

Social Media Policy
MECCG Policy Reference: MECCG139

Target Audience	All members of Clinical Commissioning Group staff and other organisations acting on behalf of the Clinical Commissioning Group
Brief Description (max 50 words)	This policy outlines how social media can be used effectively to contribute to CCG work and provides staff with guidance on using social media whether this is for approved CCG purposes or on a personal basis.
Action Required	To be approved by the CCG Board then disseminated to all staff via the staff Intranet and newsletter.

Document Information

Version Number	Version 1.1
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Officer	Communications and Engagement Officer
Approved By Quality and Governance Committee	31 May 2017
Date Approved by Board	29 June 2017
Review Date	March 2022 (Agreed at Audit Committee 23 Feb 2021 to extend the review date for this policy to March 2022)
Stakeholders engaged in development/review	Quality & Governance Committee HR Team Joint Staff Forum
Equality Assessment	This policy has been assessed for equality impact on the protected groups, as set out in the Equality Act 2010. This Policy is applicable to CCG staff, Board, members and those who work on behalf of the CCG irrespective of their age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership.

Amendment History

Version	Date	Reviewer	Comments
1.1	03.03.17	Michelle Escott HR Manager	Minor amendments made to HR process

Compliance with all CCG policies, procedures, protocols, guidelines, guidance and standards is a condition of employment. Breach of policy may result in disciplinary action.

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1. Background

The world of communication is continually changing and the CCG aims to be a dynamic organisation embracing new technologies and ways of working. The rise and popularity of social media is changing the way we, and the rest of the NHS conducts its business with 4 in 5 NHS organisations now using at least one social media channel for corporate communication and engagement¹.

Millions of people use social media every day and it is becoming an increasingly important communications tool for us to communicate with our population. According to Skills for Health, 58% of the UK adult population use social networking sites and more and more are using them for information and advice in all areas of their life - including their health. 40% of those surveyed said that information found via social media affects the way they deal with their health².

2. Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Understand how social media can be used effectively to contribute to CCG work
- Help staff participate online in a respectful, professional and meaningful way that protects the CCG image and reputation, whether they are using social media for approved CCG purposes or on a personal basis.

Employees may not appreciate the implications that their activity on social media activity could amount to misconduct and employers may need to take disciplinary action . There are two general types of misconduct: inappropriate behaviour exposed by social media and inappropriate comments made on social media.

3. Definitions

Examples of social medial platforms:

- Microblogging – for example, Twitter
- Social sharing – for example, Facebook
- Video sharing – for example, Instagram
- Professional sharing – for example, LinkedIn
- Blogging – for example, WordPress or Blogger
- Social Bookmarking – for example, Reddit and StumbleUpon

4. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of everyone within the CCG to use social media responsibly. Whenever employees engage with social media and post information about their work or employer it is highly likely that the information will be circulated to a wide audience.

¹ Skills for Health: Social media toolkit (<http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/socialtoolkit>)

² Skills for Health: Social media toolkit (<http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/socialtoolkit>)

Although members of staff are not acting on behalf of the organisation in a formal capacity when engaging with social media in their personal lives, they must be mindful that depending on the content their online posts could potentially be damaging to the CCG if they are inaccurate or defamatory.

5. Social media in your personal life

The CCG recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of the organisation, employees must be aware they can damage the organisation if they are recognised as being one of our employees.

Although it is acceptable for staff to say they work for the NHS or CCG in posts and during online conversations; they must ensure their personal online profile carries the following disclaimer: "The postings on this site are my own opinion and do not represent NHS or CCG policy or opinion".

Any communication that employees make in a personal capacity through social media must not:

- Bring the CCG into disrepute by criticising or arguing with customers, colleagues or rivals; making defamatory comments about individuals or links to appropriate to inappropriate content and any alleged incidents of this nature may be dealt with under the CCG's Disciplinary Policy.
- Breach confidentiality for example by revealing information owned by the organisation; giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague, patient or customer contact). Discussing the CCG's internal workings or its future business plans that have not been communicated to the public.
- Breach copyright for example by; using someone else's images or written content without permission; or failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something.
- Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of any individual, for example by, making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
- Using social media to bully another individual or posting images that are discriminatory or offensive (or links to such content).

