# Social Media Policy

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### Date Approved: December 2019

| Document Reference | PO – Social Media Policy |
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| **Version** | V 4.3 |
| **Responsible Committee** | Trust Management Group |
| **Responsible Director** | Executive Director of Workforce |
| **Document Author (title)** | Head of HR Operations |
| **Approved By** | Trust Management Group |
| **Date Approved** | December 2019 |
| **Review Date** | Three years from approval date |
| **Equality Impact Assessed (EIA)** | Yes (Screening) |
| **Protective Marking** | Not Protectively Marked |

**Document Control Information**

| Version | Date | Author | Status (A/D) | Description of Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.1 | 10/10/13 | Laura Hood | D | Draft of new policy |
| 0.2 | 10/12/13 | Laura Hood | D | Updated following comments at WPPG |
| 0.3 | 12/12/13 | Laura Hood | D | Final version agreed by JSG |
| 1.0 | 15/01/14 | Laura Hood | A | Final version approved by SMG |
| 2.0 | 16/07/15 | Cath Cox | D | Amended to include Diversity Statement |
| 2.1 | 07/08/15 | Cath Cox | A | Agreed at PPG |
| 3.0 | 21/10/15 | Cath Cox | A | Approved at TMG |
| 3.2 | 27/07/17 | Lael Hird | D | Updates to personal and work use guide |
| 3.3 | 02/11/17 | Lael Hird | D | Approved at PPG and referred to JSG |
| 3.4 | 07/12/17 | Lael Hird | D | Approved with amendments at JSG |
| 3.5 | 01/02/18 | Risk Team | A | Document formatted - New visual identity |
| 3.6 | 01/08/18 | Lael Hird | D | Updated contradictions. Agreed at PPG |
| 3.7 | 23/08/18 | Lael Hird | D | Agreed at JSG |
| 4.0 | 01/09/18 | Lael Hird | A | Policy approved at Sep 18 TMG |
| 4.1 | 01/10/19 | Nico Batinica | D | Update to Trust affiliated web pages |
| 4.2 | 31/10/19 | Nico Batinica | D | Approved at PDG and referred to JSG |
| 4.3 | 21/11/19 | Nico Batinica | D | Approved at JSG |
| 4.3 | 11/12/19 | Nico Batinica | A | Approved at TMG |
| A = Approved   D = Draft | | | | |
| Document Author = Nico Batinica, Head of HR Operations | | | | |
| This document is controlled. If you would like to suggest amendments to this document please contact the document author. | | | | |

**Staff Summary**

Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust (the Trust) appreciates that there are vast benefits to the usage of social media. The Trust encourages these online activities and acknowledges that staff and contractors can improve their personal skills and experience through interactions with others.

However, the Trust has a responsibility to ensure that it protects its patients, employees, public image and reputation. This involves ensuring confidentiality and maintaining security in accordance with established Information Governance policies and good practice.

## 1. Statement of Intent

The six core values that represent our YAS employees behaviours, views, image and reputation are: One Team, Compassion, Empowerment, Integrity, Innovation and Resilience. These core values provide and underpin a foundation and framework for all of YAS decision-making processes. We translate our values into actions. They inspire everything we do. How we operate as a Trust, how we behave in practice and how we implement our processes and policies to meet our strategic outcomes, mission and vision. Non-compliance to live up to our values may be deemed misconduct and referred to the Trust's Raising Standards Policy and Procedure.

Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust (the Trust) understands the many benefits of using social media as a communications tool. The Trust encourages these online activities and acknowledges that staff and contractors can improve their personal skills and experience through interactions with others.

However, the Trust has a responsibility to ensure that it protects its patients, employees, public image and reputation. This involves ensuring confidentiality and maintaining security in accordance with established Information Governance policies and good practice.

The Trust regularly uses social media as part of its communications strategy. The Corporate Communications department has the authority to speak on behalf of the Trust and is responsible for managing and monitoring the trusts official channels, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The Trust's official channels will be used to improve the public's understanding of the Trust and its work, promote health, and engage with the general public.

In addition to the trusts official accounts, the Trust will grant selected staff the authorisation to access social media and post on behalf of the Trust.

## 2. Introduction

2.1 This policy outlines the values and principles of good practice when using social media.

2.2 When posting content online, common sense and good judgement should be used in all cases in conjunction with the Code of Conduct.

2.3 If employees are in any doubt about social media and what is appropriate or

inappropriate, advice should be sought from HR or Corporate Communications, before and not after, content is posted or information is divulged.

## 3.    Principles

3.1    The Trust is committed to maintaining confidentiality and safety at all times of its employees, patients, service users and Trust business.

3.2    Patient-information or incidents involving patients, anonymous or not, should always be considered identifiable and should not be shared via social media. Selected 'Twitter Champions' who post on social media must maintain patient and service user confidentiality at all times in line with guidance in section 5.7.

3.3    The Trust holds itself and its staff to high ethical standards and responsible behaviour in line with the Trust Code of Conduct and the standards of conduct defined by any relevant regulatory or professional organisation (e.g. HCPC, GMC, NMC etc.).   Staff should follow the same high standards of conduct and behaviour online as would be expected at work.

3.4    The Trust encourages respectful behaviour between staff and will not tolerate offensive comments being made about Trust colleagues or Trust business.

3.5    Staff must take care to avoid online content or actions that breach confidentiality, are inaccurate, libellous, defamatory, harassing, threatening, or may otherwise be illegal. Such actions will be dealt with via the disciplinary policy.

