About this guide

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy has produced this guide to encourage its members to embrace social media in a productive, safe and professional manner.

It is aimed mainly at those who are new to social media or looking to develop their activity, but it also provides guidance on professional issues that may be useful for those who are more established.

The fast-moving nature of social media means that this guide cannot hope to provide the latest advice at any moment. Readers are encouraged to use the references at the end of the guide to confirm advice and instructions if in any doubt about currency.

The main social networks use different terms for similar concepts. This guide uses them interchangeably in places, so check the glossary at the end of the guide to make sure you understand what the terms mean.

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy is indebted to Claire Hodds and Physiotherapy New Zealand for permission to use their “Social media for physios” publication as the basis for this guide.
1 What is social media?

Social media is collective title for online communities like Twitter and Facebook, in which people come together to share information, ideas and opinion.

Despite the ‘social’ title, professionals and businesses form a large part of social media, using it to learn, promote and influence.

Why should you be interested?

- **Be informed** Social networks can help you to learn what patients and decision-makers think about your service, and about physiotherapy more generally.

- **Make useful contacts** You can reach out and connect with opinion-formers, patients and fellow professionals. Social media’s currency means you can speak in real time, with individuals or groups.

- **Join the debate** With instant access to current discussions, you can have your say or ask for views on topics of your own.

- **Promote yourself or your business** Social media can be an effective and cheap addition to advertising. A good reputation can spread widely through people’s connections, as can interesting content that you’ve shared.

- **Speed and reach** Few communications methods can compare with the rate at which you can place your message in front of interested readers and the speed at which they can respond. If they find it valuable and choose to share your message, it can reach far beyond your own network very quickly.

- **Target your communications** By joining relevant online groups and by nurturing appropriate lists of followers, you can focus in on people who are likely to be interested in what you have to say.

- **Measure your influence** Most social networks offer free analytics tools that let you monitor the reach of your activity and compare the effectiveness of your different posts.

Is social media for you?

You have plenty to gain from social media, not least networking, learning, influencing and promoting. These benefits don’t come for free though and need an investment in time and potentially a different outlook to communications.

**Reputation management**

In the same way that you can build a good reputation through extended social networks, negative sentiment can spread quickly too. You have less control than traditional communications methods and may need to learn a different approach.

**Speed and reach**

Conversations can be rapid and opinion can form quickly, meaning you need to check in regularly on what’s being said. If you’re running a professional account, you should check in at least daily and ideally more often if you receive regular contact.

**More to manage**

Using social media well takes time, so you must be sure that the extra work gives you a worthwhile return.

**Easy to waste time**

You need to keep disciplined, as the interconnected nature of social networks mean that you can spend hours following distractions, ending up far from where you started.
The main social networks

The popularity of each social network is ever changing but at the time of writing, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn see the most professional use in the UK.

Physiotherapy features across all three of these networks, and particularly in the CSP’s interactiveCSP community.

Each network has its pros and cons:

Twitter
Pros
✓ Open to everyone – you can reach or follow a diverse set of people from around the world
✓ Simplicity and speed of posting
✓ High level of use

Cons
✘ Boundaries blurred between professional and social posting
✘ Messages limited to 140 characters
✘ Unmoderated – some users don’t play nicely, either intentionally, or due to the ease of posting now and thinking later

Best for: Live debate and real-time listening

Facebook
Pros
✓ Massive user base in the UK, although much smaller for professional use
✓ Allows you to set up closed groups for private discussions
✓ Ease of sharing content

Cons
✘ Relative complexity of setting up a business page
✘ No guarantee that your posts will be shown to your followers – Facebook filters users’ news feeds

Best for: Reaching the public and creating small private groups

LinkedIn
Pros
✓ Large professional networking base, widely used for showing expertise to prospective employers and clients
✓ Allows you to set up closed groups for private discussions

Cons
✘ Less real-time interaction than Twitter and Facebook
✘ Regular contact from people trying to sell you business services

Best for: Building an online CV and a network of professional contacts

interactiveCSP
Pros
✓ Large, CSP member-only community, supported by professional networks
✓ Holds a large, searchable archive of shared knowledge and information
✓ Moderated posting improves baseline quality of content

Cons
✘ Features and ease of use can’t be kept as current as major social networks
✘ Can’t extend discussions to non-CSP members
✘ Responses to discussions tend to take longer than Twitter and Facebook.

