

Social Media Policy

V1.0

March 2025

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Purpose of this Policy	3
3. Scope.....	3
4. Definitions/Glossary.....	4
5. Ownership and Responsibilities	4
5.2. Role of the Communication Team.....	4
5.3. Role of Individual Staff.....	4
5.4. Role of Line Managers	5
5.5. Role of Patients and Visitors	5
6. Standards and Practice	5
7. Dissemination and Implementation	12
8. Monitoring compliance and effectiveness	12
9. Updating and Review	12
10. Equality and Diversity	13
Appendix 1. Governance Information	14
Appendix 2. Equality Impact Assessment	16
Appendix 3. Social Media Guidance.....	19
Appendix 4. Social Media Pile-On Tips	22

Data Protection Act 2018 (UK General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR) Legislation.

The Trust has a duty under the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679 to ensure that there is a valid legal basis to process personal and sensitive data. The legal basis for processing must be identified and documented before the processing begins. In many cases we may need consent; this must be explicit, informed, and documented. We cannot rely on opt out, it must be opt in.

Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679 is applicable to all staff; this includes those working as contractors and providers of services.

For more information about your obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679 please see the Information Use Framework Policy or contact the Information Governance Team.

Royal Cornwall Hospital Trust rch-tr.infogov@nhs.net

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust (RCHT) recognises the value in social media for both the organisation, its staff and patients and the public. RCHT encourages the use of social media to celebrate staff and their achievements, promote the organisation and its services, raise awareness of specific campaigns and to engage with an audience which might not be reached through traditional media such as newspapers and radio.
- 1.2. The communication team represents RCHT online, acting as a facilitator, sharing updates, and generating conversation. Staff are encouraged to participate on social media in a constructive, considered, and positive manner, in line with the RCHT Values.

2. Purpose of this Policy

- 2.1. RCHT recognises social media can be a useful tool for networking with colleagues and provides a forum for the sharing of ideas and best practice. However, we must also ensure confidentiality and the reputation of RCHT are protected.
- 2.2. The purpose of this policy is to provide staff with clear guidance on their responsibilities and the potential implications when using social media. It outlines the principles which staff should follow when using social media as part of their work. It will highlight to employees the actions and behaviours which could be deemed to be inappropriate and in breach of this policy. This will reduce the risk of damage to the organisation's or the individual's reputation, which may be caused by inappropriate use of these platforms.
- 2.3. It is important to be aware when using social media in a work or personal context, any content an individual may post could be shared outside of that forum. Depending on the nature of any inappropriate content which has subsequently reached the wider public domain, this could lead to action under other RCHT policies.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy is based on the NHS best practice guidelines and guidance from NHS England, the British Medical Association (BMA), the General Medical Council (GMC) and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) on the use of social media and outlines the organisation's expectations for online interactions, as well as the consequences of breaching the policy. This document does not form comprehensive guidance on how to use individual social media platforms and online tools. This policy applies to all staff, contractors, volunteers, and students working on behalf of RCHT (hereafter referred to as 'staff').
- 3.2. This policy should be read in conjunction with the [Email Policy](#), [IT Security Policy](#), [Information Use Framework Policy](#), [Acceptable Use Policy](#), [Employees Confidentiality Code of Conduct](#), [Disciplinary Policy](#), and [Dignity at Work Policy](#).
- 3.3. Social media is rapidly evolving and expanding, and new platforms are regularly launched.

- 3.4. Inappropriate use of social media by any member of staff may be held to account in accordance with RCHT's [Disciplinary Policy](#) for any inflammatory, derogatory, slanderous or abusive statements posted.

4. Definitions/Glossary

- 4.1. Social media - used to refer to applications or online platforms which enable users to create, share and comment on content, and participate in social networking.
- 4.2. Social networking - used to describe the use of applications or online platforms to connect and interact with other users by sharing information, opinions, knowledge, and interests. This applies to all forms of online publishing and discussion, including blogs, wikis, file-sharing, user-generated video and audio, virtual worlds, and social networks.

5. Ownership and Responsibilities

RCHT aims to protect all staff from bullying and harassment including inappropriate behaviour on social media. RCHT and all its employees have a duty to protect the confidentiality of its patients and service users.

5.1. Role of the Communication Team

The communication team will produce and post content from RCHT's corporate social media accounts which adhere to the NHS branding and accessibility guidelines. They will monitor social media activity relating to RCHT and intervene when necessary. In order to do this, the communication team will require login details of all RCHT service specific or generic accounts. This will include handling any media enquiries arising from issues created on social media and may also include closing down accounts.

