The Safe Space Charter

Using modern technology allows older people and those with disabilities to stay connected with family, friends and the community around them. It also facilitates engagement in activities that support better wellbeing. More and more older people are embracing modern technology, but the digital divide between generations remains wide. The places where people gather online tend to accommodate the sensibilities of younger people while slowly but surely social media is replacing the traditional local news that older people once depended on.

It can be daunting for older people to join these dynamic social spaces, but given support the benefits to them can be significant. This is why we have developed the Safe Space Charter which acknowledges the digital divide and asks those tasked with the administration of social spaces to support an inclusive approach to the management of their groups making them safe spaces that support age and disability equality and reduce discrimination.

A Safe Space

To be a safe space for older people we ask that you administer your Facebook groups to be inclusive, welcoming, supportive, polite, responsive, engaging, protective and clear.

Be Inclusive

In the description of your group, offer new members the opportunity to write to the group's safe space representative for guidance. This might be worded as follows:

> We have adopted the Safe Space Charter. If you are an older person and need support, please write to [email address].

Be Welcoming

New members to the group should be welcomed with a new member intro that includes a statement giving a commitment to maintain a safe and inclusive space.

Be Supportive

If a member's post is rejected, an explanation should be provided with the opportunity to re-post. Define group rules such as,

Title:
Please re-post with changes. Reasons why might be:

Description:
Because your written introduction is unclear or some important detail is missing or the post you have shared is not public. Please see the administrator's comments.

For those you feel might be a vulnerable or older person, be sure to add the (optional) additional feedback explaining specifically why their post was rejected and encourage them to re-post.

Be Polite

Impolite words should be filtered from the group using automated administrative tools. It takes time to develop the collection of words used in the community you support. As inappropriate words slip through your filters, the collection of words should be updated. On rejecting a word used in a comment, its author should be sent an automated message such as,

> "We are a Safe Space Charter group. Your comment included a restricted word. You are welcome to re-comment with more polite phrasing."

Be Responsive

Use the automated group services, currently called Admin Assist, to send the administrators notification or act on their behalf such as using the facility to 'Turn off commenting if' a post or comment is reported 3 times or more.

Regularly remind your members that the group has high standards of social etiquette and encourage them to report any inappropriate comments to the administrator.

Be Engaging

As far as possible, posts should be engaging. An easy way to achieve that is to establish a rule that asks for all posts, especially shared posts, to include a written introduction. Use the 'Decline incoming post if' in 'Admin assist' to automatically reject posts with no introduction or only a few words. You should 'Notify author and give feedback' using something like:

> "Members of the group, particularly older people, appreciate written introductions. Please re-post adding at least a sentence to introduce and explain your post. Thank you."

Be Protective

Turn on Potential Spam to make sure any content Facebook identifies in comments as a potential threat to members is reviewed before it is approved.

Be Clear

Your group's description, which appears in the 'About' of the group, should clearly state that the group is a safe and inclusive welcoming space for everyone, but particularly for older people, such as:

This group complies with the Safe Space Charter at www.safespacecharter.org making it a safe and welcoming space for older people.

Use one of the membership questions to inform new members that the group is maintained as a safe space for older and vulnerable people, such as,

We maintain a safe space for older people and those with disabilities. Do you agree to support them and other members by abiding by the group's scope, etiquette and rules? You will find these in the 'about' of the group.

o Yes
o No

The Charter's Endorsement

When you have adopted the Safe Space Charter your group's membership will be displayed on our website. To maintain your membership we will check your group from time to time to make sure it complies with the charter.

We will contact organisations and companies that provide services to older people and tell them about the groups that comply with the Safe Space Charter. Your group can make a difference to older people and those with disabilities.

Thank you.