

In the past few years the use of Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X and other social media tools has steadily increased – and continues to grow – as a way of demonstrating and communicating health messages.

Social media platforms are complementary communications channels to expand, foster engagement, and increase access to credible, evidence-based health messages and information.

Integrating social media into public health communications has the potential to provide opportunities for conversation, connecting to communities, promoting the current issues and communicating in ‘real time’.

This in turn helps spread key messages and influences people when making decisions about their own health.

PHA's social media channels:

- [Facebook @publichealthagency](#)
- [Instagram – @publichealthni](#)
- [LinkedIn – public-health-agency-pha](#)
- [X – @publichealthni](#)

## **Facebook policy**

### **Public Health Agency Facebook Policy**

The following policy sets out the purpose of the Public Health Agency’s Facebook Pages, provides guidance on posting comments and content and how the organisation will moderate and administer the Pages.

#### **Introduction**

The Public Health Agency (PHA) Page ([www.facebook.com/publichealthagency](https://www.facebook.com/publichealthagency)) is administered by the PHA (the regional organisation for health protection and health and social wellbeing improvement in Northern Ireland).

The Page is designed to help provide advice and information on health issues. Our aim is to provide an online social community where people can freely access information, share their thoughts, engage with others and ask questions relating to public health matters.

By following us ('liking' our Facebook Page') you can find up-to-date information on current health issues. You can also post relevant comments and questions about public health related matters to us and we will help address these issues and provide helpful information as required.

However, it is important to note that the Public Health Agency Facebook Page is not a facility for the diagnosis of illnesses.

### **Social Media Posting**

Posted comments and images do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency. We do not agree with or necessarily endorse all comments posted by individuals on our Page.

We want people to have an informative and enjoyable time while using the Page and we ask that people post comments in a respectful manner.

Below we have outlined our policy for removing comments and banning users in certain circumstances.

The following activity and comments will be deleted:

- Offensive, bullying, threatening in nature
- Sectarian, racist or sexist
- Libellous or defamatory
- Attacks, intimidation or threats against our employers or other users and individuals
- Off-topic or irrelevant posts and those posted under the wrong thread
- Designed to unduly promote a commercial organisation, product or brand
- Disruptive
- Lewd or pornographic in nature
- Infringement on copyrights
- Other comments that our social media team deem inappropriate.

Our social media team will also, in serious cases, remove users or block from the site those who continue to regularly post content and comments described above.

## **Monitoring**

Our social media accounts are not monitored 24 hours a day. Please understand that we may not be able to reply immediately to comments and questions, particularly outside of normal office hours (9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday) and during public holidays.

On occasions there may be inappropriate comments or posts which require a quick response that we do not spot right away, but we are committed to dealing with these posts as soon as possible.

## **Data Protection**

The PHA abides by the Data Protection Act. The Information Commissioner's Office's guide - *Social networking and online forums – when does the DPA apply?* - is [available here](#).

## **Instagram policy**

### **Public Health Agency Instagram Policy**

The following policy sets out the purpose of the Public Health Agency's Instagram account, provides guidance on posting comments and content and how the organisation will moderate and administer the account.

### **Introduction**

The Public Health Agency (PHA) account ([www.instagram.com/publichealthni](https://www.instagram.com/publichealthni)) is administered by the PHA (the regional organisation for health protection and health and social wellbeing improvement in Northern Ireland).

The account is designed to help provide advice and information on health issues. Our aim is to provide an online social community where people can freely access information, share their thoughts, engage with others and ask questions relating to public health matters.

By following us on Instagram, you can find up-to-date information on current health issues. You can also post relevant comments and questions about public health related matters to us and we will help address these issues and provide helpful information as required.

However, it is important to note that the Public Health Agency Instagram account is not a facility for the diagnosis of illnesses.

## **Social Media Posting**

Posted comments and images do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency. We do not agree with or necessarily endorse all comments posted by individuals on our account.

We want people to have an informative and enjoyable time while using the account and we ask that people post comments in a respectful manner.

Below we have outlined our policy for removing comments and banning users in certain circumstances.

The following activity and comments will be deleted:

- Offensive, bullying, threatening in nature
- Sectarian, racist or sexist
- Libellous or defamatory
- Attacks, intimidation or threats against our employers or other users and individuals
- Off-topic or irrelevant posts and those posted under the wrong thread
- Designed to unduly promote a commercial organisation, product or brand
- Disruptive
- Lewd or pornographic in nature
- Infringement on copyrights
- Other comments that our social media team deem inappropriate.

Our social media team will also, in serious cases, remove users or block from the site those who continue to regularly post content and comments described above.

## **Monitoring**

Our social media accounts are not monitored 24 hours a day. Please understand that we may not be able to reply immediately to comments and questions, particularly outside of normal office hours (9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday) and during public holidays.

On occasions there may be inappropriate comments or posts which require a quick response that we do not spot right away, but we are committed to dealing with these posts as soon as possible.

## **Data Protection**

The PHA abides by the Data Protection Act. The Information Commissioner's Office's guide - Social networking and online forums – when does the DPA apply? - is [available here](#).

## **X policy**

### **Public Health Agency X (Twitter) Policy**

The Public Health Agency (PHA) uses Twitter to promote news and information related to our public health awareness campaigns and to engage with the public.

Our Twitter account is <http://twitter.com/publichealthni>

The following Terms of Use set out our policy on communicating through Twitter:

### **Content**

If you follow us on Twitter you can expect regular tweets on the following topics:

- Updates, news and developments on our public health awareness campaigns;
- Useful advice on public health related topics;
- News and views from third-parties on relevant health related topics.

### **Following**

The Public Health Agency follows relevant organisations and individuals on Twitter who we believe to be relevant to our remit and campaigns, including:

- Public sector organisations, public bodies and government departments;
- International organisations and individuals with an interest in public health issues;

- Journalists;
- Politicians;
- Other individuals who may have an interest in our work or may wish to disseminate our information to their followers.

Please note that our decision to follow a particular Twitter account does not imply endorsement of any kind.

## **Followers**

Twitter allows people to become ‘followers’ of other Twitter users. We aim to attract followers to our Twitter profile as part of our remit as a public health awareness organisation in Northern Ireland. However, we are not responsible for the people who follow us on Twitter and the appearance of a Twitter user as a follower of PHA does not imply endorsement of any kind.

## **@ replies and Direct Messages**

The Public Health Agency welcomes relevant @ replies, retweets and Direct Messages from Twitter followers. We review all messages and aim to use any relevant views and information to improve our work and campaigns. We will also aim to reply to messages, however this will be done on a case-by-case basis.

We will disregard tweets and Direct Messages containing:

- racist, defamatory or libellous comments
- threats, obscenity or vulgarity
- commercial post or spam
- copyrighted material
- links to inappropriate websites

## **Retweets**

Users may retweet our posts, however we would like to be credited for the information used.

The PHA will retweet relevant information from third parties on a regular basis including health promotion activity and health advice, although this does not necessarily constitute endorsement.

## **Links to Other Websites**

We are not responsible for the accuracy of content available through website links. Links to third-party websites do not necessarily constitute an endorsement of the content or the website.

## **Medical Information**

Please note that we do not provide medical diagnoses.

## **Data Protection**

The PHA abides by the Data Protection Act. The Information Commissioner's Office's guide - *Social networking and online forums - when does the DPA apply?* - is [available here](#).

[Print](#)