The role of the communication team also extends to monitoring social media channels associated with RCHT to ensure they are following brand and accessibility guidelines. They will decide whether to authorise generic RCHT social media accounts and hold login details of these accounts in the event of reputational or crisis response.

The communication team will report any social media content which does not follow the guidelines set out within this policy to the relevant manager and escalate further where appropriate.

5.2. Role of Individual Staff

A useful 'rule of thumb' is to say nothing in social media you would not say in a face-to-face conversation with a colleague or patient. Staff are expected to take responsibility for what they post on social media and follow the guidelines set out within this policy and where relevant, their professional registration body's own social media policies and guidelines. For example, the [General Medical Council \(GMC\)](#), [British Medical Association \(BMA\)](#), [Nursing and Midwifery Council \(NMC\)](#), the [Health and Care Professions Council \(HCPC\)](#) and the [General Dental Council \(GDC\)](#).

Everyone is free to share their opinion and undertake political activism in a personal capacity. If you identify yourself as a member of RCHT or NHS staff, what you say and do reflects on the organisation. Therefore, it should always be clear any content is the account holder's personal opinion and not of their employer. Use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed here are my own and don't necessarily represent those of Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust." The use of a disclaimer does not override the need to follow other principles in this policy.

Staff should report any inappropriate behaviour they believe contravenes this policy to their line manager, People Partner or the Head of Information Governance.

5.3. Role of Line Managers

Line managers should ensure new employees are aware of this policy and promote awareness of it within their individual departments. Line managers should investigate any allegations of misuse of social media and social networking platforms in accordance with the Trust's Staff Disciplinary Procedure, liaising with People Partners, Information Governance Departments and communication team as required.

5.4. Role of Patients and Visitors

It is recognised patients, and their visitors will make use of social media while in our hospitals. They are expected to be respectful of their surroundings and the privacy and dignity of others when connecting to social media platforms while on RCHT premises. When using our free public Wi-Fi, patients and visitors are required to sign up to conditions of use which make these responsibilities clear.

6. Standards and Practice

6.1. RCHT Social Media Accounts

6.1.1. RCHT maintains a corporate presence on the following platforms (as of March 2025):

- Facebook Page – Royal Cornwall Hospitals Trust (@RCHTWeCare).
- Facebook Group (private) – Royal Cornwall Hospitals RCHT Staff.
- X (formally Twitter) - @RCHTWeCare.
- Instagram - @royal_cornwall_hospitals.
- LinkedIn – Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust.
- YouTube – Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust.
- Vimeo – Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust.
- TikTok - @RCHTWeCare.

- 6.1.2. Any staff member Any staff member wishing to establish a work-related social media presence e.g. a team, department, or clinical area, must obtain approval from the communication team in the first instance. The communication team will look at proposals in the context of the organisation's social media, communication, and engagement needs.
- 6.1.3. The communication team will use the following acceptance criteria. Social media accounts must:
- Have a content plan, editorial purpose, and requirement to communicate regularly with a specific group of stakeholders on an ongoing basis.
 - Be based on clear evidence of user needs and their use of the channel (not hearsay).
 - Be sufficiently resourced to allow accounts to be checked multiple times a day with responses to questions and comments provided as appropriate.
 - Not be used for promoting internal initiatives (staff communications).
- 6.1.4. Please note accounts may be deactivated for the following reasons:
- Inactivity – no original (organic) posts have been made for 2 months or more.
 - Growth – the account fails to reach 200 followers after being active for 6 months.
 - Relevance – the reason for the account is no longer relevant e.g. the service closes or campaign ends.
 - Governance – the account violates RCHT policies and values.
- 6.1.5. When setting up a social media profile that has been authorised by the communication team, you will need to change the passwords from their default setting and be of a complex nature. This would be a passphrase (e.g. LongWalkInP24ark) or complex 12-character word (e.g. mix of words, uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and special characters where possible).
- 6.1.6. The communication team must be provided with the username and password of any RCHT related social media account in case action needs to be taken out of hours. If the password changes, the communication team must be informed.
- 6.1.7. For all RCHT social media, the contents are property of RCHT. If a member of staff leaves RCHT, the account must be handed over to the communication team or another colleague. Once handed over, the password must be changed, and the communication team informed if not already involved.

