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Social Media Guidelines

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Purpose and Summary of Document:

This document sets out guidance for Public Health Wales staff when using social media. It covers:

How and why Public Health Wales uses social media

A look into different types of use

- Professional
- Personal

General points to consider

Quick top 10 tips to getting started with social media in Public Health Wales

These guidelines **must** be read in conjunction with Public Health Wales Internet Usage Policy.

These guidelines have been developed by the communications team, in line with the All Wales Social Media Policy, to help staff within Public Health Wales get the most out of using social media.

1. Your quick top 10 tips to getting started with social media in Public Health Wales

- i.** Be transparent
- ii.** Be yourself
- iii.** Build communities of like-minded people
- iv.** Be social. Involve yourself in relevant conversations
- v.** Bring value to the conversations you create and contribute to
- vi.** Be responsible for the things you write
- vii.** Respect confidentiality, copyright and information governance
- viii.** Be productive. Strike the right balance on how you use social media as part of your work
- ix.** Make sure that common sense underpins everything you do
- x.** Before you start you must read the All Wales Social Media Guidelines [here](#)

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2. Why does Public Health Wales use social media?

Every day, Public Health Wales, our services, our policies, reports and wider work are being discussed on social media. Whether this is by news organisations reporting on our work, other organisations discussing our priorities, or members of the public talking about how we've helped them, these conversations are happening. By being present and visible on social media, Public Health Wales has the opportunity to be a part of these conversations and where appropriate, contribute.

The technologies available to us are not only changing the way we communicate in our personal lives, but also changing the way we work, offering us new ways to engage with the people most relevant to us. It is a rapidly evolving way to communicate which we highly value to help us build stronger direct relationships and communicate the important work we do for health in Wales. Not only does social media give us the opportunity to take part in conversations, it also offers the opportunity to dispel myths and correct misinformation about health, as well as address any negative feelings people may have towards Public Health Wales.

The principles of how we use social media at Public Health Wales are captured in our social media Aims and Objectives, which are detailed below. Our aims are to:

- Promote the work of Public Health Wales
- Help people understand what PHW does for the people of Wales
- Work in a multi-agency approach across sectors
- Establish PHW as an authority, online, on information and advice around health in Wales

Regardless, if you are using social media in a personal, professional or organisational capacity, these are the principles that you should look to contribute towards when communicating on social media about Public Health Wales.

These guidelines will continually evolve as new technologies and social networking tools emerge so check back to make sure you're up to date.

3. Different types of social media use

Not everyone uses social media for the same reasons. That rule applies inside and outside of the organisation. Individuals will use social media for different reasons, and different social media platforms for different reasons. An example may be that they use LinkedIn to talk about work related topics, and Facebook for keeping in touch with long distance family, or keeping up to date with old school friends.

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Public Health Wales wants to encourage and enable staff to use social media to benefit their work, if and when this is appropriate. We also respect the decision that staff may not want to use social media as part of their work or in any way professionally. This document will provide guidance that we hope is relevant to however you plan to use social media.

4. Using social media in a professional capacity

If you would like to discuss the opportunities to use social media in your work in more depth, then get in touch with a member of the Public Health Wales communications team.

Be transparent

Honesty is crucial in a social media environment. You should use your real name and explain what you do if you are talking about your work through your own social media account. If you make a mistake, be the first to point it out.

Personal or professional, what is the right balance?

It is a question we all often ask ourselves. There is no right answer; it is whatever feels best for you. One way to consider your presence on social media and what elements of personal life you might share is – when you come into work and talk to your colleagues in the office, do you only talk about work, or do you say what you got up to on the weekend, how your family are and talk about what hobbies you have? If you feel comfortable, there is nothing wrong with sharing that information across social media as part of a professional presence.

However, if you want to keep your social media presence purely professional, that is fine too, you just need to be clear either way so your audience know what to expect and how you intend to use social media. An easy way to do this is to describe what people can expect to see on the 'bio' section of your profiles. An example for Twitter could be: *'Joe Bloggs, work @PublicHealthW as a health expert. Tweets about all things health related in Wales'*. This way, your audience gets a good understanding that this is likely to be a professional feed for professional information.

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5. General points to consider

Bring value

Social media is a competitive environment with hundreds (and thousands!) of users talking about similar topics to you, posting information, news and events. This is a great opportunity to connect with relevant people, but it means it is not always easy to get your voice heard. The best way to get yours noticed and read is to write things that people will value.

You should share information, thoughts and comments with like-minded, interested people. You should also be confident that whatever you are sharing is not at risk of causing potential reputational damage to Public Health Wales. If you have any concerns with this please talk them through with the communications team before publishing them.

A professional social media presence provides you with a unique opportunity to share an individual perspective on what is going on at Public Health Wales and promoting excellence in your area of work; from talking about work you are involved with and proud of, to contributing to wider public health discussions at events or conferences.

