

Social Media Policy for employees, office and post holding Members, other College members and patient and carer representatives

January 2024

1. Purpose of the document

This document highlights how the College expects all employees, Members and patient and carer representatives to conduct themselves on social media and social networking sites, when publishing internet posts or blogs, or when creating any other form of online material.

It applies to use which is related in any way to the College and the work of the College, as well as personal use that may affect the College in any way.

It also includes a reminder to all College members of the requirement to comply with the General Medical Council's guidance relating to social media.

Nothing in this policy is intended to suppress or prevent open, respectful discussion and debate.

2. Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all employees, workers, Members and patient and carer representatives.

For the purpose of this policy, "**Members**" means any member of the College who is also a Senior College Office Holder or Other College Post Holder.

Section 9 applies to members of the College who are not 'Members'.

3. What do we mean by social media

By 'social media' we mean X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Tumblr, WordPress or any other online platform where comments can be published to a network of people, which can be viewed publicly, shared and/or commented on. It also includes your responses to other people's content.

4. Using personal social media accounts to promote and discuss the work of the College

The College welcomes employees, Members and patient and carer representatives supporting College communications by promoting positive messages about the work of the College on social media.

There are many ways to do this, including:

- a) Re-tweeting or sharing tweets/posts from College accounts.
- b) Liking tweets or posts published by the College.
- c) Creating your own posts/tweets to publish positive messages about the work of the College and your work area in particular.
- d) Positively and respectfully engaging the wider public in the work of the College and psychiatry.

Have separate accounts for work use and personal use if possible

We ask that, rather than having social media accounts on which you publish posts about both your work and your personal life, you consider having separate accounts for each where possible.

Creating separate accounts for work and personal content will help to ensure that:

- a) you are able to tailor your posts appropriately to the target audience, and
- b) you are able to keep a clear separation between your professional and personal posts.

Please bear in mind, however, that even if you do have separate accounts for work and personal purposes, when you are posting from a personal account (particularly one which is publicly accessible) you may still be seen as connected to or affiliated with the College.

We therefore ask that you bear in mind and adhere to the values and Codes of Conduct of the College whenever posting content which relates to the College, the work of the College, your role with the College or which may affect the College in any way.

Bios

If as an employee, Member or patient and carer representative, you have set up a social media account on which you post content which is partially or entirely related to the work of the College, we ask that you make clear the nature of your affiliation with the College in your bio, and that you keep it up to date.

If you disclose your affiliation with us on your profile or any social media postings, you must include the disclaimer “all views are my own” (or otherwise make clear that your views do not represent those of the College) in your bio or post.

Posting content and commenting

When posting content or commenting on social media, you should be mindful that your posts or comments can have implications for the College's business and reputation. This includes posts and comments which relate to the College, its work or your role with the College, but also to personal posts and comments where you have outlined your affiliation with the College in your bio (or your affiliation with the College is otherwise known or apparent).

You should therefore ensure that your posts and comments don't contravene College values, any applicable College Code of Conduct or any other professional rules or Codes of Conduct which may apply to you.

Employees, Members and patient and carer representatives who have responsibility for relationships with politicians, decision makers and/or stakeholder organisations must take particular care if they have personal accounts and use these to promote College work. In such circumstances, you should not make statements that are overtly political or that could compromise College stakeholder and decision maker relationships.

More information about the behaviours and conduct expected from you when using social media, where such use has or may have an effect on the College or its work, is provided in Section 6 below.

Responding to negative comments about the College or College work

Please avoid responding to negative comments about the College on behalf of the College. Instead raise the negative comments with the College's Digital team in the first instance.

If you feel you are being harassed or bullied on social media, please refer to Section 7 of this document.

Doctors using personal social media for work reasons

Members who are practising doctors should familiarise themselves, and comply at all times, with the General Medical Council's guidance on Good medical practice and its specific guidance Doctors' use of social media.

- [Good medical practice](#)
- [Doctors' use of social media](#)

This policy is intended to be supplementary to the GMC guidance outlined above.

5. Using RCPsych social media accounts to promote and discuss the work of the College

The College has accounts on a range of social media channels including X, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. We also have a wide range of accounts on X.

If you wish to create a new College social media account, please do not do so without contacting the Head of Digital first, who will explain the process.

If you manage one of these accounts, please note the College's policy to use only the College's standard logo as the account's profile picture (that is, the logo at the top of this document). The only exceptions are for accounts which represent parts of the College which have their own recognised logo, for example the NCCMH.

