

Organisation Name: CHARLTON MEDICAL CENTRE

Patient Social Media and Acceptable Use Policy (England)

Version	Edited by	Date issued	Next review date
1.6	Carrie Anne Wood	13/04/2026	13/04/2027

Position	Named individual
Practice Manager	Carrie Anne Wood

Overview for all staff

- All staff must be aware of the actions required should they identify an unacceptable post on the organisation's social media accounts.
- Staff must not use the organisation's social media platforms for unrelated posts; to prevent inappropriate use, access is restricted to named, authorised individuals only.
- If a staff member receives a friend request from a patient, they should exercise caution and carefully consider the professional and personal implications before responding.
- Patients may request to record their consultation for their own personal use; they should be discouraged from making covert recordings and reminded that they can access their consultation records online or via the app.
- Staff should remind patients that audio or visual recording is not permitted in any public area of the organisation as this may compromise the confidentiality and privacy of other patients and staff members.

Table of contents

1	Introduction	3
1.1	Policy statement	3
1.2	Status	3
2	Principles of social media posts	3
2.1	Patient access to information	3
2.2	Social media ‘friend’ request by a patient	4
2.3	Inappropriate postings by a patient	4
2.4	Should the patient be unwilling to remove the post	4
3	Patient recordings within the practice	5
3.1	Patients requesting to record their consultation	5
3.2	Covert patient recordings	5
3.3	Patients posting their consultation recording online	6
3.4	Use of audio-visual recording within public areas of the practice	6
	Annex A – Patient social media guidance	7

1 Introduction

1.1 Policy statement

The purpose of this policy is to ensure all staff understand what to do when an unacceptable social media post has been made by a patient about either the organisation or its staff, and provides guidance on the acceptable use of mobile phones and other portable electronic devices within the organisation.

This document has been produced to help all staff and patients to recognise the need to understand and uphold obligations as deemed appropriate and in accordance with the [NHS Constitution](#).

While all persons have a freedom to express their opinion, staff have an obligation to ensure concerns regarding unsafe practice, fraud or wrongdoings are managed as per the organisation's Freedom to Speak Up Policy. Additionally, all staff have a fiduciary duty to their employer, and that loyalty is expected when placing any social media post. This is further detailed within the organisation's Communication Policy.

Should there be any concerns regarding the level of care or treatment received, patients may only complain via the Complaints Procedure and in a manner that conforms to extant guidance in common with other NHS organisations. It should be noted that raising any grievance via social media does not conform to the legislation and will not be considered to be a complaint.

This document is to be read in conjunction with the NHS E [social media](#) guidance. Throughout this document, there is reference to other supporting policies that are held by the organisation.

1.2 Status

In accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](#), we have considered how provisions within this policy might impact on different groups and individuals. This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual, which means they may be modified or withdrawn at any time. They apply to all employees and contractors working for the organisation.

2 Principles of social media posts

2.1 Patient access to information

This organisation will ensure patients have access to current and relevant information; this is achieved by sharing information on the organisation's website. The organisation does not post information on social media platforms.

Staff are not permitted to use the organisation's practice website to make any unrelated posts and, to prevent inappropriate use, access is limited to named individuals. Only information that has been approved by the management team may be posted, and monitoring of the platform(s) for comments and feedback by patients is the responsibility of the aforementioned individuals. For further detailed information, refer to the organisation's Communication Policy.

Under no circumstances is clinical information to be transmitted on any social media site, even if responding to a specific question that has already outlined any diagnosis or treatment.

2.2 Social media 'friend' request by a patient

Should a patient send a 'friend' request over a social media platform then the [BMA guidance on social media, ethics and professionalism](#) must be adhered to. The General Medical Council (GMC) also provides guidance on [Using social media as a medical professional](#) and, although GMC registrant specific, all staff should adhere to this guidance.

2.3 Inappropriate postings by a patient

All staff are requested to remain vigilant while visiting any social media site especially regarding any detrimental comment being placed about this organisation or any of its staff. The following medico-legal guidance provides further detailed information:

BMA	Dealing with abuse of practice staff on social media from patients
MDU	Dealing with online criticism
MPS	Top 5 social media dilemmas

Should inappropriate information be posted on social media, the Practice Manager is to be informed at the earliest opportunity. They will use the site specific guidance ([Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#)) on how such information can be deleted.

If it is not possible to remove a post, i.e., when the post has been added from a patient's social media account, the Practice Manager will contact the author of the post, requesting it be deleted.

2.4 Patient unwilling to remove a post

Should the patient not be willing to remove the post, the Practice Manager will consider the options, which may include contacting the Medical Defence Union (MDU) for advice and to confirm that the process has been duly followed. The organisation could bring a claim on the basis that the publication amounts to both a misuse of its private information and a breach of [Article 5](#) of the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR).

