Social Media and Networking Policy

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Name of author:	Communications Team
Name of approving committee	Stakeholder Engagement and Involvement Group
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Target audience:	All Staff
Distributed via:	LCHS websites

Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust

Social Media Policy

Version Control Sheet

Version	Section/Para/ Appendix	Version/Description of Amendments	Date	Author/
1		New Policy – supersedes G_CoG_01	April 2016	Rachael Cousins
2		Full review	Sept 2017	Sharon Bradwell
3		Full review	June 2018	Sharon Bradwell/ Susan Ombler
4		Review	Nov 2020	Sharon Bradwell
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Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust

Social Media and Networking Policy

Policy Statement

Background

Social media is a method of digital marketing and communication; it is direct, personal, instant and responsive.

Statement

Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust uses social media as a channel to communicate, engage and inform stakeholders, while supporting the delivery of operational and strategic objectives. We will use this channel to complement traditional channels of communication.

Responsibilities

All communication on behalf of the trust published on social media websites, should be checked by Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust Communications Team unless otherwise agreed.

All LCHS staff contributing to social media have the responsibility to ensure their content is appropriate and professional.

Training

Training can be provided to any staff members who wish to use this medium.

Dissemination

Websites

Resource Implication

The Communications Team manages the organisation's social media presence and output.

Equality Statement

As part of our on-going commitment to promoting equality, valuing diversity and protecting human rights, Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust is committed to eliminating discrimination against any individual (individual means employees, patients, services users and carers) on the grounds of gender, gender reassignment, disability, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, language, religion or beliefs, marriage or civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, appearance, nationality or culture

Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust

Social Media Policy

Policy Statement

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1 Introduction

1.1 Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust (the trust / LCHS) is making increased use of social media and networking to engage with service users, staff and other stakeholders.

1.2 The trust recognises social media and networking can positively contribute to patient and staff management and supports and encourages its appropriate and professional use.

1.3 The trust will continue to explore positive use of social media and networks as new channels become available.

1.4 Social media and social networking are terms commonly used for web-based and other mobile communications technologies that enable messages and opinions to be shared in dialogue with others who often share the same community interests.

1.5 This policy is necessary as many employees enjoy sharing their professional knowledge and experience with others of similar roles and interests. The trust encourages these professional online activities and acknowledges that staff can improve their personal skills and experience through relevant interactions with colleagues both inside and outside the trust.

1.6 However, the trust has a responsibility to ensure the operational effectiveness of its business, including its reputation, confidentiality for patients and data protection. This involves ensuring confidentiality and maintaining security in accordance with NHS Information Governance Policy and Good Practice.

1.7 As in all their conduct, staff must adhere to their professional codes of conduct and employment terms and conditions while using and contributing to social media. This includes reflecting the LCHS Way and strategic objectives of the trust:

We listen, we care, we act, we improve.

We listen:

- We engage with everyone we work with
- We are united
- We are always positive

We care

- Everyone is valued, respected and developed
- Knowledge and skills are nurtured
- Success is celebrated

We act:

- Clear goals and the right resources
- Freedom coupled with accountability
- Emphasis on simplicity

We improve:

- We are creative, resourceful and innovative
- Integration and collaboration is the way forward
- We are always striving to do better

Strategic objectives:

- Leading integration and innovation
- Providing high quality, safe, personalised care
- Value for money and financial sustainability
- Building a productive, quality and supported workforce
- Strengthening our positive reputation

2 Purpose

2.1 This policy is provided so that members of staff at the trust are aware of their personal and professional responsibilities for appropriate use of social media.

3 Duties, Accountabilities and Responsibilities

3.1 The trust is committed, along with its staff and Staff Side partners, to providing an environment where staff are treated with dignity and respect in the workplace.

3.2 The trust will not tolerate any LCHS employee using a social networking site or technology application in a way that may be viewed as discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation towards another employee, patient or carer or family member of a service user of LCHS.

3.3 Any individuals found to have undertaken such action will be subject to disciplinary action in line with the trust's Disciplinary Policy.

3.4 All employees of the trust have a responsibility to ensure they are informed of this policy and that inappropriate activities carried out by employees on social media and networking sites which have a negative or detrimental impact on the trust, colleagues, patients or service users may be viewed as a disciplinary offence. Any individual made aware of any such activity should take immediate action and seek the advice of Practitioner Performance/HR at the first opportunity.