If you post, comment or otherwise create content on a College account, you must comply with the expected behaviours and conduct set out in Section 6 of this document.

The College's Digital team has also produced guidelines to make sure what we publish on our social media channels is consistent in terms of design and tone of voice. Please ensure that you comply with these style guides when using College social media accounts. For more information please refer to our style guides:

- [Style guide for X \(formerly Twitter\)](#)
- [Style guide for Facebook](#)
- [Style guide for YouTube](#)
- [Style guide for Instagram](#)

6. Standards of behaviour and conduct when using social media

Employees, Members and patient and carer representatives using social media (as described in section 3 above), where such use relates to the College, the work of the College, their role with the College or which may affect the College in any way, must comply with the following standards of behaviour and conduct at all times:

- 1) You are personally responsible for your posts and comments, which will be published on the internet and may be viewed publicly. They can be hard to delete once published and may remain online for a long time. Reflect carefully on these guidelines below before publishing content or commenting.

Make sure content and comments are appropriate

- 2) You should take care, and use your best judgment, to ensure that you post material and make comments that are appropriate, respectful and do not contravene any applicable rules, regulations or laws.
- 3) Each social media channel has a set of terms and conditions, including around appropriate use; you should be familiar with these and comply with them.
- 4) If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from posting it until you have discussed it with your line manager or other appropriate manager or senior College member.

Be respectful

- 5) Respect other people; posts and comments should not be abusive, intimidating, harassing, discriminatory, defamatory or offensive in nature, and should not be made to deliberately provoke others. We recommend that replies to any disagreements or negative comments are kept polite and professional at all times, regardless of how hostile or challenging these may be. One should remain mindful and understanding of differences of experiences. It might at times be preferable to 'agree to disagree' without getting into protracted debates.
- 6) If, in the context of content or a post relating to the College or its work, you feel provoked by what you consider to be a negative or personal comment, please try not to respond and contact the RCPsych Digital Team in the first instance.

Do not publish inappropriate content or comments

- 7) Do not publish content or images which:
 - Are defamatory or disparaging.
 - Are harassing or bullying.
 - Are discriminatory.
 - Are false or misleading, or impersonate colleagues or third parties.

Do not damage the College's reputation

- 8) Be aware of the effects your actions on social media may have on your professional reputation, as well as the reputation of the RCPsych as an organisation and its employees and Members (in the broader sense of the definition). You must avoid making any social media communications that could damage the reputation of the RCPsych.
- 9) You must not express opinions on our behalf via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so by your manager or a senior College member.

Do not publish confidential information

- 10) Do not publish, post or release anything publicly which is confidential or not intended to be seen by the public. For example, you must not post comments about sensitive business-related topics or do anything to jeopardise our confidential information or intellectual property. If you are unsure about when is considered confidential, please check with the Human Resources department.
- 11) When posting in relation to the work of the College, do not promote commercial products and services.
- 12) Be very cautious about revealing personal details about yourself, and do not reveal personal details about other people. Don't reveal personal contact details such as phone numbers, email addresses or postal addresses.

- 13) When publishing in relation to a College event, please make sure the speaker has given permission for the talk to be covered on social media, and/or for pictures of the speaker and their slides to be published (as applicable). There are some instances where social media coverage of any form is prohibited, or information from some slides is not for sharing more broadly than with those in the room. There are also instances where photos and videos are not permitted. It is important to always understand the policy at any given event, and seek consent for publication before doing so.

Comply with safeguarding and GDPR requirements

- 14) When publishing content and images, please comply with the College's policy on safeguarding and GDPR, and seek consent from any applicable third parties in advance of publication.
- You must get appropriate permission before referring to, or posting content or images relating to, current or former employees, workers, Members (in the broader sense of the definition), patient and carer representatives, vendors or suppliers.
 - You must get appropriate permission to use a third party's copyrighted or trademarked material, or other intellectual property (including text, quotes, logos and images).
 - When posting a picture be careful not to include confidential information or information you have not obtained consent to post by mistake, including (but not limited to) addresses on envelopes or stickers on laptops.
- 15) If as an employee you have concerns about the mental or physical wellbeing of someone who gets in touch via one of the College social media accounts, please contact the Public Information and Engagement Manager who deals with incoming calls from members of the public concerning mental health issues.

Refer media queries to the College

- 16) If you are approached by the media on social media, please refer the enquiry to the media team, in the Strategic Communications department.