6.2. Royal Cornwall Hospitals Trust Staff Facebook Group

- 6.2.1. This group was created for sharing internal messages easily and acts as an informal engagement group for staff. All RCHT staff, including substantive, Kernowflex, honorary and voluntary contracts, can request to join the group and once approved, post information about their teams and departments or ask questions. All staff must read and agree to the group rules before being approved. Information from this group must not be shared publicly.
- 6.2.2. The communication team verify and record all new members of the group. Requests to join may be automatically declined where employees:
- Do not answer all the membership questions.
 - Do not give a valid NHS email address, or line manager's name if you do not have an NHS email address.
 - Do not agree to the group rules.
 - Do not work for, or hold a contract with, RCHT.

6.3. General Principles for Using Social Media

- 6.3.1. The following points should be considered when using social media platforms. They will help employees get the most out of social tools, whilst maintaining a safe, professional environment and protecting themselves and RCHT. The communication team can provide training and support for anyone who is unsure about what constitutes safe and professional practice. See appendix 3 for a summary of the principles in this policy.
- 6.3.2. You are personally responsible for what you publish
- Remember anything you post will be published world-wide immediately. It will remain permanently available and is likely to be republished in other media. Be aware that even if you delete content, it does not always ensure it can no longer be seen. Once online, information can be copied and redistributed, and it is easy to lose control of it. Avoid publishing your personal contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them and never publish anyone else's contact details.
- 6.3.3. Stay within the legal framework
- Libel, defamation, copyright, and data protection laws apply. Also be aware of fair use and financial disclosure laws. RCHT's internet and email policies must be followed at all times. If you are unsure, please contact the communication team before publishing.
- 6.3.4. Use disclaimers
- If you are representing yourself as an employee on social media sites such as LinkedIn where personal and professional references are the focus, you may not provide professional references about any current or

former employee, contactor, vendor or contingent worker. You may provide a personal reference or recommendation for current or former employees, contractors, vendors and contingent workers provided the statements made and information provided in the reference are factually accurate; and you include the disclaimer: "This reference is being made by me in a personal capacity. It is not intended and should not be construed as a reference from Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust".

6.3.5. Consent

- 6.3.5.1. Do not cite or reference anyone without their approval. If you do make a reference, link back to the original source material where possible. Never disclose commercially sensitive, anti-competitive, private, or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with your line manager. Advice can be sought from the communication team.
- 6.3.5.2. Work colleagues also have a right to privacy and must not be named on social media or have photographs of them shared publicly unless they have given their permission. Staff must take care they do not indirectly identify other staff or disclose information to or about any other member of staff on social media (for example, by revealing they have been successful in an application for a new role before other members of staff who have been unsuccessful have been informed). Anything referring to or including a colleague should be removed where a colleague or the communication team asks.
- 6.3.5.3. The communication team's remit includes taking photographs, videos and audio recordings of staff, patients, and visitors for internal and external publishing. Consent forms will be completed before filming and recording, files and forms will be stored in line with Data Protection Act (GDPR). Consent forms can be requested from the communication team.

6.3.6. Be inclusive

Social media must not be used as the sole means of contact or communication with any given group, as this discriminates against those who do not have access to such a facility.

6.3.7. Branding

Provide worthwhile information and perspective. You must not use RCHT's logo on any accounts or websites without clearance from the communication team. Any content on RCHT accounts must follow brand guidelines.

6.3.8. Safeguarding

- 6.3.8.1. In your role, you may have cause to engage in online conversations with - and the promotion of - engagement opportunities with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The use of social media introduces a range of potential safeguarding risks to these groups.

6.3.8.2. Most children, young people and adults use the internet positively, but sometimes they and others may behave in ways that pose a risk.

6.3.8.3. Potential risks can include, but are not limited to:

- Online bullying.
- Grooming, exploitation or stalking.
- Exposure to inappropriate material or hateful language.
- The vulnerable person giving away personal details, which can be used to locate them, harass them or steal their identity.
- Coercion into illegal activity, such as distributing illegal content or hate crime.
- Exposure to ideologies, beliefs and prejudices that can lead to radicalisation.
- Encouraging violent behaviour, self-harm or risk taking.
- People's wellbeing not being promoted, as their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs are not taken into account.

6.3.9. Safeguarding concerns

6.3.9.1. Any online concerns should be reported as soon as identified as law enforcement and child/adult safeguarding agencies may need to take urgent steps to support the person.

