Social Media Guidance for Staff

The term ‘Social Media’ refers to online community sites such as Facebook, Twitter, personal blogs and LinkedIn. These along with other sites are now common place for learning, sharing, connecting and expressing views.

The Trust recognises that staff use these sites and below we have put together some ‘best practice guidelines’ to help you use these channels effectively and to protect your personal and professional reputation – and that of the Trust. Please bear in mind how you represent the Trust in your private time – social media is blurring the lines between the personal and professional aspects of many peoples’ lives and anything posted can have an impact on both.

1. **Protect your privacy**
   Online content can be viewed anywhere, anytime so it is important that staff implement the correct privacy settings on social media sites. There may be something on your profile you don’t want a prospective employer to see or you may have photos of your family that you want to keep private in your own circle of friends. Have a look at your privacy settings on your pages and see if they are at the right level for you.

2. **Think before you post**
   There is no such thing as a ‘private’ social media site. Search engines like Google will show postings years after the publication date. More critically, the web is viral and anything you could post could potentially be viewed around the world in seconds.

3. **Maintain personal and organisational confidentiality**
   Do not post confidential, personal or commercial information about the Trust, its staff or service users. Posting such information may breach legal obligations and/or Trust policies and procedures. As a guideline, don’t post anything that you would not repeat in person, in public or to the parties in question. In addition, if you are posting photographs of work, ensure that no patient identifiable information can be seen and that conduct on photos is appropriate for during working hours.

4. **Be responsible**
   Be careful before you post! Prospective employers are now reviewing online postings before extending offers of employment so don’t compromise yourself by posting abusive, copyrighted, defamatory, libellous, obscene or even illegal content that may come back to haunt you. You are personally responsible for the content you publish and comments you make.

5. **Use a disclaimer**
   If you are posting about work please include a disclaimer on your site or post that you are sharing your views and opinions and not as a representative of the Trust i.e. ‘Views expressed on this blog are purely those of Ann Smith’.

6. **Choose your friends carefully**
   As friends or followers on social networking sites can see all your posts and pictures, ensure that you choose them carefully. Is it appropriate to be friends with a client, service user or your direct reports?