



**Public – To be published on the Trust external website**

**Title: Social media policy**

**Ref: CORP-0068-v1**

**Status: Ratified**

**Document type: Policy**

## Contents

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<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Why we need this policy .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Purpose .....	5
2.2	Objectives.....	5
<b>3</b>	<b>Scope.....</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1	Who this policy applies to .....	5
3.2	Roles and responsibilities.....	6
<b>4</b>	<b>Policy.....</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1	What is social media? .....	7
4.2	Images used on official Trust social media accounts .....	7
4.3	Staff authorised to use official Trust social media pages.....	8
4.4	Acceptable use of social media by Trust staff and workers.....	8
4.4.1	Communicating with people in our care .....	9
4.4.2	How you can help if someone is experiencing a mental health crisis ...	10
4.5	Staying safe on social media.....	11
4.5.1	Contact from the media and journalists.....	12
4.5.2	Personal and professional social media accounts.....	12
4.6	Support for our colleagues .....	12
4.6.1	Recordings.....	13
4.6.2	Threats of violence.....	14
4.6.3	Limitations.....	14
4.6.4	How to report posts on social media .....	14
4.7	Use of social media by patients, public and visitors on Trust sites .....	15
4.8	Partner organisations - Trust staff working in other organisations.....	15
4.9	Using social media in departments and services.....	15
4.10	Monitoring.....	16
<b>5</b>	<b>Definitions.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Related documents .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>How this policy will be implemented .....</b>	<b>18</b>
7.1	Implementation action plan.....	18
7.2	Training needs analysis.....	19
<b>8</b>	<b>How the implementation of this policy will be monitored.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Document control (external).....</b>	<b>21</b>

Appendix 1 - Equality Analysis Screening Form .....	22
Appendix 2 – Approval checklist .....	25
Appendix 3 – Social media principles .....	27

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## 1 Introduction

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Social media is part of all of our lives and is used by billions of people across the world.

It is important that our colleagues stay safe on social media and use it in a way that reflects our Trust values of respect, compassion and responsibility. This policy outlines how colleagues can use social media responsibly and minimise any harm to them or the Trust. It also provides guidance to ensure colleagues are respectful and compassionate when they post or comment on social media.

This policy is critical to the delivery of ***Our Journey to Change***, and our ambition to co-create safe and personalised care that improves the lives of people with mental health needs, a learning disability or autism. It helps us deliver our three strategic goals as follows:

**It helps us to co-create a great experience for our patients, carers and families** because it assures them that we have provided clear guidance to staff on the appropriate use of social media. We must ensure that staff are using social media responsibly and respectfully, as often their comments and posts will be seen by the people we support in our services, their carers and family members.

**It supports the Trust to co-create a great experience for our colleagues** because it provides our colleagues with clear guidance on how to use social media in a safe, respectful and responsible way. The guidance aims to prevent any potential harm to our colleagues or the Trust from inappropriate use of social media.

It was important to consider the views of our colleagues and the people in our care to ensure the guidance was relevant and reflected real-life experiences of using social media. The following sections were co-created with colleagues and people in our care, taking into account their views and personal experiences around social media:

4.5.1 – Communicating with service users

4.5.2 – How you can help if someone is experiencing a mental health crisis

4.6.2 – Personal and professional social media accounts

**It helps the Trust to be a great partner** because it provides assurance that we are providing consistent guidance to our colleagues around their safe and appropriate use of social media and ensuring their actions do not bring the Trust or our partners into disrepute.

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## 2 Why we need this policy

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## 2.1 Purpose

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This policy:

- Outlines acceptable use of social media
- Aims to prevent any potential harm to employees and the Trust from inappropriate use of social media
- This policy ensures that staff use social media safely and responsibly

## 2.2 Objectives

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Following this policy will ensure users understand that their social media use is subject to:

- Their own professional code of conduct
- Their contract of employment with the Trust
- The Trust's Grievance Procedure and Disciplinary Procedure
- Staff know to raise any social media concerns with the communications team

## 3 Scope

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Use of non-Trust equipment

- This social media policy addresses the use of all social media by staff

Use of Trust equipment

- Only social media sites that have been authorised and enabled by the Trust shall be accessed via Trust IT systems, including via Trust-issued smartphones.

### 3.1 Who this policy applies to

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This policy applies to all employees of the Trust, non-executive directors, contractors and third parties (including agency staff), students, trainees, secondees, staff on placement with the Trust, volunteers and staff of partner organisations with access to the Trust's IT systems.

It applies to all social media use on a person's personal or professional accounts.

