

## Social Media Policy

### Introduction

Social media networks are becoming increasingly popular and easy to use. Community Pharmacy North East Central (CPNEC) encourages its staff and Committee Members to use social media to promote both the LPC and community pharmacy more generally.

This policy document describes how LPC staff and Committee Members can use social media networks appropriately.

The policy should be followed whether you are using organisation or personal accounts to comment on LPC matters, and regardless of the time of day or location from which you are accessing the account. It applies to networks including but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

### Purpose of LPC social media use

CPNEC encourages staff and Committee Members to use it for any of the following purposes:

- To promote the LPC or its policies and work.
- To promote community pharmacy.
- To engage and share information with community pharmacy contractors and their teams.
- To engage with other stakeholders, e.g., national pharmacy organisations, policy makers, commissioners, charities, patient groups, other health professionals and politicians.
- To share images and infographics relevant to your work; and
- To find information or contacts relevant to your work.

All of these can have significant benefits. However, incorrect use of social media can also negatively impact on the LPC's reputation and relationship with other organisations. This policy document sets out guidance and principles on how staff and Committee Members should use social media responsibly in a way that promotes the LPC positively, rather than negatively.

### Account profiles

If you are using an individual account to post on social media, make sure that you:

- Use your real name.
- State where you work and your role within your profile description; and
- Consider adding a disclaimer that you are posting your own views which are not necessarily shared by the organisation (this will be particularly important if you are using a personal account to comment on LPC matters).

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If you wish to set up a new social media account specifically related to your role at the LPC; to start using a personal account for work purposes; or to trial a new social media network for the LPC you should first seek the advice of the committee.

## What to do on social media

Before using any social media network, you should ensure that you understand the network and how it operates (seek advice if you are unsure).

You can then consider:

**1. Sharing content:** feel free to share messages from reputable organisations (e.g., CPE, NHS England, mainstream news media) and people you are networking with.

**Note:** Do not share posts which are reliant on rumours or have been posted by disreputable or less well-known organisations to avoid becoming the victim of ‘fake news’. If you are unsure, it is safer not to share or to wait for a more reputable organisation to validate the information first.

**2. Creating your own content:** you can create new content to do a variety of things such as:

- Promoting resources or news.
- Promoting community pharmacy services or successes.
- Joining in conversations about community pharmacy; and
- Commenting on health news stories with a pharmacy angle.

A few pointers to remember are:

- Only post the types of things that you would be happy to say at a public event – remember, journalists often use Twitter as an information source.
- Don’t pick a public fight with anyone.
- Avoid making inappropriate comments e.g., to senior government officials and others, even where you may disagree with them. Personal negative comments can damage future relationships or call into question the integrity of community pharmacy.
- Be careful with politics. When using work accounts, you must not favour any one political party over another.
- Remember the need to maintain professional working relationships at all times.
- Anyone working for the NHS will need to ensure that in any social media activity they continue to uphold the [seven Nolan principles](#) of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- Stay positive. Social media is a great place to share your passion for pharmacy.
- Use images and videos to make your posts more interesting. But ensure you are using copyrighted material appropriately. You can use photos from CPE’s library or any that you have created yourself.

**Note:** Read more on copyright [here](#). If you are unsure about whether you can use any photo or picture, consult the committee.

**3. Engage with other social media users:** social media can be a great way to engage with others (for example, politicians, commissioners, organisations, journalists, pharmacy staff). Use it to start conversations with them and to build new contacts.

**Note:** Although social media can help you to build relationships with key stakeholders, you will need to use these new contacts in the real world too.

**Note:** Social media should not generally be relied on for quick answers from contacts – if you have a query, you need answered fast but correctly, it's still often better to use the phone.

You must also:

**1. Monitor your account:** you will need to do this to see how people are interacting with your posts and to respond to any direct messages received.

**2. Respond appropriately to any engagement or queries:** you need to be seen to be responding to queries and questions posed on social media. If you can answer a query, you should do so, for instance by linking to further information on the LPC or CPE website.

**Note:** where you are asked questions you cannot answer, it is best to respond honestly and offer to look into the matter.

**Note:** if you have negative queries to respond to, ask the Committee for advice before doing so. They can probably advise on how to avoid inflaming the issue.

## General Guidelines

Whether you are sharing content, responding to others or creating your own content on social media networks, you should at all times ensure that you:

- **Think before posting** – it can be easy to respond emotionally on social media, but you must be careful to remain respectful and, if possible, positive at all times.
- **Be clear on what is fact vs opinion** – where you are not expressing an opinion, remember to check that anything you are posting is factually accurate.
- **Avoid disclosing any confidential or personal information** – this will include avoiding sharing financial, legal or operational information about the LPC.
- **Correct any mistakes** – you can delete or amend posts, but you should be transparent about this and state why you are correcting material if you are doing so.
- **Beware of potential security threats**, e.g., phishing scams, and report these to the committee.
- **Avoid inflaming issues** – if you need to respond to a user on a controversial matter, do so calmly and ask them to contact you via another channel (e.g., private message, phone call, or email). You should take any difficult discussions away from the public forum quickly.

- **Do not conduct illegal or criminal activities** – also avoid distributing information that is libellous or defamatory, damaging to the LPC, discusses people without their consent, harasses people, is discriminatory in any way or distributes spam.
- **Do not post content that is disrespectful or rude** – you should avoid posting content that could in any way damage the reputation of the LPC or community pharmacy.

## Using personal social media

CPNEC allows its employees to access their personal accounts at work. The LPC expects staff to act responsibly and ensure that productivity is not affected.

The LPC expects staff to be careful when posting on social media. It cannot restrict what is posted but does expect staff to adhere to confidentiality at all times. The LPC also cautions staff against posting something that might make your collaboration with your colleagues more difficult (e.g., hate speech against groups which colleagues belong to). In general, please:

- **Ensure others know that your personal account or statements do not represent the LPC.** You should not state or imply that your personal opinions and content are authorized or endorsed by the LPC. The LPC advises using a disclaimer such as “opinions are my own” to avoid misunderstandings.
- **Avoid sharing intellectual property** like trademarks on a personal account without approval. Confidentiality policies and laws always apply.
- **Avoid any defamatory, offensive or derogatory content.** It may damage the reputation of the LPC, if directed towards colleagues, clients or partners.

You are personally responsible for anything that you post on social media networks and must follow this policy at all times for work-related social media accounts or work-related social media activity using personal accounts. You should protect any social media accounts with strong passwords.

## **Breach of this policy**

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Any staff member suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to cooperate with any investigation which may involve handing over any relevant passwords and logins.

You may be required to remove any social media content that the LPC considers to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

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