



# Social Media Guidance for Staff

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# Social media guidance aims

- Establish practical and reasonable guidelines to help staff in their professional use of social media.
- Promote a safe environment to make the most of social media in the work we do.
- Ensure our organisation is protected against any potential negative impact of social media abuse or negligence.

**Any individual who is authorised to use social media must at all times ensure they comply with relevant legislation and Healthcare Improvement Scotland policies:**

- **including patient confidentiality**
- **data protection**
- **Freedom of Information**
- **financial disclosure, and**
- **copyright.**



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# Social media definition

Social media is a term used to refer to online technologies and practices used to share information, promote discussion and build relationships. Social media involves a combination of technology, telecommunications and some types of social interaction. Here are some examples of social media.



## **Facebook**

This social network provides a platform to communicate and share information, photos, videos and links with users we know. Users can also participate in communities that may interest them. Facebook also allows us to send private messages to contacts (known as friends) and to other users who we may not know but who are on Facebook. We can also create events and invite others to join.



## **Flickr**

Flickr is an online photo management and sharing application. The free version has a monthly upload limit of 100 MB (10MB maximum per image).



## **LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is a professional social networking website which can be used to keep connected with colleagues and network with professional peers and industry experts.



## **Twitter**

Twitter is a service for publishing short text messages (up to 140 characters). As a Twitter user you can post updates, follow and view updates from other users, and send a public reply or private direct message to connect with another user.



## **YouTube**

YouTube is a platform which allows users to publish, watch and share user-generated videos. YouTube is ideal for sharing informative or educational audiovisual materials about our activities or health issues.

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# Using social media for work purposes



## Things we must do

- **Create good content.** Using social media successfully, like any communication, relies on us having interesting and engaging content.
- **Ensure you have authorisation** from your line manager before interacting with any social media for work purposes and always gain their permission to use any information that isn't in the public domain.
- **Be transparent.** Disclose your position as a member of the organisation.
- **Display a disclaimer** that your views do not necessarily reflect the organisation's views (unless employees are authorised to speak on behalf of the organisation in an official capacity). This disclaimer needs to be stated once - preferably in the 'biography' or 'about' field on the profile page of your social media account. Here's an example of a social media disclaimer.  
**"All views here are my own personal views and do not necessarily reflect the views of Healthcare Improvement Scotland".** A shorter version is **"All views my own"**.
- **Respect copyright** when linking to images or other online material. Adhere to data protection, financial regulations and the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.
- **Be professional.** Perceptions of any organisation are driven by how people interact with the employees. You are always a representative of the organisation and, when using social media in certain networks, you might be the only Healthcare Improvement Scotland person making comment.
- **Be clear about your aims.** What story are you trying to tell, to whom and why.
- **Be responsible. Be honest.** Abide by the organisational HR and IT policies.
- **Be respectful. Pause and think before posting.** When disagreeing with other opinions, keep it appropriate and polite; always be respectful of every individual's legal right to express their opinions, whether those opinions are complimentary or critical. Our organisation recognises and appreciates the rights of individuals to free speech. Be tolerant and consider the opinions and positions of others, even if they conflict with your own.

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## Things we must not do

- **Make comments which could negatively affect the reputation of the organisation, employees, patients, stakeholders or partners.**
- **Post content that could be viewed as unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, obscene, sexually-oriented or racially offensive or of a bullying nature.** Harassment, threats, intimidation, ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, racial or religious intolerance and any other form of behaviour prohibited in the workplace is also prohibited on social media channels.
- **Make comments or posts on behalf of the organisation** eg on national policy, future direction of the organisation, what is likely to be part of the future work programme. If in doubt please contact the Communications Unit media personnel for advice.
- **Refer to customers, patients, partners or suppliers by name** - or the confidential details of their projects, without first obtaining the permission of the individual or groups.
- **Post the same or similar message more than once (this can be construed as 'spamming').**
- **Publicise anyone's personal information, including your own.**
- **Advertise or solicit products or services.**
- **Impersonate someone else.**
- **Access social media which has a pornographic, violent, offensive or unethical content.**
- **Reveal confidential or sensitive information about the organisation.**
- **Engage in social media discussions on religion, politics or any other controversial issues** that may provoke a charged, emotional response.
- **Use social media channels for internal business communications** between fellow employees. It is fine for employees to disagree, but never use your external blog or other online social media channels to air your differences publicly.

