



British Society of  
Periodontology and  
Implant Dentistry

## **Social Media Policy 2019**

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### **1. Introduction**

The British Society of Periodontology (here on referred to as "the BSP") recognises that in recent years there has been a significant rise in the use of social networking sites. The BSP strives to exhibit acceptable behaviour at all times to maintain the reputation of the Society, its members and that of the relevant professions and collaborations with other organisations. The BSP is committed to always maintaining confidentiality and safety of its members, whilst also recognising that all members are entitled to privacy in their personal life. The purpose of this policy is to set out the clear expectation that when using social media BSP members, employed and self-employed staff (as defined in the 'Scope', section 2) will behave appropriately and, in a way, which is consistent with the BSP's values.

Over 50 per cent of people in the UK use social media websites and this number continues to grow. There are many benefits of using these sites and the BSP currently uses Facebook and Twitter accounts to engage with the public, members, dental professionals and Partner Sponsors, to communicate our news and promote events quickly and effectively.

It is important, however, to realise that the use of social networking websites has the potential to blur the lines between public and private, personal and professional. Social networking sites make personal information publicly accessible so it is vital that staff think about how the information they share might reflect on the BSP. Though the BSP recognise that staff will likely maintain personal accounts on various social networks, it is important to remember that as staff of the BSP you have an obligation to always conduct yourself in a manner which does not reflect poorly on the Society. Guidelines for functioning in an electronic world are the same as the values, ethics and confidentiality policies staff are expected to live by every day. This policy sets out the principles which staff are expected to follow when using social media, whether at work or in their personal life.

All staff within the BSP, whether employed directly or not, have a duty to ensure that the terms of this Policy are adhered to.

### **2. Scope**

The policy applies to all Council members, Trustees, employees and contractors of the BSP, as well as anyone representing the BSP as a lecturer, ambassador, volunteer, contractor or processor (here on referred to as "staff"). The policy also applies to all members, sponsors and visitors to the BSP.

### **3. Definitions**

Social Media can be defined as "websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking". Social Networking is the term commonly given to websites and online tools which allow users to interact

with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests.

Social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Plus+, Pinterest, and Tumblr are the most well-known examples of social media, but the term covers other web-based services. Examples include blogs (a contraction of the term web log), audio and video podcasts, 'wikis' (such as Wikipedia), message boards, social bookmarking websites (such as del.icio.us), photo, document and video content sharing websites (such as Vine, Instagram and YouTube) and micro-blogging services (such as twitter or FriendFeed).

For the purposes of this policy, social media and social networking are used interchangeably.

#### **4. Duties**

##### **4.1 Executive General Manager Responsibilities**

- Ensure that this Policy is communicated to all staff.
- Ensure any reports of inappropriate use of social media are reported to the President and Honorary Secretary for investigation in accordance with this Policy.

##### **4.2 Other Staff Responsibilities (staff as defined in the 'Scope', section 2)**

- Ensure you have read and understood the content of this policy.
- Report any inappropriate use of social media to the Executive General Manager.
- Make sure you have appropriate privacy settings enabled.
- Consider carefully how you use social media and be mindful of what information you share.

#### **5. Process**

##### **5.1 Acceptable use of Social Media**

This section details the general principles of what staff should and should not do when using social media.

##### **DO:**

- Activate appropriate privacy settings.
- Act responsibly and ethically: When participating in online communities be aware that when you make public posts online you are obligated to behave in a manner that does not reflect poorly on the BSP.
- When disagreeing with the opinions of a member of the BSP, the dental profession or public, always ensure that your responses are professional, appropriate and respectful. If you find yourself in a situation online that looks as if it's becoming antagonistic, do not get overly defensive and do not disengage from the conversation abruptly: feel free to ask the Executive

General Manager for advice and/or to disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner that reflects well on the BSP.

- Report it to the Executive General Manager if you witness inappropriate use of social media by other staff or hear about it via a third party.
- Be mindful that what you 'Like' on Facebook can be seen as an endorsement of that organisation, group or statement and that you should not 'Like' pages that could bring you or the BSP into disrepute. This might include sharing libelous statements, or messages about illegal practices.
- Be mindful that who you follow or 'Retweet' on Twitter can be seen as an endorsement of that individual or organisation and that you should not follow accounts that could bring you or the BSP into disrepute. This might include retweeting libelous statements, or messages about illegal practices.
- Be mindful that your username and description (if applicable) on social networking sites must also not be liable to bring the BSP into disrepute, through inappropriate language etc.
- When commenting on a dental matter, unless authorised to speak on behalf of BSP, you must state that the views expressed are your own. Always add a 'views are my own' disclaimer where appropriate.
- Remember that what you post online can potentially be accessed forever.
- Remember that if you interact with other members of staff online you should conduct yourself appropriately and courteously, as would be expected of you at work. Consider carefully before mentioning or 'tagging' other members of staff in your posts.
- The BSP will not tolerate processes, attitudes and behaviour that amount to discrimination as defined within the Equality Act (see BSP Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy for full definitions)

**DO NOT:**

- Engage in activities on social media which might bring the BSP into disrepute.
- Post, 'Like', Retweet' or 'Share' discriminatory statements online.
- Make disparaging, discriminatory or defamatory remarks about the BSP, patients or fellow employees on any form of social media site, or 'Retweet' or 'Share' such comments.
- Behave in a way using social media which could be interpreted as bullying or harassment.
- Post any confidential information that you have obtained through your employment or association with the BSP.

- Set up any form of official BSP account on a social networking website - all official social media accounts are managed by the Executive General Manager.

## **5.2 Reporting Inappropriate Use**

If a member of staff comes across information contained on social media sites that contravenes this policy, they should report the issue to the Executive General Manager. All incidents will be investigated by the Executive General Manager, the President and the Honorary Secretary, which may include viewing and taking screenshots of the posts in question.

The BSP will not tolerate behaviour from staff which breaches our Social Media Policy. Any such breach will be regarded as misconduct and dealt with by the Trustees. Any breach by a lecturer or contractor may result in their contract being terminated.

## **6. Training**

The Executive General Manager is available to provide advice and guidance on the effective and appropriate use of social media to all staff, if required.

## **7. Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or when otherwise deemed necessary.

(This Policy was last reviewed in May 2020)