



Social Media and Digital Communications Policy

Version Number	Update Details	Person Responsible	Date
1.0	Policy Update	Rod Walshe	04/02/2026
1.0	Reviewed No Changes	Rod Walshe	03/04/2026
Review Date:	03/04/2027		

This policy is reviewed annually or when there are significant changes in legislation or accreditation requirements

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1.0 Introduction

Medicall's Ambulance Service "Social Media & Digital Communications Policy" is designed to balance employee rights with the critical need for patient confidentiality, professional integrity, and public safety. The term "Social Media" for the purpose of this policy includes all online platforms, Social Media Applications, Sites and forums. There is no such thing as "private social media". The principles also apply to dealing with local or national media. Once an event is made available on a social media website it may not be retractable as its subsequent reproduction is completely unpredictable and may be irreversible.

All staff and members of the public have widespread access to smart phones and other camera or video recording technology. On or off duty, staff can still be easily identified as employees of the Company based on posts or user profiles. Knowing this, staff must always be aware of the absolute need to protect their own, and Medicall's reputation.

The potential to cause catastrophic, irreparable damage to our clients, Medicall as a service and its staff in terms of their integrity and reputation cannot be under-stated. There are many examples of catastrophic consequences of ill-considered recordings, postings or publications among the EMS community both nationally and internationally.

Medicall acknowledges that, as a private citizen, staff have the right to comment on news articles and other media, however, any such comments must be not purported to represent Medicall in any way.

2.0 Rationale and Scope

As first responders, our staff hold a unique position of public trust. This policy ensures that the use of social media—both professional and personal—does not compromise patient safety, breach [GDPR/Data Protection](#) obligations, or damage the reputation of Medicall Ambulance Service or its partners. It applies to all permanent, temporary, and volunteer staff.

2.1 Key Definitions

- **Social media:** Any online platform for social interaction, including but not limited to X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and private messaging groups (e.g., WhatsApp).
- **Identifiable Patient Information:** Any data (images, text, locations, or vehicle details) that could allow a member of the public to identify a patient, even if their name is not used.
- **Professional Representation:** Any instance where an employee is identifiable as a member of the service through their profile, uniform, or content. This includes both on duty and off duty activity in relation to Medically.

2.2 Core Prohibitions and Rationale

Rule	Rationale
Zero Tolerance on Patient Data: Never post photos, videos, or descriptions of patients or medical scenes.	Confidentiality: Breaching patient privacy is a fundamental ethical failure and a violation of Data Protection Law.
No Recording in Work Settings: Prohibit taking unauthorised photos/videos in the back of ambulances or clinical areas.	Operational Integrity: Recording in high stress clinical environments risks accidental disclosure of sensitive info and distracts from care.
Separation of Views: Personal accounts must state "views are my own" if the employee is identifiable as staff.	Neutrality: Prevents the public from assuming individual political or social opinions represent official service policy.
Ban on Harassment/Trolling: No derogatory remarks about colleagues, the service, or the public.	Workplace Safety: Protects the Dignity at Work of all staff and prevents toxic workplace environments.

Additionally

- Staff are expressly forbidden from recording any company activities involving patients/clients or anyone else they meet whilst on duty or in uniform.

(The one exception to the above prohibition is the recording of accidents/incidents involving company property or staff whether through on-board devices or personal phones/cameras. These recordings may be supplied to Medicall's management.)

- Staff must never post or forward photographs or movie clips of incidents or accidents witnessed whilst on duty (even if they are not directly involved).
- Improper or inappropriate use of social media could constitute a breach of PHECC Guidelines and Medical Ethics generally and could constitute grounds for summary dismissal (see Employee Handbook). The terms and conditions of Medicall's Contract of Employment forbid comment to the media – the company considers this prohibition to include social media (as the net effect is similar).
- Commenting on any issue including the Medicall's internal processes, Staff or Management on social media is not allowed as this may cause reputational damage.
- At no time should patient, family, client, hospital or other details be posted, or reported on, to any media (traditional or social).
- Never disclose a location or transport timings. This information allows relatively easy identification of a patient or their originating or destination points. 'Checking in' or Identifying Location on social media is not permitted whilst on duty at any time for this reason.
- Staff observing any posts, media articles or images that mention the company, its employees or might have the potential to identify other agents, either in a negative or positive way, should report same to the Senior Leadership Team immediately.
- All staff are forbidden from commenting to the Print & TV Media. (There is no such thing as "off the record" – Staff maybe quoted/mis-quoted.) All requests for comment, including calls to company landlines, should be referred to the Director of Service Delivery immediately and a simple "no comment" provided by staff.
- If staff are being filmed or recorded, their first responsibility is the well-being of their patient/patients and to shield them from recordings where possible. No verbal or physical interaction should occur with those making recordings other than a simple request to stop recording. If the request is ignored, Staff should take no further action. Legal precedent exists permitting recording of any activities taking place in public places. Staff members should report all such instances immediately to Dispatch who will inform the Senior Leadership Team.

2.3 Approach to Disciplinary Procedures

Breaches of this policy are treated with the utmost seriousness. In line with the WRC Code of Practice, we follow a progressive but rigorous disciplinary framework:

1. Informal Resolution/Counselling: For minor first-time lapses (e.g., failing to include a disclaimer) that have no impact on patients or reputation.
2. Formal Investigation: For alleged serious breaches (e.g., posting from work or a scene). Employees may be suspended on full pay pending the outcome.
3. Sanctions: Based on the severity and impact, sanctions may include:
 - a) First Written Warning: Documented for a set period.
 - b) Final Written Warning: For repeated offenses or Significant policy violations.
 - c) Dismissal: Summary dismissal (without notice) is a standard consideration for Gross Misconduct, which includes any post that identifies a patient or severely brings the service into disrepute.
4. Reporting: Breaches involving patient data must be reported to the Data Protection Officer and, where required, the [Health Information and Quality Authority \(HIQA\)](#).

2.4 Staff guidance

It is recommended that staff always select the highest privacy setting on social media accounts and never allow their accounts to be hacked or mis-used.

Staff should never ignore or leave inappropriate comments on a “wall” or site. These should be deleted and, where necessary, a clarification should be provided.

If any Staff member has any questions or requires clarification on the content of this policy, they are advised to contact one of the Senior Leadership Team.