



Social media for RDA groups

'Social media' is the term to describe websites and online tools which allow people to interact with each other – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social media involves the building of communities or networks, encouraging participation and engagement.

Social Media provides a platform to share views, ideas and positive actions you are carrying out on behalf of RDA as well as providing the opportunity to recruit volunteers, participants and promote events.

Why is Social Media a Good Idea for my Group?

Many RDA groups find social media a quick and easy way to pass messages on to volunteers, participants and supporters, to ask for help, promote events and to deliver critical information.

Less tangible (but no less beneficial) groups find that social media invites a culture of communication and sharing that helps to strengthen the team as a whole.

Many groups find it speeds up the exchange of information and that people respond quicker than with other forms of communication. With volunteers and participants increasingly accessing social media through their mobile phones, keeping updated doesn't have to be done during dedicated 'admin time' in the evening – communication can be instantly received, quickly processed and immediately answered. It appeals to busy people who'd rather be active outdoors than sitting at a desk.

One of the major benefits to social media is the ability to grow your network, rather than reaching the out to the same pool of supporters the whole time.

Who is going to run your account?

To make the most of being on social media, consider if the people responsible for it have:

- A good understanding of what your group wants to achieve through its use of social media.
- The resource and time available to post regular content and monitor activity.
- A good understanding of what is appropriate in terms of content and how it is used.

Guidance: We recommend always having more than one 'administrator' on your social media accounts.

Social Media and Safeguarding

There is no doubt that social media offer tremendous opportunities, however as with any environment there are also risks.

Take a look at the RDA e-safety code of conduct to help you get things right from the start.

Facebook

Facebook is the most popular social network and is therefore a good place to start in the world of social media.

www.facebook.com

Good for:

- Facebook can be a very effective way for your Centre to build client base, share success stories, communicate with current clients, network with like-minded organisations, and encourage people to attend your events.
- 80% of 18 to 24-year-olds and 73% of 25 to 34-year-olds use Facebook so this is especially relevant to ensure your centre can engage with a younger generation of supporters.

Create a Page

A Facebook page is essentially a profile for your centre and is the best way to promote your centre to the wider world.

You can include information about when you operate, where from, further contact details etc – it may even mean you don't need a website.

Pages are public facing and are designed to allow you to interact with the wider Facebook world as an organization.

Users of Facebook can choose to see your messages on their Facebook page by 'liking' your page. The more likes you have the more people who are likely to be receiving, reading and interacting with your content.

Guidance: Make sure that more than one person is set up as an admin for the page

Tell Your Story with a Cover Photo

The first thing people will see when they visit your page is the cover photo, so it is worthwhile spending some time choosing an image that really represents your centre.

The image needs to be a specific size of 851 x 315. You can use www.picmonkey.com if you need to resize or crop a photo.

Think About Your Page Content

Facebook is a shop window to showcase the very best of what can RDA can do. Try not to use it just to post adverts for events or fundraisers, but instead to capture the life changing activities you deliver. You can always include an 'ask' in your message, but let the story of what you do take centre stage.

EG "Here's one of our riders trotting for the first time – a few months ago he'd never been on the horse and now his parents say it's the highlight of his week. Thanks to all our volunteers who make this possible. If you could give some time each week to help us please contact"

Posting regular content onto your page will keep it fresh and lively and keep reminding your followers that you are out there! Think about trying to post a few times a week.

Try to keep your text quite brief and to the point.

Check in to see if people have commented on your messages and respond if necessary.

Use Photos

Good photos get a better response than any other kind of message on Facebook and they keep your page looking lively and engaging.

Photos are a powerful way to demonstrate the benefit of what your group offers and the breadth of activities on offer.

Photo guidance (applies to all photos in RDA)

- *Be sure you have permission of all of those who appear in your photos, remember once a photo is online it can be very difficult to get it removed.*
- *Don't include full names with photos.*
- *Have a quick check to make sure the photo is a good example of RDA activity (tack, equipment and hats properly fitted etc)*

Search for the RDA Facebook page by looking for 'Riding for the Disabled Association'

Twitter

Twitter is a social media platform where individuals or organisations can write short messages (Tweets), which can be seen by other users who have chosen to follow them. As well as writing messages, users can read what others are saying, and select people or organisations of interest to 'follow'. It doesn't sound like much, but it provides a platform for communication that is quick, informal and inclusive.

www.twitter.com

Good for:

- Reaching your immediate and wider RDA community, as well as local businesses, supporters, donors.

Getting started

Set up a twitter address for your group. These always start with the @ symbol and then should be something quite obvious, eg @KinetonRDA.

If you are new to Twitter, the best thing to do is to start by following other people or organisations first and getting a feel for how it works. If you start by following @RDAnational and then see who they follow, you will find a lot of RDA groups out there and see the kinds of thing they write about.

If Facebook is like a shop front for your group, Twitter is more like a conversation with your RDA community. You can be connected to volunteers, parents, donors, supporters – promoting what you do but also asking for help, thanking supporters, sharing in celebrations and achievements.

Hints for Using Twitter

- Get to the point! Twitter allows you 240 characters so be concise.
- If you want to refer to another twitter user in your Tweet, such as the company that you are thanking or the venue that your event is being held at, use their '@' address – they will get notified!

- Retweeting is where you read someone else's message and want to share it with your followers. You can also add your own comment. People love to get their message retweeted – you will too!
- Include pictures and weblinks. See the guidance from Facebook above about using pictures.

When you've set up your social media profile for your group - don't forget to tell people about it!