**Leeds Local Medical Committee (LMC) - Communications policy**

Leeds LMC is the professional statutory body which represents and supports the interests of General Practitioners in the Leeds area. We work closely with other LMCs in West Yorkshire and the BMA’s General Practitioners Committee England (GPCE) to ensure that there is close liaison between the national and local representation of general practice.

This policy:

* is intended as a reference to LMC Committee Members whether elected or co-opted, Officers and employees.
* describes the communication channels that have been designed to ensure consistency in the dissemination of information and compliance with GDPR.

Leeds LMC works to:

* support and advise individual GPs and practice teams on all matters that affect them in their professional lives
* provide individual GPs and practice teams with a variety of services to give them the support they need
* encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in all its activities
* be truly representative of all within general practice, and for everyone to feel respected and able to work effectively for their patients

**Use of LMC communications:**

It is important that any communication sent by LMC staff in carrying out their role or otherwise on behalf of Leeds LMC is appropriate. It is important therefore that individuals adhere to the following standards regardless of the method of communication:

* adopt a professional tone and observe appropriate etiquette when communicating
* remember that any communication can be used in legal proceedings and that deleted e-mails may remain on the system and be capable of being retrieved.
* must not send abusive, obscene, discriminatory, racist, harassing, derogatory, defamatory, pornographic, inappropriate, illegal, or offensive or emails that could be regarded as being in bad taste or immoral. As a general rule, if any person might be intimidated, degraded or offended by the contents of an email or other forms of communication, or if the fact it has been sent might be a source of embarrassment if made public, then sending it will be a breach of this policy.
* must not send or forward private e-mails, documents or other messages in the name of Leeds LMC which the individual would not want a third party to read; send or forward chain mail, junk mail, cartoons, jokes or gossip; unnecessarily copying or forwarding e-mails to others who do not have a real need to receive them; or send messages from another person's e-mail address (unless authorised) or under an assumed name.
* all communications sent on behalf of Leeds LMC should state the sender’s name and identify the sender as writing on behalf of Leeds LMC.

**Use of social media**

There are many benefits to using social media, but the legal consequences of improper use can be serious. Please remember that you represent Leeds LMC, and that any communication you send, whether from work or privately, and in whatever form, can lead to legal claims against you or Leeds LMC and can be used as evidence in those claims. You must always avoid any communication that could lead to legal claims, e.g. you must not send anything that is abusive, obscene, discriminatory, or bullying.

The GMC and BMA have each produced guidance for doctors that describe the benefits and risks to consider when using social media platforms such as Twitter, WhatsApp, and other messaging services, Facebook and YouTube. Use caution and common sense and read further guidance from these organisations if you need to.

BMA guidance [Ethics of social media use for doctors (bma.org.uk)](https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/ethics/personal-ethics/ethics-of-social-media-use)

GMC guidance [Doctors use of social media - summary - GMC (gmc-uk.org)](https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/doctors-use-of-social-media)

**Leeds LMC Committee Meetings**

To enable LMC Committee Members to liaise effectively with GPs and practice teams in their individual localities, Leeds LMC will produce minutes of the committee meetings and circulate to members as soon after the meeting as is possible. The minutes of the meeting can be discussed with constituents, but committee members are asked not to circulate the actual document.

**Confidentiality**

Both during and after your term of office as a Member, Officer or employee you have a personal responsibility to protect and maintain the confidentiality of Leeds LMC’s information and that relating to any Leeds LMC stakeholders of which you become aware during your role. Accordingly, you must not, except as required by law, by way of necessary discharge of your obligations to any regulatory authority or body, or as authorised or required by your duties, reveal to any person any trade secret or confidential information in whatever form belonging or relating to Leeds LMC, its stakeholders or its or their business or other operations. This obligation will continue after the termination of your term of office as a Member, Officer or employee unless and until any such information comes into the public domain other than through any breach of this provision by you.

Confidential information consists of information not generally known to the public and will include (but not be limited to) financial information, details of negotiations between Leeds LMC and third parties, terms of any arrangements entered into by Leeds LMC, proposed initiatives and opportunities, sensitive information provided to it by other stakeholders and any information which you have been told is confidential or which has been obtained in circumstances in which Leeds LMC is subject to a duty of confidentiality in relation to that information. For the avoidance of doubt, information need not be expressly designated as confidential to fall within the scope of this clause.

All confidential information is imparted to Leeds LMC Members, Officers and employees in a relationship of confidence. This means that you should exercise a particularly high standard of care regarding all confidential information.

Outside of this term of office as a Member, Officer and employee you are restricted from using your knowledge of confidential information to suit your personal purposes or to the detriment of Leeds LMC. You are responsible for the security of any Leeds LMC documentation obtained by you during your role. Extra care should be taken to maintain the confidentiality of any documents of a sensitive or otherwise confidential nature.

February 2022