Social Media Toolkit

Version: 1

Status: Final

Directorate: People

Reviewed by: Policy Review Alignment Group – June 2024

Review date: June 2027

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Contents

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1. Introduction

1.1 The organisation recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of the organisation, employees must be aware that anything posted on social media is considered to be in the public domain, and therefore has the potential to damage their own and the Trust's reputation.

1.2 Whilst the Trust recognises the benefits of using social media, this toolkit sets out principles to ensure that all employees use social media responsibly to ensure the confidentiality of patients, families, and colleagues, along with the reputation of the Trust is safeguarded.

1.3 Social media has blurred the boundaries between a person's private and professional life. Employees who use social media in their personal life should therefore be mindful that inappropriate content could have implications on or damage their own reputation and that of the Trust and its colleagues, and cause harm to others.

1.4 This toolkit covers the use of all social media platforms such as Facebook, blogs, microblogs such as X (formally twitter), chatrooms, forums, podcasts, commenting on message boards and forums, commenting on news items and articles, and content sharing sites such as YouTube and Instagram. However, this is not an exhaustive list and new online platforms will be considered automatically covered.

1.5 The Trust recognises that the internet and social media is fast moving technology, and it is impossible to cover all circumstances and emerging media/technologies within this toolkit, therefore the principles must be followed irrespective of the medium or platform.

1.6 Where this toolkit refers to 'employees' this includes all directly employed individuals, temporary workers, bank workers and past employees.

1.7 Employees are allowed to say that they work for the organisation, which recognises that it is natural for its staff sometimes to want to discuss their work on social media.

1.8 If employees do discuss their work on social media (for example, giving opinions on their specialism or the sector in which the organisation operates), they must consider the appropriateness of this in line with the principles set out below.

2. Core Principles

Any communications that employees make in a personal capacity through social media must **not**:

2.1 <u>Bring the organisation into disrepute</u>, for example by:

2.1.1 Criticising or arguing with service users, colleagues or competitor organisations;

2.1.2 Making defamatory statements about the Trust, including posting/sharing of photographs or content which could be interpreted as defamatory; or

2.1.3 Making defamatory, disparaging, or discriminatory comments about individuals or other organisations (such as other NHS organisations, Fire Service or Police) or groups; or

2.1.4 Making comments that may bring the reputation of the profession into disrepute or the professional body with which the employee or colleagues are registered; or

2.1.5 Representing or sharing personal views as those of the Trust or profession; or

2.1.6 Contacting patients or family members, or accepting connection requests from patients or family members; or

2.1.7 Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content.

2.2 Breach confidentiality, for example by:

2.2.1 Identifying other employees, including sharing of photographs or other media taken within the Trust or other NHS facilities or premises, or of individuals wearing Trust uniform without prior permission; or

2.2.2 Identifies patients or their families that have been attended to or treated by a Trust employee, including sharing of incident details, photographs or and other content; or

2.2.3 Revealing information owned by the organisation; or

2.2.4 Giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague or patient) or another organisation; or

2.2.5 Discussing the organisation's internal workings (such as its future business plans that have not been communicated to the public).

2.3 Be in contradiction to the Trust's Culture, Values and Behaviours which aim to build a culture where we act as **one team**, are united in our **compassionate** approach and where we are continually **innovative** and striving to improve.

2.4 Breach copyright, for example by:

2.4.1 Using someone else's images or written content without permission; or

2.4.2   Failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something; or

2.5   <u>Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of any individual</u>, for example by:

2.5.1   Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief or age;

2.5.2   Using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee of the organisation); or

2.5.3   Making comments or judgements about an employee's performance or character; or

2.5.4   Engage in conversations with people of a sexual nature unless the individual knows who they are and the conversation is mutually accepted. Sexual conversations can be dangerous if you do not know who the person is and how old they are; or

2.5.5   Posting images that are discriminatory or offensive (or links to such content).

2.6   <u>Use social media in a way that breaches other Trust policies</u>, for example you are prohibited from using social media in a way that breaches any of the following;

- Dignity and Respect at Work Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Confidentiality obligations to patients
- Any other laws or regulatory requirements.

2.7   The Trust recognises that social media groups such as Facebook and WhatsApp with colleagues can be beneficial as a communication platform to share information and have access to support and advice. Any content shared via such platforms must comply with this guidance and the following additional guidance is given:

2.7.1   Employees should consider whether the content is appropriate to share via these platforms;

2.7.2   The exclusion of colleagues from such groups could be deemed inappropriate and may constitute bullying, harassment or discrimination;

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2.7.3   Administrators of social media groups should be mindful of the principles of this guidance when selecting or accepting contacts to join the group, and group membership should be regularly reviewed to ensure that contacts should still be receiving data.