### 3.2 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
All staff, students, contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only staff who have been authorised by the communications team can manage and update official Trust social media channels.</li> <li>• Accept and comply with this policy. If there is any conflict with Trust policy, activity should cease and staff member should report the incident via InPhase.</li> <li>• Complete network training prior to using the Trust’s approved social media platform.</li> <li>• Be aware of the Trust’s associated policies as set out in section 6.</li> <li>• If accessing the Trust’s social media accounts from a non-Trust device, ensure no login details are saved on the device.</li> <li>• Ensure non-disclosure of personal information outside of the Trust’s policies and procedures</li> <li>• Consider the content of social media posts, as social media posts are admissible as evidence in court. Posts and messages on social media can potentially fall within the definition of a “document” and may have to be disclosed in court proceedings</li> <li>• Ensure that the social media content does not damage the professional reputation of the Trust.</li> <li>• Report all breaches, near misses or suspected breaches of this policy in line with the Trust’s incident reporting process</li> <li>• Be aware that misuse of the Trust’s social media accounts will lead to disciplinary action and is strictly prohibited. In addition some types of use may attract criminal liability or breach of an agreed contract.</li> </ul>
Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report all breaches, near misses or suspected breaches of this policy in line with the Trust’s incident reporting process</li> <li>• Inform the service desk of starters and leavers within the department</li> </ul>

Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chief Executive is ultimately responsible for ensuring the Trust complies with this policy</li> <li>• The Chief Executive is the Information Risk Accounting Officer for the Trust. The Accounting Officer has overall responsibility for ensuring that information risks are assessed and mitigated to an acceptable level. Information risks should be handled in a similar manner to other major risks such as financial, legal and reputational risks. Reference to the management of information risk and associated information governance practice is required in the Annual Governance Statement which the Accounting Officer is required to sign.</li> </ul>
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## 4 Policy

### 4.1 What is social media?

The term 'social media' describes a range of online technologies and practices which are managed and controlled by the users themselves. Social media allows users to connect with each other and share written material, photographs and videos. This policy applies equally to websites and mobile phone apps, and includes:

- Multimedia networking and sharing technologies (e.g. Facebook, Twitter/ X, Instagram, LinkedIn, Skype, and YouTube)
- Information sharing sites (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Forums (e.g. Mumsnet)
- Opinion sites
- Blogs
- Personal web pages or business/professional websites (even if it does not relate to your role in our Trust)
- All web-based comments, pictures and audio-visual files
- Comments on newspaper articles

This list is not exhaustive.

Content uploaded to, and opinions expressed via, social media must be considered to be in the public domain.

### 4.2 Images used on official Trust social media accounts

The communications team will use images as part of the content they post on the official Trust social media pages. The communications team will always seek permission before

using your image and you may be asked to sign a consent form (see [Consent for images and recordings procedure](#)).

### 4.3 Staff authorised to use official Trust social media pages

The communications team manage and oversee the official Trust social media accounts. An up-to-date list of these accounts can be found on the staff intranet. Please also see section 4.9 Using social media in departments and services.

Guidance on how to use social media for Trust business use is available on the staff intranet. This is managed by the communications team and any questions or concerns about this should be emailed to [tewv.communications@nhs.net](mailto:tewv.communications@nhs.net).

### 4.4 Acceptable use of social media by Trust staff and workers

- As in all their conduct, staff must be mindful of their behaviour on social media and act in accordance with the Trust values of respect, compassion and responsibility.
- When posting or commenting on social media staff should be polite and respectful to others and not use defamatory, discriminatory, derogatory or offensive language of any kind. If you are unsure, ask a fellow colleague or a friend for advice before you post.
- Do not discuss patient care and share patient information on social media.
- Identifying yourself as a Trust employee on a personal social media account is a good way to let people know more about what you do and connect with different views and lived experiences of mental health, learning disabilities and autism. As a Trust, we advise you to add a disclaimer which states: *any views expressed are not those of my employer*.
- We understand that some colleagues would prefer to remain private on social. Please read section 4.5 to understand how to stay safe on social media.



Even if you **do not** identify yourself as a Trust employee on your accounts, or you use the disclaimer, you must not bring the Trust into disrepute because of your actions on social media.

- No social media posts are guaranteed to remain private. Do not post anything that you would not be happy for your family, friends, manager, colleagues, patients, the media and the public to see.
- The communications team are responsible for providing one official source of news and information on social media. In an emergency situation, the local police may lead on public messaging. Therefore, staff should not post comments, videos or photographs relating to an emergency incident affecting our buildings or services. This



includes but is not limited to fire or flood in a Trust building, a terrorist incident, or any incident attracting media attention.

