

## Royal College of Nursing: Social Media Policy for RCN Members

<b>1. Overview .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.1. Purpose of policy .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2. RCN corporate social media use and definitions .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Corporate social media .....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Country and regional social media .....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Other staff-led social media .....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Member-led social media accounts.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<b>1.3. WhatsApp groups .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.4. Social media advertising.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.5. RCN logo and brand on social media.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.6. Artificial intelligence and RCN social media .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.7. Imagery and consent .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.8. Other relevant policies and guidance.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2. Royal College of Nursing members and social media.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.1. NMC and employer guidelines .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.2. Expectations and conduct .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>All members .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Elected members .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<b>2.3. Privacy and staying safe online .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>All members .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Elected members .....</i>	<i>10</i>

<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Date finalised by RCN Council</b>	November 2025
<b>Policy owner(s)</b>	Strategic Campaigns and Communications (Social Media)
<b>Key reviewers/sign off</b>	HQ Communications HR Member relations Complaints/Membership Chief of Staff Governance Countries Regions Partnership Forum GMB@RCN
<b>Date for review</b>	November 2026

# 1. Overview

## 1.1. Purpose of policy

- 1.1.1. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and its membership uses social media platforms to reach audiences across the nursing profession, as well as to raise awareness of issues facing nursing staff across the UK.
- 1.1.2. The purpose of this policy is to outline how the RCN uses social media platforms as corporate communications channels, and to provide guidance for members when using social media(s), whether professionally or personally.
- 1.1.3. Breaching of this policy could result in disciplinary action for members (through the [RCN Member Resolution Policy](#)).
- 1.1.4. The policy covers the RCN's use of:
- Facebook (including groups)
  - Instagram
  - LinkedIn
  - Threads
  - Bluesky
  - TikTok
  - YouTube
  - WhatsApp Groups (only)
- 1.1.5. The policy covers the organisation's **approach** to X (formerly Twitter).
- 1.1.6. This policy is not an exhaustive guide and should be used in conjunction with other RCN policies and procedures.

## 1.2. RCN corporate social media use and definitions

- 1.2.1. Social media is defined as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

### ***Corporate social media***

- 1.2.2. The RCN Social Media Team (within the Strategic Communications and Campaigns team) are responsible for the day-to-day running of the RCN's owned corporate social media channels, including:
- Facebook:
    - [Royal College of Nursing](#)
    - [Royal College of Nursing Students](#)
  - Instagram:
    - [Royal College of Nursing](#)
    - [Royal College of Nursing Students](#)
  - [Bluesky](#)
  - [LinkedIn](#)
  - [TikTok](#)
  - [Threads](#)
  - [YouTube](#)
- 1.2.3. As of November 2024, RCN Executive Team and RCN Council made the decision to stop having an active presence on the social media channel X (formerly Twitter).
- 1.2.4. The RCN corporate channels do not cover all regional events and updates, and they only cover a limited number of awareness days each year.
- 1.2.5. The RCN Social Media Team also provide the RCN President with social media support as and when relevant.
- 1.2.6. Member and customer queries on social media are triaged by the Member relations team, and Advice Information Co-ordinators, Monday-Friday 9am-5pm (excluding Bank Holidays).
- 1.2.7. RCN members are not permitted to have administrative access (i.e. log in details) to the RCN's corporate social media channels.

### ***Country and regional social media***

- 1.2.8. Country and regional communication teams are responsible for the running of their devolved social media accounts, with content relevant to their geographical area.
- 1.2.9. RCN affiliated country and regional social media accounts can be found on the [RCN website](#).

### ***Other staff-led social media***

- 1.2.10. There are a limited number of other social media accounts run by staff across the RCN.
- 1.2.11. RCN affiliated staff-led social media accounts can be found on the [RCN website](#).

### ***Member-led social media accounts***

- 1.2.12. Forum, branch and network members are able to request RCN social media accounts if they wish to run these as part of member-to-member engagement.
- 1.2.13. Social media activity is not a requirement for forums, branches and networks or any other member group.
- 1.2.14. All new requests for member-led social media accounts must follow the guidance and the scrutiny process for new accounts . If they fail to do so, they will be asked to retrospectively go through the process, and the HQ Communications team reserves the right to request the account is deactivated if necessary.
- 1.2.15. Members should request detail of this process through their RCN staff contact (such as a Professional lead or Regional Communications Manager) so they can be taken through the process.
- 1.2.16. RCN affiliated member-led social media accounts can be found on the [RCN website](#).