2.8   The Trust recognises that social media usage is a daily part of life for many individuals, however the use of social media during working hours is prohibited whilst engaging in patient activities; employment work streams or training activities where there is an expectation that your full attention is on the task at hand'.

2.9   All employees must adhere to the Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Agreement Policy, Appendix G – Social Media Usage, which can be found on the Trust intranet.

3   Breach of Guidance

3.1   Any breaches of this guidance may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, all actions will be taken in accordance with the Trust's disciplinary policy. Employees are required to cooperate with any investigation if a breach of these guidelines is suspected.

3.2   Any professionally qualified employee must also adhere to social media guidelines produced specifically by their registered bodies e.g., HCPC. Any breaches of guidelines may put professional registration at risk.

3.3   The Trust requires individuals to remove any social media content that the Trust considers a breach of guidelines, upon management request. Failure to comply with such a request may result in disciplinary action.

4   User Responsibilities

4.1   All employees must be aware that as soon as a post is made online, it is no longer within the private sphere or in control of the original poster and may be viewed by patients, families, employers, colleagues, the media, etc. If in doubt, do not put the information or comment on any social network site, blog or forum.

4.2   Any employee identifying misuse of social media which breaches these guidelines must report the breach to a line manager, member of the HR team or Freedom to Speak Up team.

4.3   Any employee who is approached by a journalist or other individual via direct messaging or other online forum must not respond to the request for information, but notify the press office to avoid any undesirable, unsolicited probes for information going out to press. Press office - 0300 369 0021 - communicationsteam@swast.nhs.uk and/or publicrelations@swast.nhs.uk

5 Legal Implications

5.1 Employees should be aware that there are several legal implications associated with the inappropriate use of social media, liability can arise under the laws of:

- Defamation
- Copyright
- Discrimination
- Contract
- Human Rights
- Protection from harassment
- Criminal Justice
- Data Protection.

11. Monitoring

11.1 The effectiveness of this toolkit will be monitored and reviewed at the HR management team meeting three months before the review date. Recommendations will be recorded and shared via the recognised policy approvals process in time for the policy review date.

Appendix A - Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessment	
Title	Social Media Toolkit
Date Completed	01/11/2023

The Social Media Toolkit should be read and reviewed in conjunction with South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust's Equality and Diversity policy.

In applying this policy, the organisation will have due regard for the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and provide for good relations between people of diverse groups, in particular on the grounds of the following characteristics protected by the Equality Act (2010); age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation, in addition to offending background, trade union membership, those with carer responsibilities or any other personal characteristic.

Promoting diversity embodies the principles of fair treatment for all and will, as a result, improve the retention of staff. SWASFT values the diversity of its workforce and aims to ensure that all staff understand this commitment and adhere to the required standards.

Protected Group	Does any aspect of this policy that disproportionately impact on the below groups? Please confirm either yes/no	Are these impacts negative, neutral or positive?	Are further actions required to address any negative impacts or enhance positive ones? Please confirm either yes/no
Age	**Yes**	**Positive**	**No**
Disability	**Yes**	**Positive**	**No**
Gender Reassignment	**Yes**	**Positive**	**No**
Marriage and civil partnership	**Yes**	**Positive**	**No**
Pregnancy and maternity	**Yes**	**Positive**	**No**

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Race and ethnicity	**Yes**	**Positive**	**No**
Religion or belief	**Yes**	**Positive**	**No**
Sex	**Yes**	**Positive**	**No**
Sexual orientation	**Yes**	**Positive**	**No**

What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy/change programme?

Has this policy /change programme considered who needs to be involved in the widest sense – up, down and across? Who might it impact, directly or indirectly?

What are the results?

This toolkit has been reviewed in line with the Equality and Diversity policy, this toolkit has a positive impact on individuals with protected characteristics, providing clear guidance for all employees on appropriate social media usage and giving additional protection to those with protected characteristics.

What are the wider implications, how will others be educated on this policy/change programme so all colleagues are supported?

How can we create a framework of understanding and support around those directly impacted?

There are no wider implications identified that would be a concern. The policy is available to all employees via the SWAST Intranet. It is planned to communicate this new policy via the trust bulletin.

How will we measure the implementation of this policy/change programme, what will be our measure for success?

What are the results?

Evaluation of incidents relating to inappropriate use of social media.

Summarise whether the proposed policy, will have a disproportionate impact on any of the protected groups above?

If so, an action plan should be completed

Protected groups listed above will have greater protection against harassment and/or bullying via social media platforms.

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	Activity	Who	When	Deliverables
1				
2				
3				
4				
Sign Off				
Executive Director / Deputy Director Associate Director / Head of Service:		Date Approved		

Version Control Sheet

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes
0.1 DRAFT	11/2023	Claire Rowswell, People Project Manager	New toolkit