- Staff should not comment or post about a legal matter involving the Trust. This includes but is not limited to inquests and investigations. If you are unsure whether something is a legal matter, it's best to not comment at all.
- Staff may write personal blogs about work related matters but must adhere to the guidelines set out in this policy and also include the following disclaimer: "Any views expressed in this blog are entirely my own and not those of my employer."
- Personal use of social media should take place outside of normal working hours and during breaks –and should not:
  - Interfere with staff productivity or system performance
  - Involve cost to the Trust
  - Pose any risks to the integrity, security and confidentiality of the Trust's corporate and clinical systems
- Do not use 'TEWV' in your social media handle, for example @JoeBloggsTEWV, as this gives the impression that you are acting on behalf of the Trust.
- Staff using social media for personal or professional use are bound by the law and must comply with behaviours set out in our Trust values, and policies and procedures relating to data protection, information governance, and patient confidentiality.
- MS Teams should be used Trustwide for instant messaging. Although Whatsapp is used by some teams to message each other on a personal level, it should not be used to share Trust confidential or sensitive information. Our Trust Board and executive team are required to have a non-Trust communication tool for business continuity purposes, which is the only approved usage of WhatsApp.



Breaches of the Social Media Policy may result in a disciplinary process as outlined in the Trust Disciplinary Policy.

#### 4.4.1 Communicating with people in our care

This section was co-created with people in our care and colleagues.



Confidentiality must be maintained at all times. No information that could lead to someone in our care and/or their carer being identified should be disclosed through social media.

All Trust colleagues should maintain professional boundaries with people in our care, families and carers. You should never contact them via social media to discuss a person's care. This is to protect patients, carers and staff, and not leave anyone in a vulnerable position. Communication should go via official Trust methods, such as NHS team email or telephone number.

If you are contacted directly on social media to discuss a person's care, please remember the Trust values of respect, compassion and responsibility and politely ask them to make contact using the email address for your team or service. If you are contacted publicly, it is best to give the contact details of the service via private message on the relevant social media platform. This ensures that any details about the person's care remain private. You should inform your line manager of the communication and discuss whether the details should be recorded.

If you are contacted by a previous patient, carer or family member, you should maintain the same professional boundaries. Accepting a friend request on your personal social media accounts is not always a straightforward decision. We recommend you consult your professional guidelines if applicable, speak to your line manager and seek advice from the communications team before accepting the request.

You may have friends or colleagues who are carers, experts by experience, previously or currently receiving care from the Trust, and it's ok to follow or be 'friends' with them on social media. There may be times that they reach out to you as a friend for mental health support via social media. Again, please remember the Trust values of respect, compassion and responsibility and offer support and signposting as any friend would. If you are contacted publicly, it is best to take the conversation out of the public domain, to ensure their personal information is kept private.

There may be times when it is appropriate to communicate with a person in our care, family member or carer on social media to discuss work-related topics, such as involvement or co-production opportunities. Remember that involvement and co-production are often related to specific locations or mental health conditions. Please ensure you maintain confidentiality and do not say anything that might result in their personal information or experience being revealed on social media.



You are also expected to read and adhere to the social media guidance from your professional body or regulator if you have one.

#### **4.4.2 How you can help if someone is experiencing a mental health crisis**

This section was co-created with people in our care and colleagues.

If you are contacted by someone who appears to be in a mental health crisis, either publicly or via a direct message, it is ok to acknowledge this with a compassionate response. If you are contacted publicly, it is best to take the conversation out of the public domain, to ensure their personal information is kept private.

There are number of steps you can take to offer support to that person, which we have outlined below:

Our website provides helpline numbers and information on [what to do in a mental health crisis](#)

The NHS websites provides information on [where to get urgent help for mental health](#), which includes what to do if you think someone's life is at risk



Facebook, Instagram and Twitter/X have advice and guidance around reporting posts relating to suicide and self harm. Please note that although the guidance can be helpful, people in our care can feel harmed by being reported when they're experiencing a mental health crisis.

[What should I do if someone posts something about suicide or self-injury on Facebook?](#)

[What to do about self-harm and suicide concerns on Twitter](#)

[I'm worried about someone after seeing content they've shared on Instagram about suicide or self-injury](#)

Some helpline numbers might not be relevant to the UK.

## **4.5 Staying safe on social media**

Part of staying safe on social media includes setting appropriate privacy settings, thinking clearly about the nature of your relationships, both on social media and offline.

When you comment on a public social media post, anyone can click on your name to view your profile. They can only see what you allow them to see, based on the privacy settings you have in place. Therefore, it is important to think about what you want people to see, including your profile photo, full name, where you work and your friends list.

The following links will help you set the appropriate privacy settings on your social media accounts:

[Instructions for adjusting your Facebook privacy settings](#)

[Instructions on how to protect your tweets on Twitter](#)

[Understanding your privacy on LinkedIn](#)

[Controlling your visibility on Instagram](#)

We know that being abused online affects people in different ways. Dealing with inflammatory, abusive or hurtful posts directed at staff on social media is set out in our [social media principles](#) and section 4.6 *Support for our colleagues*.