Best for: Member-only discussions, sharing and building a knowledge base

Other networks to consider include YouTube for sharing video and its partner network Google+ – similar in scope to Facebook but with strong tie-ins to Google’s search engine and advertising model.
2 Planning

As with any new venture, be clear what you want to achieve before you begin.

You don’t need a lengthy communications plan – just a few sentences to clarify why and how you’re going to do this.

This will help you keep your focus in an environment where it’s very easy to be distracted.

Your social media plan

For a simple plan, consider including:

- **Aims**: I am doing this so that …  
  eg I increase the number of patients coming to my practice.

- **Audience**: I am trying to talk with …  
  eg sports people based in Devon.

- **Channels**: I am going to use x, y and z social platforms.  
  eg Twitter and a Facebook business page.

- **Measures, targets, timelines**: I want to achieve … by …  
  eg 20 new patients by the end of this year.

**Voice**

Are you speaking as an individual or a business? Will your account be strictly professional or will you try to balance it with more social posts?

Some users manage to give a sense of themselves in corporate social media. Getting the balance right is a matter of judgement. Purely professional social media can seem impersonal and inauthentic. A timeline where too many posts are not about your work will not be followed by your target audience.

Having set these out, you can start to think about what you’re going to do to make it happen.
Creating an account

Whichever social network you want to use, you’ll need to create an account. This will allow you to follow other people’s activity, post content and build an audience for yourself.

The appendix to this guide includes instructions to help you set up accounts on the main social networks.

While each network has its own way of creating an account, there are some things common to all of them:

Account name
This will be how the world sees you, in your promotion and in links from other people. For example, the CSP is @thecsp on Twitter and /charteredphysios on Facebook.

With hundreds of millions of accounts already in existence, your preferred account name may already be taken. Spend some time choosing the most suitable one that’s still available though as you won’t be able to change it easily once it’s set.

Account image or avatar
When you post a comment, your message will be accompanied by a small image – your avatar. You can set this image when you create your account, and change when you see fit.

Your account page or timeline can also show a bigger image to help you portray you or your brand.

For both of these, think carefully about the impression you want to give people. While a grainy holiday snap might be OK for your personal Facebook account, you’ll want something more professional if you’re using social media for work purposes.

Biography
Your scope for detail depends on your choice of network. In line with its compact tweet limit, Twitter only allows very short biographies. Facebook, particularly for businesses, encourages you to add much more information.

Use your biography to show potential followers who you are and what you’re about.

Advanced users scan their followers’ biographies to identify useful influencers.

Only mention your employer if you’ve got permission to do so. It’s advisable to state that the views expressed on your account are your own.

Following people
Before you start posting to your new account, take time to follow some other people or organisations, to get a feel for how your chosen network is used.

If you’ve seen someone’s account name (eg @thecsp), you can type it in to the search box on your social network or follow a link from their website to see their list of posts.

Alternatively, use the network’s search feature to find a range of people related to your subject of choice. Then follow, like or connect (depending on your network) that account to start receiving posts from them in your timeline.

Once you’ve started following a few people, your timeline will fill up quickly. Make sure to check regularly to see what the people you follow are saying.

Following topics and themes
Facebook and LinkedIn let you search for people, business and events, while Twitter also lets you search people’s individual tweets.

Twitter’s hashtags (a word or string of words preceded by a #) are used to tag posts on a common theme. You can search by hashtag, or if you see one in a tweet, click on it to see all other tweets including the same hashtag.

Many events pre-publicise a hashtag (eg #physio14), encouraging delegates to post before, during and after the event to raise its profile. You can then follow what’s going on by viewing posts that contain that tag.
**Content**

Now you have an account and have seen what others are posting, it’s time to start creating content yourself.

