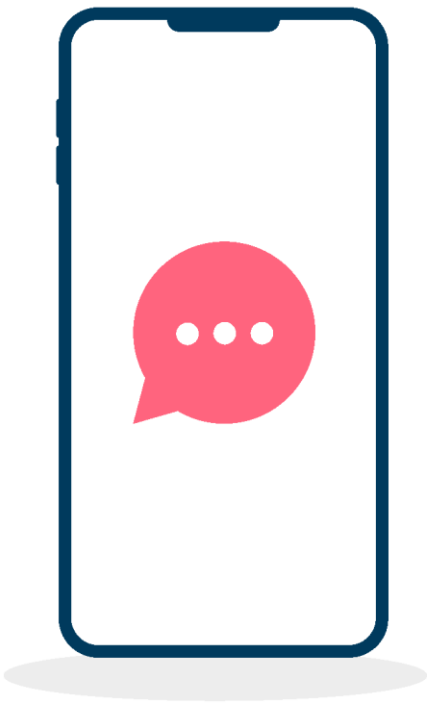
Guidance

General Chiropractic Council

The General Chiropractic Council Guidance for Registrants:

Social Media & Digital Messaging



In effect from: 01 January 2026

GCC Guidance for Registrants

The General Chiropractic Council's Guidance for Registrants is supplementary to the Code of Professional Practice and supports registrants in meeting the Principles and Standards in the Code.

Whilst there is an expectation that guidance will be followed unless there is a good reason not to do so, there may be other acceptable ways to secure the same outcome required under the Code of Professional Practice.

If a chiropractor's Fitness to Practise is questioned, both the Code of Professional Practice and the relevant supplementary guidance will be considered to assess any breach of professional standards.

Each year (as part of the process to retain registration) all chiropractors are asked to confirm that they are keeping up to date with the supplementary guidance published by the GCC.

The Purpose of this Guidance

This guidance will assist registrants to meet the expectations of the Code of Professional Practice in relation to Social Media and Digital Messaging.

It covers:

- Privacy and anonymity
- Professional behaviour (including boundaries and confidentiality)
- Accountability

Publication History

This edition was published 01 November 2025 and comes into effect 01 January 2026.

Changelog

Date	Change
November 2025	This edition redesigned for consistency with other guidance. References to principles and standards within the Code (2016) updated to equivalents in the Code of Professional Practice. Additional updates have been made to: • Paragraph 3: types of platforms updated. • Paragraphs 7 and 13: new risks around technologies including artificial intelligence (Standard J1). • Paragraph 23: inclusion of patient dignity (Standard C8). • Paragraph 25 and 26: accountability when delegating social media (Standard G6).
October 2021	Second Edition Published
April 2016	First edition published.

Contents

Relevant Principles, Standards and Definitions in The Code of Professional Practice 4
Introduction 5
What is social media and digital messaging? 5
Using social media responsibly 6
Privacy 7
Anonymity 8
Professional behaviour 8
Maintaining boundaries 9
Maintaining confidentiality 10
Accountability when social media and digital messaging is delegated 10
Other relevant information 11

Relevant Principles, Standards and Definitions in The Code of Professional Practice

Hyperlinks to the Code of Professional Practice are marked by

Principle C

You must act with honesty, and integrity, and maintain the highest standards of professional and personal conduct

Principle G

You must communicate professionally, properly and effectively

As a chiropractor you must:

Standard C7:

ensure your behaviour is professional at all times, upholding and protecting the reputation of the profession and justifying public trust.

Standard C8:

respect confidential information about the patient and preserve their dignity at all times, including online, during remote consultations, and when referring to them anonymously.

Standard G6:

when communicating online as a healthcare professional (including media sharing, social networking sites and user-generated content), do so responsibly. You must check that the information is not misleading, and maintain professional boundaries and public confidence in the profession. Where you delegate this, the accountability sits with you.

The following Principles, Standards and Glossary definitions may also be relevant:

Standards:

C5, C6, G2, G3, J1.

Glossary definitions:

Remote consultation, Media sharing, Social media, Social networking, Technology, Telling people about your services, User generated content.

The following Guidance for Registrants may also be relevant:

- Advertising,
- Confidentiality,
- Professional Boundaries.

Introduction

1. This guidance must be read in conjunction with the General Chiropractic Council's (GCC) Code of Professional Practice, which sets out the standards of conduct, performance, and ethics for chiropractors to ensure the competent and safe practice of chiropractic.