Please report social media posts or comments that you find upsetting to the communications team rather than responding from your personal social media accounts.

#### **4.5.1 Contact from the media and journalists**

If you are contacted by a journalist or someone representing a media organisation, please forward to the [communications team](#) or advise them to contact the communications team themselves. The communications team will talk to the media and will always respond to media enquiries as openly as they can.

#### **4.5.2 Personal and professional social media accounts**

This section was co-created with people in our care and colleagues.

Whether you regard your social media account as personal or professional, please remember:

- It can be difficult for a member of the public to know the difference between a personal and professional social media account. To avoid any confusion, it is a good idea to state in your description that 'this account is personal', and you may wish to include the link/handle for your professional account if you have one. If you want to limit who can see your content, set your privacy settings accordingly.
- Always adhere to the guidance in section 4.4 of this policy around 'acceptable use of social media by Trust staff and workers' and refer to guidance from your professional body or regulator if you have one.

If you're unsure about whether a particular piece of content is suitable for your own social media account, contact the communications team, who can offer advice, and may suggest that the content is more appropriate for the Trust's official social media channels.

### **4.6 Support for our colleagues**

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No one should face abuse, in person or online.

Comments, posts, audio recordings or videos that are posted on social media naming or targeting a member of staff can be very distressing. Anyone who is affected should be offered support by their line manager, which may include confidential advice and counselling.

Our [social media principles](#) explain how we expect the public to interact with us on our social media channels. We ask that anyone engaging with us shows courtesy, kindness and respect.

We take the following action when a post or comment goes against our social media principles:

- We hide or delete the comment where this is possible
- If we're tagged in the post, we ask people to remove their posts or comments that name our staff, or include photos, videos or recordings of them
- If a post names or targets a member of staff, we report it to the social media platform
- We talk to care teams so they can have conversations with patients if they are posting about staff
- We involve line managers who can offer support to the individual
- We may also block people from our social media accounts if they continue to go against our social media principles

Please read the [social media principles](#) in full for more information on action we take.

There may be other times when you don't experience abuse on social media, but you may feel that you need support. An example of this is if you are contacted by someone experiencing a mental health crisis and you support them, as outlined in section 4.4.2. These situations may be really difficult for many reasons and support should be made available by your line manager to talk it through or debrief if necessary.

#### 4.6.1 Recordings

As part of the Recordings by patients and carers for personal use procedure (forthcoming), patients have a legal right to record their consultations with staff for their own personal/household use. They do not have to tell you they are recording.

However, we know it can be upsetting and concerning to see videos of consultations posted on social media. Section 5 of the Recordings by patients and carers for personal use procedure (forthcoming) states:

*There is case law that would suggest that if a person uploads recordings onto social media it could mean that the reason for processing is no longer for purely personal/household reasons. If that were the case the posting would fall under the Data Protection Act regulations as the individual would be deemed to have become a Data Controller within the meaning of the Act.*

If you have concerns about a social media post involving video footage of staff, and you feel they are being targeted, please alert your line manager as soon as possible and contact the communications team, who can give advice and will take action in line with our social media principles. The communications team can be contacted by emailing [tewv.communications@nhs.net](mailto:tewv.communications@nhs.net).

Although it can be upsetting to see, posting footage of Trust staff on social media, by a person in our care, family member, carer, advocate or activist is not in itself an act of harassment. Unfortunately, there is no absolute right to anonymity on social media. If footage is threatening or could put the staff member at risk, then the activity may constitute harassment and you should discuss with your line manager whether police involvement or other legal input is required (see section 4.6.2)

If there is a safeguarding issue on either part, please raise it with your line manager immediately and follow the guidance as outlined in the safeguarding policy.

#### **4.6.2 Threats of violence**

If a threat is made against you on social media, this may be malicious communications or harassment. You should inform your line manager and the communications team. You should also report the post to the social media platform and you may wish to tell the police.

#### **4.6.3 Limitations**

We will do what we can to protect our staff wherever possible, however there are limitations to the action that the Trust can take.

- We can't enforce what the public post on their personal social media accounts. If we ask a person to remove a comment or post that includes names or pictures of our staff, they may refuse. This can also have a negative effect and lead to more posts or comments of the same nature.
- We can't remove a tweet on Twitter/X. However, the communications team will always report a tweet that goes against our social media principles. Anyone can report a tweet. This is done anonymously and the person will not know who has reported them. Once a post or comment is reported, it will be investigated by Twitter/X and if it goes against their community guidelines they will take action against the Twitter/X user. The Trust can't influence Twitter's / X's decision.

