

NOVEMBER 2014

QUICK GUIDE FOR NEW STARTERS

NEW TO THE NHS? YOUR GUIDE TO USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE NHS

Globally, social media is impacting on the way healthcare is planned, delivered and discussed. In the UK, the whole healthcare sector is represented on multiple social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn. Every day, NHS staff, patients, and the public are discussing the NHS from feedback on services to the detail of commissioning.

This quick guide helps you answer these questions:

- What should I know about social media now I work for the NHS?
- What should I do with my personal social media profiles?
- What impact could social media have on my job?

Key actions and points

- Read your staff policy covering social media at work and your profession's social media guidance.
 - Check the privacy settings on your social media profiles. You may want to maintain both a personal social media profile and a professional one.
 - When using social media, remember if you wouldn't say it aloud in the canteen, don't post it online.
 - Social media can have a positive impact on your job, helping you to make connections across the NHS.
 - NHS organisations and staff add value to their work and connect with their target audiences through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.
-

“The NHS Employers organisation firmly believes in a permissive approach to using social media in the NHS.”

A permissive approach

The NHS Employers organisation firmly believes in a permissive approach to using social media in the NHS. Individual staff should be permitted and enabled to use social media for work. Only a permissive approach will unlock the innovations within the vibrant creative spaces found on social media sites.

As with any communication tool, social media has a few potential pitfalls, which

are avoidable with a little preparation. Before we look at how the NHS is using social media, here are our tips on using social media in your new job:

1. Read your local social media policy.
2. Read your profession's social media guidance.
3. Check the privacy settings on your social media profiles.

Read your local social media policy

Many NHS organisations have a staff policy covering social media use at work. It may be a standalone document or found in the IT or HR policies. It is important you read the policy to make sure you know where your employer stands. Not all NHS organisations are fully supportive of social media at work, yet.

Some NHS trusts prefer staff to discuss work-related social media use with the communications team first. This isn't necessarily to deter staff from using social media, but to make sure you've got the support you need to make it a success. If you find that your

organisation is not taking a permissive approach to social media, consider directing key individuals such as board members or the HR team to our site: www.nhsemployers.org/socialmedia – where they'll find lots of helpful social media resources.



Read your profession's social media guidance

Many of the healthcare professional colleges and societies have released guidance on using social media at work. Keeping up to date with this guidance will help you get the most out of social media.

You can find a list of the guidance available by profession here: www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/need-to-know/social-media-and-the-nhs/social-media-guidelines

“Always remember the rule: if you wouldn’t say it aloud in the canteen, don’t post it online.”

Your personal social media profiles

Working in the NHS can mean your social media profiles are of more interest to the media than if you were working in other sectors; naughty nurses and big-spending NHS executives sell papers. Find out more in [\[2\] 'An Introduction to: Using social media during your career'](#).

Top tip: check the privacy settings you have on your social media profiles.

Can everyone see the content you post? What comes up when you Google search your name? Once you understand this, check the things you’ve posted and question if they would be acceptable to your patients or employer. You can then decide on how you will manage your profile.

Your choices:

- Maintain a private, personal profile (non-public).
- Maintain a public, professional profile which only discusses work.
- Maintain a cross-over profile which discusses both work and life.



What impact can social media have on your job?

Social media has the potential to significantly help you throughout your career. Sharing your views and knowledge with online networks can help you reflect, learn and make connections across the NHS and beyond.

Unfortunately, the thing which makes social media so powerful – its openness

and accessibility – also makes it potentially damaging to your career if you post the wrong things.

Thankfully, there is an easy rule to avoid the danger and benefit from the opportunity: “if you wouldn’t say it aloud in the canteen, don’t post it online.”

Get involved!

Get involved and stay safe online with these three top tips...

1. Take it slow. Observe how others use social media first.
2. Don’t feel you have to be online all the time. Commit as much time to it as you feel comfortable.
3. Ask questions. NHS staff on social media love helping people out!

“Facebook advertising can connect NHS organisations with their target audience for a project or campaign.”

What the NHS uses different social media platforms for



NHS organisations use Facebook pages to stay in contact with their local populations.

They can be very helpful for health campaigns and emergencies, such as [the South Wales measles outbreak](#).

- Facebook pages are for organisations. NHS organisations should always use a Facebook page and not a profile.
- Text, URLs, YouTube videos, photos and infographics can all be posted to Facebook pages.

