



MUMS SUPPORTING MUMS

Using Social Media

Ways mums use social media

Mums have told us that they use social media to keep in touch with each other and to support what they do with other mums. We've written these tips for groups who are thinking about using social media but they will also be useful for individual parents.

What we mean by social media is web-based technology, such as twitter and Facebook or blogs and forums. People use the technology to create what they want to say and then use it to communicate with other people. This kind of media is open for everyone to use, if they want to, and is easy to use and cheap, unlike traditional media forms such as newspapers, radio and television.

All you need to get you started is a smart phone or a computer with internet access.

These are some ways in which mums' groups use social media.

- Promote what they do.
- Keep in touch with each other in between get togethers.
- Keep in touch with women who are feeling more isolated or who can't get to the group each time.
- Tell each other when and where the group is meeting and what they will be doing next.
- Thank everyone for coming and to welcome new members.

It also gives individual mums another way to keep in touch with each other.

- Ask questions and look for information from other mums.
- Say if they can't make the group this week.
- Get in touch with friends they have met through the group.
- Keep in touch when someone is having a bad day.

"Facebook is simple, most people have it on their phones, one button and you're talking to mums in your local area."

"The advantage of Facebook is that it's free and second that it's reliable - we don't always get a good phone signal here."

Hints & Tips to get you started

Why we wrote these Hints and Tips

Mums Supporting Mums links together small local groups led by mums. We've been developing more ways for parents in rural areas to get together.

These are our hints and tips about using social media to support your group and to keep in contact with each other.

We have other hints and tips to help you if you want to set up other local groups or activities. They include parent and toddler groups, buggy walk groups and informal groups meeting in cafés. There are also tips to help you organise the group and find the money to help your group with its activities.

We hope these will give parents in other places ideas on what you can do.

**You will find all
the Hints and Tips
on our website at
www.otbds.org**

Example

Pushy Mummies buggy walking group set up a Facebook page

We wanted to be able to tell each other who was going on the buggy walk that day. Before we had the Facebook page it was complicated. We would have had to either:

- Phone around everyone.
- Text around everyone.
- Email everyone.
- Or a mixture of all of these.

No matter what we chose one of us would have to look at all the replies to circulate the final decision about whether we'd go for a walk in the windy weather or meet up in the cafe instead.

But having a Facebook page meant it was easier for everyone to see at a glance who was going, who might be late and who wasn't coming at all.

It has also meant that we can make decisions very quickly if the weather looks bad.

Social media also helps us keep in touch with people who are thinking about coming along and with mums who are not able to make it each week.

"When we got together we looked at how we could keep in touch. The easiest way was using social media and Facebook."

"It's good to make sure everyone has support. So even if you can't make it for a few weeks you can still keep in with everyone and find out what everyone is up to."

"It's not so scary to text someone - whereas phoning up or meeting up for the first time can be quite daunting."

Some hints for setting up Facebook for your group

- A good way to start is to playing around with it and see what Facebook can do.
- Have a look at how other local groups or organisations use Facebook and perhaps ask to join them on Facebook.
- Set up a profile for your group and keep it separate from your own page if you have one.
- Check the privacy settings are for friends only - this limits who can see your stuff. Or you can list just the people (your members) who can see your page. Youtube has lots of videos to help you with this.
- Start small. Only add your members or people you know well to practice on first.
- You can use it to have some information which is public and some which is closed and just for members. Public Facebook pages are good for reaching more people who might be interested and for telling other community groups what you do.
- You don't have to post all the time - but make sure this is the place where people come to for information.
- Remember - everything you post is there for people to see, so be careful and polite in what you say.
- Look out for what annoys you from others on Facebook and avoid it yourself.
- Give yourself time slots for going onto Facebook or you could spend hours!
- Find people and topics that interest you and 'like' them to keep up to date on the latest news of information.

"A lot of it is common sense, like don't befriend people you don't know."