It is possible to hide and delete comments on Facebook, which we will do if someone goes against our social media principles.

- Legal action taken by the Trust against a social media user would be carefully considered with the Trust's legal representatives and senior management. The legal options are limited, and any action taken to protect our staff on social media must be balanced with the impact on patient care.

#### **4.6.4 How to report posts on social media**

[How to report content on Facebook](#)

[How to report content on Twitter](#)

[How to report content on LinkedIn](#)

[How to report content on Instagram](#)

## **4.7 Use of social media by patients, public and visitors on Trust sites**

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Use of social media by patients, public and visitors is covered within the Use of Mobile Phones by Service Users procedure and Communicating with Service Users Procedure.

## **4.8 Partner organisations - Trust staff working in other organisations**

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Some Trust staff work within other organisations including but not limited to HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and the Police. These colleagues face specific types of risk associated with these environments which must be mitigated.

Employers have a duty of care to their employees, which means that they should take all steps which are reasonably possible to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing. This duty of care extends to providing appropriate guidance for social media.

Where Trust staff are embedded in or working within partner organisations, then staff must meet the requirements of both the Trust and respective partner organisation's social media policies. Where there is any conflict in the guidance, staff should adopt the most conservative and restrictive requirement. Staff may raise any social media concerns about working in partner organisations with their line manager in the first instance, or if required their general manager.

Staff may be members of the following professional organisations which have their own social media policies. The list is not exhaustive and should not be taken as such:

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

## **4.9 Using social media in departments and services**

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The Trust has several devolved social media accounts. These are accounts managed by a department or service, not the communications team. These are:



## Recruitment

Twitter/X [@TEWV\\_careers](#)

Facebook [www.facebook.com/TEWVCareers](http://www.facebook.com/TEWVCareers)

LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/tewv-careers/>

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/tewvcareers/](http://www.instagram.com/tewvcareers/)

## TEWV Research:

Twitter/X [@TEWVresearch](#)

## Arch Recovery College:

Facebook [www.facebook.com/durhamrecoverycollege](http://www.facebook.com/durhamrecoverycollege)

## Staff library

Twitter/X [@TEWV\\_library](#)

## Coaching programme

Twitter/X [@TEWVThinkOn](#)

Individual departments and services should not set up social media accounts that represent the Trust unless authorised to do so by the communications team. If you would like to discuss a departmental social media account please contact the communications team.

Where a departmental social media account has been set up, it will belong to the Trust and all log-in details should be shared with the communications team. If the account holder leaves the Trust permanently they must inform the communications team of who will manage the account going forward.

If a devolved Facebook page is linked to a staff member's personal account (e.g. they have an admin role) they must ensure that a member of the communications team has an 'admin' role too. This ensures that the page management is handed over should they leave the Trust.

## 4.10 Monitoring

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If there is a need to investigate a colleague because they have breached the social media policy, any relevant posts or comments may be copied and used as evidence in an investigation.

Any evidence collected from social media posts in evidence to investigations will not be disclosed elsewhere. Where required under legal statute, it may be passed to the appropriate relevant authorities, e.g. the police.



## 5 Definitions

Term	Definition
Author / account owner	Person who controls a social media account and posts content to the social media platform
Combined personal and professional use of social media	A Trust colleague who uses social media for personal use and identifies themselves explicitly or implicitly as a Trust staff member with or without discussion of professional issues.
In the name of a Trust service or derivative of a service	Defined as where Trust staff are using social media as a team, running accounts in the name of a Trust service or derivative of a service to communicate with patients and/or the public.
Professional use of social media	A staff member who uses a social media platform such as Twitter/X or Facebook which identifies the staff member as a Trust employee and the social media account is used to discuss professional issues and not to discuss personal matters.
Social Media	<p>Social media is considered to be IT based technologies (desktop, laptop, tablet and smartphone) that allow the creating and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks.</p> <p>Different types of social media include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Forums</li> <li>○ Blogging, Microblogging and Instant Messaging</li> <li>○ Social Networking</li> <li>○ Entertainment</li> <li>○ Multimedia</li> <li>○ Wikis</li> </ul>
Trust	Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Trust social media account	A social media account that represents the Trust and is managed by the communications team
Trust staff / colleague	Staff employed by the Trust

Workers	Anyone performing duties on behalf of the Trust whether paid or not
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## 6 Related documents

- Social Media principles [Our social media principles - Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust \(teewv.nhs.uk\)](https://www.teewv.nhs.uk)
- End of Employment Procedure (to ensure Trust social media account access removed from staff leaving the Trust)
- Managing Concerns of Potential Conduct Procedure Information Security and Risk Policy
- Network Security Policy
- Email Procedure
- Access to Information Systems Policy
- Telephone Usage Policy
- Communicating with Service Users Best Practice
- Consent for the use of Person Identifiable Images procedure
- Recordings by patients and carers for personal use (forthcoming)

