

RCN Social Media Policy 2019

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Introduction

This policy applies to **all RCN elected representatives and members** and is not an exhaustive guide. RCN members should be able to enjoy the benefits of social networking whilst understanding the standards of conduct expected by the RCN.

Other policies to be read and considered include:

- Your local employer IT, social media and disciplinary policies.
- For RCN Accredited representatives, [The RCN Group IT policy](#)
- RCN's Member Resolution policy <https://www.rcn.org.uk/about-us/how-the-rcn-is-governed/our-governance-documents>
- RCN's Respect Charter <https://www.rcn.org.uk/about-us/how-the-rcn-is-governed/our-governance-documents>

For NMC registrants this should also be read in conjunction with:

- The NMC Code (<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/>);
- NMC Social Media Guidance (<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/guidance/social-media-guidance>);

RCN and social media

Social media is defined as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking and used responsibly and appropriately, can offer a range of benefits for RCN members.

The RCN runs official social media accounts to share and cascade important information with members and representatives. They provide an excellent opportunity to engage and reach members across the UK and beyond and are great tools for member networking and support. Social media also plays a pivotal role in RCN campaigns and raising awareness and support for organisational priorities.

Accounts

Whether you have a personal, work or RCN account, this should be managed appropriately, with care taken to ensure the content posted is suitable for the account and complies with applicable policies.

Your privacy

Social networking platforms are in the public domain and while it is advisable to familiarise yourself and appropriately use any privacy settings it is not always possible to be sure what is being viewed, shared or archived, even if material is posted on a closed profile or group. There can be no reasonable expectation that posts will remain private and will not be passed on to other people, intentionally or otherwise. Material published online may have the potential to be available publicly, indefinitely.

Conduct

Users have the right to freedom of thought, opinion and expression and can use social media as a means of communicating these but remember that the same standard of behaviour is expected of you online as it is offline.

Consider your use of language and phrasing, and whether you would be happy for the comments, photographs or videos you have posted, commented on or shared to be seen by fellow members, colleagues, your manager, patients or members of the public.

Users should not post messages, status updates or links to material or content, which is deemed to be inappropriate by the RCN or brings your patients, profession, employer or regulator into disrepute. This content includes: pornography, racial or religious slurs, gender-specific comments, information encouraging criminal skills or terrorism or materials relating to cults, gambling or illegal drugs.

Inappropriate content or material also covers any text, images or other media that would reasonably offend someone on the basis of race, age, sex, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or any other characteristic protected by law. If your employer has a social media policy you may want to review this to see if it provides any further guidance.

Trolling

Remember to remain appropriate, respectful and polite, even when disagreeing with others. You are bound to come across posts with which you don't agree and, by the same token, may yourself post things with which others take issue. This is of course never justification for poor conduct.

In internet slang terms a "troll" is a person who posts something inflammatory, digressive, extraneous or off-topic online, not to engage you in their point of view, but simply in order to provoke an emotional response.

If you see something or receive a message that you don't like consider your options and obligations to the NMC, your employer and the RCN before taking action.

Generally it's not advisable to engage with trolls, that's what they want. You could ignore the message, or unfollow the user, or block the user having no further communication with them. Most of the time they will go away if you don't give them any time or attention.

You may feel it appropriate to reply. If you do respond, try to take as neutral a tone as possible, you could just quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations. If you make a mistake in a contribution be prompt in admitting it and correcting it.

Regardless of whether or not you reply you could consider other options [to deal with unacceptable behaviour](#).

Copyright

The RCN (Royal College of Nursing) is a protected brand and social media pages cannot use the logo or name without permission.

The logo may be used by external organisations that can demonstrate a valid reason for its use and successfully apply through our logo request process. Contact logo.requests@rcn.org.uk for more information.

Dealing with unacceptable behaviour

Often the social media platform will have its own policy and processes for reporting unacceptable behaviour. They may also provide tools to remove, unfollow or block content or users.

If the behaviour is directed at you and is regarding your place of work, place of study or from a work colleague you may want to consider taking action in line with any local policies and the guidance available on the [RCN's bullying and harassment online advice page](#).

Inappropriate behaviour via social media between RCN members may constitute harassment and bullying and can be reported to the RCN Governance department under the Respect Charter. Any complaint may be investigated under the Member Resolution Process 2019.

If the behaviour is directed at you because of any action you have taken on behalf of the RCN, whether that's as a representative, a volunteer or a member please report this using the principles outlined in the RCN's respect charter and the [RCN's managing unacceptable behaviour guidelines for accredited representatives and relevant RCN staff](#).

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