# Social Media Policy

## Summary

This policy provides guidance to staff on using social media for professional and personal purposes.

It provides guidance to staff on their personal responsibility as an employee of the Trust when using any social networking site.

It also provides staff with information to consider before participating in or developing any new social media application on behalf of the Trust, to help them get the best out of the tools available whilst maintaining a safe professional environment and protecting themselves as well as the organisation.

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<td>Director Responsible</td>
<td>Dympna Curley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lead Author</td>
<td>Karen Shaw</td>
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<td>Lead Author, Position</td>
<td>E-Communications Manager</td>
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<td>Department / Service Group</td>
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| Contact details  | Karen Shaw  
                 | Tel 028 9056 5641  
                 | Karen.shaw@belfasttrust.hscni.net |
| Additional Author(s) |                 |
| Reference Number | TP076/11       |
| Supersedes       | All legacy policies relating to this area |
### Version Record

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### Policy Record

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### Approval Process – Trust Policies

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### Local Approval Process

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Social Media Policy – v1.0 – December 2011
Introduction

The use of Social Media provides many opportunities to improve the way we communicate, reach out and interact with the different communities we serve. However when using these emerging technologies there are a number of risks and issues to consider, both for individual employees and the organisation. These risks need to be identified and managed to ensure the benefits can be realised in as safe a manner as possible.

Outside of the workplace, personal use of social networking sites is also growing in popularity, and is used by many as a way of keeping in touch with friends and colleagues on a social basis. While in the vast majority of cases, the use of sites such as Facebook is trouble free, guidance is required to ensure staff do not act in a way that may negatively affect the reputation of the Trust, or leave themselves open to allegation.

Purpose

This policy relates to both the professional and personal use of social networking sites by employees of the Trust. It aims to:

- provide guidance to staff on their personal responsibility as an employee of the Trust when using any social networking site.
- provide managers and individual employees with information to consider before participating in or developing any new social media application and to help them get the best out of the tools available whilst maintaining a safe professional environment and protecting themselves as well as the organisation.

Scope

By definition Social media’ is the term commonly given to web-based tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online. As the name implies, social media involves the building of online communities or networks to encourage participation and engagement.

This includes blogs, message boards, social networking websites (such as facebook, twitter, bebo, MySpace), content sharing websites (such as flickr, YouTube) and many other similar online channels.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during office hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media sites are accessed using our IT network and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.
Objectives

- To ensure safe, professional use of social media tools
- To make staff aware of the issues relating to the use of social media for both private and professional purposes, and aware of their responsibility as an employee of the Trust
- To ensure staff are aware of all relevant legislation and standards relating to online information, including codes of practice from related professional bodies.

Compliance with related policies and legislation

This document should be read in association with relevant policies, guidelines and legislation. This includes, but may not be limited to, the following policy documents:

- ICT security policy, which provides a framework for security of all Information and Communication technologies in use throughout the Trust, including use of email and the internet.
- Data protection and protection of information policy, which outlines our legal obligation to protect information relating to others.
- HR policy on working well together, which deal with issues of harassment and bullying.
- Development of websites in the public domain, which outlines the required approval process for developing new Trust-related social media applications or sites.

Codes of practice

Professional bodies may have issued their own code of practice relating to the use of social media. Staff have a personal responsibility to be aware to codes of practice relating to their professional body, however the Trust policy remains the definitive guidance for staff in the use of social media as an employee of Belfast Trust.

Roles and Responsibilities

To minimise the risks inherent in using social media, to avoid loss of productivity and to ensure that IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate business purposes, we expect all staff\(^1\) to adhere to this policy.

\(^1\)Staff relates to everyone on a Trust contract, including those on temporary, bank, student and honorary contracts.
All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to your line manager.

It is the responsibility of the line manager to investigate any reported breaches of this policy, in conjunction with HR, IT and Corporate Communications. Where necessary, it is also the responsibility of line managers to report breaches of Data Protection to the ICO (through the Trust Data Protection team).

Corporate Communications will be responsible for monitoring the Trust’s use of Social Media.

Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to: Karen Shaw, E-Communications Manager, karen.shaw@belfasttrust.hscni.net
SECTION ONE: Personal Use of Social Media

Outside of the working environment, whether or not an individual chooses to create or participate in an online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion is his or her own business.

However as a Trust employee it is important to be aware that posting information or views about the Trust cannot be isolated from your working life. Comments about the Trust, our patients, clients or colleagues can bring the Trust into disrepute and make both the Trust and the employee liable to legal action. Staff should therefore keep their personal use of social media as separate as possible from their professional life.

