. Users download the Boredometer and rate how bored they are during the week ahead. The app then suggests local activities for them and their friends to take part in. The app uses data from the government-supported Plings database of positive activities at www.plings.net.

It is free to use – both for the young people who install it and for local authorities and other organisations who want to take advantage of another communications channel to promote positive activities in their area.



Before you start

Be clear about what you want to achieve. Asking yourself the following questions will help to clarify what you want to get out of your social media activity:

What are our local priorities?

Are we trying to increase participation at the project?

Do we want to promote specific events?

Are we trying to get feedback to help shape future project activities?

Are we looking for new ways to engage the young people that attend our project, harnessing and building their social media skills?

Do we have images and videos that we want to share?

Where do we see our project in six to 12 months' time?

How will we know whether our activity has been successful and how will we measure its impact?

Who is your audience?

While this may sound like an obvious question, it is worth thinking about who you are trying to reach with social media.

Do you want to increase communication between current project members?

Would you like to reach out to new young people unfamiliar with your project?

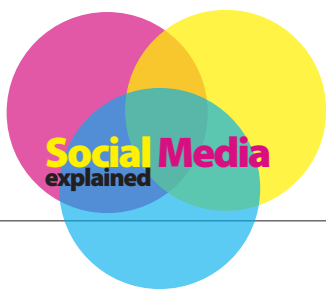
Perhaps you are also interested in communicating with older teenagers who are interested in volunteering or coaching at the project?

Other audiences?

Understanding your audience

Talk!

Understanding how your members use social media provides valuable audience insight. It will help you decide which social media platforms are most



relevant for your project, and it will steer you towards developing the most relevant content by identifying what really interests young people. Initiate a discussion with your project members about social media and ask them:

What social networking sites do you use and why?

How often do you use them?

What do you use them for? Seeing what friends are up to by reading the latest updates, posting comments on photos or blog entries, joining in group discussion, generating and posting other content such as video, email, planning activities?

What do you enjoy most about using social media?

What do you talk about on Facebook etc?

What makes you want to respond to a 'post', update or comment from a friend?

How can we take the elements of the youth project that interest you most and excite others through social media?

What photos and videos can we create and post on a social media platform to give people a good feel for what we do?

What social media platform do you think would be most appropriate for our project and why?

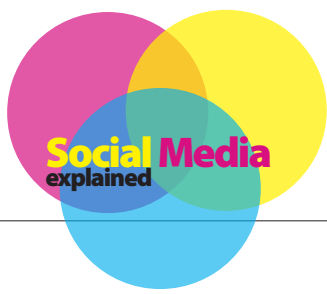
What functionality does the platform we choose need to have? A blog or forum?

What events or activities are coming up that we can highlight, or invite people to, through social media?

Listen!

Another way to understand your audience and find out what people are talking about is to start 'listening' to social media (albeit reading from your computer screen) and building a picture of what is going on in your local community.

Listening in this way will help you create a social media presence that has relevance and contributes something new to existing conversations. For example, if there is already a popular forum for young footballers in Newcastle, setting up another is unlikely to attract many followers. It would be much more valuable for your project to join the existing forum and become an important part of that conversation.



How to do it

A simple Google Blog search (option from the homepage) with key words that sum up your project and what it does. You can also set up a Google Alert at www.google.com/alerts so that whenever one or more of your key words (for example 'Lambeth Urban Dance') are mentioned, Google will send you an email with a link to the source.

RSS feeds are another easy way of keeping an eye on who is saying what on blogs, and also in the news. Rather than you having to log onto a blog site in order to find out what is being said, or even having to open your email account, RSS technology updates you immediately when new content is posted. RSS feeds can be viewed most easily by using a 'reader' – Google Reader is one example of this – which constantly checks news sites and blogs that you have specifically identified for new content.