6.3.9.2. Where a child, young person or adult is identified to be in immediate danger, dial 999 for police assistance.

6.3.9.3. If you have concerns about a breach in the terms of service for a platform, e.g. participation of underage children, nudity in images, use of unsuitable language, grooming, stalking or radicalisation that could lead to terrorist activities etc. you should report this to the service provider.

6.3.9.4. If you are concerned about any information being posted online which may relate to extremist views or affiliations, you should raise your concerns in line with the Trust's [adult safeguarding policy](#) or through [Prevent and Action Counter Terrorism](#).

6.3.9.5. You should also report this activity to your line manager and the communication team as consideration may need to be taken regarding continued use of that platform.

6.3.9.6.

6.4. Using social media as a paid marketing tool

The communication team can use paid for advertising on social media such as Facebook Ads or Google Ads, to promote healthcare advice or specific campaigns. Paid for social media must only be posted from RCHT's corporate accounts run by the communication team. If RCHT services or departments wish to run a paid advertising campaign, they must contact the communication team and have the funding agreed with their budget holder.

6.5. Moderation and community management

6.5.1. The communication team moderate comments, posts, and messages on RCHT social media accounts and reserve the right to remove those which do not meet our moderation guidelines, or do not meet the community standards of the social media platform. We do not use moderation to suppress legitimate, reasoned discussion, but will refer complaints to the appropriate channels where those concerns can be responded to.

6.5.2. Inappropriate comments or content may include:

- Malicious or offensive messages which could constitute a personal attack on a person's character, including other people using our social media channels, and our staff.
- Inciting hatred based on race, religion, gender, nationality or sexuality or any other personal characteristic.
- Sharing your personal details, such as private addresses, phone numbers, email addresses or other online contact details.
- Sharing personal details of members of staff in relation to complaints or concerns, including their names. Please [contact our patient experience team](#) if you have complaints or concerns about the care you have received or about a member of staff.
- High volumes of overly long messages which could constitute as spamming.
- Repetitive negative messages which aim to provoke a response or do not constructively add to the conversation.
- Comments that impersonate or falsely claim to represent a person or organisation.
- Swearing, hate-speech or obscenity.
- Comments which break the law - this includes libel, condoning illegal activity, and breaking copyright.
- Advertising commercial products and services - you can mention relevant products and services as long as they support your comment.

- Comments which include links to scam, impersonation, or phishing sites.
- Breach of any of the terms of any of the social media platforms themselves.

6.5.3. We reserve the right to remove comments, at our discretion, deemed inappropriate at any time. Repeated breaking of these guidelines could result in the commenter being banned from viewing or commenting on our social media channels.

6.6. Responding to the media and journalists

6.6.1. All work-related media requests, including statements and interviews, must come through the communication team. Do not approach or engage in conversation with the media or journalists online, they should be directed to the appropriate channels for comment.

6.6.2. If you read something online which is factually incorrect, inaccurate or you feel needs a response from RCHT, please contact the communication team.

6.7. Crisis management

During major incidents we will have one official source of news and information. What you say externally can easily be picked up by the media. If you want to point followers to relevant, accurate information then share content from RCHT's corporate social media accounts. During these times, internal channels such as, emails and Snapcomms will be used for up-to-date guidance and information.

7. Dissemination and Implementation

- 7.1. This policy document will be held in the public section of the Documents Library with unrestricted access.
- 7.2. The policy will be disseminated to all staff in the communication team's weekly newsletter when published. It will also be sent to individual staff members who are known to have a social media presence.

8. Monitoring compliance and effectiveness

Information Category	Detail of process and methodology for monitoring compliance
Element to be monitored	We are unable to monitor all social media sites, but we will ensure corporate RCHT sites are being used appropriately.
Lead	Communication team. Head of Information Governance.
Tool	Any incidents or concerns will be raised through RCHT's risks and incidents tool (currently Datix).
Frequency	RCHT owned social media sites should be checked at least weekly to ensure appropriate use.
Reporting arrangements	Where inappropriate use is identified as the result of staff activity, this will be reported to the Information Governance Group as part of the Incident report.
Acting on recommendations and Lead(s)	Depending on the incident, the Communication Team or Information Governance leads will ensure recommendations are followed.
Change in practice and lessons to be shared	Required changes to practice will be identified and actioned within one week. A lead member of the team will be identified to take each change forward where appropriate. Lessons will be shared with all the relevant stakeholders.