The following policy statements are designed to protect the Trust and the employee from risk of allegation, disrepute and liability.

Staff should never do any of the following:

1.1 share confidential information online
1.2 post inappropriate comments about a staff member, patient or client. This includes discussion of work-related issues, conversations about patients and complaints about colleagues.
1.3 use social media sites to bully or intimidate a member of staff.
1.4 use social media in any way which is unlawful

The above statements refer to the posting of all types of content on social media sites, including (but not exclusively) text, photographs and video.

1.5 We recognise that Northern Ireland is a small place, and often we will provide health or social care to people who are our friend; these friends may also be ‘friends’ in sites like facebook.

However, if you receive a friends request from a patient or client (or their family member) who you only know through your professional work, you should not accept this request.

Any patient/ client or their family member, who you only know through your professional work, who is currently an online friend should be deleted from your friends list immediately.

1.6 Do not publish your Trust email address on a personal social networking site, or use this address as part of your login/registration on a personal site.

1.7 While access to social media sites through the Trust network is blocked to most employees, accessing the internet through personal smart phones and other mobile devices is on the increase. Therefore do not let your use of social media interfere with your job and always access these sites in your own time.

1.8 Never use Trust networks or equipment to access or update a personal social media site.
SECTION TWO: Professional Use of Social Media

Your relationship with social media changes as soon as you identify yourself as a Belfast Trust employee, speak in any kind of professional capacity or seek to deploy social media on Trust business.

In such circumstances there are responsibilities, standards of behaviour and other organisational considerations which apply. Remember, you are publically representing the Trust and should participate in the same way as you would with other media, public meeting or forum.

Always remember that participation online results in your comments being permanently available and open to being republished in other media.

You should also be aware that you may attract media interest in yourself or the organisation, so proceed with care. If you have any doubts, take advice from your line manager, who may in turn contact the Trust media office in Corporate Communications if required.

Professional Use of Social Media is defined as:

- Participation in third party professional forums and/or discussion boards relating to your work
- Creating and/or managing content on a social media site created, branded and managed by the Trust
- Social media monitoring for business purposes

NB. Anyone wishing to develop a social media site or application on behalf of the Trust should first read the policy document: Development of websites in the public domain, which outlines the required approval process.

The following policy statements relate to professional use of social media.

2.1 Staff are free to participate in professional forums relating to their area of work.
2.2 When participating in a professional capacity on behalf of the Belfast Trust, staff must:

- seek approval from your line manager before participating, or declare any existing interests.
- clearly identify yourself as an employee of Belfast Trust, and state your role.
- only provide information about your work location if it is absolutely essential
- be professional - make sure you are always seen to act in an honest, accurate, fair and responsible way at all times.
- obtain written permission to publish any information, report or conversation that is not already in the public domain. Do not cite or
reference colleagues, partners or suppliers without their written approval.
• respect copyright when linking to images or other online material.

2.3 When participating in a professional capacity on behalf of the Belfast Trust, staff must not:

• Mention any information relating specifically to an individual patient or client
• Use offensive, sexist, racist, hateful or otherwise offensive or discriminatory language
• Publish information that is disparaging to the HSC, patients or other members of staff
• Endorse or appear to endorse any commercial product or service
• Voice political opinion

Non-Compliance

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether Trust equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach.

Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with our investigation. This may include removing internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach in this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

Serious breaches may be reported to the PSNI, ICO or other public authority for further investigation.

Monitoring

The Trust regularly monitors social media as part of our media strategy. Any instances of policy breach identified through this process will be dealt as per the Trust disciplinary procedure.

Consultation Process

Initial working group to develop the policy included representatives from ICT Security, HR and information Governance (data protection).

Draft issued to wider HR and ICT and communications teams for comment.

Draft version issued to directors for circulation throughout service areas.
Staff-side consulted through TJNCF WGPR Subcommittee. Additionally BMA consulted.

Final draft issued again to Directors for final comment from their service areas.

**Equality and Human Rights screening carried out:**
In line with duties under the equality legislation (Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998), Targeting Social Need Initiative, Disability discrimination and the Human Rights Act 1998, the Belfast Trust has carried out an initial screening exercise to ascertain if this policy should be subject to a full impact assessment.

☑ Screening completed
   No action required.

☐ Full impact assessment to be carried out.

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Symone Curley
Head of Communication

Date: 23 November 2011

Cecil Drenagh
Chief Executive

Date: 23 November 2011