#### Guideline for PPGs using social media

#### Social media, like other communication tools, is used to improve the public’s understanding of Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) and their work, promote their GP Practice services and engage with the general public.

#### When using social media sites, PPGs, supported by their GP Practices, will ensure that:

#### Comments and posts reflect the PPG’s vision and values

#### Responses are respectful towards patients, members of the public and staff within the GP Practice

#### Confidential or sensitive information about patients, members of the public, staff within the GP Practice or offensive or derogatory posts are removed

#### Defamatory comments are not shared in any public forum. Legal advice will be sought and action taken where necessary

#### As PPG’s are linked to the NHS, they will be a more trusted source for information and guidance. They cannot, therefore be seen to be promoting or endorsing products or businesses that do not already have a link to the NHS in Gloucestershire or nationally.

#### The organisations and apps that have been reviewed by the NHS nationally are available at NHS.uk. If in doubt please contact the CCG communications and/or engagement team for confirmation (contact details at the bottom of this guidance).

#### Ensure all posts, whether they are PPG original posts or material from other pages are factually correct, don’t jump on the band wagon e.g. if you find an interesting news story check the facts behind the headline by visiting <https://www.nhs.uk/news/>

#### Social media do's and don'ts

## Before you start (set up) – do:

* **speak to the GP Practice team about your plans and discuss how they can support you to provide relevant information and engaging content. If they already run active accounts they may be able to help you raise awareness and build your following**
* **have a plan for your account – agree your objectives, what content is needed and when. Schedule posts to go live at the times your audience are most likely to be on these channels. Talk to the CCG Comms or Engagement team about planning templates to help you**
* have a clear plan for how to **resource your account** – and who looks after it when you are away. Consider having a **rota** as you will get more from your account if you share the load and will enable you to monitor the account daily and respond to comments, messages and questions on the same day they are posted
* **liaise** with the GP Practice or the CCG Comms and Engagement teams if you have any concerns about how to respond to comments or concerns
* refer to the **CCG social media policy** for support and guidance

**You are all set up – be responsible and:**

* **be respectful** at all times, too - Posts containing anything racist, sexist, homophobic, sexually explicit, threatening, abusive, disrespectful or other unlawful comments must not be published. Inappropriate comments relating to protected characteristics set out in current legislation, for example disability, should also not be posted
* **be careful about the use of photos -** think carefully before posting photos, make sure they are appropriate and that you have the relevant permissions from anyone in them. Also consider the setting and ensure you have permission from the venue too e.g. the GP Practice. You must not post images, of any description, containing patients on personal social media accounts
* **protect confidentiality -** Confidentiality must be respected by anyone who posts anything on the internet, and under no circumstances should anything be posted that identifies someone that has not given their permission. Addresses and other personal information should not be shared
* **consider safeguarding -** Posts must not encourage behaviour that could be linked to safeguarding issues, for example: bullying luring and exploitation, theft of personal information, encouraging self-harm or violence, glorifying activities such as excessive drinking or drug taking

**Post hints and tips**

* **do your research -** Ensure all posts, whether they are original posts or material shared from other pages are factually correct
* **listen** - social media is designed to be a two-way channel, just like any good conversation. Do answer their questions (quickly, factually and honestly). If you discover you have reported or responded to something incorrectly, you should amend it and make it clear you have done so
* **innovate**– different approaches work for different people
* have a **personality**– corporate speak or just issuing press releases won't work well on social media
* **share** other people's helpful content and links (refer to guidance at the beginning of this document)
* **use hashtags but use them appropriately and strategically – your hashtag should also be your campaign ‘call to action’, objective or event hashtag, Make sure they are clean – e.g. they haven’t been used before**
* **credit** other people's work, ideas and links. Respect copyrights
* **ask** your own questions. Seek feedback from your followers/ likers (but make sure you share the results with them)
* **evaluate your accounts** – consider sharing the monthly insight data at your PPG meetings
* **talk** to the CCG Comms and Engagement teams – we are here to help you
* use social media in the spirit in which it was intended – to **engage, openly and honestly**

## Don't

* try to **cover up** mistakes, be honest and you'll get more respect for it in the long run
* just **build accounts** and hope people will come – sometimes it is best to go to the places where your audiences are already having conversations
* **assume** that social media will look after itself – you will need to invest time, enthusiasm and energy to make it work. And don't leave your accounts unattended for long spells
* **continue with poor performing accounts – sometimes it’s best to close an account which is not delivering, effective or active.**
* post content which will **embarrass** the GP Practice, your PPG or you as an individual
* **ignore** legal advice, it's there to help you
* think that a **disclaimer** in your bio will save you from potential legal action, it won't
* **don’t** forget that **social media is 24/7**– just because you have logged off doesn't mean the world or your followers have. They will still be active. If your account is only staffed between certain hours then you should say so on your profile

For further advice and support contact the NHS Gloucestershire CCG Communications and Engagement teams:

* Katherine Holland, Patient and Public Engagement Manager, Primary Care and Inclusion [Katherine.holland@nhs.net](mailto:Katherine.holland@nhs.net)
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