



The **ROYAL COLLEGE** of
OPHTHALMOLOGISTS

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

A guide for staff, volunteers and members on using social media to promote the work of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists and in a personal capacity.

This policy applies to all current and future social media platforms used by the College and will be reviewed every two years. We will amend this policy, following consultation, where appropriate.

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1. Introduction

What is social media?

Social media is the term given to web-based tools and applications that enable users to create and share content – words, images and video – and network with each other by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. Examples of social media include LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram.

Why do we use social media?

Social media is a key communications tool for the College. It enables us to engage with our audience, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of our work.

Why do we need a social media policy?

The difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to the College or our work. While we encourage the use of social media, we have certain standards, outlined in this policy, that we require everyone to observe. Publication and commentary on social media carry similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to College staff, trustees and volunteers, and to members when representing the College or engaging in College-related social media activity. It applies to content posted on both College-owned and personal devices. Before engaging in work-related social media activity, staff must read this policy.

Setting out the social media policy

This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of the College, and the use of social media by staff, trustees and volunteers in both a professional and personal capacity. It sets out what you need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to help you support our official social media profile on LinkedIn, while protecting the College and its reputation and preventing any legal issues.

2. Governance and access

Internet access and monitoring usage

There are currently no access restrictions to social media sites in the College. However, staff must adhere to the Staff Handbook, which states that personal use of social media during working hours is not permitted, regardless of device or internet connection, and is only permitted during designated breaks.

Point of contact for social media

Our Communications team is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our social media channels. If you have specific questions about any aspect of these channels, please speak to the Communications team. No other staff member can post content on the College's official channels.

This applies to the College's corporate social media channels. Other College-affiliated channels (such as publications including Eye) may be managed by designated individuals or teams, with appropriate oversight and in alignment with this policy.

Which social media channels do we use?

The College currently uses LinkedIn to connect with members and other organisations and individuals with interests in the ophthalmology and associated specialties. Our posts promote achievements and activities that demonstrate expertise and leadership, highlight the benefits of College membership, and publicise volunteering opportunities and staff vacancies.

We have previously used:

- X (Twitter). We ceased actively posting in August 2025 and made our account dormant in January 2026.
- Facebook. We ceased actively using Facebook in 2024.

We continually explore the potential of other social media channels to engage with our audiences.

3. Guidelines on appropriate conduct

Using and engaging with the College's social media channels

Account management

The Communications team is responsible for setting up and managing the College's social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the Director of Policy and Engagement will have access to these accounts.

Staff contributions

If staff outside of the Communications team wish to contribute content for College social media, whether free or paid for advertising, they should speak to the team about this.

Monitoring and social listening

We monitor our social media channels during UK office hours: Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. In specific circumstances, such as during a crisis or key event, we may monitor them during evenings and weekends. At times we may use social listening tools to monitor public mentions of the College.

Content standards

Our social media content should:

- reflect the College's values
- support the College's strategic aims
- provide value to our audiences
- respond to comments in a timely and respectful manner where appropriate.

Safeguarding and consent

We make every effort to incorporate digital safeguarding best practice in all our social media activity. We will not tolerate abuse and will take necessary action if it occurs.

We take care with the presentation of content to ensure it is inclusive and accessible and we check to make sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors. We also check the quality of images.

If using interviews, videos or photos that identify an individual, we will ensure that the appropriate consent is obtained prior to publication. The intended use of the content must be clearly explained in advance, and individuals should be given the opportunity to object or opt out where appropriate. Where children or young people are involved, consent must be obtained from a parent or guardian.

Legal and safety considerations

We will not:

- Encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others to gather materials. For example, a video of a stunt.
- Encourage people to break the law to supply material for social media, such as using unauthorised video footage.
- Breach copyright or licensing requirements when publishing material.

AI-generated content

Where artificial intelligence (AI) tools are used to generate text, images or video for social media content, this material must be reviewed by the Communications team before publication. Staff should ensure that AI-generated content is accurate, does not breach copyright, and does not misrepresent the College's views or expertise. AI-generated images or text should not be used in ways that could mislead audiences about real people, events or research.

Political neutrality

The College is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We have every right to express views on policy, including the policies of parties.

Complaints management

If a complaint is made on the College's social media channels, the Communications team will assess the nature of the issue and consult with the Director of Policy and Engagement and any relevant department directors to agree an appropriate response. Depending on the nature of the concern, this may be managed in line with the College's [Complaints Policy](#), Staff Handbook (including disciplinary or grievance procedures), Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy, or Whistleblowing Policy.

Crisis escalation

Sometimes issues can arise on social media that can escalate into a crisis because they are sensitive or risk serious damage to the College's reputation. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the College.

The Communications team regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of the College so we can catch any issues or problems early. If there is an issue that could develop or has already developed into a crisis, the Communications team will work with the College's crisis response team to manage it.

Staff and volunteers are encouraged to engage with (like, comment, reshare etc.) the College's social media posts. This provides a human voice, raises our profile, and helps boost the reach of our messaging. However, when doing so they should refrain from offering personal opinions that conflict with College positions. If you are in doubt about the College's position on a particular issue, please speak to the Policy team.

Staff and volunteers should not set up public-facing groups, pages, accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of the College or any College committee without approval from the Communications team. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness and dilute our impact. By having official social media accounts in place, the Communications team can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following and narrative.

This does not prevent the use of informal communication tools (such as messaging apps) for operational purposes, provided these are not presented as official College channels.