Scanning your timeline, you’ll quickly see that people use social networks in different ways:
- sharing information
- asking questions/gathering opinion
- holding conversations
- building excitement about an event
- managing customer service

All have merits and the approaches you choose should reflect what you’re trying to achieve in your plan.

Try to focus on what your audience will find useful and interesting, rather than trivia. Consider whether what you’re posting will help achieve what you’ve set out in your plan.

Of course creating your own content takes time, so you may like to supplement this with links to other content.

Here are a few ideas on finding content to share:
- Check websites with regular physiotherapy news updates, such as [www.csp.org.uk](http://www.csp.org.uk)
- Share interesting posts from those that you follow
- Set up notifications with services such as Google Alerts, so that you get a message when something is published on your chosen subject.

Here are five ideas to get you started if you are employed:
1. Highlight an interesting article on your employer’s website
2. Post a daily tip on staying healthy
3. Share a positive insight into your working day
4. Ask your audience a question
5. Say how physiotherapy can help a condition (and link to a CSP Physio Works briefing).

And five ideas to get you started if you are a private practitioner:
1. Highlight a special offer or deal for patients
2. Highlight an interesting article on your website
3. Create a prize competition for followers
4. Create a poll on a current topic (you can do this easily on Facebook)
5. Share a new physiotherapy tool or app that you’ve discovered.

**Interaction**

Before long, if you’ve planned your activity well, people should start to respond to your posts and mention you in their own messages.

This is your chance to build a relationship – you might want to:
- thank them for their comment
- answer their question, clarify something or continue the discussion
- share their comment with your followers

Sometimes you might receive negative comments. See the later section on professionalism for advice on how best to handle these.

**Promotion**

Be proud of your social media accounts. Include your account name in your contact details, as you would with your email or postal address.

If you have a website, use your chosen network’s tools to add social buttons to your interesting content. These give readers a simple one-click route to share your work with their own followers.

**Keeping on top of it all**

Regular checking and posting is the best way to build a strong following and to keep up with what people are saying.

All networks have a tools to help you do this and can be configured to notify you when someone mentions you, marks your post as a favourite, or starts following you. You can quickly review these interactions and decide whether you want to thank them, start a conversation or perhaps add them to a list for future targeted contact.

With most networks having easy to use apps for people on the go, many choose to track what’s going on almost around the clock. If you’re representing a business, you need to decide whether you’re going to offer that level of service or make it clear in your biography the hours that you’re online.

TIP

If you mention people in your posts, include their account name so that they get a notification and may in turn start a conversation. Do this by typing an @ in front of their account name in the text of your post (eg @thecsp on Twitter).
What to measure

The main social networks provide a wealth of data on your account activity and popularity. While much of this is interesting and possibly ego-boosting, try to focus on the things you set out to achieve in your social media plan.

Basic account metrics
The main networks let you see the popularity of both your individual posts and your account overall.

Twitter, for example, will tell you:
- how many followers you have and who they are
- how often you have been mentioned in other people’s tweets
- how many times your tweets have been retweeted
- how often your tweets have been marked by someone as a favourite

Follower analysis
Your network will provide you with a list of people who follow your account. As a minimum, you should look through your list to see if there’s anyone new that you should follow back.

Most social media management tools will give you reports on your followers, allowing you to search their biographies for keywords. You can also rank your followers in terms of their influence, their likelihood to share your messages and even the time of day when they’re normally active on social networks. This can be very helpful in finding people to target with specific comments or questions.

Impact
The chances are that your objectives are more sophisticated than attracting a certain number of followers, or for lots of people to be talking about you. This is where impact comes in.