"My Health Visitor told me about the group so I looked the group up on Facebook and decided to come along."

"We have a Facebook group set up and we have everyone's phone numbers."

"It's a good way to find out information - just post a question on the group page and people will comment."

"I keep in touch with everyone in the group through Facebook."

Keeping safe on Facebook

- Don't post personal details like full names, addresses and phone numbers.
- Treat it like a busy café where people can hear what you are saying and only say online what you would share then. In real life you don't tell everyone everything.
- Keep your privacy settings high and check them regularly. You can make the group private so only your members see it.
- But it also helps if you ask new members to check and limit their privacy settings too because this helps limit the number of people who can see the group's posts. Ultimately though this is up to each individual so only post things you would like everyone to know.

Other ways to reach and help people

Check out any community websites for your area. These are good ways to raise your group's profile. It is also a way of finding out what else is happening and what other groups are doing.

There are websites and directories with information about resources in the local area. This can be a good way to check out opening times and which ones have the facilities you need.

Each area has one - and sometimes several - organisations which support voluntary groups. Their websites and updates through social media are good ways to find out about training courses and funding opportunities.

Other voluntary organisations which give support to families and to women have websites with good information and resources on them such as helpline details. These might be of more interest to some of your members than others, but sending round information to everyone is a good way to make the contact easy for anyone who needs it.

You can use and link up with other organisations and networks that bring together information that is useful for parents. There are more NHS resources available through websites now, for example.

Think of a mix of traditional communication and social media. For example, you can put up posters or leaflets in local shops or community centres with the basics and point people to your website or Facebook page for more information.

"Facebook is a lifeline for me."

"The Health Visitors told us about the Ready Steady Baby app and we've been spreading the word about that."



"I use Facebook if I want to ask something about teething or weaning. It's good to get other ideas."

"I use it for support and to hear other mums' experiences. There are so many good ideas to share and it's so easy."

"Someone always there to give advice."

Other hints for keeping safe online

- Think carefully about what you say before you post anything online.
- Don't post any personal information online – like your address, email address or mobile number.
- Keep your privacy settings as high as possible.
- Never give out your passwords and use different passwords for different sites and activities.
- Change your passwords regularly.
- Don't meet up with people you've met online but use it to check out groups you might like to meet up with or contact.
- Remember that not everyone online is who they say they are.
- Also not every claim that is made on the internet is true. Check the sources and decide if you trust them.
- Keep your phone or tablet out of other people's view when using them in a public place.
- If you see something online that makes you feel uncomfortable, unsafe or worried: report it as unacceptable, leave the website and turn off your computer if you want to.
- Keep your computer safe by using anti-virus soft and firewall and updating regularly.

"We used the village website to publicise our fundraising. We got donations of equipment and people offering to help - like doing a quiz night for us."

Further help and information

“Some of us have struggled a bit with post-natal depression. There are some great websites which help you manage your wellbeing. We got suggestions from the Health Visitors and share information on places that we find helpful. It’s good to feel you are not alone.”

Look for our other Hints and Tips on: Toddler groups, buggy walking groups, informal groups in cafes and finding funds .

Some websites that offer help are

- <http://www.wikihow.com/Keep-Safe-on-Facebook>
- <http://www.technewsdaily.com/7880-10-twitter-safety-tips.html>
- <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/10-twitter-safety-tips-to-protect-your-account-identity/>

“The very good thing to remember about social media is its potential to connect you with a large amount of people with similar interests, who will be going through similar experiences as you and can offer support and guidance on things that have worked for them. For many mums in rural and isolated places this is just what we need, want and use.”

Contact us

There is more on the Mums Supporting Mums project at www.otbds.org/mums

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THIS PROJECT IS BEING PART-FINANCED BY THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY SCOTTISH BORDERS, DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY AND SOUTH LANARKSHIRE LEADER 2007 - 2013 PROGRAMME

