



## Personal Use of Social Media Policy

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**The provisions of this policy, which was developed by a partnership group on behalf of Grampian Area Partnership Forum, apply equally to all employees of NHS Grampian except where specific exclusions have been identified.**

**NHS Grampian  
Personal Use of Social Media Guidance**

**This document is also available in large print and other formats and languages, upon request. Please call NHS Grampian Corporate Communications on Aberdeen (01224) 551116 or (01224) 552245.**

**This Policy has undergone Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment.**

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# **NHS Grampian**

## **Personal use of Social Media Policy**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Social media is online technology that enables the sharing of information, the promotion of discussion and the establishment and development of relationships. It can be accessed through websites on computers or via special applications on mobile devices, such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones.

The intention of this policy is not to interfere with an employee's personal life or to discourage them from using social media outside of work. Social media is a useful tool to share good news and positive developments about NHS Grampian. As an organisation, we use #ProudToBeNHSG to highlight the pride we take in the people we employ and the services we provide. NHS employees are recognised in their communities as trusted sources of information. We want to foster a sense of community and encourage staff to share good news stories and important information about service provision. The aim of this policy is to highlight the potential risks and issues that can arise due to inappropriate use of these sites and the consequences this could have on an individual's employment with NHS Grampian. It also aims to encourage good practice to maintain your personal privacy and security.

If you wish to use social media in a professional capacity e.g., setting up an account to provide information about a service or location, there is a separate policy (Social Media for Business Use); please contact [gram.socialmedia@nhs.scot](mailto:gram.socialmedia@nhs.scot) to discuss further.

NHS Grampian will not monitor an employee's social networking sites and does not intend to be prescriptive about how employees should conduct themselves in their private lives. However, where material is brought to the attention of the organisation which may be considered to be inappropriate NHS Grampian will investigate in line with the appropriate policy or legislation.

Information can be shared in a variety of different formats, such as text, pictures, video and audio. Examples of popular social media sites include Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn, Threads, Snapchat and TikTok. This guidance also covers messaging platforms such as Messenger or WhatsApp, and comments on sites such as YouTube, Wordpress, or Reddit. This list is not exhaustive and this guidance is not limited to these platforms alone.

Please remember only Teams and NHS.scot emails are approved for business communications. You should not use any messaging platform such as WhatsApp, Messenger, or direct/private messages associated with social media platforms to send or receive patient or business confidential information between teams, to communicate with patients, or within business processes. There are no exceptions.

## 2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all staff of NHS Grampian and others carrying out work for NHS Grampian such as contractors, volunteers, honorary and other contract holders. It also applies to students on placement (short-term and long-term) with NHS Grampian. People working within the health and social care partnerships and employed by a local authority should refer to their local workforce policies and guidance.

Members of staff who use personal communications devices should refer to and comply with the [NHS Grampian Electronic Communications Protocol](#).

This policy applies to the personal use of social media sites during hours of work, rest breaks, and when staff are not at work.

## 3.0 Guidelines for staff on the appropriate personal use of Social Media

**You are personally responsible for any content you publish/post - the views and opinions you express are your own and not those of NHS Grampian.**

Staff are strongly advised:

### 1. To think before you publish/post.

Whether you are posting a status or message of your own, commenting on a post, or sharing content from other people, take a moment to think about how others might react. Posted content can be difficult to retract and can spread very quickly through social media sites if it is circulated by other users. It can become permanently available for others to see and use elsewhere. Comments, tweets, blog posts or status updates can also be used by local and national media without your permission. Comments posted in the heat of the moment cannot be taken back. Adding a disclaimer such as 'all views my own' will not prevent potential action being taken against you for inappropriate posts.

### 2. Work e-mail addresses should not be used to register for personal social media accounts.

NHS.scot email addresses are provided for the purpose of carrying out your duties as an employee. Please use a personal email account for your personal social media activity.