## 7 How this policy will be implemented

- This policy will be published on the Trust’s intranet and external website
- Line managers will disseminate this policy to all Trust employees through a line management briefing

### 7.1 Implementation action plan

Implementation Action Plan				
Activity	Expected outcome	Timescale	Responsibility	Means of verification/ measurement
Update Trust induction	All colleagues participating in a Trust induction will understand what social media use is appropriate	Within 1 month of publication of policy	Communications team and HR	Audit of induction materials by comms team + questionnaire/ metacompliance overview and quiz
Communications to all staff about the new social	All staff have the guidance and are aware of what is	Within 1 month of publication of policy	Communications team	All staff metacompliance

media policy via the intranet, desktop graphic, Team TEWV social media post and weekly brief	appropriate social media use			overview and quiz
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## 7.2 Training needs analysis

Staff/Professional Group	Type of Training	Duration	Frequency of Training
New starters Placement students Volunteers	Local induction	20 minutes	On starting employment with the Trust
Existing staff	Communications and management cascade	5 minutes	Annual metacompliance overview and quiz

## 8 How the implementation of this policy will be monitored

Number	Auditable Standard/Key Performance Indicators	Frequency/Method/Person Responsible	Where results and any Associate Action Plan will be reported to, implemented and monitored; (this will usually be via the relevant Governance Group).
1	InPhase monitoring	Monthly reporting by Compliance Team	Digital performance assurance group (DPAG)
2	Check and update induction materials	Every six months	DPAG
3	Metacompliance brief and quiz – compliance report	Every quarter	DPAG

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## 9 References

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NHS Digital, Social media security: example policy 30 October 2018

<https://digital.nhs.uk/services/data-and-cyber-security-protecting-information-and-data-in-health-and-care/cyber-and-data-security-policy-and-good-practice-in-health-and-care/social-media-security-guidance-for-health-and-care-organisations/social-media-security-example-policy>

NHS Digital, Social media and attributed digital content policy, February 2017

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/social-media-policy.pdf>

Social media guidance from the Nursing and Midwifery Council -

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/guidance/social-media-guidance/>

Doctors' use of social media – guidance from the General Medical Council:

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/doctors-use-of-social-media>

Health & Care Professions Council:-

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/resources/guidance/guidance-on-social-media/>

Social media guidance from other professional bodies – collated by NHS Employers:

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/need-to-know/social-media-and-the-nhs/social-media-guidelines>

NHS Employers, A social media toolkit for the NHS

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/need-to-know/social-media-and-the-nhs/a-social-media-toolkit-for-the-nhs>

Guidance from NHS Protect on dealing with abusive and threatening social media activity directed at NHS staff:

[https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/2017-03/Misuse\\_of\\_social\\_media\\_to\\_harass\\_intimidate\\_or\\_threaten\\_NHS\\_staff\\_guidance\\_May\\_2016.pdf](https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/2017-03/Misuse_of_social_media_to_harass_intimidate_or_threaten_NHS_staff_guidance_May_2016.pdf)

CCDH Center for Countering Digital Hate Ltd (2019) *Don't Feed the Trolls: How to Deal with Hate on Social Media* [Online] Available at: [www.counterhate.co.uk](http://www.counterhate.co.uk)

Nyhan, B. and Reifler, J. *When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions*. *Political Behavior*, 32, 303–333

## 10 Document control (external)

To be recorded on the policy register by Policy Coordinator

Date of approval	20 March 2024
Next review date	20 March 2027
This document replaces	N/A - new policy
This document was approved by	JCC
This document was approved	12 March 2024
This document was ratified by	Management Group
This document was ratified	20 March 2024
An equality analysis was completed on this policy on	13 June 2023
Document type	Public
FOI Clause (Private documents only)	n/a

### Change record

Version	Date	Amendment details	Status
1	20 Mar 2024	New document	Ratified

## Appendix 1 - Equality Analysis Screening Form

Please note: The Equality Analysis Policy and Equality Analysis Guidance can be found on the policy pages of the intranet

Section 1	Scope
Name of service area/directorate/department	Corporate affairs and involvement
Title	Social media policy
Type	Policy
Geographical area covered	Trustwide
Aims and objectives	<p>This policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outlines acceptable use of social media</li> <li>• Aims to prevent any potential harm to employees and the Trust from inappropriate use of social media</li> <li>• Ensures staff are aware of their responsibilities when using social media</li> </ul>
Start date of Equality Analysis Screening	June 2019
End date of Equality Analysis Screening	13 June 2023

