

Social Media Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out how Longtown Medical Practice uses social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter) and the standards of behaviour expected from users.

It applies to:

- Members of the public engaging with our pages
- Practice staff contributing to or moderating content
- Any official practice social media account.

Our social media platforms are intended as **general information resources only** and are not designed to provide clinical advice or manage individual patient matters.

2. Regulatory Framework

This policy supports compliance with:

- **Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014**
 - Regulation 9 – Person-centred care
 - Regulation 10 – Dignity and respect
 - Regulation 12 – Safe care and treatment
 - Regulation 16 – Receiving and acting on complaints
 - Regulation 17 – Good governance
 - NHS Constitution values
 - Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
 - GMC *Good Medical Practice* (where applicable).
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3. Purpose of Social Media Use

Our social media accounts are used to:

- Share general health information and public health messaging
- Provide updates about practice services
- Promote patient education and NHS campaigns
- Signpost to appropriate services.

We do not provide medical advice, manage prescriptions, or discuss individual cases via social media.

4. Expectations for Respectful Behaviour (Regulation 10)

We are committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment.

Users must:

- Treat staff and other users with dignity and respect
- Use appropriate language
- Avoid discriminatory, abusive, threatening or defamatory comments
- Avoid posting personal or confidential information
- Keep comments relevant and constructive.

Behaviour that undermines the dignity of staff or other service users will not be tolerated.

5. What Constitutes a Breach

Content may be removed if it includes:

- Harassment, intimidation or threats
- Offensive or discriminatory language
- Defamation or unverified allegations
- False or misleading statements presented as fact
- Repeated posting of the same complaint across multiple threads
- Personal information relating to staff or patients
- Confidential clinical information
- Misinformation about practice services or NHS care
- Promotion of commercial products or spam
- Content that may bring the practice or NHS into disrepute.

Repeated attempts to post content that breaches this policy may result in further action.

6. Moderation and Governance (Regulation 17)

Our social media pages are moderated.

Moderators may:

- Hide or remove posts or comments
- Disable commenting where necessary
- Restrict or block users following repeated or serious breaches.

All moderation decisions are taken in accordance with this policy and recorded where appropriate as part of our governance processes.

Restriction from social media access **does not affect a patient's registration status or access to care.**

7. Social Media Is Not an Official Complaints Route (Regulation 16)

Social media platforms are not a formal complaints mechanism.

We are unable to:

- Investigate complaints
- Discuss clinical matters
- Respond to individual case queries
- Manage safeguarding or urgent concerns

Patients wishing to raise concerns should use our formal complaints process:

- Contact: Practice Manager; tel: 01228 791328; email nencicb-cu.longtownreceptionteam@nhs.net
- Written complaints to: Practice Manager, Longtown Medical Practice, Moor Road, Longtown CA6 5XA
- Further information available at: <https://www.longtownmedicalpractice.nhs.uk/complaints-and-feedback>

All formal complaints are handled in accordance with NHS complaints regulations and CQC expectations under Regulation 16.

8. Confidentiality and Data Protection (Regulation 12)

We will not disclose confidential patient information on social media.

If a patient shares identifiable clinical information publicly, we may:

- Hide or remove the comment to protect confidentiality
- Invite the patient to contact the practice directly.

Staff must not engage in discussions that risk breaching confidentiality.

9. Safeguarding and Urgent Issues

Our social media accounts are not continuously monitored.

If a post indicates immediate risk, moderators may signpost to:

- 999 (emergency services)

- NHS 111
- Appropriate safeguarding services.

Social media must not be used for urgent medical advice.

10. Staff Responsibilities

Only authorised staff may post on behalf of the practice.

Staff must:

- Maintain professionalism at all times
 - Follow NHS and GMC guidance on online conduct
 - Escalate complaints or safeguarding concerns appropriately
 - Document any serious incidents via internal reporting processes.
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11. Equality and Inclusion

We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. Discriminatory content will be removed.

12. Public Statement for Social Media Profile

The following statement may be displayed publicly:

“Our practice social media pages are intended as general information resources. We have a social media policy which sets out expectations for respectful and constructive engagement. Posts that fall outside this policy may be removed and repeated breaches may result in restricted access. This does not affect your ability to access care or raise concerns through our formal complaints process.”

13. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually or sooner if required.

Approved by: Practice Manager & GP Partners

Date: February 2026

Review Date: February 2027