Bluesky Social Media

A Youth Work Overview

Why Bluesky?

If Twitter/X no longer feels like the right fit, Bluesky can be a useful alternative for you and your group to consider. No social media platform is perfect but alternatives exist and may be a better fit for your organisation.

Many people from membership have asked questions or raised concerns about some of the bigger social media platforms recently. Youth Scotland has been using Bluesky as one of our main channels for several months, alongside Facebook, Instagram and our regular E-newsletter. Check out our handy Linktree for all the places you can find us online: https://linktr.ee/youthscotland

Some of the text in this guide has been bolded – this usually means you can read more about that term in the glossary at the end.

What is Bluesky?

Bluesky is a social media platform that works a lot like Twitter/X: short posts (300 characters), replies, reposts, quote posts, hashtags, images, video and DMs. It's made by some of the team who originally worked on Twitter in the past and they say it is designed to give users more control over what they see and how they manage their experience.

Why might a youth group use it?

If Twitter/X no longer feels like the right fit, Bluesky can be a useful alternative for:

- Sharing news and updates.
- Celebrating young people's achievements.
- Connecting with local partners, youth work colleagues and funders.
- Following topics that matter to community-based youth work.

What's different from Twitter/X?

Bluesky has a few features that help people shape their own experience:

- Custom feeds: choose different 'timelines' for different interests, rather than one single algorithm.
- Starter packs: curated bundles of accounts and feeds, handy for getting started quickly.
- Stronger user controls for muting, blocking and reporting.

Good to know

- Bluesky is still a public social network, so assume posts are visible on the open web, not just to people with accounts.
- Similar to other social networks in the UK (currently) you must be 13 or older to use Bluesky.
- Bluesky 'handles' all start by using the format of '@yourgroupname.bsky.social' but you can 'verify' and use your own domain name if you like such as our own handle of @youthscotland.org.uk (more on this later).

How do I get started?

In this section, you can find a quick start guide to getting up and running on Bluesky in around 10 minutes. It might be useful to have your logo, an image that you like from your group and a short description of who/what your group is and does to hand before you begin.

Create an account

1. Go to https://bsky.app/ or download the Bluesky mobile app.
2. Create an account.
3. Add:
   Profile name (e.g. 'Your Youth Group Name').
   Short bio (what you do, where you are, who you support).
   Logo as profile image and a simple banner image.
4. Choose your basic settings – there are many options from privacy and security to moderation and notifications. Good places to look at first are:
   Notifications – select those you actually want.
   Direct messages – choose the (DMs) options you would like
5. Follow some accounts!
   You can start with us - @youthscotland.org.uk

Finding your people

Here are simple ways to build a useful feed quickly:

- Search for partner organisations and local stakeholders, then follow.
- Look for relevant hashtags (for example, local place names or youth work topics).
- Use a starter pack shared by someone you trust, then follow the suggested accounts and feeds.

Following 30–50 accounts is enough to make Bluesky feel 'alive'.

Optional: 'verified' using your website

Bluesky lets you use your own domain as your handle (for example, @yourgroup.org). This can help people trust that an account is authentic. This is optional and does require some technical know-how. You can read a guide to getting verified in the links at the end.

Creating your first post

1) Start a new post

Select New Post (the compose button). You'll see a text box and options to add media.

2) Write your message

- Bluesky posts have a 300 character limit (it may be fewer, depending on emojis and special characters which can count as 2 or more).

- Aim for:

  o One clear point.

  o A simple call to action (e.g. 'Book your place', 'Read more', 'Get in touch').

Tip: If you need more space, post a follow-up reply to your own post to create a short thread.

3) Add links

- Paste your URL (link) into the post. Bluesky supports link/webpage cards (previews, like Facebook etc.) for URLs.

- In the app, you'll often see an 'Add link card' option to turn the URL into a preview, then you can remove the raw URL from the text to save characters.

4) Add images or video

- You can add up to 4 images per post.

- For images, add a short alt text description (this improves accessibility).

- You can also post video (one video per post).

5) Check, then publish

Do a quick check:

- Is it clear what you want people to do next?

- Are you sharing anything that shouldn't be public?

- If it includes young people, make sure you have the right permissions and consent.

6) Then select Post!

FAQs

Is Bluesky private?

No. It's a public social network. Assume posts are visible widely and accessed by search engines and AI.

Do young people need to be 13+?

Yes, Bluesky's terms set a minimum age of 13. While there is some discussion on new legislation to change this, the current UK restriction is 13+.

What if we get trolls or abuse?

Use mute, block and report tools early. You're not obliged to engage.

Can we turn off DMs?

Yes, you can set DMs to 'No one'.

For full FAQs, see here: https://bsky.social/about/blog/5-19-2023-user-faq

Glossary (plain English)

Handle: your username, starting with @ (e.g. @yourgroup.bsky.social)

Feed: a timeline view (for example, your following feed or a custom feed)

Starter pack: a recommended bundle of accounts and feeds

Mute: hide someone's posts from you without them knowing

Block: stop interaction both ways

Verified: an account that has been linked to their own web domain (e.g. @youthscotland.org.uk)

Call to action: sometimes just CTA, a call to action is what you would like the reader to do next, such as 'Book your place', 'Read more', 'Get in touch'.

Alt text: or alternative text, is a simple description of what can be seen in the image. This helps visually-impaired users and can help with search functions and search engines.

DMs: direct messages – where another Bluesky user sends you a private message instead of a public reply or post.

Links and more information

Bluesky User FAQ (official): https://bsky.social/about/blog/5-19-2023-user-faq

Moderation and Custom Feeds (official help): https://blueskyweb.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/19002427251981-Moderation-and-Custom-Feeds

Data Privacy (official help): https://blueskyweb.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/15835264007693-Data-Privacy

Direct Messages (official): https://bsky.social/about/blog/05-22-2024-direct-messages

Starter Packs (official): https://bsky.social/about/blog/06-26-2024-starter-packs

Domain handle tutorial (official): https://bsky.social/about/blog/4-28-2023-domain-handle-tutorial

Terms of Service (official): https://bsky.social/about/support/tos

Community Guidelines (official): https://bsky.social/about/support/community-guidelines

Privacy Policy (official): https://bsky.social/about/support/privacy-policy