Section 2	Impacts
Who does the Policy, Service, Function, Strategy, Code of practice, Guidance, Project or Business plan benefit?	<p>All colleagues</p> <p>Patients, carers and family members</p> <p>Trust partners</p> <p>The public</p>

<p>Will the Policy, Service, Function, Strategy, Code of practice, Guidance, Project or Business plan impact negatively on any of the protected characteristic groups?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Race</b> (including Gypsy and Traveller) <b>NO</b></li> <li>• <b>Disability</b> (includes physical, learning, mental health, sensory and medical disabilities) <b>NO</b></li> <li>• <b>Sex</b> (Men, women and gender neutral etc.) <b>NO</b></li> <li>• <b>Gender reassignment</b> (Transgender and gender identity) <b>NO</b></li> <li>• <b>Sexual Orientation</b> (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Heterosexual etc.) <b>NO</b></li> <li>• <b>Age</b> (includes, young people, older people – people of all ages) <b>NO</b></li> <li>• <b>Religion or Belief</b> (includes faith groups, atheism and philosophical beliefs) <b>NO</b></li> <li>• <b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b> (includes pregnancy, women who are breastfeeding and women on maternity leave) <b>NO</b></li> <li>• <b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b> (includes opposite and same sex couples who are married or civil partners) <b>NO</b></li> <li>• <b>Veterans</b> (includes serving armed forces personnel, reservists, veterans and their families) <b>NO</b></li> </ul>
<p>Describe any negative impacts</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Describe any positive impacts</p>	<p>The policy gives clear guidance on how staff should use social media, to prevent harm to themselves or the Trust. It ensures staff are aware of their responsibilities when using social media. Positive behaviours help prevent negative impact on the above protected characteristics and protect privacy of the individual.</p>

<p><b>Section 3</b></p>	<p><b>Research and involvement</b></p>
<p>What sources of information have you considered? (e.g. legislation, codes of practice, best practice, nice guidelines, CQC reports or feedback etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research into other social media policies, including the General Medical Council, Nursing &amp; Midwifery Council, Health and Care Professions Council, Royal College of Nursing, British Medical Association, Royal Pharmaceutical Society, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, British Dietetic Association,</li> </ul>

	<p>British Association of Occupational Therapists &amp; College of Occupational Therapists, and other NHS Trusts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups held with people in our care and Trust colleagues</li> </ul>
Have you engaged or consulted with service users, carers, staff and other stakeholders including people from the protected groups?	Yes
If you answered Yes above, describe the engagement and involvement that has taken place	<p>A focus group was held with people in our care and a further session held with colleagues to co-create the following sections:</p> <p>4.5.1 – Communicating with service users  4.5.2 – How you can help if someone is experiencing a mental health crisis  4.6.2 – Personal and professional social media accounts</p>
If you answered No above, describe future plans that you may have to engage and involve people from different groups	N/A

<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Training needs</b>
As part of this equality analysis have any training needs/service needs been identified?	No
Describe any training needs for Trust staff	N/A
Describe any training needs for patients	N/A
Describe any training needs for contractors or other outside agencies	N/A

**Check the information you have provided and ensure additional evidence can be provided if asked**



## Appendix 2 – Approval checklist

	Title of document being reviewed:	Yes / No / Not applicable	Comments
<b>1.</b>	<b>Title</b>		
	Is the title clear and unambiguous?	Yes	
	Is it clear whether the document is a guideline, policy, protocol or standard?	Yes	Policy
<b>2.</b>	<b>Rationale</b>		
	Are reasons for development of the document stated?	Yes	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Development Process</b>		
	Are people involved in the development identified?	Yes	
	Has relevant expertise has been sought/used?	Yes	
	Is there evidence of consultation with stakeholders and users?	Yes	Trust wide consultation x 2 Involvement and engagement x 2 JCC 11 July 2023 JCC 12 March 2024
	Have any related documents or documents that are impacted by this change been identified and updated?	Yes	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Content</b>		
	Is the objective of the document clear?	Yes	
	Is the target population clear and unambiguous?	Yes	
	Are the intended outcomes described?	Yes	
	Are the statements clear and unambiguous?	Yes	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>		
	Is the type of evidence to support the document identified explicitly?	Yes	
	Are key references cited?	Yes	
	Are supporting documents referenced?	Yes	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Training</b>		
	Have training needs been considered?	Yes	