Below is a list of some other free online 'listening' tools:

<http://tweetbeep.com>

Twitter version of Google Alerts

<http://socialmention.com>

Searches lots of different social spaces

www.trackur.com

Has a free trial. Searches lots of spaces

<http://addictomatic.com>

Good but cannot save searches, best for one-offs

www.whostalkin.com

Good for searching social networks

<http://technorati.com>

Good for blog monitoring

www.boardreader.com

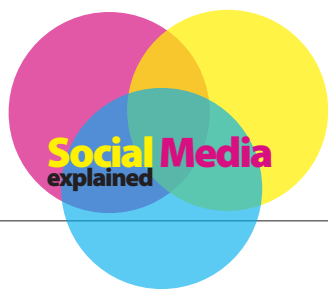
Good for forums – can track a whole conversation thread.

Doing it

How to create a social networking presence for your project

Agree your group or account name with project members – it makes sense for it to be the name of your youth project so that users can search for and find it easily. But it might relate to a specific activity for which you have become well known, or the name that your members have given themselves.

If you do not already have one, create a professional profile that is separate from any personal profile you may have on the networking platform that you have chosen to use – Facebook or MySpace for example. This should clearly state who you are, who you



work for, how young people can verify your identity, and offers links to relevant policies and information young people should be aware of (such as who to contact if they have any concerns/complaints about your activities on the site).

From here use your professional profile to create an account, group or page for your project, and follow the joining instructions. It is really important that group profile information is representative of the project as a whole rather than any particular member, or yourself.

Be creative when creating your group or account, select strong images that represent your members, and write clear descriptions of what you do.

You will need to enter an email address when creating a group. This should be the email address of your club which you, as the project manager, view on a regular basis. You will get email alerts whenever users comment, tag or request to join the group.

This is a good opportunity to work with members, using their skills. Who has photographic talent? Who knows the basics of using a video camera and can film and upload video to the profile? Who can record music? Who is a good writer?

Develop some simple, clear guidelines for young people engaging with your project through social media. You could create a group agreement that covers the allowed language, discussions and content sharing. Make sure these guidelines are created with young people and are accessible.

Encourage your members to join the group and build something they feel is theirs.

Moderation

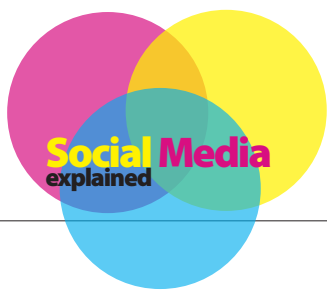
Most social media platforms offer different levels of access to group information and content. For example the Facebook options are:

Open – everyone on Facebook can view the group, join it and post content.

Closed – everyone on Facebook can see the group, but the administrators must approve all membership requests or personally send invitations. Only group members can view its wall, discussion board and photo or video content. This option is usually the most appropriate for youth projects.

Secret – membership is by invite only.

For moderating comments and other content, you can choose 'premoderation' where



you check each message before it appears (although this may lead to discussions stalling, or 'post-moderation' where you'll need to check the space regularly and remove any unsuitable messages. Think about how your existing approach to working with groups of young people (agreeing ground rules, challenging inappropriate behaviour etc) can be applied in the online space.

The Home Office Taskforce on Child Internet Safety has published a good practice guidance for moderators of online services and developers of social network sites (see 'appendix').

Uploading images and video

Uploading your images and video to the internet is simple. Any video hosting or photo sharing site will have clear instructions on how to do this. However, each site has limits on the size of file or length of video you can upload. For instance, with YouTube you can only upload files up to 2GB or 10 minutes in length.

When exporting video material from your editing software, the finished product will be a compressed version of the original files. It is important to remember that the uploaded video content will be further compressed so the image quality will be reduced. You should try to upload the highest quality file possible.

Updating your social media space

Social media never stops, so it is essential to keep your group, blog or forum up to date by adding content and keeping the conversation going. If you have nothing to say, then people will simply stop listening.

