



General Practice Task Force Derbyshire

Getting Started on Social Media

Social Media is underused by GP surgeries, but is a great resource for keeping patients informed. This guide discusses two of the most commonly used social media platforms, and how they could be used by surgeries to engage and inform patients.

We would recommend practices make themselves familiar with the [GMC Social Media guidelines](#) prior to setting up an account.

TWITTER



Twitter is a brilliant way of communicating with your patients. You can inform and engage patients, whilst communicating with other practices and getting updates from your LMC, CCG NHSE etc. An estimated 15 million people in the UK Tweet.

Twitter is rapid to set up and use.

Practices could use Twitter 1 of 2 ways:

- 1) As a fully interactive account. This would ensure you get the most out of twitter. It is reasonably labour intensive, and requires regular checking of the account.
- 2) As an information giving account. It is possible to have a purely one-way account, to keep patients up to date with new developments, but with out replying to comments / messages. This would be easier, but it would be wise to state this intention within your Twitter 'bio'.

For details on use of Twitter and Pitfalls – See our 'Guide to Twitter' advice sheet.





Guide to Twitter

How to set up account

- 1) Go to www.twitter.com
- 2) To sign up, enter your full name, email address and password under ‘new to twitter’
- 3) Choose your username (must be <15 characters)
- 4) Click ‘create my account’
- 5) If you want add a photo of yourself
- 6) Complete your bio – this is limited to 160 characters. Make it snappy and engaging. Consider whether adding a disclaimer may be appropriate.

How to Tweet

- 1) 140 characters per tweet
- 2) If you start a reply with a person’s twitter handle eg ‘@DerbyLMC hello’ only the person included in the tweet and people who follow both of you will see it. Want more people to see it; then add a full stop or some text before the twitter handle. Then all your followers can see it.
- 3) Add a ‘hashtag’. Hashtags collate themes of tweets eg #GPTFConf (General Practice Task Force Conference or #juniorcontract. You can then search for a particular hashtag and find out all about a subject / conference / celebrity.

Basics

- 1) Twitter is conversational, so engage people and ask questions
 - a. Use pictures
 - b. Share websites / videos
- 2) Retweet – if you agree with a tweet, you can ‘retweet’ it to share with your followers. Wish to disagree or add a comment then ‘quote tweet’.
- 3) You can also send personal (direct) messages to people who follow you and you also follow

How to Build a following

- 1) The more people you follow, the more you interact and the more you re-tweet other people the more people will follow you.
- 2) Make the content varied and engaging.

Pit falls

Twitter attracts individuals who wish to be confrontational. They may act as devils advocate or just be plain rude in their tweets to you. They are known as ‘Trolls’.

They can be ignored (you do nothing but just don’t respond), muted (so you don’t see what they write) or blocked (mute + they are unable to contact you at all).





FACEBOOK



Facebook has huge advantages as a patient engagement tool. There are an estimated 30 million UK Facebook, and Facebook users cross all patient demographics. It is likely that a large percentage of your practice population use Facebook.

Facebook can be less labour intensive than Twitter, but requires an existing account to set up your practice page. You could potentially set up a dummy account purely to administrate a practice account, if preferred. Pages can be set up so that the person who owns the account is not identifiable.

As with Twitter, the account could be run as a two-way dialogue with patients, or as a pure information giving service.

Create a Facebook ‘Page’

This would be the preferred option of communicating with patients rather than creating a Facebook ‘Group’ which requires intensive moderation.

Log on to your Facebook page and click ‘create page’.

Thereafter you will be guided through the creation process.

I would suggest considering:

- Disabling visitor posts. This means no one can post on your page. It also means you control the content and don’t need to moderate the page. People are still able to comment on posts and ‘like’ posts.
- Through ‘Page moderation’ you can restrict posts containing certain words – this could simply be the names of your doctors. But if you wish to prevent almost all comments, you could extend this to many common words eg ‘ and, it, a, she, he, they’. The rare comments you then have could be deleted if you disagree with them.
- Turning off people being able to message the page. This is for similar reasons as above.

For more details on Social Media and general practice, click [here](#).