9. Updating and Review

- 9.1. This policy will be reviewed no less than three years from the date of publication. Where appropriate, revisions may be made ahead of the review date to ensure compliance with RCHT's use of social media and regulation which may affect social media.
- 9.2. Where the revisions are significant and the overall policy is changed, the author should ensure the revised document is taken through the standard consultation, approval, and dissemination processes.
- 9.3. Where the revisions are minor, e.g., amended job titles or changes in the organisational structure, approval can be sought from the Executive Director responsible for signatory approval and can be re-published accordingly without having gone through the full consultation and ratification process.

- 9.4. Any revision activity is to be recorded in the Version Control Table as part of the document control process.

10. Equality and Diversity

- 10.1. This document complies with the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust service Equality and Diversity statement which can be found in the [Equality Diversity And Inclusion Policy](#) or the [Equality and Diversity website](#).

- 10.2. Equality Impact Assessment

The Initial Equality Impact Assessment Screening Form is at Appendix 2.

Appendix 1. Governance Information

Information Category	Detailed Information
Document Title:	Social Media Policy V1.0
This document replaces (exact title of previous version):	New Document
Date Issued/Approved:	12 March 2025
Date Valid From:	March 2025
Date Valid To:	March 2028
Author/Owner:	Laura Mason, Head of Communication
Contact details:	rcht.communication@nhs.net
Brief summary of contents:	The policy sets out the practices and processes for using social media, either as part of the agreed working practices of staff or for personal use where reference is made to the RCHT or those who work or visit any of its 3 main sites.
Suggested Keywords:	Social media, social networking, Facebook, X, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, safeguarding, branding.
Target Audience:	RCHT: Yes CFT: No CIOB ICB: No
Executive Director responsible for Policy:	Dual Chief People Officer.
Approval route for consultation and ratification:	JCNC.
Manager confirming approval processes:	Head of Communication.
Name of Governance Lead confirming consultation and ratification:	Laura Mason.
Links to key external standards:	None required.

Information Category	Detailed Information
Related Documents:	Acceptable Use Policy. NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Community Email Policy. Freedom to Speak Up - Raising Concerns Policy. Adult Safeguarding Policy. Dignity at Work Policy. Information Technology Security Policy. Information Use Framework Policy. Employees Confidentiality Code of Conduct. Disciplinary Policy.
Training Need Identified:	No
Publication Location (refer to Policy on Policies – Approvals and Ratification):	Internet and Intranet
Document Library Folder/Sub Folder:	Chief Executive / Corporate Services

Version Control Table

Date	Version Number	Summary of Changes	Changes Made by
January 2025	V1.0	Initial issue.	Laura Mason, Head of Communication.

All or part of this document can be released under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

All Policies, Strategies and Operating Procedures, including Business Plans, are to be kept for the lifetime of the organisation plus 6 years.

This document is only valid on the day of printing.

Controlled Document.

This document has been created following the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust [The Policy on Policies \(Development and Management of Knowledge Procedural and Web Documents Policy\)](#). It should not be altered in any way without the express permission of the author or their Line Manager.

Appendix 2. Equality Impact Assessment

Section 1: Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

The EIA process allows the Trust to identify where a policy or service may have a negative impact on an individual or particular group of people.

For guidance please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment Policy (available from the document library) or contact the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Team
richt.inclusion@nhs.net

Information Category	Detailed Information
Name of the strategy/policy/proposal/service function to be assessed:	Social Media Policy V1.0
Department and Service Area:	Communication Team, Corporate.
Is this a new or existing document?	New
Name of individual completing EIA (Should be completed by an individual with a good understanding of the Service/Policy):	Laura Mason, Head of Communication
Contact details:	01872 252934

Information Category	Detailed Information
1. Policy Aim - Who is the Policy aimed at? (The Policy is the Strategy, Policy, Proposal or Service Change to be assessed)	All RCHT employees.
2. Policy Objectives	To ensure safe and appropriate use of social media platforms.
3. Policy Intended Outcomes	Increased engagement, together with reduced instances of complaints or poor behaviours.
4. How will you measure each outcome?	Use of analytics from social media platforms.
5. Who is intended to benefit from the policy?	RCHT employees and external stakeholders.

