

The information in this leaflet was put together by trainee doctors at NHS Ayrshire & Arran and was adapted from 'North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee's Social Media Guidance' with reference to 'NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Social Media Policy 2012' and the 'GMC's Doctor's Use of Social Media 2013'.

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Social media

Your personal and professional conduct

Information for doctors and other medical staff



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Social media



We recommend that you use this guidance alongside NHS Ayrshire & Arran Social Media Policy 2012 and the GMC Doctor's Use of Social Media 2013.

Social media provides a great way for people to maintain or enhance communication. The amount and type of information, however, can leave people open to certain risks.

Key message



Any patient information should be treated as confidential as per NHS Scotland's Code of Practice on Protecting Patient Confidentiality 2003.

You should follow the same standards for online activities as you would in any other aspect of your life - personally or professionally.



The same professional expectations and guidelines for interacting with people apply online as in the real world.

Your personal profile



- We encourage you not to identify job title or where you work on social media sites.

- You should never display photographs of yourself, or your colleagues, in your workplace.
- You should avoid discussing your work activity on social media pages.
- You are expected to behave appropriately and should always consider consequences of sharing information with others.
- Your work email address should not be posted online.



Is private really private?



- Take time to think about the information you put online. Only post information you would be comfortable for everyone to see.
- Do not access social media sites at work.
- You should always be respectful regarding your employer, colleagues, patients and members of the public.
- Avoid using equipment such as cameras while at work, unless by prior agreement or support from medical illustrations.
- Protect yourself by ensuring you always use maximum privacy settings when using social media sites.



Private messaging (such as WhatsApp)



Although WhatsApp is an encrypted messaging service which has a certain degree of security, remember that the content is stored and there is the potential for it to be disseminated or released to a third party. You should be mindful of this when you send or share information using it. Would you be happy for others to see your posts?

Always consider how joining, being added to or following a WhatsApp group may reflect on you, especially if the group is inappropriate or offensive. Do not be afraid to raise concerns about actions you become aware of that may be inappropriate.

Remember, as a healthcare professional, it is your responsibility not to bring your profession into disrepute.

