

Social media use

During the COVID-19 crisis nursing staff will turn, like everyone else, to online communication to keep in touch and to connect with their communities.

Quite rightly, there is unprecedented interest in the experiences of nursing staff on the front line of the pandemic and concern for their welfare. Importantly, nursing staff have raised issues like lack of PPE and testing that influence government policy. They must continue to speak up.

Some members have reported pressure from their employer not to mention difficulties. Whilst sympathising with the challenges faced by employers, they must continue to draw attention to their own concerns. Nursing staff are in a unique position to provide the evidence that will lead to improvement.

The purpose of this guidance is to encourage you to keep pressing for safety improvements, but to do so in ways that will not risk damage to your career. Some disputes with employers and referrals to the NMC have arisen from the use of social media during the emergency. We want to alert you to potential problems, so that they can be avoided.

Using social media safely

The [NMC Code](#) has a section specifically devoted to the use of social media, as follows:

“Use all forms of spoken, written and digital communication (including social media and networking sites) responsibly.” (The Code, paragraph 20.10)

The [NMC has also produced a useful guide](#) that sets out uses of social media that might breach sections of the Code.

Recently, the NMC has received some referrals to their Fitness to Practise Directorate involving the use of social media. These include posting misinformation about the virus, promoting sales of dubious products, inappropriate information about an employer or inappropriate comments about individuals. Hopefully, these cases will be resolved without long term difficulty, but registered nurses must remain aware that they are exposed to more scrutiny than the general public. Anything posted can end up in a public place, even if originally covered by privacy settings.

Those working in unregistered positions can be disciplined by an employer for unprofessional social media use.

How to raise concerns safely

The RCN guidance on [raising concerns](#) will lead you step by step through the process.

Social media attacks

A few members have become the victims of trolling online. If this happens to you, you can escalate the matter to your manager and your HR department may become involved. They could even involve the police. The RCN advises members to not engage with trolls and to seek RCN support.

And remember, the RCN is here to support you. We are actively challenging local and UK-wide issues on your behalf. Come to us first by speaking to your RCN advisers or your local rep. Please visit our [Get help](#) pages or telephone 0345 772 6100