## **1.3. WhatsApp groups**

- 1.3.1. As set out in the RCN WhatsApp Group policy, the definition of an official RCN WhatsApp group is as follows:
  - RCN WhatsApp groups must have at least two members of staff as administrators.
  - An official RCN WhatsApp group can only be set up by the following individuals:
    - RCN member of staff who has up to date mandatory GDPR training
    - RCN rep who has completed Activist Learning and Development GDPR training
    - RCN activist who has completed Activist Learning and Development GDPR training
    - An RCN elected member who has completed Activist Learning and Development GDPR training.
  - RCN WhatsApp groups must have received written permission (email) from an RCN Regional or Country Director, Activism Academy Team Head (or equivalent).

- Any group that is set up outside these parameters will not be considered affiliated with the RCN.

1.3.2. Official member-to-member WhatsApp groups are facilitated by the RCN Activism Academy and some regional and country communications teams.

1.3.3. These groups are considered separate from other social media activity, and their use is covered in the RCN's WhatsApp group policy (available to members on request).

#### **1.4. Social media advertising**

1.4.1. The RCN utilises social media paid advertising to further the organisation's aims (such as member engagement, member and rep recruitment, event promotion).

1.4.2. This includes advertisements on Meta (Instagram & Facebook), LinkedIn, TikTok and YouTube.

1.4.3. As is standard industry practice, the RCN regularly uploads anonymised member data to social media platforms - in accordance with the RCN's data and privacy policies – to use when targeting digital campaigning and marketing activity.

#### **1.5. RCN logo and brand on social media**

1.5.1. The RCN's logo and branding are protected by copyright, and social media pages cannot use the logo or name without permission from the organisation.

1.5.2. 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](mailto:logo.requests@rcn.org.uk) for more information.

#### **1.6. Artificial intelligence and RCN social media**

1.6.1. Artificial intelligence (AI) should be avoided when creating social media content and copy for publishing on RCN social media channels. It may be used by the organisation on occasion to evaluate social media metrics or trends. All AI use will be in line with any organisation-wide approach set by the Executive team.

1.6.2. Any content published on public social media channels that utilises AI-created imagery of the RCN brand or any RCN representatives should be reported to the social media platform for misrepresentation and escalated internally.

## 1.7. Imagery and consent

- 1.7.1. By attending RCN events (including strikes and demonstrations), members and other individuals consent to being photographed (unless otherwise stated), with the possibility of being featured on the RCN's corporate social media channels.
- 1.7.2. The RCN social media channels do not publish photography of identifiable patients in any setting unless they have explicit written consent from the patient.
- 1.7.3. The RCN social media channels aim to only use photography that is less than two years old but may on occasion need to use older/archive images.
- 1.7.4. If any member wishes to withdraw their consent to be featured on RCN social media channels, they are to send [social.media@rcn.org.uk](mailto:social.media@rcn.org.uk) their request with an accompanying picture so the organisation may action this request. We will endeavour to remove the image from our image library if it is also held there.

## 1.8. Other relevant policies and guidance

- RCN social media escalation policy (available to members on request where relevant)
- RCN WhatsApp group policy (available to members on request where relevant)
- RCN Facebook group policy & guidance (available to members on request where relevant)
- New social media account request process (available to members on request where relevant)
- RCN Group Whistleblowing Policy (available to members on request where relevant)
- RCN Disciplinary Procedure (available to members on request where relevant)
- RCN Respect at Work policy (available to members on request where relevant)
- [RCN Member Resolution Policy](#)
- [RCN Privacy policy](#)
- [Dealing with unacceptable behaviour](#)
- [RCN Social media community guidelines](#)
- [RCN Respect Charter](#)

## 2. Royal College of Nursing members and social media

### 2.1. NMC and employer guidelines

- 2.1.1. The Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC) social media guidelines, which set out broad principles to enable RCN members to consider issues and act professionally when using social media, are available to [download on their website](#).
- 2.1.2. RCN members should also abide by their employer social media policies. These policies could be more restrictive than the guidelines set out by the NMC.

