

Social media policy

1. About this policy

- 1.1. We encourage all our social media account managers to champion occupational therapists and the profession. We want them to feel confident and safe in the way they operate on social media. The purpose of this policy is to set clear rules and guidelines for the use of social media platforms by all RCOT colleagues, volunteers, and representatives of RCOT, in both professional and personal lives, so that we all operate safely and with one voice.
- 1.2. This policy applies to all social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube, Threads, and any other social networking sites. It applies to all types of social media activity, including posting, commenting, liking, and sharing.
- 1.3. Our policies are here to encourage a diverse and inclusive workplace where we can support individual needs and encourage a sense of belonging. They apply to all RCOT colleagues, volunteers, and representatives of RCOT, regardless of race, sex, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression or gender reassignment.
- 1.4. Any questions regarding this policy, and/or the practical use of social media, should be directed to the Social Media Lead.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. For the purposes of this document:
 - a **social media platform** is a tool that enables people to create, share and exchange information and content with others. Examples of social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X (Twitter) and TikTok
 - a **social media account** is what users create on a social media platform to be able to use it
 - a **social media profile page** is where an account's content is published. It also has information about the account owner at the top. It's represented by a hyperlink known as a handle which will always start with an @ symbol, for example [@theRCOT](#). Profile pages can be made private by changing the settings.
 - a **social media group** is an online community of users on a social media platform that have a shared interest. The group can be public or private. Not all social media platforms have this function.
 - a **campaign** refers to three posts or more on the same topic.
 - an **'if asked' document** refers to a list of questions and answers prepared in advance of a campaign launch (three posts or more on a project, report or event) so that you are prepared to respond to queries from our community.

- 2.2. We refer to different types of social media accounts in this document. These accounts will have been set up either as RCOT accounts for the purposes of the organisation or personal accounts for personal purposes.
- 2.3. We believe there should be three kinds of RCOT accounts:
- **Main accounts** are the core RCOT social media accounts run by the Profile and Campaigns team to promote the work of our entire organisation and the power of occupational therapy. These accounts are for sharing messaging that aligns with our strategy.
 - **Team accounts** are managed by an RCOT team and set up only when there is a need to share niche topics with a specific target audience. These accounts must be aligned to the main account, and they must follow the order of publication. Not all teams need an account; they are the exception rather than the rule. New accounts must be approved by the Social Media Lead.
 - **Community accounts** are accounts that used to represent a Specialist Section or region, run by volunteers to promote occupational therapy and their work. They are for sharing posts about niche topics relevant to their target audience. We are not issuing new community accounts at this time. We are reviewing the future of Community accounts in line with the development of the new Communities model and Volunteers strategy. We will be updating this policy in line with the results of that review.
- 2.4. There are two different forms of personal accounts:
- **Personal professional accounts** are a personal account used by a member of SLT or Council, a colleague, or a volunteer to enhance their professional profile. These accounts can also be used to promote the work of their team/branch and/or region, to share RCOT key messaging, and to advocate for occupational therapy.
 - **Personal accounts** are accounts used by RCOT colleagues and volunteers primarily for personal use but may also be used on occasion to promote occupational therapy and RCOT. Members' accounts used for either personal or professional use are also referred to as personal accounts.
- 2.5. We have previously set up **Individual RCOT accounts** with the same purpose as RCOT team accounts but run in an individual's name. We still have some of these legacy accounts but will no longer be setting them up. We believe it's better for the organisation to manage an RCOT community via a team account in case individuals move on. Over time, we will be phasing out existing individual RCOT accounts. Until then, existing accounts must follow the rules set out for team accounts, except for their accounts requiring two admins. For individual accounts, only the owner of the account is required to be an admin.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to anyone using social media representing RCOT on any type of social media platform. This includes all colleagues (including those on fixed-term contracts), external contractors, consultants, agency workers, members and volunteers, or any self-employed individuals working for us or on our behalf. This policy is non-contractual and may be varied, replaced, or withdrawn by us at our discretion.

- 3.2. It applies at any time, not just during office hours, whether the social media platform is accessed using our IT facilities and equipment or your own equipment.

4. Why we use social media

- 4.1. For a great number of us, social media has become a big part of our day-to-day lives. We recognise that many of our jobs and volunteer roles are enhanced by its use, and some roles may come with an established social media account and the requirement to engage in social media activity.
- 4.2. When used effectively, social media can be a great medium to:
- speak directly with members, improving our understanding of their needs, opinions, and priorities, and to make them aware of the work we are doing on their behalf
 - network and build a community of interest with key influencers in a specific field of practice, positioning ourselves, and RCOT, as a leading voice within the profession
 - raise the profile of the profession and our brand amongst the occupational therapy community (including members and non-members), the public, thought leaders, policy makers and other key stakeholders.
- 4.3. Due to its reach and public nature, social media also carries risks that other communication channels don't. That's why it's essential for everyone using social media to follow this policy and associated guidance.