If any volunteer or member of staff outside of the Communications team becomes aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on the College's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the Director of Policy and Engagement immediately.

Safeguarding and dealing with abuse

We will not tolerate abuse on our social media profiles. Comments that use offensive or abusive language will be muted or removed and may be reported. Accounts that repeatedly mention or tag the College in such posts will be blocked.

Using personal social media accounts

This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media but instead flags up those areas in which conflicts might arise. College staff and volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with College values, both online and in real life.

Doctors should refer to the General Medical Council's guidance on [Using social media as a medical professional](#).

Responsible posting

Before posting, we recommend that social media users always:

- pause and think
- check facts and verify information – use a reputable fact checking tool and being wary of photo manipulation
- correct mistakes openly if they occur.

Representing the College

Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive the College. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the College. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about the College's work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the College's positions, policies or opinions" or "Opinions are my own and not the views of the College." Reposting content can reasonably be perceived as endorsing it and you should be cautious of sharing information that could be inaccurate.

College staff and members should not post content about members without their express permission. If staff, volunteers or members are sharing information about members or third-party organisations, this content should be clearly labelled so our audiences know it has not come directly from the College.

Those in senior and specialist roles who are well known in their field of expertise must take particular care as personal views published may be misunderstood as expressing the College's view.

Participating in online panels, webinars and speaking engagements

Staff and volunteers who participate in online events, panel discussions, podcasts or webinars that are promoted or shared on social media should make clear whether they are speaking in a personal capacity or representing the College. Where individuals are asked to comment on issues relating to College policy or positions, they should consult the Policy and Engagement department in advance. If the event is recorded or shared publicly online, participants should assume the content may circulate on social media.

Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with the College and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself.

Media enquiries

If a staff member or volunteer is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to the College, they should talk to the Communications team immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.

Logo and trademark use

Never use College logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the Communications team.

Privacy and personal safety

Always protect yourself and the College. Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information. Your published content is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so do consider the content carefully.

Respectful posting

Think about your reputation as well as the College's. Express your opinions and deal with differences of opinion respectfully. Do not insult people or treat them badly. Passionate discussions and debates are fine, but you should always be respectful of others and their opinions. Be polite and the first to correct your own mistakes.

4. Legal and regulatory guidance

When using social media in either a professional or personal capacity, staff and volunteers should be aware of the following legal and regulatory considerations.

Confidentiality

Any communications that members or staff make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that the College is not ready to disclose yet, such as a news story that is embargoed for a particular date.

Any actual or suspected confidentiality or personal data breach arising from social media activity must be reported immediately to the Director of People and Resources/Data Protection Lead in line with the Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy.

The General Medical Council offers guidance on respecting patient confidentiality, privacy and dignity [here](#).

Libel

Libel is when a false written statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published online or in print. Whether you are posting content on social media as part of your job or in a personal capacity, you should not bring the College into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

Copyright law

It is critical that we abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Never use or adapt someone else's images or written content without permission. Failing to acknowledge the source/author/resource citation, where permission has been given to reproduce content, is also considered a breach of copyright.

Discrimination and harassment

You should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official College social media channel or a personal account. For example:

- making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief
- using social media to bully another individual
- posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content.

Accessibility

To demonstrate our value of inclusion, we endeavour to ensure our social media is as accessible as possible. This includes:

- using plain English, accessible fonts and avoiding small text sizes
- using contrasting colours
- using subtitles where appropriate
- using alt text for videos and images
- referring to the [RNIB accessible social media checklist](#).

Lobbying Act

Charities are legally allowed to campaign to bring about a change in policy or law to further their organisational purpose. In most cases, spending on charity campaigns that are in accordance with charity law will not be regulated under electoral law. However, the Lobbying Act, which was passed in January 2014, states that during national elections (known as regulated periods) spending on campaigning activities may be regulated.

Charities that spend more than £20,000 in England or £10,000 in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, during the regulated period, need to register with the Electoral Commission. To abide by the Lobbying Act, campaigning activities on social media must not be seen as intending to influence people's voting choice.

5. Recruitment considerations

Recruitment should be carried out in accordance with relevant associated procedures and guidelines. Any advertising of vacancies should be done through the People and Resources department. College staff and volunteering vacancies are shared routinely on LinkedIn.

There should be no systematic or routine checking of candidates' online social media activities during the recruitment process, as this may introduce bias and conflict with the College's commitment to fair and inclusive recruitment practices.

However, in limited circumstances, the College may carry out targeted and proportionate checks of publicly available social media content after interview and prior to appointment, where there is a legitimate business need. Any such checks will be undertaken in a fair and consistent manner, and in line with relevant data protection requirements.

6. Protection and intervention

The responsibility for measures of protection and intervention lies first with the social media site itself. Different social media sites offer different models of interventions in different areas. For more information, refer to the guidance available on the social media site itself. However, if a staff member considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the Director of People and Resources immediately.

7. Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of the College is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect.

Employees may be subject to disciplinary action. For volunteers and others acting on behalf of the College, breaches may result in removal from role, withdrawal of responsibilities, suspension from College activity, complaints action, or other action under the governing documents and Code of Conduct. Anyone who is unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy should seek advice from the Director of Policy and Engagement.

8. Related policies and guidance

Please refer to:

- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Code of Conduct
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy
- [Staff Handbook](#)
- Whistleblowing Policy
- The General Medical Council's [Using social media as a medical professional](#) guidance.