### 2.2. Expectations and conduct

#### *All members*

- 2.2.1. All members have the right to freedom of thought, opinion and expression and can use social media as a means of communicating these.
- 2.2.2. When using social media, the same standard of behaviour is expected of members as is offline. This means when posting on social media, abiding by:
- Community guidelines on the platform
  - [The RCN's community guidelines](#) when engaging with RCN social media accounts
  - [The RCN Respect Charter](#) when dealing with any RCN members, staff, accounts, or RCN related topics
  - Zero tolerance for [bullying or harassment](#) of any kind
- 2.2.3. When members are interacting with an RCN social page – for example, commenting on an RCN post – the RCN reserves the right to ban users, report harmful or false content, or hide comments that fall under certain criteria.

#### *Elected members*

- 2.2.4. Elected members do not have to seek permission from the RCN to be active on social media channels.
- 2.2.5. Now the RCN is no longer active on X, elected members are asked to avoid using the platform to represent the RCN in any official capacity.
- 2.2.6. If elected members choose to identify their affiliation with RCN in any of their social media bios, it is advised they include a disclaimer such as: "Views are my own and do not represent the RCN." Please note: disclaimers do not guarantee a separation of personal and professional identity, and are not legally binding.
- 2.2.7. Elected members represent the RCN in a more formal capacity than other members. This means they should be more mindful of how their social media activity



and digital footprint could impact the RCN's reputation. If an elected member posts a comment and/or shares any materials that may impact the RCN's reputation, it may result in a [Member Resolution Policy process](#).

- 2.2.8. Elected members should avoid posting personal criticisms or endorsements of political figures where this could be construed as representing the RCN's position. This applies especially to social media accounts where users are identifiable as RCN elected members.
- 2.2.9. Elected members should act cautiously when interacting with politicians, councillors, or government departments online. Liking, resharing, or replying to political content may be interpreted as an official RCN stance. Where political engagement is required from an organisational standpoint, it should be managed through formal communications channels.
- 2.2.10. If elected members receive queries via social media related to the RCN, they are encouraged to direct these to the main RCN account on that platform to get official responses from RCN staff.

### **2.3. Privacy and staying safe online**

#### ***All members***

- 2.3.1. RCN members should ensure they are familiar with the [NMC Code](#) which all nursing staff registered with the NMC are committed to upholding to protect the privacy of themselves, patients, staff, and others.
- 2.3.2. When posting on social media, members must assume nothing is truly private and everything can be potentially made public indefinitely. Even posts on private accounts or closed groups can be screenshotted and shared without consent, and posts which have been deleted can be retrieved.
- 2.3.3. It is recommended that members always check the privacy settings on any social media platform they use, and ensure their data and profile are protected.
- 2.3.4. Where possible, members are encouraged to use multi-factor authentication to protect their social media accounts from being hacked.
- 2.3.5. Members must remember to remain appropriate, respectful and polite, even when disagreeing with others. Disagreement is never a justification for poor conduct.
- 2.3.6. On social media, a "troll" is a person who posts something inflammatory, digressive, extraneous or off-topic online, not to engage other users in their point of view, but simply in order to provoke an emotional response. If RCN members see something or receive a message that they find concerning, they should consider their

options and obligations to the NMC, their overall wellbeing, their employer and the RCN before taking action.

2.3.7. Generally, it's not advisable to engage with trolls. Members are encouraged to consider ignoring the message, unfollowing the user, or blocking the user, having no further communication with them.

2.3.8. If members decide to respond to trolls, they are encouraged to take as neutral a tone as possible and correct misrepresentations.

2.3.9. Regardless of whether or not they choose to reply, members are also encouraged to consider other options to [deal with unacceptable behaviour](#).

2.3.10. If social media is impacting members' wellbeing, they should seek support from their employer, including any employee assistance programmes, or contact the RCN for support.

#### ***Elected members***

2.3.11. Elected members should not be using social media for any RCN decision making processes. This includes WhatsApp. Only official RCN channels should be used for this.

For any questions regarding this policy, please contact the RCN Social Media team on [social.media@rcn.org.uk](mailto:social.media@rcn.org.uk).