Be responsible for what you write

Even when using social media personally, you can still be associated, positively or negatively, with Public Health Wales. Exercise good judgment and common sense, regardless of whether your comments online relate directly to your job. Post meaningful, respectful comments and if disagreeing with others' opinions, keep it appropriate and polite. If you want to write about other organisations, make sure you know what you are talking about, have your facts straight and that you have the appropriate permission. Remember that what you publish is widely accessible, in the public domain and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully.

It is important to remember that complaints about the use of social networking sites or other online activity will be taken as seriously as real-world events. Inappropriate action online may lead to disciplinary action. If you are aware of situations when social media has been used inappropriately and are unsure about how to proceed, advice can be sought from the Workforce & Organisational Development department.

You should assume that everything you say will be public so only post messages you'd be happy to be seen on an advertising billboard along with your name next to it. Ultimately, you are responsible for what you post. Common sense should underpin everything.

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Respect confidentiality

Be transparent but be aware of the need to protect confidential information or content. In line with our Information and Governance policy, you must not reveal any confidential information about Public Health Wales. If you are concerned about the appropriateness of the message you are writing, you should consult your line manager first, or follow the lead of the corporate Public Health Wales accounts who may be discussing the same topics.

For example, as an organisation we may be talking internally about a press release, social media campaign or a new report developed by Public Health Wales, so it is always important to establish if this is confidential or embargoed [not to be discussed until a certain date] before communicating it via social media. The Public Health Wales corporate accounts should, in most circumstances, break the news first and take the lead.

Respect copyright and fair use

Always give people credit for their work and make sure you have the right to use something with attribution before you publish. Please respect brand, trademark, copyright, fair use, trade secrets (including our own processes), confidentiality, and financial disclosure laws. If you have any questions about these, speak to someone in the Information and Governance or communications teams. Remember, you are responsible for the content you publish.

Use it productively

Talking to people and building good relationships through social media could become a key part of your job, but try to find the right balance. If you want to participate on behalf of Public Health Wales, it is important to make sure you have a clear objective and valid business need for using social media as part of your day to day work so as not to use social media excessively or not to best effect. If you would like to further explore how social media could support your role, please contact the communications team for advice and support.

Think about which communication channel is most appropriate. Social media must not be used for raising and escalating concerns that are covered by Public Health Wales policies such as the Dignity at Work Policy, the Grievance Procedure, Incident Reporting, Safeguarding Policies and Whistleblowing Policy.

Think about style and voice

Social media increasingly blurs the line between personal and professional. You should try to talk in the first person and be open to new conversations, as this can often result in connections with like-minded people, which may benefit both you and your work at Public Health Wales. It is important to use appropriate language at all times and again, remember; you are responsible for what you write so you should be conscious of how it could come across out of context.

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Build communities

The essence of community is the idea that it exists so you can support others and they, in turn, can support you. Consider how to balance personal and professional information, and the important role that transparency plays in building a community. Think about how you can best communicate with your own online community to meet their needs, and how you can link with other Public Health Wales social media communities to best share information related to the health of the people of Wales.

6. Practical considerations

What language should I communicate in?

If you are using social media as an individual and not posting from a branded organisational or sub-brand of Public Health Wales you may communicate in your language of choice, be that Welsh, English or any other language.

If you are posting across social media from a corporate account or sub-branded account (e.g. Improvement Cymru, Help me Quit, Everychild) and not as an individual, you must post content bilingually, in line with the Welsh Language Scheme, and ensure that you are not treating the English or Welsh language any less favourably than the other.

If you are unsure which of these groups you fall into, please speak to the communications team who will be able to explain further.

Individual and corporate accounts

Aside from the social media platforms that have already been set up by the communications team, no employee should set up any new Public Health Wales branded accounts on any social media channel without first speaking with the communications team.

You are our eyes and ears

If you see anything negative about Public Health Wales on any social media channel, please report it to the communication team. You should not reply or comment as yourself before taking advice on what the corporate approach would be. The communications team will decide on the most appropriate response and who it should be from.

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Mistakes happen

As in real life, mistakes happen! If you make a mistake online, best practice is to change it and make it clear you have edited/corrected a post. If you believe the mistake to be serious, contact the communications team straight away.

What if I leave Public Health Wales?

If you leave Public Health Wales and are actively using social media as part of your role, best practice is to let your community know, change your bio information and username appropriately and point your community in the direction of your successor, or where they can continue to find information you may have been posting about your work. Of course, you have built the community, so you are very entitled to take it with you, as it is likely they will be relevant in your future role as well.

Adhering to these guidelines is an agreement you make when you begin a social media presence through which you talk about Public Health Wales.

Remember that the overall consideration is that when using social media sites at home or at work, you should not do anything which may bring Public Health Wales into disrepute.

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