Adhere to College values and codes of conduct

- 17) The [College's values](#) underpin everything we do and must be taken into account when posting in relation to RCPsych or its work, and in circumstances where your post may affect the College in any way. Below are each value and the behaviours which we expect from our employees, Members and patient and carer representatives:
- **Courage**
 - Champion the specialty of psychiatry and its benefits to patients
 - Take every opportunity to promote and influence the mental health agenda

- Take pride in our organisation and demonstrate self-belief
- Promote parity of esteem
- Uphold the dignity of those affected by mental illness, intellectual disabilities and developmental disorders
- **Innovation**
 - Embrace innovation and improve ways to deliver services
 - Challenge ourselves and be open to new ideas
 - Seek out and lead on new and, where possible, evidence-based, ways of working
 - Have the confidence to take considered risks
 - Embrace the methodology of Quality Improvement to improve mental health services and the work of the College
- **Respect**
 - Promote diversity and challenge inequalities
 - Behave respectfully – and with courtesy – towards everyone
 - Challenge bullying and inappropriate behaviour
 - Value everyone's input and ideas equally
 - Consider how own behaviour might affect others
 - Respect the environment and promote sustainability
- **Collaboration**
 - Work together as One College – incorporating all Members, employees, patients and carers
 - Work professionally and constructively with partner organisations
 - Consult all relevant audiences to achieve effective outcomes for the College
 - Work together with patients and carers as equal partners
 - Be transparent, wherever possible and appropriate
- **Learning**
 - Learn from all experiences
 - Share our learning and empower others to do the same

- Value and encourage personal feedback
- Use feedback to make continuous improvements
- Create an enabling environment where everyone is listened to, regardless of seniority
- Positively embrace new ways of working

- **Excellence**

- Deliver outstanding service to Members, patients, carers and other stakeholders
- Promote excellent membership and employee experience
- Always seek to improve on own performance
- Promote professionalism by acting with integrity and behaving responsibly
- Demonstrate accountability in all that we do
- Uphold the College's '[Core Values for Psychiatrists](#)'

18) In addition Members should take into account the RCPsych Core values for psychiatrists:

- **Communication:** successful conveying or sharing of information, ideas and feelings
- **Dignity:** being worthy of respect
- **Empathy:** showing the ability to understand and share the feelings of another
- **Fairness:** treating people equally without favouritism or discrimination
- **Honesty:** truthful and sincere
- **Humility:** having a modest view of one's importance
- **Respect:** due regard for the feelings, wishes or rights of others
- **Trust:** firm belief in the reliability, truth or ability of someone

19) Members should also take into account the RCPsych Framework for Senior College Office Holders and Other College Post Holders and comply with the associated Code of Conduct.

Report misuse of social media to the College

- 20) If you become aware of any misuse of social media, or if you see social media content which disparages or reflects poorly on the College, you should report this to the College's Head of Digital.

7. If you feel you are being bullied or harassed

We encourage employees, Members and patient and carer representatives to block, and if appropriate report, any users they feel are bullying, harassing or insulting them on their personal social media accounts.

If you feel you are being bullied or harassed on a College social media account, or by a College member of employees, Member or patient and carer representative, please refer to the applicable College anti-bullying and harassment policy for further information on how to escalate your concerns.

8. Breaches of this policy

All employees, Members and carer and patient representatives are required to adhere to this policy.

Staff should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action under the applicable College disciplinary policy. Serious breaches of this policy - for example, incidents of bullying or harassment of colleagues, or social media activity causing serious damage to the College or its reputation - may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to summary dismissal.

Any individual suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to cooperate with any associated investigation we may carry out.

You may be required to remove any social media content that we consider to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

9. For other College members

Other College members who are practising doctors are reminded that they should familiarise themselves and comply at all times with the General Medical Council's guidance Good medical practice and its specific guidance Doctors' use of social media.

- [Good medical practice](#)
- [Doctors' use of social media](#)

10. The status of this policy

This policy does not form part of the contracts of employment of any College employees or workers, and we may amend it from time to time as we consider appropriate.

11. Kate's Twitter tips

Twitter (now known as X) is the most heavily used social media platform by College staff and Members. The College's Dean from 2016-2021, Dr Kate Lovett, shares her tips below on how to successfully run a Twitter account.

Kate's Twitter Tips



<https://youtu.be/V9FGFOU0JHQ>