Tips for keeping your social media space updated:

Make sure that you reflect whatever is going on offline, through social media – the two should be seamless. If you have an event coming up, invite the group to it; if you are debating something in particular, discuss it online.

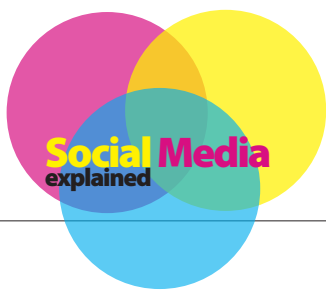
Talk about areas of responsibility with your members. This is a great chance for them to take ownership of specific elements of your social media activity such as photography or promoting events.

Keep 'listening' to your audience and encouraging feedback. What do they like?

What is lacking? Adjust your approach and content accordingly.

Allow your members to lead the conversation wherever possible and appropriate.

They know what will interest their peer group far better than you.



Tagging

How to help others find your content

Tagging is really important when you upload photos, videos or blog posts that you want other people to find. Tagging is a way of signposting readers through search engines to your content. So, for example, if you made a video about skateboarding in Manchester, you would add key words such as 'skateboarding, skate, skateboard, Manchester', etc. If you are unsure what keywords to add, go to

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

This will tell you the most searched terms for any phrase that you type in.

Remember, there are billions of web pages on the Internet, if you do not tag, it is extremely unlikely your content will be found.

Measuring impact

However you use social networking sites for engaging with young people, you should always be assessing the impact of your activity. This will enable you to:

Identify where engagement has led to change for young people.

Identify opportunities to improve and develop future projects.

Make the case for future investment in engagement through social network sites.

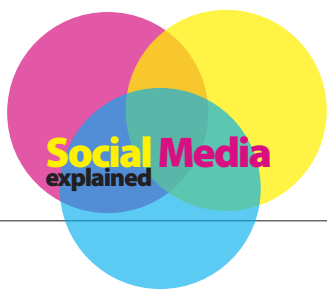
There are many ways to evaluate online participation, including:

Web metrics such as visitor statistics and details of how people found your online participation opportunities.

Content analysis, for example looking at how many comments have been posted and how many different people have got involved in online surveys and polls, either ongoing during a project, or at set points in the project.

Focus groups and feedback including people who did not take part in the online participation to find out why not.

Go back to your original objectives – are you succeeding in meeting them? What do you need to change for future engagement?



A guide to safety and security

Below are general safety guidelines which will help you approach social media safely and confidently. While there is certainly a range of factors you need to consider, do not let this deter you from engaging in social media if it will help you to achieve your objectives.

The main risks associated with young people using social media are:

Cyber bullying where other young people try to embarrass or intimidate their peers through posting malicious content.

Cyber grooming where predatory adults pretend to be children or responsible adults, in order to befriend young people and then meet them in person.

Young people posting private, personal or inappropriate information which may impact on their 'reputation' both online and offline.

Young people being exposed to inappropriate commercial content.

Safety considerations for discussion in all situations:

Inform staff and volunteers what they should do if they have concerns about a young person's online safety.

Choose social networking tools that are age-appropriate, for example do not encourage under 13s to use Bebo, as the terms of service do not allow this.

If you are working face-to-face with a group of young people and using social networks to extend your work or to share it online:

Discuss and agree ground rules with the group about what they should or should not share online.

Make group members aware of the support available to them if they come across things online which concern or worry them.

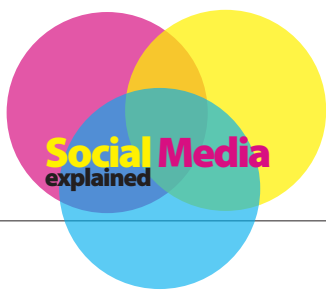
Actively monitor online discussions about your work or project to identify and respond to any issues that might arise.

If you are creating content that involves young people:

Ensure you have informed consent from young people for their images, videos or other content to be used online. You may also need to gain consent from parents or guardians.

Explain to young people about how posting personal content reveals information about them online.