3.5 Staff should:

- Be aware of this policy and comply with it;
- Set a positive example by treating others with respect at all times;
- Ensure use of technology and social media is appropriate at all times;
- Do not make personal or offensive comments;
- Be supportive of colleagues who may be subject to inappropriate activities on social networking sites.

3.6 The Practitioner Performance Manager will have responsibility for informing relevant departments of all reported social media and networking inappropriate behaviour. This information, along with the outcomes of any investigations and disciplinary procedures, will contribute to future reviews of this policy.

4 Definition of Terms Used

- **Lead Officer:** The director accountable for the policy;
- **Author(s):** The person nominated by the Lead to prepare the policy;
- **Development:** A process by which something passes by degrees to a different stage, process of clarification;
- **Consultation:** An exchange of views, time limited period during which the views / advice of others are sought to further inform the policy content;
- **Ratify:** Formal agreement and acceptance;
- **Implement:** Put into practice / operation;
- **Embedded:** Established;
- **Review:** Reassess.

5 Private Use of Social Media

5.1 Staff of the trust may use social media for private purposes during their work breaks.

5.2 Staff should be aware that the trust reserves the right to monitor the web and all trust technologies including social networking sites, for content that it finds inappropriate at all times.

5.3 When using social media, members of staff should be clear that they are communicating in a personal capacity and not on behalf of the trust. However, this does not mitigate liability and conduct should be in line with terms and conditions of employment.

5.5 Members of staff are ultimately responsible for their own online behaviour, which includes any statement or activity which identifies them as a professional or LCHS employee; they remain bound by the trust's Disciplinary Policy.

5.6 Staff must refrain from any action or activity which may bring them, their colleagues, their service area, profession, the trust or the NHS into disrepute. This not only covers posts staff members make directly onto social media, but also any sharing, 'liking' or comments on posts written by others, along with comments other people make on to staff members' social media profiles.

5.7 The following are examples of professional and regulatory organisations of which staff may be members, which may have their own social media and networking policies. Staff using social media and networking sites should be aware they may be bound to these policies by their professional registration/affiliation. The following list is not exhaustive and should not be taken as such:

- Nursing & Midwifery Council
- Royal College of Nursing

- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
- British Association of Occupational Therapists & College of Occupational Therapists
- General Medical Council
- Health and Care Professions Council
- Royal College of General Practitioners
- British Medical Association
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society
- British Dietetic Association

6 Professional Use of Social Media

6.1 Any communication made on behalf of the trust as a whole should be made by the Communications Team or appropriate senior manager.

6.2 Staff can identify themselves as working for the trust and are entitled to make professional statements but cannot imply their view is that of the trust as a whole.

6.3 So long as there is a clear, professional and appropriate purpose, such as viewing training material on YouTube or taking part in a professional forum on Twitter, the use of social media and networking to enhance care, contribute to staff development or facilitate communication is encouraged.

6.4 Social media and networking used to enhance patient care or during patient-facing time should only be done so if professionally appropriate and with the permission of the patient in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Consent for patient participation in promotional activities for the trust should be obtained as set out in the Communications Policy. Further advice and guidance can be sought from the Communications Team.

6.5 Staff must not disclose information about the trust that is or may be sensitive or confidential, such as information about service users, other staff and stakeholders, other organisations, commercial suppliers and other information about the trust and its business activities. This includes the disclosure of any information relating to patient identifiable information, such as name, address, condition, personal circumstances, personal opinions relating to patients or their circumstances.

6.6 Corporate logos or other visible markings or identifications associated with the trust may only be used where prior permission has been obtained from the Communications Team.

6.7 All social media accounts representing the trust as a whole are managed by the Communications Team. No other teams / staff within the trust should set up corporate accounts without the authorisation of the Communications Team.

6.8 Staff should not set up sites that are made to resemble an official site.

6.9 The trust will use internal and closed social media and networking sites to communicate with its staff. These will be overseen by the Communications Team but may be administered by nominated staff representatives, e.g. applications like Whatsapp.

7 Using social media in departments and services

7.1 Services or individual teams may decide the use of social media would be beneficial and enhance the way they communicate and engage with their service users and the public.

