Social Media Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET:

Key Information:

Title:	Social Media Policy
Date Published/Issued:	TBC
Date Effective From:	TBC
Version/Issue Number:	0.03
Document Type:	Policy
Document status:	Approved
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File Location:	@SAS

Revision History:

Version:	Date:	Summary of Changes:	Name:	Changes Marked:
0.01	1.10.15	Initial draft for consultation	NA	
0.02	4.2.16	Draft for sign off at NPF	NA	

Approvals: This document requires the following signed approvals.

Name:	Date:	Version:
Policy Review Group		0.01
National Partnership Forum		0.02
Staff Governance Committee		0.03

Distribution: This document has been distributed to

Name:	Date of Issue:	Version:
Senior Management Team		0.01
All Staff via @SAS		1.00

Linked Documentation:

Document Title:

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment:
Completed

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Introduction

Social Media is the collective name for online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Different types of social media include:

- Forums –These include most media sites, the BBC and the Service's Patient Engagement site. It also includes Yahoo and Google groups.
- Blogging, Microblogging and Instant Messaging – These include Blogger, Twitter, Instant Messager, What's App, community websites, Patient Opinion and SMS.
- Social Networking- These include Facebook, Bebo, Myspace, LinkedIn video conferencing, Skype, Adobe Connect, Shared Spaces, Community Websites, RSS Feeds.
- Entertainment: These include any virtual sites.
- Multimedia: These include Vimeo, YouTube, Flickr and Instagram.
- Wikis – These include Wikipedia and LibraryBlogsWikis.

Billions of people use social media responsibly around the world every day and it is becoming an increasingly important communications tool. The Service needs to set clear guidelines for using social media sites to ensure they are used effectively as part of a wider communications mix and that their use does not expose the Service to security risks or reputational damage. Social Media also presents the Service with an opportunity to talk to and engage with groups of people which traditionally have been harder to reach, e.g. young people, working people and people living in remote areas, helping us to participate in a two way conversation with different groups. It has also become a vital communications channel for public communications during major incidents.

Policy statement

- It is acknowledged that there is significant potential benefit in using social media and that this can bring great advantages. The responsible corporate use of social media is actively encouraged.
- This policy provides a structured approach to using social media and will ensure that it is effective, lawful and does not compromise Scottish Ambulance Service information, ICT or reputation.
- Users must ensure that they use social media sensibly and responsibly in line with this policy. They must ensure that their use will not adversely affect the Service or its business, nor be damaging to the Service's reputation and credibility or otherwise violate any Service policies. They must also ensure that no patient identifiable information enters the public domain.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, Non Executive Directors and other workers (including casual and agency workers, secondees and contractors). It also applies to all volunteers including Community First Responders.

Aims of Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure:

- Engagement with individuals, communities and successful promotion of the Service through the use of social media.
- A consistent and corporate approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media.
- That patient confidentiality is not breached.
- That Service information remains secure and is not compromised through the use of social media.
- That users operate within existing policies, guidelines and relevant legislation.
- That the Service's reputation is not damaged or adversely affected.
- To ensure that all participation is inclusive, promotes equality and our values and follows the spirit as well as the letter of the relevant laws.

Responsibilities of those using social media for official work purposes

A social media channel used for work purposes is a social media channel which represents the organisation. These include any social media accounts which represent departments, teams and Divisions. It also includes Community First Responder Scheme official social media accounts and contractors who are representing the Service.

The following guidelines will apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected:

- Be aware of, understand and recognise your responsibilities identified in the Social Media Policy.
- Make sure that you think of the following before sending out any messages on social media:
  o Could the message identify a patient?
  o Could the message damage the reputation of the Service or any of its partners
  o Could the message offend anyone?
  o Does the message adhere to the Service's values?

- o Would it be more beneficial for our patients and/or the Service for the message to be sent from the Service's main social media channels? (if so, please send the message to the Corporate Affairs and Engagement Department (scotamb.communications@nhs.net)
- Ensure you have authorisation from your line manager and a member of the Corporate Affairs and Engagement department (scotamb.communications@nhs.net) before using social media. This includes replying to posts put on Patient Opinion. For a corporate social media account you will be asked:
  - o why you want a corporate social media account
  - o how will it benefit our patients and the Scottish Ambulance Service
  - o who will have access to the account
- You must have completed your training from the Corporate Affairs and Engagement Department before setting up a corporate social media site.
- You must have completed your training before replying to any posts on Patient Opinion. Training is provided by the Patient Experience Team.
- Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on any form of social media.
- An owner must be identified for each social media site before publication. It is the Department's responsibility to inform the Corporate Affairs and Engagement Department (scotamb.communications@nhs.net) if this contact changes for any reason.
- Your log in details for all Corporate Social Media Accounts must be shared with the Corporate Affairs and Engagement team (scotamb.communications@nhs.net) to enable them to gain access whenever they feel necessary.
- Your password must be changed every 90 days.
- Do not 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. However, the Corporate Affairs and Engagement department do have a multimedia library which can provide staff with official images and film footage.
- Never give out personal details such as home address and telephone numbers. Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Service's Data Protection Policies.
- Respect copyright, fair-use and financial disclosure laws.
- Social media sites are in the public domain and it is important to ensure that you are confident about the nature of the information you publish. Permission must be sought if you wish to publish or report on meetings or discussions that are meant to be private or internal to the Service. Do not cite or reference patients, partners. Colleagues, managers or suppliers without their approval.