5. Essential guidance

- 5.1. As elsewhere when we represent RCOT, on social media we act in line with our values and our EDB goals and we reflect the expectations we set for our members in our professional standards and ethics:
- [RCOT Professional standards and ethics](#)
 - [Values](#)
 - [Equity, Diversity and Belonging strategy](#)
- 5.2. Occupational therapists must meet the Health and Care Professions Council's (HCPC) standards when using social media:
- [HCPC guidance on social media](#)
- 5.3. Each social media platform's policy must also be followed. This includes but is not limited to:
- [X \(Twitter\)](#)
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [LinkedIn](#)
 - [Instagram](#)
 - [TikTok](#)

- [Threads](#)
- [YouTube](#)

5.4. It is the responsibility of all individuals to make sure that they are abiding by the policy of any platforms they use.

6. Social media accounts

Account manager responsibilities

6.1. Main accounts

- Owned by the Profile and Campaigns team.
- Passwords must be kept in a password-protected Excel document.
- Passwords must be changed at least every six months to reduce the risk of hacking.
- Two-factor authentication must be set up on all platforms to reduce the risk of hacking.

6.2. Team accounts

- Managed by a member(s) of a specific RCOT team and owned by the Social Media Lead.
- Passwords must be changed at least every six months to reduce the risk of hacking.
- Login details must be shared with the Social Media Lead. This is for the protection of the accounts and retrieval should those running them move into a different role or leave RCOT.
- Admins must stay up to date with best social media practice by reading guidance shared and accepting learning and development opportunities offered.
- Team accounts must remain active, posting at least once a month. If there isn't any activity for three months or longer, the account will be closed. A message will be shared from the account a week before to make followers aware that the account is closing and directing them to the main account instead.
- Two-factor authentication must be set up on all platforms to reduce the risk of hacking.

6.3. Community accounts

- Owned by us and managed by volunteer admins from the Communities.
- Passwords must be changed at least every six months to reduce the risk of hacking.
- Login details must be provided to the main RCOT Social Media Lead. This is for the protection of the accounts and retrieval should those running them move into a different role or leave RCOT.
- Admins of community accounts are representing RCOT through their personal accounts and their behaviour as admins. Admins must not post anything on any RCOT profile pages or groups they are managing that could generate negative reactions and/or damage the reputation of RCOT.
- Admins of community accounts must ensure that the profile images of any personal accounts they use as admins are suitable as they will be visible when they post on any

RCOT profile pages and groups. If the profile image on an admin's personal profile is deemed unsuitable by the Communities and Connections team, then the admin must either change the profile picture, set up a professional profile to use as admin instead, or be removed from admin duties.

- When posting from the community accounts, it is the responsibility of the admins to behave in a way that nurtures and grows the community and makes all members of the community feel welcome and included.
- Community accounts must remain active, posting at least once a month. If there isn't any activity for three months or longer, the account will be closed. A message will be shared a week before to make followers aware that the account is closing and directing them to the main account instead.
- Two-factor authentication must be set up on all platforms to reduce the risk of hacking.

6.4. Professional accounts (including SLT and Council accounts)

- Two-factor authentication must be set up on all platforms to reduce the risk of hacking.
- Owned by the individual.
- Passwords should be changed at least every six months to reduce the risk of hacking.
- Two-factor authentication should be set up on all platforms to reduce the risk of hacking.

Setting up a new account

6.5. To support us in speaking with one voice and delivering messages in a consistent way, we will manage the setting up of all new RCOT social media accounts.

6.6. All new team and community accounts must be approved before being set up.

- To get approval, complete the application form. Team accounts will be reviewed and approved by the Social Media Lead. Community accounts will be reviewed and approved by the Communities team, working with the Social Media Lead.
- Each team and community can only have one account on each platform.

6.7. Individual accounts will no longer be set up; team accounts or professional personal accounts will be used instead. Professional personal accounts are for personal use and therefore the responsibility of the account owner. They do not need to be approved.

Personal use of social media

6.8. We expect all RCOT employees to uphold our values, especially in the public arena. This applies to all social media activity, including from personal accounts.

6.9. As set out in our standards of professionalism and ethics for our members, we also expect our staff to reflect on and take responsibility for the way you use social media. Conduct yourself on social media in a way that doesn't undermine confidence in you as a professional, or RCOT as your employer.