2. This guidance is not intended to cover every situation that you may face. However, it does set out broad principles to enable you to think through and act professionally to help protect patients and the public.

What is social media and digital messaging?

3. Social media and digital messaging describes web-based applications that allow people to create and exchange content. In this guidance 'social media' is used as an umbrella term.

Examples of applications covered by this guidance include

- blogs and microblogs,
- internet forums,
- content communities,
- social networking sites,
- messaging applications,
- video meeting or broadcast applications,
- other current or emerging social networking platforms.

Any professional e-forum or professional digital messaging site that you may belong to is equally relevant and the examples given are non-exhaustive.

4. The standards expected of chiropractors do not change simply because they are communicating with others through social media, as opposed to being face to face, or through other traditional forms of media. However, social media does create new circumstances in which the established principles of professionalism apply.

5. As well as this guidance, and the GCC's general Guidance on Confidentiality, you should also create and/or comply with social media policies within your place of work.

Using social media responsibly

6. If used responsibly and appropriately, social media sites and messaging applications can offer several benefits for chiropractors. These include building and maintaining professional relationships, establishing or accessing chiropractic support networks, and being able to discuss specific issues, interests, research and clinical experiences with other healthcare professionals globally. In addition, social media, if used properly, is a good way to market yourself as a chiropractor and/or to advertise a chiropractic practice.

7. To use social media and messaging applications responsibly, you must ensure that you keep yourself informed and up to date. Think carefully before you post and be sensitive to protecting your reputation and that of the profession.

This means:

- You should familiarise yourself with how individual social media applications work and be clear about their advantages and disadvantages.
- You should realise and understand that even the strictest privacy settings have limitations. Privacy settings can be complex and are different on each platform. Failure to understand privacy settings or ignorance of them is no excuse. Once something is online, it is not easy to retrieve or delete and can easily be copied and redistributed by other people.
- You should be aware of new risks, including the creation and misuse of AI-generated content, deepfakes, and third-party applications that may collect or share data without your explicit consent.
- You should think carefully about posting information relating to your personal life on professional accounts, and vice versa. Would you be happy for these different audiences to see that material?
- Where you are unsure whether something you post online could compromise your professionalism or your reputation, you should think about what the information means for you in practice, and how it affects your responsibility to keep to the principles of the GCC Code of Professional Practice. It is always best to err on the side of caution, and not to post it.

8. It is important to consider with whom and what you associate with on social media. For example, merely acknowledging someone else's post can imply that you endorse or support their point of view, despite any disclaimer you may use, particularly given the rise in functionally that enables you to 'react' to a post. 'Associate' could include the people or groups you follow, the posts you react to or share, the hashtags you use in a post, or the 'handle' (name) you choose to go by. You can still be held responsible for content you have associated with, even if you did not create it.

9. You must consider the possibility of other people mentioning or tagging you in inappropriate posts. If you have used social media for several years, it is important to consider, in relation to the Code of Professional Practice, what you have posted online in the past and what others have posted about you, and whether all posts should remain on your account(s), particularly posts from before you held professional registration. Remember, anything you or others post about you will likely be online for many years, unless active steps are taken to remove it.

Privacy

10. Using social media and messaging applications can blur the boundaries between an individual's private and professional life. Online information can be easily accessed by others. Chiropractors must be aware of the limitations of privacy online; it is strongly advised that you regularly review the privacy settings for every social media and messaging account you have (particularly as they are different for each platform) and adopt conservative privacy settings where these are available. Sometimes, the privacy setting of each individual post needs to be considered, as well as that associated with your overall profile. It is important to understand that not all information can be protected on social media, and

In particular:

- Social media sites cannot guarantee confidentiality, whatever privacy settings are in place.
- Patients, your employer and potential employers, or any other organisation that you have a relationship with, may be able to access your personal information.
- Information about your location may be embedded within photographs and other content, and available for others to see.
- Once information is published online it can be difficult to fully remove as, for example, other users may take screenshots or distribute it further (ie share). At this point there are almost no options available to stop further distribution of the information.

Anonymity

11. You must be aware that content uploaded anonymously can, in many cases, be traced back to its point of origin. Although you may intend to post anonymously, you should be mindful that your comments may in fact be attributed to you in some way.

12. If you identify yourself as a chiropractor in publicly accessible social media, you must also identify yourself by name. This is because any material written by authors who represent themselves as chiropractors, is likely to be taken on trust, and may reasonably be taken to represent the views of the profession more widely. If you are willing to give online information or advice as a member of the profession, then you should be willing to be identified and held accountable.