- Do not use insulting, offensive, racist or sectarian language or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace. Show consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory – such as politics or religion.
- Do not advertise or solicit products or services.
- Do not download any software, shareware or freeware from any social media site.
- Do not post confidential patient or colleague information in any format (including images):
  - An image of a remote location could identify a patient
  - A post about responding to an incident in a remote location could identify a patient
- Do not post details about any current incidents as this may cause concern to relatives/friends of people in that area. The Services main corporate accounts may put out a message informing the public that we are attending a major incident.
- Do not post/tweet any images of patients
- Do not post/tweet details of incidents where there has been a fatality.
- Do not post information about an incident until we know the outcome for the patient. (A patient, who has suffered a cardiac arrest, may have a ROSC rate on arrival at hospital, but pass away in hospital). Please do send any good news stories to the Corporate Affairs and Engagement Department (scotamb.communications@nhs.net).
- Do not impersonate someone else.
- If a staff member is contacted by the press on their social media channel that relates to the Service or NHSScotland (or impacts on NHSScotland) they should not comment but discuss this with their line manager and the Corporate Affairs and Engagement Department.
- Do not provide medical advice in response to public or private messages received from individuals. The only suitable response in such an event is to advise those individuals to seek advice through the appropriate route (such as making an appointment to see their GP or call NHS24).
- Only reply to posts on Patient Opinion if they are relevant to your role.
- If you receive an Freedom of Information request and it does not contain a correspondence address (either email or postal), please ask them to complete the form at http://www.scottishambulance.com/Content/FoiForm.aspx,. If they do include a correspondence address, please send the request to scotamb.foi@nhs.net.

Failure to comply with the guidelines could result in disciplinary action being taken.

Personal use of social media

Personal social media channels are those accounts set up by individual members of staff for personal use. This does include sending out messages from this account about the Service.

The Service allows access to Twitter/Facebook/other social media websites on its computers and laptops.

You are personally responsible for any content you publish. Ensure you take advantage of settings that allow you to control how visible content will be. Even if you have an account with restricted access e.g. a closed Facebook site, you are still responsible for any messages you put on it. Staff should consider whether they need to include their occupation on their own social media sites and they should include a tagline within their Tweets/Posts which says "Views are my own." Remember that putting something like 'John Smith, paramedic, Scotland' and making an opinion will identify you as a member of the Service and anything you say may be associated with the Service.

Make sure that you think of the following before sending out any messages on social media:

- Could the message identify a patient
- Will the message damage the reputation of the Service. any of its staff or any of its partners
- Could the message offend anyone
- Does the message adhere to the Service's values

Please be aware that you may offend some people if you are sending out a political message or commenting on a political social media account.

Any communications made in a personal capacity through social media must not:

- Bring the Service into disrepute, for example by criticising or arguing with stakeholders, colleagues or rivals; making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content.
- Breach confidentiality, for example by revealing information owned by the Service; giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague or patient); or discussing the Service's internal workings or its future business plans that have not been communicated outwith the Service.
- Post patient or colleague identifiable information in any format (including images) without their permission.
    o An image of a remote location could identify a patient

- o A post about responding to an incident in a remote location could identify a patient
- Do not post/tweet any images of patients
- Do not post details about any incidents
- Post anything that brings you into conflict with your professional code of conduct (for example Health Care Professions Council for Paramedics).
- Do anything that could be considered discriminatory 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 (such as a staff member); or posting images that are discriminatory or offensive.
- Staff must consider the personal information you disclose on social media sites, especially with regard to identity theft. Making information available such as date of birth, place of work and other personal information could be high risk in terms of identity theft.
- If a staff member is contacted by the press on their social media channel that relates to the to the Service or NHSScotland (or impacts on NHSScotland) they should not comment but discuss this with their line manager and the Corporate Affairs and Engagement Department.
- Social media is not the appropriate place to raise or discuss work matters or issues. Any legitimate concerns should be addressed through the appropriate Board policies, for example the 'Dealing with Employee Grievances' or 'Whistleblowing' policy.
- Staff should consider not to accept 'friends' or follow 'requests' from patients who have been in your care, or their friends or relatives. Before liking or following others (or deciding whether to permit others to like or follow you) consider whether you wish to be associated with that person/brand/organisation and their views and values. Carefully consider any potential consequences or repercussions that could arise from such association. Avoid any conflict of interest.
- Do not provide medical advice in response to public or private messages received from individuals. The only suitable response in such an event is to advise those individuals to seek advice through the appropriate route (such as making an appointment to see their GP or call NHS24).
- Staff should be aware that copyright and date protection laws, as well as libel, defamation and data protection laws apply to them.
- Staff should also be aware that consideration will be made to barring members of the public from our Corporate Social Media channels who persistently post aggressive messages or tweets.

Breach of policy

Any breaches of this policy, in relation to work or personal use of social media, may be considered under the Management of Employee Conduct policy. Serious breaches of this policy may amount to gross misconduct and may result in dismissal.

Staff should be aware that if they break the law using social media (for example by posting something defamatory), they will be personally responsible.

Review of policy and procedure

This policy and procedure (s) has been updated as part of continual improvement programme within the Service focusing on ensuring best practice in partnership with managers and staff representatives through a partnership working group. The policy will be formally reviewed every two years.