Your objectives might include some of the following:
- Leads generated – ask new patients how they found out about you, or why they decided to make contact.
- Activity on your website – use your website’s visitor statistics to see how many people have arrived at your site via your social media posts. If you aren’t currently receiving statistics, try Google’s free and powerful Analytics service. This will tell you not just how people got to your site, but what they did when they got there.
- Useful information gathered – reflect on how much knowledge or how many useful leads you’ve gathered as a result of your social media research.
- Customer satisfaction/sentiment – there are online tools that attempt to measure whether people are saying positive or negative things about you across social media. While these can be useful for large corporations receiving thousands of mentions, you may be better off setting up a search for people mentioning you and manually assessing whether they are feeling good about you and your service.
- Credibility – several online services can analyse the credibility of your social media account, based on the popularity of your posts and the credibility of those who follow you. Kred and Klout are two well established examples, and while their scores have limited absolute meaning, they are useful for monitoring trends and comparing your presence to others in your sector.
- Behaviour change/influence – try to detect changes in the policy or actions of those you are trying to influence.

Measurement tools
For more detailed insight, report scheduling, follower analytics and so on, subscribe to a social media management service. Many of these can help you track conversations, monitor posts on keywords and hashtags, and even post for you at the most effective time for your audience.

Search for ‘social media management tools’ to find providers and reviews, or ask others what they recommend.
Professionalism

Social media offers great opportunities to build relationships, share, influence and learn, but as with any other form of communication, you need to remain professional and legal at all times.

The ease and speed with which you can post or comment can make it easy to forget your responsibilities, but the rules around defamation, ethics and professionalism are no different from if you were writing a journal article.

Remember your responsibilities

Be familiar with your responsibilities set out by your regulator and professional body:

- Health and Care Professions Council (www.hcpc-uk.org)
- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (www.csp.org.uk/professionalism)

The HCPC requires that your social media activity meets four of their standards of conduct, performance and ethics:

- You must act in the best interests of service users
- You must respect the confidentiality of service users
- You must keep high standards of personal conduct
- You must behave with honesty and integrity and make sure that your behaviour does not damage the public’s confidence in you or your profession.

If you are employed you will also be bound by any rules laid down by your employer. Sadly the CSP has seen an increasing number of cases of members falling foul of disciplinary processes due to social media posts. Even if they have not provided a specific social media policy you will need to bear in mind your general duty not to bring your employer into disrepute.

Social media code

Whether you are acting on your own or setting up a social media account for your team, you should write a social media code. This will help you and your team to act consistently and to remain professional in your social media dealings.

Some professional recommendations to consider:

- Criticism – Don’t criticise individuals on social media. You may think that you are only voicing an opinion, but it is easy to be misinterpreted or overstep the mark, risking a libel claim or disciplinary action. Any post could be seen to be defamatory if you clearly identify someone and say something that could be interpreted as damaging to their reputation.
- Data privacy – Despite network privacy settings, assume that anything you post online will be visible to everyone and for ever. You can delete a tweet if you later decide you were wrong to post it, but there’s always a slim chance that someone has taken a snapshot before you removed it. The networks sometimes change their privacy policies, so do check from time to time your privacy settings remain as you would expect. Better still, don’t publish anything that you would regret others seeing.
- Personal privacy – Due to their open nature, most social media networks may be unsuited to the discussion of specific clinical cases. Closed professional networks like interactiveCSP offer much more control over who will see your posts, but even then there’s no guarantee that your content will remain private. You should remain highly cautious about the risk of identifying a patient, either through your own post or in combination with details posted elsewhere, even if the patient gives their consent for you to do so.
- Mixing work and pleasure – If you choose to have a single account for social and work purposes, do you want to have both groups seeing the same posts? Another approach is to have a separate account for your social and professional worlds, with appropriate privacy settings on each one. Do remember though that even on your purely personal social media accounts, you may still be bound by professional and employer policies.
- Friend requests from patients – If contacted at your personal account by a patient, we would suggest that you politely decline a request to become friends on Facebook. An informal online relationship with a patient could put you at risk of breaching your professional responsibilities. It may be that you have a professional reason to accept a request, for example if you are sharing marketing material about your private practice, but you should consider the risks before you do so.

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Handling negative posts

Not all postings on social media are positive. How best to respond depends on the seriousness of any negative post and on who posted the comment.