7.2 Before establishing a service's presence on any social media channels, staff should contact the Communications Team for advice and assistance about setting up, moderating and managing accounts. Staff should outline the need for the channel, which may include:

- Target audience
- Planned activity
- Evidence to support the need to establish the channel eg feedback, patient surveys etc.

If a social media account is approved, the account password and log in details must be provided to the Communications Team in case of staff absences, annual leave or if the responsible account holder leaves the organisation.

7.3 All social media accounts representing LCHS services will be expected to adhere to this policy and all other relevant IT policies.

7.4 The trust will take steps to remove any account or content that operates outside of this policy.

7.5 Accounts not used for a significant period of time will be deleted by the Communications Team.

8 Raising a concern

8.1 All staff within the trust have a duty to challenge inappropriate comments or posts by other staff members by raising issues through appropriate channels.

8.2 Line managers who are made aware of a breach of policy should seek advice from the HR team, the Practitioner Performance Manager or the Communications Team.

8.3 If a member of staff feels they are the target of complaints or abuse on social media sites, they can remove someone from their friends or followers list and block them from interacting with them. Most sites will include mechanisms to report abusive activity and provide support for users who are subject to abuse by others. If a staff member has reason to believe that the activity is originating from a colleague or service user, they should alert their line manager or another appropriate person within the organisation.

8.4 Any grievance with the trust should be dealt with in the work environment through the correct process and not displayed or discussed on social media.

9 Training

9.1 New starters will be made aware of the policy through induction training. The policy will also be available via the trust public website and policy files kept on sites where appropriate.

9.2 Social media training will be provided to individuals/teams upon request via the Communications Team.

10 Fraud, Bribery and Corruption

10.1 In accordance with the Trust's Countering Fraud and Corruption Policy, Strategy and Guidance Notes Policy, all suspected cases of fraud and corruption should be reported immediately to the Director of Finance.

11 Equality and Diversity Assessment

11.1 In conjunction with the Trust's Equality and Diversity Lead this Policy has undergone an Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment which has taken into account all human rights in relation to disability, ethnicity, age and gender. The Trust undertakes to improve the working experience of staff and to ensure everyone is treated in a fair and consistent manner.

12 Associated Documents

- P_HR_06 – Your Behaviour Matters - Disciplinary Policy and Procedure incorporating investigation process.
- P_HR_27 - Your Equality and Diversity Matters Policy
- P_Fin_01 Countering Fraud and Corruption Policy, Strategy and Guidance Notes
- P_CoG_13 Communications Policy

Appendix A Equality Analysis

Equality Impact Analysis Screening Form

Title of activity	Social Media Policy		
Date form completed	26/11/2020	Name of lead for this activity	Catherine Leggett

Analysis undertaken by:		
Name(s)	Job role	Department
Sharon Bradwell	Communications Officer	Chief Executive's Office

What is the aim or objective of this activity?	
Who will this activity impact on? *E.g. staff, patients, carers, visitors etc.*	To provide a policy and advice to staff on the use of social media and networking as part of their role. To ensure staff are aware of their personal and professional responsibilities during and out of work hours relating to social media and networking to safeguard the reputation of the Trust.

Potential impacts on different equality groups:

Equality Group	Potential for **positive** impact	**Neutral** Impact	Potential for **negative** impact	Please provide details of how you believe there is a potential positive, negative or neutral impact (and what evidence you have gathered)
Age	☐	☒	☐	
Disability	☐	☒	☐	
Gender reassignment	☐	☒	☐	
Marriage & civil partnerships	☐	☒	☐	
Pregnancy & maternity	☐	☒	☐	
Race	☐	☒	☐	
Religion or belief	☐	☒	☐	
Sex	☐	☒	☐	
Sexual Orientation	☐	☒	☐	
Additional Impacts *(what other groups might this activity impact on? Carers, homeless, travelling communities etc.)*	☐	☒	☐	

If you have ticked one of the above equality groups please complete the following:

Level of impact

	Yes	No
Could this impact be considered direct or indirect discrimination?	☐	☐
If yes, how will you address this?		

	High	Medium	Low
What level do you consider the potential negative impact would be?	☐	☐	☐

If the negative impact is high, a full equality impact analysis will be required.

Action Plan

How could you minimise or remove any negative impacts identified, even if this is rated low?
How will you monitor this impact or planned actions?
Future review date: