

WHITESTONE CHAMBERS
Barristers

Whitestone
Chambers

1 Middle Temple

London

EC4Y 9AA

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

(JUNE 2026)

1. Our commitment.

We are committed to creating an inclusive and positive environment in which everyone considers they are being treated fairly and equitably. We expect everyone to carry out their work and conduct themselves in a professional manner that promotes our values and the interests of Whitestone Chambers.

We appreciate that there is a growing need for many of our members to use social media to effectively carry out their roles in chambers and that, outside of the workplace, you will likely use various platforms to communicate with your peers. We encourage you to exercise your right to speak freely and openly. However, we also expect you to balance your content with our professional values and the rights of others and ensure that you are not using social media in a way that might damage our reputation or the reputations of any of the individuals working within Whitestone Chambers.

This policy is designed to encourage and support you to make appropriate use of social media platforms, both in a professional and personal capacity. It explains the general rules and principles that we expect you to follow when using social media, and the potential consequences if you fail to do so.

All members, pupils and administrative staff should consider this policy when posting online and on social media. It should always be remembered that things written by individuals can affect the reputation and standing of Chambers.

This policy is not part of your membership agreement, and we can change it at any time. If you have any questions about this policy, please talk to The Acceptable Behaviour Officer Miss Analissa Lim.

2. What and who is this policy for?

This policy applies to all Members, pupils and administrative staff who use social media both inside and outside of work, no matter whether for business or personal reasons. It refers to social media platforms which directly associate you with Whitestone Chambers and those which do not.

In this policy:

- ‘We’ / ‘us’ refers to Whitestone Chambers.
- ‘You’ means all members, pupils and administrative staff of Whitestone Chambers.
- ‘Manager’ means the person who has responsibility for you

3. What Do We Mean By Social Media?

For the purposes of this policy, social media includes any type of interactive online media, or public messaging application, that you use to communicate and share data or other forms of content, such as videos, audio files, or photographs, with other individuals, organisations, or communities. This includes, but is not limited to, social media channels such as X (formally

known as Twitter), Bluesky, Threads, Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Twitch, Discord and Reddit.

Whilst short message exchange platforms and other similar communication tools such as WhatsApp, Outlook, and Gmail are not traditionally classified as social media and therefore fall outside of this policy, we recommend that you exercise caution when using them to speak about work. This is because the messages you exchange through them can easily be forwarded to others or captured using a screenshot and made public.

4. Purpose of Social Media Policy.

Your use of social media is likely to engage your right to freedom of expression under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) which includes the right to hold and express opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas. However, Article 10 is a qualified right which must be balanced against other rights and values protected by the ECHR (such as the rights and reputations of other members of the profession or consumers of barristers' services).

The European Court of Human Rights has recognised that lawyers, by virtue of their profession, have a special status which justifies placing certain restrictions on their conduct:

“...the special status of lawyers gives them a central position in the administration of justice as intermediaries between the public and the courts. Such a position explains the usual restrictions on the conduct of members of the Bar... Regard being had to the key role of lawyers in this field, it is legitimate to expect them to contribute to the proper administration of justice, and thus to maintain public confidence therein.”

If you use social media whilst acting in a professional capacity, your conduct could bring into question your compliance with certain Core Duties and Conduct Rules in the BSB Handbook that apply to you when you are practicing or otherwise providing legal services.

These include:

- Core Duty 3: You must act with honesty, and with integrity.
- Core Duty 5: You must not behave in a way which is likely to diminish the trust and confidence which the public places in you or in the profession.
- Core Duty 6: You must keep the affairs of each client confidential.
- Core Duty 8: You must not discriminate unlawfully against any person

The BSB warn that, in general terms, any conduct on social media which might be said to be inconsistent with the standards expected of barristers may amount to a breach of the BSB Handbook.

You should therefore at all times consider whether your conduct risks contravening any of the

Core Duties and Conduct Rules which apply to you.

In considering a potential breach of the BSB handbook in relation to conduct on social media, the regulator will take into account the following:

1. How a hypothetical, ordinary reasonable person would be likely to respond to your conduct, having regard to the wider context in which it occurred. This will involve an objective assessment based on the “natural and ordinary meaning” of what you post. The social media platform which you use may also be relevant. The views and/or reaction of any individual who reported the conduct to us, while potentially relevant, is unlikely to be determinative.
2. The substance of what you post (including the type of speech engaged, such as whether it is “mere gossip” or contributes to a debate in the public interest. The regulator recognise that political speech is afforded the highest level of protection under Article 10 and is something in which they are unlikely to have a regulatory interest. However, the BSB are likely to have a regulatory interest in conduct which is not afforded the protections guaranteed by Article 10, by virtue of Article 17 ECHR (ie conduct which is aimed at the destruction of the rights and freedoms of others). Case law from the European Court of Human Rights has found that this includes extreme or grave forms of hate speech, a threat of or incitement to violence, xenophobia, racial discrimination, Antisemitism, Islamophobia and Holocaust denial.
3. The manner in which you express your views (including the language used), the mode of publication, and the broader context. While the right to hold a view and say something may be protected by Article 10, if there is something objectionable about the manner in which it is expressed, this could be a potential breach of the BSB Handbook and therefore the BSB have a regulatory interest in your conduct.
4. The impact of your conduct. This may include the impact on individuals or organisations, and/or on public trust and confidence in you or the profession. The purpose behind your conduct may not always be relevant.