	<b>Title of document being reviewed:</b>	<b>Yes / No / Not applicable</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	Are training needs included in the document?	Yes	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Implementation and monitoring</b>		
	Does the document identify how it will be implemented and monitored?	Yes	
<b>8.</b>	<b>Equality analysis</b>		
	Has an equality analysis been completed for the document?	Yes	
	Have Equality and Diversity reviewed and approved the equality analysis?	Yes	
<b>9.</b>	<b>Approval</b>		
	Does the document identify which committee/group will approve it?	Yes	
<b>10.</b>	<b>Publication</b>		
	Has the policy been reviewed for harm?	Yes	
	Does the document identify whether it is private or public?	Yes	Public
	If private, does the document identify which clause of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 applies?	Not applicable	

## Appendix 3 – Social media principles

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Our social media principles set out how the Trust monitors and updates its official social media accounts. It outlines what is acceptable and unacceptable when people interact with us on social media, e.g. when commenting on our posts or tweeting us. It also outlines how we will take action if we feel that our social media principles have been broken.

They are available [online here](#) for everyone who wants to engage with us on these platforms.

### Our social media principles

We want our social media platforms to be a welcoming space where people feel comfortable to talk to us and each other. We ask that anyone engaging with our social media channels shows courtesy, kindness and respect for all other members.

These principles have been produced to help us all feel as comfortable, safe and confident as possible whenever we visit or interact on our social media pages.

We might need to make changes to these principles as things can change quickly in the online environment. If they're important to you, please check back regularly.

We welcome your feedback on our posts and how we can use our accounts effectively.

Please take care of yourself. If it's urgent or you're in crisis please contact the relevant team through the contact details on our website. Please don't use our social media accounts for this purpose.

### What we'll do:

Our communications team updates and monitors our main Trust accounts Monday to Friday, 9am to 4.30pm and schedules posts to appear outside of these hours. This includes:

Twitter/X – @TEWV

Facebook – tewv.ft

Instagram – tewvnhsft

- We aim to respond to messages on the same day.
- We'll read all mentions, @replies, posts and direct messages sent to us. We can't always reply to every individual message we receive but we will get back to you, or pass your message on where appropriate.
- We may ask you to send a private message to us with your contact details, particularly when it's not appropriate for us to respond on social media. This means the right person can follow up with you about your question or concern.
- We're working on guidance for staff about personal use of social media and how we will support them with this.

We have a number of other Trust accounts that relate to more specific parts of our work. These are checked less regularly and response times will therefore be longer. This includes:

TEWV research: Twitter/X – @TEWVresearch

Arch Recovery College: Facebook – durhamrecoverycollege, Twitter/X – @archrecovery

KPO/QIS: Twitter/X – @TEWVQIS

Recruitment: Twitter/X – @TEWV\_careers

Staff library: Twitter/X – @TEWV\_library

Therapies: Twitter/X– @TEWVtherapies

### **What we won't do:**

- We won't discuss any individual's care through social media.
- We don't deal with complaints through social media. There's a process to follow: [View our complaints process](#)
- We don't answer clinical or medical questions, but we'll do our best to signpost where to get information, advice or support as appropriate.

### **Taking action and supporting our staff**

We understand we'll face scrutiny and criticism on social media. We believe people are entitled to share their views and we won't remove a post simply because it's negative.

If we believe a contribution goes against our principles we may hide or delete the comment, block the account that it's come from and/or report it to the social media platform. In certain cases, we may send comments to the police or take legal action in the case of threatening, libellous or defamatory posts.

### **We will take action when a post:**

- Contains hateful or discriminatory comments
- Contains swearing or other profane, defamatory, offensive or violent language
- Is abusive towards members of staff or the public
- Targets a member of staff. We do take complaints about our employees very seriously and if you have an issue or concern about an individual please follow our complaints process.
- Contains links to inappropriate material
- Discusses illegal activity
- Relates to confidential or personal information
- Contains irrelevant advertising
- Is mean-spirited or contributes with the intention of causing offence or hurt

If you see a social media post that breaks our social media principles, please contact the communications team on [tewv.enquiries@nhs.net](mailto:tewv.enquiries@nhs.net)

The health and wellbeing of our colleagues is very important to us. Where a staff member has been identified and/or targeted on social media, they will be contacted by the communications team and offered support. It may be necessary to include the person's line manager.

Although the Trust will take action as quickly as possible, we can't guarantee that each social media platform will remove a post that has been reported after breaking our principles. Due to the differences in social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter/X and LinkedIn), we also cannot guarantee the full removal of a comment from every platform.

We'll always try to message social media users who we've taken any action against because of a post or comment and explain our reasons. If you want to discuss our decision please email [tevw.enquiries@nhs.net](mailto:tevw.enquiries@nhs.net)

If you don't agree with our social media principles then please don't post or comment on our social media channels. If you have any question please get in touch by emailing [tevw.enquiries@nhs.net](mailto:tevw.enquiries@nhs.net)