It is also possible that offences could be committed under other acts, including:

- [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#)
- [Malicious Communication Act 1988](#)
- [Communications Act 2003](#)
- [Defamation Act 2013](#)*

* The MDU advises within the above link that defamation actions can be lengthy and expensive, and it can be difficult to predict any outcome

If a patient continues to be unwilling to remove any unfounded, malicious or unreasonable post against the organisation or its staff, it could be suggested that the patient-doctor relationship has broken down in accordance with the [GMC's Good Medical Practice](#).

The patient should also note that this also explicitly compromises their requirements as detailed in the NHS Constitution within the [Patients and the public: your responsibilities](#) section.

Justifiably, patients should not be removed due to a complaint and, should the post be a complaint or refer to an ongoing complaint, the Practice Manager will contact the patient to give them the opportunity to follow the correct complaint pathway. A complaint leaflet will also be offered outlining the process. At this stage, it should be agreed that the patient removes the offending post as failing to do so is detrimental to the patient/doctor relationship.

3 Patient recordings within the practice

3.1 Patients requesting to record their consultation

At this practice, if a clinician is asked by a patient if they can record a consultation, then staff are to adhere to the [BMA's Patients recording consultations guidance](#), and will not inhibit any patient from recording or making notes of any consultation and ensure the following are adhered to:

- All recordings are requested and carried out in an open and honest manner and do not interfere with the consultation or treatment
- At the end of the consultation, the clinician might suggest that the patient provides a copy of the recording to be added to their healthcare record and form a permanent record of the consultation
- An entry will be made within the patient's health record with [SNOMED CT ID: 431315003](#) – Audio recording of subject interview. The entry should state that the patient has recorded the consultation or the care being provided
- The patient should be reminded of the private and confidential nature of the recording and that it is their responsibility to keep it safe and secure
- The recording is only made for personal use. Patients are to be made aware that the misuse of a recording may result in criminal or civil proceedings

3.2 Covert patient recordings

The [BMA](#) explains that patients making covert recordings can be interpreted as a sign that trust is lacking and, in such circumstances, patients should be invited to make the recording openly. To avoid a patient feeling the necessity to record any consultation, it will be highlighted that, at this practice, proactive steps are always taken to investigate and address any issues regarding any patient's treatment and care, and clinical staff may want to consider providing patients with a written summary of their consultation for their own personal use.

Patients are to be advised that they are entitled to see their notes and, if they wish to do so, they should request this through a Subject Access Request (SAR) in accordance with the organisation's Access to Medical Records Policy.

Should any consultation be posted online, further detailed information is available from:

- MDU: [Patients recording consultations](#)
- Pulse: [Can I stop a patient recording our consultation?](#)
- BMJ: [My patient wants to record our conversation, what should I do?](#)

The Patient Social Media Guidance at [Annex A](#) outlines the code of conduct for patients.

3.3 Patients posting their consultation recording online

Should any consultation be posted online, then the BMA [Patients recording consultations](#) guidance is to be followed. This document also includes a letter template that requests its removal.

3.4 Use of audio-visual recording within public areas of the practice

Patients should not photograph or use any video clip or sound recording that captures any other patient that could identify they have been at the practice as this affects their right to confidentiality as detailed within the organisation's Caldicott and Confidentiality Policy.

All patients have privacy rights, and no recording of other patients can be made without their explicit consent. Any such recording is likely to be an interference of their privacy rights under [Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights](#).

No member of the public can photograph or make either a video or audio recording of any member of organisation staff without the express permission of that person.

Annex A – Patient social media guidance

At Charlton Medical Centre, we have a website that provides a range of useful information for our patient population.

This practice has a duty to maintain patient confidentiality and to safeguard vulnerable patients. You can help us to achieve this by adhering to the code of conduct outlined in this guidance.

Patients are expected to always adhere to the following code of conduct:

1. The organisation requires all users of portable devices to use them in a courteous and considerate manner, respecting their fellow patients. Portable devices are not to be used during consultations, except when agreed with your clinician.
2. Patients are not permitted to disclose any patient-identifiable information about other patients unless they have the express consent of that patient.
3. While not encouraged, patients may record their consultation but this should be agreed with your clinician. This recording will solely be for your own purpose.
4. Patients must not post any material that is inaccurate, fraudulent, harassing, embarrassing, obscene, defamatory or unlawful. Any such posts on any social media pages will be reported.
5. Patients are not permitted to take photographs in any area where other patients are present, nor is it permitted to take photographs of staff.
6. Patients must not post comments on social media that identify any staff.
7. Patients can leave an official review about the practice via the website as this will enable the Practice Manager to respond appropriately. Reviews left on unofficial sites will not be responded to.
8. Defamatory comments about our team are not to be shared on any social media platform. Legal advice may be sought and the appropriate action taken against any patient who posts defamatory comments.

Patient complaints on social media

We have a separate Complaints Procedure that patients are to use should they wish to make a complaint. We will only respond to complaints made to the organisation in accordance with practice policy.

If a complaint is made on a social media platform, it will not be acknowledged and you will be requested to delete it.