... if you would not be happy having your social media comment on a t-shirt you are wearing for all to see, then perhaps it is best to re-read and edit!

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# How to use social media effectively for work

## **A work social media presence**

- If you want to use social media for your own professional use you may want to create a separate social media account, linked to your work email. This will appear for example as 'John Smith Healthcare Improvement Scotland' and will be completely separate from any personal accounts.
- Those members of staff who adopt a work social media presence should also connect with the main Healthcare Improvement Scotland channel (either facebook or Twitter). This will allow for retweeting and sharing information
- Remember when setting up a work social media presence for the organisation, the account and any followers associated with the account sit with the organisation. The account still exists when you leave the organisation – you do not own this account. Contacts may be passed on within the organisation when you leave.

## **Part of a plan**

- Think through your reasons for using social media and the outcome you want to achieve. If you are inviting public responses, for example, then consider how you will use the results and how this fits in with other forms of consultation.
- Social media shouldn't be seen in isolation – it should be part of an overall communications effort – along with other digital and traditional channels and as part of a wider communications and engagement strategy.
- Have a plan for how you intend to monitor and evaluate your activity.
- Always try to add value to online conversations by advancing the dialogue in a constructive, meaningful way.
- Respect your target audience. Think about their specific needs and be aware of language, cultural or other sensitivities.

## **A different way of thinking**

- Employees who engage about topics relevant to our work should always be aware that their disclosures are not private or temporary. Social media disclosures live online indefinitely, and employees should remember that they will be visible to a broad audience and possible even read out of context. A good maxim is when in doubt, leave it out.
- Once initiated, conversations on social media cannot be controlled and you may hear/see things you don't like; it is OK to have a variety of views expressed which conflict with your own.
- Social media is immediate – be aware that the types of conversation that happen in social media channels require a degree of immediacy that challenges organisational culture and the way organisations have traditionally worked. So engaging in social media requires resource – a commonly held view that it is simple and easy to do is misleading.

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# Personal use of social media

## Some things to consider in relation to your work

### **There is only one you!**

The judgement you exercise on your own time reflects on the judgement you exercise at work. There's only one you – at work and play. Whether you are on your own time or Healthcare Improvement Scotland time, you are still a public sector employee.

Only engage with your personal social media outside working hours and remember:

- you are personally responsible for any content you publish
- follow our organisational and IT code of conduct, HR and Social Media Guidance, and
- try to avoid talking about the work you do for Healthcare Improvement Scotland in your personal social media.

It's best that you don't upload photos or videos showing you or your friends doing anything inappropriate. Take advantage of any settings that allow you to control how visible content will be if your friends have not exercised such good common sense.

### **Privacy**

Be mindful of the personal information you disclose on social media sites, especially with regards to identify theft. Making information such as your date of birth, your place of work, and other personal information public, can be high risk in terms of identity theft.

Most major social media sites allow you to control how visible your information is on the site. You need to decide how visible you want your contact and profile information, videos, photos, and other posts to be. Understand your online privacy settings – check your settings and understand who can see the information you publish and your personal details. Use strong passwords to avoid attackers using your account to lure your circle of friends into clicking a malicious link sent from your account.

### **The message spreads at lightning speed**

Every public message you post on a social media account can be spread around the world in a matter of seconds and found in searches at any time of the day or night. This can be harnessed to very positive effect. However, these messages can also have the power to compromise your safety and identity, jeopardise your future employment, or just embarrass you to the world. So if in doubt, leave it out!



[www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org](http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org)

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The Healthcare Environment Inspectorate, the Scottish Health Council, the Scottish Health Technologies Group and the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) are part of our organisation.