Professional behaviour

13. Chiropractors should be conscious of their online 'image' and how it may impact on their professional standing, and the reputation of the wider chiropractic profession. As well as any legal proceedings that could follow, you may put your GCC registration at risk if, on any form of social media (be it personal or professional accounts), you act in any way that is unprofessional or unlawful.

Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Sharing confidential information
- Posting images of patients and people receiving care (or pictures from which they can be identified) without their consent
- Using AI image or video generators with patient data, images, or likenesses without consent.
- Posting or otherwise permitting inappropriate images of yourself such that your professional reputation or that of the wider profession may be adversely affected
- Posting inappropriate comments about patients, chiropractors or other healthcare professionals, such as GPs, osteopaths etc.
- Bullying, intimidating, harassing or exploiting people
- Building or pursuing relationships with patients, former patients or patients' carers
- Stealing personal information or using someone else's identity
- Encouraging violence or self-harm
- Inciting hatred or discrimination
- Generally using language that other people may deem to be rude, offensive or unprofessional

14. If you are aware that another chiropractor has used social media in any of these ways, it is your professional duty to report it to the GCC and/or the police.

15. When interacting with or commenting on social media about colleagues, other chiropractors or chiropractic practices, you must be aware that online posts are subject to the same laws of copyright and defamation[1] as written or verbal communications, whether they are made in a personal or professional capacity. Use of a username, or any form of anonymised identity, online does not prevent action from being taken against you, or website owners being forced to divulge who you are.

Maintaining boundaries

16. Social media can create risks where social and professional boundaries become unclear. You must ensure your behaviour on social media does not cross professional boundaries.

17. It is recommended that chiropractors do not accept or initiate 'friend' or 'follow' requests or engage in any other means of communication on other social media forums with current or former patients or patients' carers, on their personal accounts. This includes direct messaging or liking posts.

18. If a patient or patient's carer contacts you about their care or other professional matters through your personal profile, you should indicate that you cannot mix social and professional relationships and, where appropriate, direct them to your professional profile, or contact details such as your secure email or telephone number.

19. You should not contact or communicate with a patient or carer through social media, in either a professional or personal capacity, via your personal account. It is accepted that patients may wish or find it more convenient to contact a chiropractor on social media, for example by Facebook Messenger or LinkedIn. Any response to a patient on social media should be done through your professional account or business page.

20. If you currently do not have a professional account where patients and/or potential patients can contact you regarding chiropractic services, we recommend that you create a professional social media account or business page for your practice.

21. By communicating with patients and patients' carers in a professional manner through your professional account and not your personal account, the risks of misunderstandings and blurring of boundaries are reduced. It is important to

[1] Defamation is the act of making an unjustified statement about a person or organisation that is considered to harm their reputation.

remember that communicating with patients in this manner does not change your responsibility to maintain comprehensive patient records. Consideration should be given to what information needs to be transferred into clinical records.

Maintaining confidentiality

22. The ethical and legal duty to protect patient confidentiality applies equally to social media and messenger applications, as it does when you communicate privately with patients through more traditional means. (See GCC Guidance on Confidentiality.)

23. You must not use social media to discuss existing or past patient treatments. You may use social media sites that are targeted towards professional communities where current practice and specific (often unusual) but anonymised circumstances are discussed, but you must maintain the dignity of the patient.

24. While participation in such sites can be very valuable, the requirement to maintain confidentiality and not to share identifiable information about current and former patients remain. Be aware that it can often be easy to breach this requirement inadvertently, especially if you have a very specialised practice, or operate in a small area. If you post lots of information, even if across many different posts, it can be possible to identify patients by the sum of information that you make available.

Accountability when social media and digital messaging is delegated

25. Standard C5 and Standard G6 of the Code of Professional Practice are clear that if you delegate the task of updating or using social media or digital messaging, the accountability remains with you. You should ensure anyone you allow to access your social media account is aware of the expectations of you as a professional and should satisfy yourself that they are competent, supervised and supported as necessary.

26. Messages sent through automated systems or chatbots must still comply with confidentiality and professional standards.

Other relevant information

27. Your professional association should be able to advise you on specific posts or content. However, if in doubt, the safest position to adopt is not to post.

28. Despite the challenges discussed, social media can provide many positive and helpful opportunities for chiropractors. Most professionals using social media find it beneficial and do so in line with professional standards and without any problems.

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