
Trust Policy and Procedure

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Social Media Policy



For use in:	All areas
For use by:	All staff members
For use for:	Guidance to staff on the use of social media
Document owner:	Head of communications
Status:	Approved

Purpose of this document

To provide comprehensive guidance to Trust staff of all grades for the use of all types of social media.

This policy provides guidelines about the appropriate use of social media within the Trust as a communications tool for the Trust and by staff members in their professional capacity. This is a rapidly changing area and this policy is expected to be updated and amended as our communication strategies evolve.

1. Introduction

- 1.0 There are a large range of social media platforms available, such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. The Trust realises that many of our stakeholders (patients, carers, partners and staff) use social media as a way to interact with others, find out information and leave feedback. In order to ensure the Trust is able to communicate and engage with stakeholders who use social media as a main form of communication the Trust hosts a Facebook page, LinkedIn page, Twitter account, Instagram account and YouTube channel. These corporate accounts are managed and monitored by the communications team on behalf of the Trust.
- 1.1 The Trust recognises that many staff use these in their own time, using their own computers and smartphones. In addition to personal use, for many, this is an important channel for professional communication, learning and gaining a work profile. This policy documents that every staff member has permission to use social media at work for work purposes. It sets out our expectations of you when you do so and what you can expect from us.
- 1.2 This policy provides guidelines about the appropriate use of social media within the Trust as a communications tool for the Trust and by staff members in their professional capacity. This policy has been developed based on best practice from NHS Employers. This is a rapidly changing area and this policy is expected to be updated and amended as our communication strategies evolve.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, contractors and any agency workers, volunteers and students whilst on placement with us. Failure to use social media in accordance with this policy could result in disciplinary action being taken.

3. Responsibilities

Chief executive

The chief executive has overarching accountability for this policy and delegates responsibility for ensuring this policy is applied consistently and fairly across the Trust, to the executive directors and senior managers of the Trust.

Director of workforce and communications

The Director of workforce and communications is responsible for ensuring a robust policy is in place for the use of social media and monitoring compliance with this policy.

Employees

- The West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust understands the value that social media platforms can bring to its employees. This policy documents that every staff member has permission to use social media at work for work purposes. It sets out our expectations of you when you do so and what you can expect from us.
- Please remember that whenever or however you may be using these sites, as West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust employees, you are expected to maintain standards of professionalism. Any breach of this such as inflammatory, derogatory, slanderous or abusive statements may lead to disciplinary action. Just as we don't tolerate bullying in real life, we will not tolerate it online.
- It is important that you do not give the impression that your comments represent the views of the Trust unless specifically authorised by the communications team.
- If you identify yourself as working for the Trust on social media platforms, it should be made clear that all comments and opinions are made in your personal capacity.
- The following social media websites are accessible from Trust workstations:
 - Twitter
 - YouTube
 - LinkedIn
- Guidance for different professions across the NHS has been published. In general, the guidance across all professions state:
 - professional or personal use of social media by clinical staff is not banned by any of their professional bodies;
 - caution in using social media professionally is advised particularly around:
 - patient confidentiality
 - maintaining appropriate relationships with patients
 - upholding professional values
 - caution should be taken to avoid making any potentially libellous statements about others

4. Trust use of social media to support communications with stakeholders

The West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust uses the following social media platforms to communicate with patients, the public, staff and the media:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Instagram

Our social media accounts are monitored during office hours: 8am – 5pm, Monday – Friday, excluding public holidays. Occasionally we may cover events outside of these hours live on our social media platforms.

From time to time social media services may be unavailable and we accept no responsibility for lack of service due to social media service downtime.

We may use some scheduling tools to help us ensure content is spread across the week. Our followers can expect between 5–15 posts a week. This may increase if we hold a tweet chat or in the case of an emergency.

By sharing other social media users content our organisation does not endorse the information or others' views of that organisation or individual. We aim to share information which adds to any debate or topic we are involved in.

Our social media content will cover some or all of the following:

- Alerts about new content on our digital channels, for example, new publications, videos on YouTube, blog posts or health campaigns.
- Sharing content from organisations we follow such as other NHS organisations, the emergency services and public sector organisations
- Occasional live coverage of events

Departmental social media accounts

We understand that staff may want to use social media in a formal capacity to enhance their engagement with patients and the public.

All corporate digital channels (including internet and intranet pages) are managed by the communications team.

To ensure that sites and channels are set up in a supportive manner in line with Trust guidance, prior consent and approval must be granted by the communications team before a social media handle, account or site is set up that represents the Trust or team in any professional/formal capacity. You can contact the team at communications@wsh.nhs.uk.

The communications team will provide you with advice and guidance; the team can work with you to either:

- Support sharing your messages via the already established corporate channels

- Support you in moving through the formal process to establish a separate account.

The communications team will guide you on which option is best suited for your needs.

The team will also provide support and advice on appropriate and engaging content.

The following principles should be adhered to:

- The team / service need to be committed to the site, posting regular original content that supports staff, patients and our community
- Good practice is to monitor social media accounts every day and respond, when needed, in a timely manner.
- Any information posted online is in the public domain and can be freely viewed by anyone at any time, even if it has been deleted

All usernames and passwords for approved departmental accounts must be provided to the communications team. The communications team has the right to remove posts, but will only do this in exceptional circumstances, as one example, if factually incorrect has been shared.

If Trust affiliated accounts are not used frequently or to Trust standards, the communications team has the right to close these accounts. This will not be done without informing the relevant staff members linked to the account.

5. What to avoid when using social media

Any communication which employees make in a personal capacity through social media must not:

Breach confidentiality by:

- revealing confidential information about West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust;
- revealing confidential information about a colleague/patient/visitor;
- discussing West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust's internal working or future plans which have not been communicated to the wider public;

Breach copyright, for example by:

- using someone else's images or written content without permission;
- or failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something.
- damaging West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, for example its business interests, or service users, whether directly or indirectly.

Discrimination, harassment and 'cyberbullying'

The Trust supports a culture of inclusion and this should be respected. All employees are advised that they must refrain from any online behaviour which could be considered to be discriminatory or which may constitute bullying or harassment of colleagues or service users. This includes, for example, making offensive comments relating to gender, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion/belief age, or any other protected equality and diversity characteristic (this is not an exhaustive list);

using social media to bully another individual ('cyberbullying') and posting images that are discriminatory or offensive, or links to such images.

Incidents of discrimination, bullying or harassment which take place via social media will be managed in line with relevant Trust policies.

If members of staff have any concerns in this respect, they are encouraged to contact the communications team, their manager, human resources, their trade union representative or staff advisor for informal discussion and advice.

6. Monitoring the use of social media

Employees should be aware that any use of social media (whether or not accessed for work purposes) is monitored and where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken under the disciplinary policy. The Trust reserves the right to monitor and report on social media usage, particularly if there is a legitimate concern about security.

The Trust reserves the right to restrict or prevent access to certain social media websites.

For more guidance on clinicians and nurses using social media, please see either the [GMC guidance on doctors' use of social media](#) or the [NMC guidance on social networking](#). Staff are advised to familiarise themselves with the relevant guidance for their profession where appropriate.

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File name:	
Supercedes:	N/A
Equality Assessed	Yes
Implementation	
Monitoring: (give brief details how this will be done)	Training will be included in IG training. DPA incidents/breaches will be reported and investigated. DPA audits will be carried out on a regular basis.
Other relevant policies/documents & references:	Information Security Policy Incident Reporting & Management Policy Data Protection Policy
Additional Information:	