January 2017

How to use Twitter

This guidance document has been created to help community pharmacy teams and LPCs learn how to use Twitter and should be used in conjunction with **PSNC Briefing 001/17: Social media guide for community pharmacy teams and LPCs**.

a) Getting started

You can sign up for an account at twitter.com/signup and will need to provide:

- An email address – it would be best to use a generic pharmacy email account rather than a personal one to ensure others have access when someone is off sick or on holiday, for example.
- A username – this should be simple and tell others who you are (e.g. NamePharmacy or NameLPC). However, it must be unique so think of a back-up to use if your first preference has already been taken.
- An official account name – this will be visible so the name of your pharmacy (or LPC) would work well.
- A 'profile' photo (ideally 400×400 pixels) – it would be a good idea to use the pharmacy's (or LPC's) logo.
- A 'header' photo (ideally 1500×500 pixels) – perhaps use a photo of the inside of your pharmacy.

You can customise your profile page by clicking the 'Edit profile' button. This is where you can edit your account's photos, name, location, website, theme colour, and most importantly your bio. Your bio gives visitors to your profile page a brief description (maximum 160 characters) of what your organisation does – keep it simple and professional.

Look for other Twitter users you might want to follow, such as relevant organisations, so you can see all their tweets and you can easily share their messages with your own followers. Some suggestions are: @PSNCNews for pharmacy news; @NHSChoices for health assistance; and @DiabetesUK/@AsthmaUK for patient support. There may be other local organisations you should consider following but it is good to be selective so you aren't overwhelmed with a packed timeline: will those you are following have relevance of their messages to you and/or your followers? LPCs may wish to refer to our template LPC stakeholder map.

Find these accounts by typing in the person's (or company's) name, or username if you know it, into the search box at the top of your Twitter timeline (the first page you see once you have signed in). Your results will show a combination of people and tweets related to your search – click 'Accounts' to filter your search results. When you find a user you want to follow, click the 'Follow' button on their profile page.

Thinking point: should you follow patients?

This question is worth considering very carefully. If you do choose to follow a patient, they are then able to send you a Direct Message and could use that private messaging service to send you urgent or sensitive clinical advice. However, Direct Messages don't meet the necessary NHS data protection criteria and important information could be missed if it is sent to a pharmacy account that is only checked say once a week. It is recommended that you don't follow patients for this reason and because it could fill up your timeline with irrelevant information because you would see all their posts, healthcare related or not.

Once the pharmacy account has been set-up, check the settings to see what notifications you will receive about your account's Twitter activity. This can be done by clicking your profile icon in the top-right corner when you are on your timeline and then selecting 'Settings' from the drop-down menu. Now select 'Email notifications' from the left-hand

info@psnc.org.uk   psnc.org.uk   0203 1220 810

sidebar, check or uncheck the notification boxes to reflect your email preferences, and then click 'Save'. It's recommended to start off having everything ticked to make sure you know when someone is commenting on or retweeting your posts. These emails may become too frequent as your account becomes more popular, but you can easily go back into this setting and turn them off.

Click here for further guidance on signing up for a Twitter account.

b) Sending posts

Type your tweet into the box at the top of your timeline or click the 'Tweet' button. Your post must be 140 characters or fewer – any additional characters will display in red and you will be unable to post until they have been removed. Click 'Tweet' to send your post.

If you want to add a link, simply type or paste the URL link (e.g. mylpc.org.uk/link) into the tweet box. Note that a URL of any length will be altered to 23 characters, so you don't need to worry about including long links.

People on Twitter often use the hashtag symbol (#) before a relevant keyword or phrase (without spaces) in their posts to categorize those tweets and help them show more easily in a Twitter search. Clicking on a hashtagged word in any message shows you all other tweets marked with that keyword.

To attract more attention to your post, you may wish to add an image; you can do this simply by clicking the button when you have the tweet box open. Once a photo is selected, you will see a thumbnail image (or file name) appear as an attachment. You can select up to four images to tweet at once and these won't affect your text character limit. (Twitter will automatically re-size your image to best fit its newsfeed, but you can use this Image Size Cheat Sheet to create images that are a perfect fit.)

Finally, you may wish to pin a post to the top of your Twitter profile to keep it from getting lost in amongst other tweets. To do this, find the tweet, click the ••• button in the bottom-right corner, and select 'Pin to your profile page'. Note, this option is only available after you have posted the tweet.

c) Communicating with others

If you wish to mention another Twitter user in your post, tweet as you normally would but replace any names you include with that person's @username (e.g. "The @PSNCNews website is a really useful resource"). Twitter will recognise this and link to the @username in the tweet and that user will be made aware of the post.

Clicking the icon located at the bottom of a tweet will then display a tweet box with the @username of the account you are replying to automatically added at the beginning of the tweet. You can then easily complete your reply and click 'Tweet' to post it.

You can also 'like' another user's tweet by clicking the icon (previously this looked like a star) or retweet it to your own followers by clicking the icon. Private messaging is also available. To do this, select the 'Message' button on a user's profile page.

Further information

Additional support is available from Twitter's help pages: support.twitter.com

If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require more information please contact Melinda Mabbutt, Communications Officer.