Check that if this content is linked to young people's profiles that it will not reveal information that they do not want to be made public and that they know how to use their privacy settings.



If you are planning to interact with young people online:

Have a clear policy that sets out which staff members can interact directly with young people online.

Enable young people to verify the identity of the profiles they will be interacting with on social network sites (check that you are 'official').

Link to online safety information and guidance for young people from your profile. For example, you could link to 'Click Clever, Click Safe' or 'Think U Know' resources from www.ceop.police.gov.

If you have accepted young people as friends, group members or fans, post a regular update (via a status update for example) reminding them that this connection exists and what it means (that you can see their profile information) to check that you still have their consent.

Safety guidance taken from Social Media & Youth Participation in Local Democracy, LGIU, 2009

Responding to safety concerns

In general, you are no more likely to encounter situations online which give rise to child protection concerns than you are in similar face-to-face work with young people. If a particular situation does concern you, base your response on your existing professional practice. There is a number of organisations and routes which have been established specifically to respond to concerns about young people's safety.

Emergency call

If you suspect a young person is in immediate danger or you need a fast response you should phone 999.

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)

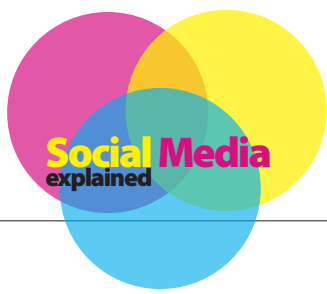
CEOP is a police agency with powers to investigate concerns about grooming or sexual abuse of young people online. Professionals and young people can report concerns to CEOP via the 'Report Abuse' button on their website.

www.ceop.gov.uk

Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)

You can report obscene and illegal internet content to the IWF and they will work with Internet Service Providers to ensure it is removed or access to it is blocked.

www.iwf.org.uk



Service providers

Responsible website providers will have clear processes for dealing with reports of abuse, including inappropriate content or bullying. For concerns which do not involve illegal content or conduct, look for the 'report abuse' feature on the website in question. Most social network sites only check content when alerted to it by users.

Record it, talk to your manager and know your policies

You should raise any other concerns with your senior manager or the appropriate child protection/safety co-ordinator within your organisation. Whatever actions you take you should make a record of them.

Make sure you are aware of the general child protection and reporting guidelines

for your organisation. These will apply to online work with young people as well as face-to-face work. Your organisation may also have a specific e-safety policy which you should be familiar with.

Responding to safety concerns taken from 'Safe and Effective Social Networking for Youth Professionals', Tim Davies, 2009. Available from www.practicalparticipation.co.uk.

Top tips to take away

Be clear about what you want to achieve and how you are going to measure the impact of your activity.

Ensure you are aware of the online and offline safety considerations, but do not let them deter you from taking part.

Involve your members from the beginning and utilise their skills and knowledge.

Understand your audience – listen to what interests young people and what they enjoy most about using social media.

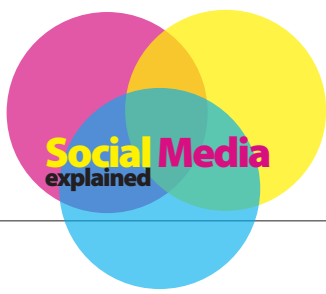
Create and share interesting, fun and relevant content including photos and videos.

Encourage members to link to the group and to share it with friends.

Check out the available moderation and privacy options and create settings that you are comfortable with.

Update content regularly and keep the conversation going.

Allow members to 'own' their social media space.



Appendix 1 Getting more support

There are many resources and online communities that can support you in using social media to promote positive activities for young people. A few are listed below:

The Youth Work Online community – www.youthworkonline.org.uk – is a free online network where over 500 youth work practitioners, researchers, volunteers and digital experts share their ideas, experiences and resources. You can find a range of guidance documents and other resources here.

The Plings project blog – <http://blogs.plings.net> – is regularly updated with news and resources exploring the use of social media for promoting positive activities. Explore previous blog posts for case studies and How To guides.