### **3. To comply with existing policies**

Adhere to the appropriate workforce conduct policies as well as (if applicable) the codes of conduct relevant to your profession. If you are registered with any professional body, for example the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the General Medical Council, or the Health and Care Professions Council (this list is not exhaustive) you are strongly encouraged to read and understand their guidance and how it applies to you. Staff have a requirement to comply with all relevant UK legislation and the terms and conditions of acceptable use that each social media site has in place.

### **4. Not to post messages about, or images/recordings of patients or colleagues.**

NHS Grampian operates a number of corporate social media accounts. Staff achievements and patient stories are frequently posted there, only after ensuring proper consent. Please contact [gram.socialmedia@nhs.scot](mailto:gram.socialmedia@nhs.scot) to request a post.

You should not publish content about the NHS, its services, facilities, staff, patients, or third parties that could be considered as inappropriate, confidential, offensive, defamatory, discriminatory, harassing, illegal, embarrassing, threatening, intimidating, which may incite hatred or compromise the safety of staff or patients.

### **5. Not to use social media for whistle blowing or to discuss any aspect of your work.**

Social Media is not the appropriate place to raise or discuss work matters or issues. Concerns can be raised with a line manager, Trade Union or Professional Organisation rep or with the HR Hub. A Whistleblowing policy is in place and further information is available here, including details of Speak Up Ambassadors/Confidential Contacts: [Whistleblowing](#)

### **6. To choose your online friends wisely.**

Do not accept 'friend' or 'follow' requests from patients you have only come into contact with during the course of your work, or their friends or relatives. You should avoid any conflict of interest. If you are registered with a professional body, you should also consult their social media policy.

### **7. To keep your account secure and check your privacy settings**

Make sure you are fully aware of the account settings on your Social Media account and that you regularly review these settings to maintain your security and privacy.

Social media sites are regularly targeted by hackers trying to get access to users' accounts. To help keep your account secure, use a complex password for signing in to your account and consider changing this regularly (such as every three or four months). Consider using login verification with each site where a security code is sent to your phone each time there is a login attempt.

Please remember that even the strictest privacy settings have their limitations. Regardless of the settings you have in place, once something is published online it can be copied and redistributed by other users very quickly and effortlessly – even if the posts you publish aren't public or are posted via a site's private messaging facility.

It is recommended that you check your settings after each application update as these can change frequently.

Be aware that many online games, puzzles or surveys require you to give them access to your account. Regular checks of your privacy and security settings will keep your account and information safe.

#### **8. To regularly monitor content on your account.**

Pay particular attention if others have access to publish/share content which will appear on your account. Other users can tag your account profile in their posts and include you in group conversations. Remove any content that others publish and take steps to disassociate your account from other posts and group conversations that could be considered to be inappropriate.

#### **9. To report anything that gives you cause for concern**

Social media sites each have their own terms of use guidelines and an option for reporting or flagging content. If you see something that may be breach of this personal use guidance you should report it to the social media site where the content has been posted. NHS Grampian is unable to raise concerns on behalf of individual employees; you are responsible for flagging inappropriate comment. NHS Grampian can only manage the content (e.g. edit, delete) it publishes to its own accounts. The organisation is not able to remove material posted on personal accounts, forums, etc. Check the rules for a particular social media site before submitting a report and be aware that content will only be taken down if a social media site agrees that another user has breached their rules.

In the event of another user promoting illegal activity or behaving in a threatening manner, report it to the Police by dialling 101 – in addition to reporting it to the social media site.

## 4.0 Compliance

Please be aware that any social media activity which results in harm, distress or loss of reputation to patients, staff or the organisation may be considered gross misconduct and potentially unlawful.

Any member of staff who is found to be in breach of the relevant policies and procedures may be subject to action up to and including a formal disciplinary process. Examples of relevant policies are below; this list is not exhaustive:

- NHS Grampian Information Security Policies
- NHS Scotland's Workforce Conduct Policy
- NHS Scotland's Workforce Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Codes of professional standards relevant to an employee's profession.

Staff who have queries about the contents of this guidance or wish to report a breach or suspected breach should contact their supervisor/line manager in the first instance, or alternatively contact the HR Hub or staff side representative. Breaches of data security will be managed by Information Security in line with the relevant protocol(s).