Information Category	Detailed Information
6a. Who did you consult with? (Please select Yes or No for each category)	- Workforce: Yes - Patients/visitors: No - Local groups/system partners: No - External organisations: No - Other: No
6b. Please list the individuals/groups who have been consulted about this policy.	Please record specific names of individuals/ groups: JCNC. People and Culture Committee.
6c. What was the outcome of the consultation?	Agreed.
6d. Have you used any of the following to assist your assessment?	National or local statistics, audits, activity reports, process maps, complaints, staff, or patient surveys: No.

7. The Impact

Following consultation with key groups, has a negative impact been identified for any protected characteristic? Please note that a rationale is required for each one.

Where a negative impact is identified without rationale, the key groups will need to be consulted again.

Protected Characteristic	(Yes or No)	Rationale
Age	No	
Sex (male or female)	No	
Gender reassignment (Transgender, non-binary, gender fluid etc.)	No	
Race	No	
Disability (e.g. physical or cognitive impairment, mental health, long term conditions etc.)	No	
Religion or belief	No	
Marriage and civil partnership	No	

Protected Characteristic	(Yes or No)	Rationale
Pregnancy and maternity	No	
Sexual orientation (e.g. gay, straight, bisexual, lesbian etc.)	No	

A robust rationale must be in place for all protected characteristics. If a negative impact has been identified, please complete section 2. If no negative impact has been identified and if this is not a major service change, you can end the assessment here.

I am confident that section 2 of this EIA does not need completing as there are no highlighted risks of negative impact occurring because of this policy.

Name of person confirming result of initial impact assessment: Laura Mason.

If a negative impact has been identified above OR this is a major service change, you will need to complete section 2 of the EIA form available here:
[Section 2. Full Equality Analysis](#)

Appendix 3. Social Media Guidance

It is the role of the communication team to communicate officially about the work we are doing across our hospitals, but you can all help in sharing these messages more widely through your communities and networks.

This guidance applies to everyone who works for RCHT, whether you are full or part-time, permanent, temporary, freelance or a contractor. You are expected to adhere to this guidance on social media and any other tool or service that facilitates interactions over the internet, including but not limited to WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, Mailchimp and Snapcomms.

If you are unsure or would like further information about anything in this document, please contact the communication team at rcht.communication@nhs.net.

These are our corporate social media accounts. You can help by following and sharing messages from these channels:

Facebook: [@RCHTWeCare](#)

Twitter: [@RCHTWeCare](#)

Instagram: [@royal_cornwall_hospitals](#)

LinkedIn: [Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust](#)

YouTube: [Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust](#)

Vimeo: [Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust](#)

TikTok: [@RCHTWeCare](#)

How to contribute

- Think of yourself as an ambassador for RCHT, helping us to share positive news about our hospitals.
- Remember, what you say and do reflects on the organisation. Always follow our RCHT Values and use your best judgement and common sense, ensuring you always comply with legal requirements, such as The Equality Act 2010.

Establishing an online presence

- Any generic (ward, department, team) social media account must be approved by the communication team.
- Generic social media accounts should be set up through a generic NHS email account.
- Generic account login details, or administrator rights, must be provided to the communication team.
- Approved accounts, not for public messaging, should be made private.

Do

- Be open and honest in your posts. If you make a mistake in a contribution, be prompt in admitting and correcting it. If you feel even slightly uneasy about something you are about to publish, don't post it.
- Make sure your privacy settings are the appropriate level for the purpose of the account.
- Remember anything you post will be published world-wide immediately. Everything can be screenshot, shared and be republished in other media.
- Respect copyright, fair use, data protection, defamation, libel and financial disclosure laws. Don't reveal confidential information about patients, colleagues, or the organisation. Never post any information that can be used to identify a patient's identity or health condition in any way. RCHT's internet and email policies must always be followed.
- Run separate accounts for your personal and work-related social media activity. Give your full name (and, where relevant, your role) when you discuss NHS-related matters and write in the first person. You must make it clear whether you are speaking for yourself or on behalf of RCHT. For approved NHS sites you should set up an official profile that identifies your role.
- Use a disclaimer on any personal account such as: "The views expressed here are my own and don't necessarily represent those of Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust." The use of a disclaimer does not override the need to follow other principles in this policy.
- See our tips on handling social media 'pile-on' (where a post is attracting significant numbers of responses with criticism or personal attack).
- Be aware of who else might be members of groups or social media platforms you are using, such as media, patients, and colleagues.
- Be aware of your professional registration body's social media guidance.