Incidents of discrimination, bullying or harassment which take place via social media will be managed in line with the CCG's Bullying and Harassment Policy and/or Disciplinary Policy dependent of the nature of the incident.

6. Business Use

Only the Mid Essex CCG Communications and Engagement team can conduct campaigns on social media, as it has responsibility for external communications.

NHS Mid Essex CCG uses the following social media platforms to communicate with patients, the public and the media:

- [Twitter - @MidEssexCCG](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Website blog](#)

Mid Essex CCG also have the following accounts which are related to individual communication campaigns:

- [Twitter - @MaternityVoices](#)
- [Facebook – Maternity Voices](#)
- [Twitter – @DieWellEssex](#)
- [Facebook – Die Well Essex](#)
- [Instagram – Die Well Essex](#)

The CCG also has shared responsibility for managing the following accounts:

- [Twitter - @ConnectWellME](#)
- [Twitter - @SuccessEssex](#)

7. Availability

The CCG social media accounts are monitored between 08:00 to 17:00 Monday – Friday, excluding public holidays. Occasionally the accounts may be active outside of these hours to promote live events.

From time to time, social media services such as Twitter may be unavailable and we accept no responsibility for lack of service due to social media downtime.

8. Content

We may use some scheduling tools to help us ensure content is spread across the week. Our followers can expect between 10-25 tweets a week. This may increase if we hold a tweet chat or in the case of an emergency, for instance.

We will update our Facebook page around five times a week and aim to publish a new blog post once a month. This may increase to support certain campaigns/initiatives. By sharing other social media users' content, our organisation does not endorse the information or others' views of that organisation or individual. We aim to share information which adds to any debate or topic we are involved in.

Our social media content will cover some or all of the following:

- Alerts about new content on our digital channels, for example, news, publications, videos on YouTube, blogs etc.

- Sharing content from other organisations we follow, such as other stakeholder NHS organisations, the emergency services and public sector organisations
- Twitter polls
- Infographics
- Information on public health topics and campaigns
- Occasional live coverage of events and workshops
- Occasional live Twitter chats with key members of CCG personnel

9. Following us on Twitter

The CCG will not automatically follow back anyone who follows us. However, being followed by Mid Essex CCG does not imply endorsement of any kind. If we need to direct message you or you direct message us, we will follow your profile and may un-follow it afterwards. Our profile settings allow you to direct message us even if we don't follow you already.

10. Talking with us online

The CCG welcomes feedback and ideas from all our followers. However, we may not be able to reply individually to all messages we receive via our social media platforms. We read all comments to and about us to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to relevant people within the CCG.

When we reply to questions it may include us asking for an email address in order to give you a full response outside of the character limits on some social media services. Other ways of contacting us are detailed in the [contact us](#) section of our website. We cannot engage on issues of party politics.

11. Social media during a crisis/emergency

If there is a crisis that affects our NHS services, we will provide the latest information we have to our followers using the most relevant hashtag(s) on Twitter and post updates on Facebook. We will also retweet (RT) information from other official sources, such as the Ambulance Service (@EasrEnglandAmb), Essex Police (@EssexPoliceUK) and Essex Fire Service (@ECFRS).

During a crisis/emergency, there will be one agency acting as the lead for communications. We will share any information provided by the lead agency via social media to ensure that messages are consistent, timely and accurate.

12. Related Policies

[MECCG005 Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy](#)

[MECCG068 Media Relations Policy](#)

[MECCG080 Communications and Engagement Strategy](#)

[MECCG084 Dignity at Work Policy](#)

[MECCG085 Disciplinary Policy](#)

[MECCG109 Acceptable Use of Electronic Communications and Devices Policy](#)

[MECCG112 Standard of Business Conduct Policy](#)

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Version No: V1.1

Approval Date: 31 May 2017

Review Due: March 2022