Because social media is so publicly visible, and different responses are appropriate depending on the type of comment being made, the CSP uses a decision tree to guide staff in deciding whether and how to respond. You may wish to adapt this for your own use:

You can reduce the chance of receiving negative posts in the first place on your network by having a clear commenting policy. In this, you can set out what constitutes inappropriate behaviour and under what circumstances you will remove posts or report posters to the network.

If someone complains about you removing an unsuitable post, you should be able to show that it breaches your published commenting policy.

CSP relationship

Although we ask that you don’t use the letters CSP in your account name, nor the CSP corporate logo in your account image, you should feel free to promote your membership through your social media biography, eg ‘Chartered physiotherapist, practising privately in Durham’.

If we’ve encouraged you to start up a social media account, let us know any interesting examples of how it’s helped you in your professional life.

You might like to join the thousands of other CSP members who follow us on Twitter and like our Facebook page, to keep up with the latest news from the profession.

Any questions?

If you have any further questions about professional issues when using social media, our professional advisers may be able to help.

Contact them at paservice@csp.org.uk or on +44 (0)20 7306 6666.

* A troll is the term for someone who posts deliberately provocative comments with the intention of causing disruption and argument.

TIP
Don’t delete comments just because you don’t like them or don’t agree with them – your followers will soon pick up on this and may escalate the problem.
We hope that this guide has taken away some of the fear about social media. With a clear plan and some care, there are lots of ways for you or your business to gain from getting connected.

Before you jump in, run through our checklist to make sure that you’re ready to go.

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<tr>
<td>✓ I know which network(s) I’m going to use</td>
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<td>✓ I have chosen my social media voice</td>
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<td>✓ I have decided which tools I shall use to manage my activity</td>
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<td>✓ I know how I’m going to measure the effectiveness of my activity</td>
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<td>✓ I have a set of rules around ethics and professionalism that I will follow</td>
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<td>✓ I know my employer’s policy on social media</td>
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<td>✓ I have a policy on acceptable comments (if publishing a page, eg Facebook)</td>
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Setting up accounts

**Twitter**

1. Visit www.twitter.com and fill in the ‘Sign up’ form with your name, email address and password.
2. You’ll be asked to choose your account name – the one that begins with the @ symbol, like @thecsp – and agree to Twitter’s terms of service.
3. Twitter will ask about your interests and offer you some suggested accounts to follow.
4. Before you can start posting, you’ll have to confirm your account by clicking on a link in an email that Twitter sends to the address that you’ve just provided.
5. Edit your profile to set up your photo, biography, location and website address.
6. Click on the cog icon to access your full settings, including notifications and privacy.

**LinkedIn**

1. Go to www.linkedin.com and complete the registration form with your name, email address and password.
2. Add your location, job title and company.
3. You’ll need to activate your account by following the link in a confirmation email before you can do anything else.
4. LinkedIn will suggest people that you might now to connect with.
5. Fill in your profile with your employment history, skills and education.
6. Review your privacy settings by clicking the icon that may either be your photo, or if you haven’t added one yet, the outline of a head and shoulders.

**Facebook**

Even if you want to start a business account, you’ll need to create a personal account first.

1. Go to www.facebook.com and fill in the ‘Create an account’ form. Provide your name, email address, password, date of birth and gender.
2. You’ll be encouraged to find people to hook up with by sharing your contact list, saying where you live, grew up, went to school and work.
3. Facebook will send you an email so that you can confirm your account.
4. In the meantime, you can add a photo and start to set up the rest of your account.
5. Click on the downward pointing triangle icon in the menu bar to access your settings. Look carefully at privacy, timeline and tagging, notifications and followers.

Now you have a personal account, you can set up a page for your business.

1. Go to www.facebook.com/pages/create/ or follow the ‘create page’ link visible on most pages.
2. Fill in the form with your business address details. Then add categories, a description and your website address. Personalise your page by adding a logo or photo and more information about your business.
3. As with your personal account, check your settings carefully to make sure you know who can interact with your page.

When you want to update your business page, you will need to log in to Facebook with your personal account details, click on the downward pointing triangle icon and choose to ‘use Facebook as your business’.