The Youth Engagement and Social Media online guide – www.practicalparticipation.co.uk/yes/ – contains regularly updated resources on using social media in all different forms of work with young people; the 'toolbox' section includes How To guides on a range of social media tools.

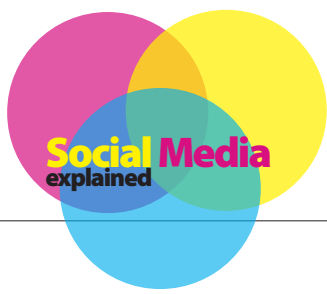
The LGIU's Social Networks and Youth Participation in Local Democracy Guide – available via <http://bit.ly/at4m14> – includes shared learning from a six-month action learning set exploring the use of social networks in youth participation. It is supported by the free Networked Participation online network www.networkedparticipation.co.uk.

The Digizen Social Networking and Cyberbullying resource kits – www.digizen.org – from Childnet International provide useful resources for when you are deciding which platforms to use.

The Social by Social toolkit – www.socialbysocial.com – is a practical guide to using new technologies to create social impact. It includes a wide range of case studies and practical tips for using social media in small and large organisations.

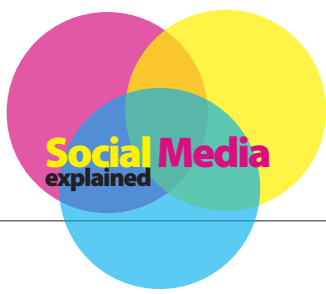
Hear by Right – <http://hbr.nya.org.uk> – provides a tried and tested standards framework for youth participation, if you want to use social media to listen to the voice of young people and identify change as part of your evaluation. Available for download along with a range of resources, including the 'What's Changed' tool.

The UK Council on Child Internet Safety – www.dcsf.gov.uk/ukccis/ – is continually developing resources to support practitioners in promoting young people's online safety.



Home Office moderation guidance – good practice guidance for the moderation of interactive services for children can be found at www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/internet05.htm

For practical step-by-step guidance for local authorities on fulfilling their duty to secure access to, and publicise, positive leisure-time activities for young people, go to www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/publications/sharingthelearning/



Appendix 2 Common social media platforms

Communication

Blogs: Blogger, LiveJournal, Open Diary, TypePad, WordPress, Vox, ExpressionEngine, Xanga, Joomla, Drupal

Micro-blogging / Presence applications: fmylife, Jaiku, Plurk, Twitter, Tumblr, Posterous, Yammer

Social networking: Bebo, BigTent, Elgg, Facebook, Geni.com, Hi5, LinkedIn, MySpace, Ning, Orkut, Skyrock,

Social network aggregation: NutshellMail, FriendFeed

Events and activities: Upcoming, Eventful, Meetup.com, Plings

Collaboration

Wikis: Wikipedia, PBwiki, wetpaint

Social bookmarking and tagging: Delicious, StumbleUpon, Google Reader, CiteULike

Social news: Digg, Mixx, Reddit, NowPublic

Opinion sites: epinions, Yelp

Multimedia

Photo sharing: Flickr, Zoomr, Photobucket, SmugMug, Picasa

Video sharing: YouTube, Viddler, Vimeo, sevenload

Livestreaming: Ustream.tv, Justin.tv, Stickam, Skype

Audio and Music Sharing: imeem, The Hype Machine, Last.fm, ccMixter, ShareTheMusic

Reviews and Opinions

Product Reviews: epinions.com, MouthShut.com

Business Reviews: Customer Lobby, yelp.com

Community Q&A: Yahoo! Answers, WikiAnswers, Askville, Google Answers

Entertainment

Media & Entertainment Platforms: Cisco Eos

Virtual worlds: Second Life, The Sims Online, Forterra

Game sharing: Miniclip, Kongregate

Other Information aggregators: Netvibes, Twine



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