3.6    Inappropriate content posted online can bring the Trust into disrepute. Instances of behaviour which harms the Trust's reputation, or is considered to be offensive, will be dealt with under the disciplinary policy.

3.7    Employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online and ensuring that they use social media in a sensible manner. Whilst it is recognised that staff use their own personal profiles, they should ensure that this is in line with the Trust values when communicating on Trust associated social media.

3.8    Employees wishing to make an announcement regarding the Trust or via the Trust's official social media (e.g. Twitter) should contact the Corporate Communications team.

3.9    Closed Facebook pages for YAS employees can be used to informally discuss YAS topics for internal communications; it must not undermine or disrupt the operational and business functions of the Trust. Any clinical posts should align with Trust existing clinical practices and should be used to promote excellent clinical practice across the Trust.

3.10    Regardless of the topic, staff must not repost any comments/content to external social media sites without prior consent from the site moderators.

3.11    If an employee has an issue or concern (grievance), they should discuss this with their line manager or consult the relevant Trust policies. Moderators for these closed sites should ensure that communication is in line with Trust

expectations.

3.12   If an employee becomes aware that a colleague has accessed/utilised sites which pose harm to children/vulnerable adults, these concerns should be raised immediately through the route outlined in the Policy for the Management of Allegations of Abuse or Neglect of a Child/Vulnerable Adult against Staff.

## 4   Social Media Guidelines for Personal Use

4.1   At no time will using social media be allowed to take priority for the staff member; their treatment of patients and the 'day' job will always come first.

4.2   Staff must not post images containing patients or service users or any information that could identify them.

4.3   Staff must not post photographs of incidents or performance status boards.

4.4   If a member of staff discloses that they work for YAS they should ensure their profile and related content is consistent with how the Trust would expect them to present themselves at work.

4.5   Additionally, if disclosing that they work for YAS staff should disclaim that their views are their own e.g. "All views my own".

4.6   Staff must not attempt to contact patients or service users on social media. In the event of a member of staff being contacted by a patient they should direct them to the relevant department for advice i.e. Patient Relations or Corporate Communications

## 5   Staff with Authorised Access to Social Media for Work Purposes

5.1   Despite having authorised access to social media for work purposes all staff members must adhere to all the Principles in Section 3 and the Diversity Statement in Section 5.

5.2   Selected staff will be permitted to use Twitter as part of their daily work and post from an official account on behalf of the Trust as part of a scheme run by Corporate Communications.

5.3   No staff member will be able to tweet using an official account until they have met with a communications' team member and had an introduction to Twitter, how and when to use an official account, and also gone through the dos and don'ts of using an official account.

5.4   At no time will using Twitter be allowed to take priority for the staff member; their treatment of patients and the 'day' job will always come first.

5.5   All usernames and passwords will be held by Corporate Communications and the staff member's tweets can be accessed, edited and even deleted at Corporate Communications discretion.

5.6   Selected 'Staff Tweeters' must adhere to the style guide provided by Corporate

Communications.

5.7     Whilst selected 'Staff Tweeters' are encouraged to tweet about their work, staff must maintain patient and service user confidentiality at all times. The following is considered patient identifiable information and should not be disclosed:
- Patient's name, address, full postcode or date of birth
- Pictures, photographs, videos, audio-tapes or other images of patients
- NHS number and local patient identifiable codes
- Anything else that may be used to identify a patient directly or indirectly. (For example, photograph of house in street, rare diseases, cars, drug treatments or statistical analyses which have very small numbers within a small population may allow individuals to be identified.)

5.8     The HR Department will also use the Trust's social media sites i.e. Linked In and Twitter for recruitment purposes.

5.9     Corporate Communications and HR can and will revoke staff access to official channels at their own discretion.

## 6     Diversity Statement

6.1     Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust encourages an inclusive culture and values diversity. The Trust is committed to tackling all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination and fostering good relations on the grounds of "protected characteristics". Those protected characteristics are age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

6.2     As part of this commitment the Trust endeavours to ensure that no employee, or prospective employee, is discriminated against, either directly or indirectly. This includes through the use of social media.

6.3     Many YAS employees make use of social media in a professional and personal capacity.  While employees may not always think that they are acting on behalf of the Trust or in their capacity as a YAS employee, employees must be aware that they can be recognised as being a YAS employee.

6.4     Any communications through or engagement by employees with social media, whether in a professional or personal capacity must not do anything that could be considered discriminatory or convey views or opinions that are contrary to the Trust commitment to diversity. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples:
- Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to protected characteristics or
- Posting/ liking or sharing images or content that are discriminatory or offensive (including references to organisations that may convey discriminatory views) or
- Publishing any material or comments that could undermine public confidence in the Trust and its employees or
- Posting or sharing links to such content

**7      Process for review and revision**

This policy will be reviewed in three years' time unless legislative or other changes necessitate an earlier review.

**8      Associated Documentation**

This policy operates in conjunction with the following documents:
- Disciplinary Policy
- Issue Resolution (Grievance) Policy
- Dignity and Respect at Work Policy
- Freedom to Speak Up Policy
- Policy for the Management of Allegations of Abuse or Neglect of a Child/Vulnerable Adult against Staff.

**9      Monitoring Compliance with this Policy**

Social media sites are periodically checked for content concerning YAS and any incidents that are deemed to breach this policy will be dealt with under the appropriate procedure.

**10     Implementation Plan**

This policy will be communicated via the following mechanisms:

- Staff Update
- Locality meetings
- Trust intranet
- YAS Team Brief
- YAS TV