**interactiveCSP**

If you already have a CSP member website account, you just need to set up your iCSP network and email settings.

1. Visit the CSP website at www.csp.org.uk, click on the ‘LOG IN’ link at the top of the page, then fill in your details.
2. Go to your account page by clicking on ‘ACCOUNT’ in the top bar.
3. Choose ‘iCSP network subscriptions’ from the ‘Online account’ area, to sign up to or step down from around 70 networks.
4. Back on the account page, choose ‘Email subscriptions’ to set whether you receive fortnightly bulletins and/or one-off discussion emails from each of your networks. You can also manage all your other CSP email subscriptions from the same place.

If you don’t have a CSP website account yet:

1. Go to www.csp.org.uk and click on the ‘LOG IN’ link at the top of the page. Then choose the ‘Create new account’ option.
2. Choose a display name and then enter your email address. As a CSP member, you’ll need to provide your CSP membership number along with your date of birth, to prove that you are entitled to an account. You’ll also have to give your name and to agree to the terms of use.
3. The site will send you an email at this point, with a link you need to follow to confirm your account.
4. You’ll be redirected back to the website where you can set your password, then go on to choose your network and email subscriptions.
An explanation of some of the terminology used in popular social networks

**Twitter**

- **Direct message**: a private message to someone you follow, who follows you too.
- **Follow**: to subscribe to another Twitter user’s tweets, causing them to appear when posted on your timeline.
- **Hashtag**: a word or series of joined up words preceded by the # sign, acting as a link to other tweets tagged in the same way.
- **List**: a group of Twitter users, stored in a list, offering a way to follow or promote individual accounts as a group.
- **Mention**: to include another user’s Twitter username in one of your tweets.
- **Retweet**: to share someone’s tweet with your followers.
- **Timeline**: a live stream of tweets from your followers.
- **Tweet**: a post of up to 140 characters, consisting of text, links, a photo or a video.

**LinkedIn**

- **Company page**: a home page for businesses, outlining what they do and listing their updates.
- **Connection**: an online link between two LinkedIn users.
- **Degrees**: how closely you are connected to another user.
- **Group**: a public or private space for collective discussions.
- **Mention**: to include another user’s LinkedIn username in one of your updates.
- **Network**: all the users to whom you are connected.
- **Profile**: information about you and your employment history.
- **Recommendation**: an endorsement of someone’s professional experience.
- **Update**: the LinkedIn name for a post.

**Facebook**

- **Event**: a page based around an event, allowing you to manage invitations.
- **Friend**: someone you connect and share with on Facebook.
- **Group**: a private space where you can share content with approved fellow Facebook users.
- **Like**: to let someone know what you enjoy their post. Liking also adds that post to your timeline. If you like a page, you’ll see posts from that page in your news feed.
- **Message**: a private message with another Facebook user.
- **News feed**: a current list of updates from the people and pages that you follow.
- **Page**: the Facebook home for an organisation or business.
- **Tag**: a tag connects a person, page or place to your post.
- **Timeline**: a live stream of your posts and ones in which you’ve been tagged.
Networks

- Twitter – www.twitter.com
- Facebook – www.facebook.com
- LinkedIn – www.linkedin.com
- interactiveCSP – www.csp.org.uk/icsp

CSP resources

- Social media guidance – www.csp.org.uk/socialmediaguide
- Professionalism resources – www.csp.org.uk/professionalism
- Professional advice service – paservice@csp.org.uk

Other resources

- HCPC – www.hcpc-uk.org.uk
- Physiotalk – www.physiotalk.co.uk

Official CSP social media accounts

- Twitter: @theCSP – www.twitter.com/thecsp
- Facebook: /charteredphysios – www.facebook.com/charteredphysios
- YouTube: Chartered Society of Physiotherapy – www.youtube.com/users/cspphysiovideos

Other CSP Twitter accounts

See our Twitter lists for the latest links to:
- CSP nations and regions
- CSP staff
This document can be made available in a format for people with sight problems. Tel: 020 7306 6666