

Use of social media by Bring Me Sunshine

Bring Me Sunshine (BMS) provides dementia-friendly activities and events for older people in the community. It aims to help combat isolation and loneliness and promote health and wellbeing to older people in Catford, Lewisham.

Although most of Bring Me Sunshine's service users are not on social media in any way, social media is a key tool for marketing to relatives/carers of service users and the broader community, and for internal management. BMS mainly uses various social media platforms to:

- inform about upcoming events (marketing communications)
- report on events with photos and videos (most popular especially using tagging and hashtags) and improve engagement (marketing communications)
- raise awareness of related issues and events - that would mainly appeal to those in touch with older people in the community (marketing communications)
- support and manage volunteers (internal management).

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/BringMeSunshineSE6> is openly accessible and aims to:

- keep volunteers updated and reminded about upcoming and past events
- keep the wider community informed about activities that are going on in their community (engaged and interested as a 'liked' page)
- enable referrals to the service through awareness raising and information provision.

Often local groups will share BMS content, especially if they are fun pictures and videos. People like to see happy real-life content of people enjoying themselves - especially the entertainment! When people meet the priest or one of the in-house entertainers and volunteers who sings and leads movement and music sessions in the community, they often comment on their latest notorious costume or performance. (e.g. the priest in his captain outfit or an entertainer volunteer who performed using personas during Covid visits.)

X (formerly known as Twitter) <https://twitter.com/lesleyaallenbt1>

BMS uses the organiser's personal account. This has worked well as she is a local community leader and has key followers who re-tweet content about BMS. Photos and videos of events are extremely popular (see below). However, the line between personal and work can sometimes be grey (see Challenges below).

What'sApp (closed group, accessible by invitation only)

Group chats are a key tool for engaging the volunteer team and works better than emails which tend to get fewer responses because people receive too many. WhatsApp is instant and tends to get more instant attention. Status updates on WhatsApp are also useful.

There are 43 older service users ("we use the term elders") on the WhatsApp group which keeps them informed of updates. It is also a great way of connecting and sharing positivity. Occasional reminders of the group's purpose are needed, for example after out of scope messages are shared and discussions become political.

Social media challenges

As for any organisation dependent on volunteers, social media content can be patchy and sometimes inconsistent. It tends to be reactive rather than proactive.

To have one person who has social media experience and is dedicated to posting regular content is important.

Engagement is key to a wider exposure of content (through algorithms). This means that the more a post is "liked" or "commented on" or "shared", the greater that post's reach. Writing posts that are engaging is key, but time-consuming, and emphasises the need for someone who is dedicated and responsible for this social media content.

Organisations may wish to draft some social media related policies and procedures that look to the future. Matters for consideration will include boundaries and monitoring, security, the impact of successful social media and information governance.

Boundaries and overlap between work and the personal need to be carefully considered for future-proofing, to allow separation between parts of people's lives and to protect privacy.

While current organisers, staff or volunteers may be comfortable taking on a social media role from their personal accounts (e.g. X - formerly known as Twitter), others who come to the organisation in the future may not wish to continue with the same arrangement. Some staff or volunteers may choose not to be constantly accessible, and this is to be respected. An organisational account (X handle) that is accessible by named people will enable continuity at times of change or unavailability and will protect individual privacy.

As well as aiming to raise awareness and attract people to events, social media involves substantial interaction. Security and the impact of successful social media work need consideration.

Monitoring is important.

Organisations may wish to consider putting in place procedures for moderating (i.e. vetting) posts before these are posted online and make arrangements for someone to do this. Open groups or larger organisations, in particular, may experience trolling, cyber security breaches, negative or inappropriate posts, or inappropriate promotion of services that your organisation does not endorse, but these challenges can also happen in closed groups. BMS' had experience of inappropriate posts and addressed matters by providing a reminder of the purpose of the What's App group (sharing information relevant to activities and sharing hope and positivity), by contacting perpetrators separately to discuss how their post(s) could have been received by other group members, by not engaging in dialogue on certain posts or restricting comments.

Organisations will also need to be mindful of information governance regulations (GDPR) (**General Data Protection Regulations**). Exchange of 'personal information' may take place over, for example, an organisational What's App group, and organisations may wish to consider the implications of this from a GDPR perspective.

It is also important to remember that a person who is living with dementia and who does not have mental capacity to give consent to have their information shared must, by law, be respected.

According to the **Mental Capacity Act 2005**, the following principles should apply concerning decisions around capacity:

1. A person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that he lacks capacity.
2. A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision unless all practicable steps to help him to do so have been taken without success.
3. A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision merely because he makes an unwise decision.
4. An act done, or decision made, under this Act for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be done, or made, in his best interests.
5. Before the act is done, or the decision is made, regard must be had to whether the purpose for which it is needed can be as effectively achieved in a way that is less restrictive of the person's rights and freedom of action.

Contact details: <https://bringmesunshinese6.co.uk/>

See next page for examples photos used on social media.

Photos used on social media by Bring Me Sunshine