The full BSB guidance for barristers using social media can be found here:

<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/static/61d13750-880c-4423-a4bf80cf96d3f06c/802d53c2-c9b5-4917-a03c0984e5006cfb/BSB-social-media-guidance-September-2023.pdf>

The BSB guidance on the regulation of non-professional conduct can be found here:

<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/static/e803d194-972c-43b4-84bf162568cee383/Guidance-on-the-regulation-of-non-professional-conduct-September-2023.pdf>

5. **Use of Social Media at Work.**

Personal use

We understand that you may wish to use your own devices, such as mobile phones, tablets, and laptops to access social media platforms whilst you are at work. Whilst this is permitted, we expect you to limit your personal use of social media to your non-working hours, which includes your lunch and other agreed breaks.

Work related purposes

You are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites from the computers or devices that we have provided you with throughout the working day, if doing so is directly linked to your work.

6. Guiding Principles When Using Social Media.

We recognise that, outside of the workplace, you will likely use various social media platforms to communicate with your peers. Whilst you will not be using our accounts for this purpose, you should still ensure that you are not posting, or engaging with, content in a way that might damage our reputation or the reputations of any of the individuals working within Whitestone Chambers.

To enable this, you must consider who can see your posts and engagements, and the extent to which your activity will be associated, by them, with Whitestone Chambers. Your audience and those whose algorithms are geared towards content like your own may include other members of the legal community, including our own, and other barristers, pupils and chambers professionals, aspiring barristers, private and lay clients, members of the press, and employees of the Bar Council, Bar Standards Board, and other professional membership organisations and regulators.

Regardless of whether you are using social media in a personal, or professional, capacity, we expect you to ensure that you are not doing so in any way that we would consider to be inappropriate. This includes, but is not limited to posting or engaging with content that is:

Unlawful.

This includes, but is not limited to content that:

- Has the purpose or effect of bullying or harassing any individual
- Uses language or imagery that is discriminatory, defamatory, or threatening
- Contains ‘hate speech’ or extreme political views that are proscribed by law.

Likely to bring Whitestone Chambers its members, or the profession into disrepute.

This includes, but is not limited, to:

- Directly criticising or abusing colleagues, including members, pupils and administrative staff of Whitestone Chambers, clients, or other individuals who are in some way connected to chambers, in a way which damages professional relationships and diminishes trust.
- Disclosing confidential or sensitive information about Whitestone Chambers, its members, pupils, employees, private and lay clients, or other individuals who are in some way connected to chambers
- Purporting to express views on behalf of Whitestone, its members, pupils or employees, other than in circumstances where you are permitted to use of one or more of our accounts to carry out your work and have been provided with an approved statement.
- Using social media in a way that might be in breach of other Chambers’ policies.

When using social media, you should bear in mind that people have different tolerances when it comes to determining what is appropriate, and that the content that you consider to be humorous may be considered distasteful or offensive by others.

Given the scope for misinterpretation, the difficulty of withdrawing posts, the speed of circulation, the size of the audience and the potential for posts to be commented on or republished in unforeseen ways, we ask that you take an extremely cautious approach to publishing, or engaging with, social media content. You should ensure that you are certain we would not consider your actions to be inappropriate and, if you are in any doubt, talk to The Acceptable Behaviour Officer Miss Analissa Lim beforehand.

You are permitted to identify yourself as a member of Whitestone Chambers on your personal social media accounts. However, when doing so, you must include an express disclaimer that broadly conveys the following: “the views expressed here are mine alone and do not reflect the views of my Whitestone Chambers”

7. Disciplinary Action Over Social Media Use.

If we consider there to be a valid reason for checking your internet usage, then as part of our disciplinary processes we may monitor your online activities for a set period and with the authorisation of The Acceptable Behaviour Officer, Miss Analissa Lim. This may include, but is not limited to, instances where:

- Your use of social media during working hours is impacting on your ability to perform your role.
- Your use of social media falls outside of this policy.
- You have viewed or engaged with content that we consider to be inappropriate from the computers or devices that we have provided you with.
- There is evidence to suggest that you have viewed or engaged with content that we consider to be inappropriate from a personal device during working hours.

If your use of social media falls outside of this policy then it may constitute a disciplinary offence which we may deal with under our disciplinary policy.

In serious cases, for example where your use of social media is considered to amount to discrimination, bullying, harassment, or victimisation, your actions may constitute gross misconduct, which may result in your dismissal from Chambers.

This policy will be reviewed in June 2028.

WHITESTONE CHAMBERS