| **Title:** | Social Media Policy |
| **Policy Author(s):** | Lesley Allen, Communication & HR Officer  
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| **Policy Replacement:** | ☒ No |
| **Target Audience:** | ☒ Managers  
☒ Corporate Services  
☒ Guardians  
☒ Administration  
☒ Self-Employed Guardians |
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| **Date PPI Screening:** | |
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**To be completed by the Communication & HR Officer**

| **Date Issued to Target Audience:** |  |
| **Date added to Staff Website:** |  |
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☐ n/a |
| **Date Policy schedule Updated:** | ☐ Yes |
| **Date:** |  |
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1. Introduction

Social media platforms are used internally in the NIGALA as a method of communication with staff and externally as a method to reach out and interact with a range of stakeholders, thereby increasing the public profile of the Agency. This policy sets out good practice in the use of social media, including measures to eliminate the unacceptable use of social media. Social media provides many opportunities to communicate both internally and externally, which has to be balanced against the information governance and reputational risks to the Agency.

2. Aims of this Policy

This policy aims to:

- Ensure freedom of expression is maintained, whilst providing guidance to staff to ensure that they do not act in way on social media which may negatively impact on the NIGALA’s reputation, or leave themselves open to allegation;
- Promote good practice in regards to the use of social media and adherence to acceptable standards of use;
- Demonstrate the benefits of social media as an instrument to engage with internal and external stakeholders.

3. Definitions

‘Social Media’: Websites and online applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. This includes, but is not limited to, blogs, fora, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Yammer and LinkedIn.

‘Official Use’: Use with authority from the NIGALA and/ or in the course of employment with the NIGALA.

‘Private Use’: Use undertaken on an individual basis.
4. Scope of this Policy

This Policy is applicable to all staff on a NIGALA contract, including those on temporary, bank, student and honorary contracts, as well as Agency Staff and those working with the NIGALA on placement.

This policy relates to both the official and private use of social media, whether the use occurs during office hours or otherwise. Furthermore, this policy applies irrespective of whether the social media sites are accessed using the NIGALA’s IT equipment and/or mobile devices.

5. Codes of Practice

Professional bodies may have issued their own code of practice relating to the use of social media. Registrants have a personal responsibility to be aware of codes of practices relating to their professional body, however this policy remains the definitive guide on the use of social medial within the NIGALA.

6. Official Use of Social Media

It may form part of a staff member’s professional duties to use social media in an official capacity, for example, the administration of a Twitter or Facebook page on behalf of the NIGALA.

6.1 Posting via the NIGALA Social Media Accounts

Currently the NIGALA has Facebook and Twitter accounts. The Social Medial Administrators for the NIGALA will be, in the main, the Communication & HR Officer and Records Management Officer, with other designated staff having access to the sites for administration purposes in the absence of the Social Media Administrators. When posting or commenting on social media, you are publicly representing the Agency and the expectation is that all posts/comments are professional, honest, accurate and fair.
6.2 Responses via Social Media to Comments/ Posts

Social Media Administrators for the NIGALA must perform their duties as laid out in the relevant codes of practice and this policy, in particular section 6.2. All responses must be respectful and measured and in keeping with the professional reputation of the NIGALA.

6.3 Removal of Material

In the event of the following material being posted by a member of the public, it should be removed as soon as possible by the Social Media Administrator. If such material is posted by someone associated with the NIGALA as outlined in Section 4 of this policy, the material must be removed and possible disciplinary action taken.

Material, comments, links, posts of this nature include those that:

6.3.1 Bring the NIGALA into disrepute;
6.3.2 Are considered likely to provoke, attack or offend others;
6.3.3 Are abusive or otherwise objectionable on the grounds of race, sex, sexual orientation, community background, political opinion, nationality, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender identity;
6.3.4 Are sexually explicit;
6.3.5 Contain swear words or other language likely to offend. Offensive includes:

- Pornography and sexually explicit content;
- Texts and images likely to offend people;
- Hate sites (including on the grounds of race, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation);
- Gratuitous violence.

6.3.6 Break the law or condone or encourage unlawful activity. Unlawful activity includes:

- Condones or encourages unlawful acts;
- Breaches copyright law or encourages others to do so;
- Defamatory and/ or in contempt of court;
- Hacking or other technical disruption to online services;
• In breach of the Data Protection Act 1998.

6.3.7 Are seen to impersonate someone else;
6.3.8 Describe or encourage activities which could endanger the safety or wellbeing of others;
6.3.9 Are posted anonymously;
6.3.10 Include links to unsuitable external websites;
6.3.11 Presents access or safety problems:

• Pay-to-view or other subscription sites;
• Sites which might compromise the network (for example, sites which initiate a download);
• 18+ websites (for example, gambling).

7. **Private Use of Social Media**

7.1 The NIGALA maintain that the private use of social media is an individual’s choice and does not wish to interfere in this private behaviour. However, there are circumstances whereby the private use of social media can interfere in the staff-employer relationship or relationship between the NIGALA and Self-Employed Guardians, and in which the NIGALA may need to take action.

7.2 It is the preference of the NIGALA that those identified in Section 4 do not record their affiliation with the NIGALA in their personal social media profiles. However, should you wish to do so, the NIGALA recommends you clearly identify that any comments, views or expressions are wholly personal and are in no way reflective of those of the NIGALA.

7.3 Private use of social media may give rise to disciplinary action in cases of:

• Sharing of confidential work-related information on personal social media networks;
• Posting of media on personal social media sites/applications of HSC patients, clients, service users and/or relatives.
- Posting inappropriate comments about a staff member, patient, client, service user and/or relatives. This includes discussion of work-related issues, conversations about patients, clients or service users and complaints about colleagues.
- Using social media sites to bully or intimidate.
- Using offensive, sexist, sectarian, racist, hateful or otherwise offensive or discriminatory language which would be considered contrary to any NIGALA policies and procedures.
- Posting digital media on personal social media sites/applications of other NIGALA employees taken in a work situation, without informed consent.
- Posting digital media on personal social media sites/applications of NIGALA equipment.
- Using or displaying the NIGALA corporate logo on any personal social media site/application unless formal approval is given by the NIGALA.
- Publishing your NIGALA email address on a personal social media site, or use this address as part of your log-in/registration on a personal site.
- Using NIGALA networks or equipment to access or update a personal social media site.

7.4 The above statements refer to the posting of all types of digital content on social media sites, including (but not exclusively) text, photographs and videos.

7.5 The NIGALA does not have to be tagged, mentioned or implied in order for material to come under the remit of this policy.

7.6 Pseudo-sites and alias accounts are also within the scope of this policy. This includes sites and social media accounts that are set up in which the profile may not be clearly attributable to a particular person. This may happen in the cases of persons using pseudonyms in profiles, using profiles under the banner of other organisations, clubs or topics.

8. Non-Compliance

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Disciplinary action may be taken irrespective of whether the NIGALA equipment or
facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach. This applies to private use of social media as well.

Anyone suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with an investigation. This may include removing internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

Serious breaches may be reported to the PSNI, Information Commissioner or other public authority for further investigation.

9. **Equality Statement & Monitoring Arrangements**

Application of this policy will be monitored to ensure adherence to the principle of equality of opportunity.