Do not

- Use racial or gender slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace. This includes any expression related to a relevant protected characteristic. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory, such as politics or religion.
- Use public accounts to share internal staff messages or patient information messages, unless sharing content from the corporate accounts.
- Provide individual care advice via a social media platforms or try to respond to complaints. Where possible, send a private message directing the individual to the appropriate contact point.

- Escalate heated discussions. Try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations. Always aim to get sensitive personal situations offline.
- Name colleagues on social media or have photographs of them shared publicly unless they have given their permission.
- Cite or reference anyone without their approval. If you do make a reference, link back to the original source material where possible. Never disclose commercially sensitive, anti-competitive, private, or confidential information.
- Use social media to “whistleblow” without already having raised concerns through the proper channels offline.
- Contact, engage or accept friend requests or follows from patients, clients, their close family members or anyone you suspect to be underage or vulnerable. The minimum age requirement for social media is usually 13 years old but can differ depending on the platform.
- Collect or ask users to divulge personal information about themselves or use any information in an attempt to locate or meet a child, young person or vulnerable adult, which is not directly to do with work.
- Publish content, information or material that criticises, contradicts or could be seen as a conflict of interest with RCHT policy and/or a corporate and collective decision made by the NHS.
- Breach any of the terms of any of the social media platforms themselves.
- Cite, reference or advocate for partners or suppliers on behalf of RCHT or post content about your work and RCHT related matters for commercial or personal gain.

Crisis management

During major incidents we will have one, official source of news and information. What you say externally can easily be picked up by the media. If you want to point followers to relevant, accurate information then share content from RCHT’s social media accounts. During these times, internal channels such as, emails and Snapcomms will be used for up-to-date guidance and information.

Responding to media or journalists

All media requests about RCHT, including statements and interviews, must come through the communication team. Do not approach or engage in conversation with the media or journalists online, they should be directed to the appropriate channels for comment.

If you read something online that is factually incorrect, inaccurate or you feel needs a response from RCHT, please contact the communication team.

Appendix 4. Social Media Pile-On Tips

As an individual on the receiving end of a social media pile-on, it can be extremely disorientating and distressing, especially as posts can 'go viral' very quickly and seemingly out of the blue. Here's some tips on what you can do to manage the situation if it happens to you:

1. **Step away from the platform** – while seemingly obvious, it is understandably distressing when you know people are 'talking about you behind your back'. However, it is important to realise that social media is separate from the rest of your life. Take a break for a period of time.
2. **Do not respond** – however much you may feel a burning desire to stick up for yourself, it will only exacerbate the situation. It might be that the pile-on is a result of criticism, something you have said that would benefit from further consideration. If so, when you're feeling stressed and targeted, is not the best time to reply. Take time to assess the situation once calm and consider your position then.
3. **Block anyone being abusive** – you are under no obligation to make your account available to anyone you don't like. While some aggravators consider being blocked as an acknowledgement that they've 'won' an argument, remind yourself that they're just faceless trolls whose opinion is irrelevant.
4. **If there is a specific post of yours that is at the centre of the pile-on, switch comments/replies off** – this can be activated after you have posted, but only if you started the conversation, as this function doesn't work on replies. This will help stop any additional comments being made, and in turn, stop notifications.
5. **Delete your initial post at the centre of the pile-on** – this can help cap the number of people who can add to any pile-on. **However, this doesn't stop those who have already screenshot your post. Also, if the post is important, and deleting it sends the wrong message of giving in to bullies, you may not wish to do this.** However, you can always repost your comment at a later date after the disruption has quietened down.
6. **Make your account private** – limiting who can see your account will help cut out the trolls and haters. This is more effective the smaller your account is.
7. **Temporarily delete your account** – on most social media platforms it is possible to temporarily deactivate your account – thereby making all posts invisible and stopping any notifications. You can reactivate your account at a later date once the pile-on has subsided, should you choose to do so.
8. **Turn off direct messages** – if you are receiving abusive DM's, turn off this function.
9. **Report all abusive tweets** – once you have taken time to recover, should you decide to return to your account, report any posts in breach of the platform's terms of service. If you have had posts directed towards you that are violent, threatening or could be classified as breaching malicious communications and harassment laws, it might also be worth reporting to the Police. Take screenshots and archive the tweets for future evidence in case their account is deleted.

10. **Don't be afraid to ask for help** – ask a trusted friend to manage your account – give them the login details so that they can report tweets and delete notifications before you venture back on to the platform. If this is an RCHT related account, the Communication Team should have your login details already so can help manage this too.