- By clicking the ‘Like’ button on your page, someone will get your page’s updates in their newsfeed.
- A Facebook page should be regularly monitored to ensure comments/questions are dealt with in a timely manner.

Advertising

Facebook advertising can connect NHS organisations with their target audience for a project or campaign. Advertising campaigns can be simply set up, managed and tracked directly through Facebook.



Twitter has become one of the key social media platforms used by NHS organisations and individual staff.

Twitter is used in a number of ways by NHS organisations and staff:

- Tweet chats using the hashtags such as #nhssm, #wenurses and #nhscomms.
- Promoting health campaigns such as flu fighter and Be Clear on Cancer.
- Conversations about current or polemic news topics involving parts of the NHS or healthcare industry.
- In the event of a crisis, to get simple instructions quickly to the public and media to keep them up to date with developments.

- Leadership. Many senior NHS leaders use Twitter to stay in contact with their staff and discuss their visions for their organisations.

Individual staff using Twitter

- Individual NHS staff are permitted to Tweet.
- Work-based accounts are also permitted, but check this with your local communications team first.
- It is important that individual staff are able to join online conversations to add their perspective and experiences.

“NHS organisations can create a YouTube channel to upload all their video content in one place.”


LinkedIn

A LinkedIn company page functions like an organisation’s online CV to promote its services, skills and achievements. You can connect with your organisation to stay up to date with its posts.

NHS organisations can re-post interesting projects delivered by their staff on the organisation’s LinkedIn company page to promote their work.

LinkedIn analytics tracks the connections, page views and interactions as well as viewer demographics based on job title, level of seniority, location and so forth.

Advertising


- LinkedIn does not offer paid-for advertising like Facebook; however,  various recruitment advertising options can be purchased.
- Work, campaigns and briefings may be posted to further promote the organisation’s work to stakeholders.
- You can link to articles, documents or external organisations which are doing work that is of interest to your NHS organisation.

YouTube

YouTube is a leading video-sharing website. NHS organisations often use it for recruitment videos, adverts for health campaigns and animated infographics.

NHS organisations can create a YouTube channel to upload all their video content in one place.

- YouTube videos can be embedded in websites using the YouTube ‘embed code’.
- YouTube videos can be shared on other social media sites.

- Videos from  NHS Choices cover many symptoms and conditions. These can be embedded into other NHS websites and help maintain consistent information for patients.

The growing popularity of video

As smartphones, tablets and internet connections become faster and better, video content is becoming increasingly more popular. Getting your information across in a visual format helps many people understand it better. For example, a video explaining the process of going into hospital for a day operation is often easier to understand than the written text explaining the process.

Further reading

 www.nhsemployers.org/socialmedia

Increasing staff engagement with social media, November 2013.

New to NHS communications? A guide to why the NHS is using social media, September 2014.



NHS Employers

The NHS Employers organisation is the voice of employers in the NHS, supporting them to put patients first. Our vision is to be the authoritative voice of workforce leaders, experts in HR, negotiating fairly to get the best deal for patients.

We help employers make sense of current and emerging healthcare issues to ensure that their voice is front and centre of health policy and practice. We keep them up to date with the latest workforce thinking and expert opinion, providing practical advice and information, and generating opportunities to network and share knowledge and best practice.

We work with employers in the NHS to reflect their views and act on their behalf in four priority areas:

- pay and negotiations
- recruitment and planning the workforce
- healthy and productive workplaces
- employment policy and practice.

The NHS Employers organisation is part of the NHS Confederation.

Contact us

For more information on how to become involved in our work, email [✉ getinvolved@nhsemployers.org](mailto:getinvolved@nhsemployers.org)

[✉ www.nhsemployers.org](http://www.nhsemployers.org)

[✉ enquiries@nhsemployers.org](mailto:enquiries@nhsemployers.org)



@nhsemployers



NHS Employers



www.youtube.com/nhsemployers

NHS Employers

50 Broadway

London

SW1H 0DB

2 Brewery Wharf

Kendell Street

Leeds LS10 1JR

This publication was produced by the NHS Confederation publications team:

[✉ publications@nhsconfed.org](mailto:publications@nhsconfed.org)

This document is available in pdf format at www.nhsemployers.org/publications

Published November 2014. © NHS Employers 2014.

This document may not be reproduced in whole or in part without permission.

The NHS Confederation (Employers) Company Ltd. Registered in England.

Company limited by guarantee: number 5252407

Ref: EINF37701