6.10. Professional account holders are responsible for ensuring that any business contact is entirely appropriate and in accordance with all our policies, procedures, professional standards and values.

- 6.11. Both professional and personal account holders are encouraged to re-share content from RCOT accounts on to their own with comments of support.
- 6.12. Council members/ trustees must ensure that their use of social media abides by the fundamental values that underpin all the activity of this organisation, as set out in the Trustee/Directors Code of Conduct. Trustees/Council members should pay particular attention to the section in the Code of Conduct titled “protecting the organisation’s reputation” when using social media.

7. How we communicate

How we present ourselves

- 7.1. All RCOT main, team and community accounts must follow brand guidelines. This includes the tone of voice, logos, handles and imagery.
- 7.2. Professional and personal accounts must not use RCOT branding. There will be exceptions to this, such as the CEO. Exceptions will need Social Media Lead approval.

How we post

- 7.3. To create the most impact, the following types of content will be published by the main accounts first, before being shared by other account types:
 - All news and statements from RCOT, unless alternative plans have been agreed with the Social Media Lead. These decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. Any statements to be signed off by relevant stakeholders before publication.
 - Organisation-wide strategic projects or campaigns.
 - RCOT’s largest events: Annual Conference, Casson Memorial Lecture.
 - Annual RCOT reports and projects.
 - RCOT internal job adverts.
- 7.4. If in doubt, wait for publication by the main accounts first or check with the Social Media Lead.
- 7.5. There will be exceptions where team accounts will post first, when it’s specifically relevant to their area of business. These exceptions will be agreed in advance with the Social Media Lead on an ad-hoc basis. An example is something that is region-specific which would primarily be of interest to the audience of a specific account, for example, the appointment of a new First Minister of Scotland.
- 7.6. Once content has been shared by the main accounts (or team accounts if agreed in advance), RCOT colleagues and volunteers are encouraged to share on their own profile pages and groups. Comments of support, in line with this policy, can be added when sharing. It’s important to tag the main accounts into any shares to show that we are aligned and not operating in isolation.
- 7.7. We understand that there may be times when RCOT account managers don’t agree with what is posted by the main accounts. If that’s the case, then refrain from sharing, and do not share

any public messaging that contradict or criticise RCOT's messaging, positions, or policy. Instead, share your concerns internally with your line manager if you're a member of staff or email hello@rcot.co.uk if you're a member.

- 7.8. As representatives of RCOT (this includes main, team, community, and professional accounts), we must always endeavour to share diverse voices, images, and videos.
- 7.9. Before posting, check your facts and ensure you have evidence.
- 7.10. When communications about campaigns are published on the main account, we will have created 'if asked' lines.
- 7.11. Always think twice before sharing anything, to be completely sure it's appropriate for a public channel.

Accessibility

- 7.12. All accounts must follow our social media accessibility guide when posting, to make sure we provide a smooth, accessible experience for all on our social channels. We must:
 - use accessible language
 - add alt text to all imagery and video
 - add closed captions on videos
 - make sure background noise is kept to a minimum in videos. If the sound quality is not clear, we should not post.

Sharing content

- 7.13. Our social media strategy sets out the type of content that we post to help us to achieve our [strategic priorities](#).
- 7.14. The following guidelines must be followed when considering what content to share:
 - Requests for the main account to share content from outside of RCOT will be reviewed by the Social Media Lead and, where applicable, it will need to go through the endorsement process first. Content will only be shared when it clearly links to RCOT's strategic priorities, supports our social media communities, and at a time when there is space in the content schedule. This will be done sparingly as occupational therapy and RCOT's work is the focus for all RCOT accounts. The resources will only be shared if they don't present a conflict of interest.
 - Requests for team accounts to share content from outside of RCOT will need to be approved by the account manager, working with the Social Media Lead to decide if the requests support RCOT's strategic priorities and that account's social media community. This should be done sparingly as RCOT's work should be the focus for all RCOT accounts. The resources will only be shared if they don't present a conflict of interest.
 - Requests for community accounts to share content from outside of RCOT will need to be approved by the Communities team, working with the Social Media Lead, to decide if the requests support RCOT's strategic priorities and that account's social media community. This should be done sparingly as RCOT's work should be the focus for all RCOT accounts.

The resources will only be shared if they don't present a conflict of interest.

- Requests for surveys and/or questionnaires to be shared must only be accepted if they are relevant to our members and fit in with our current business plan. Also, surveys created by community members must comply with the standards laid out on the branch [resources page](#).
- RCOT internal job vacancies will be posted by the Brand and Marketing Services team on the main channel first. Promotion on social media of external job vacancies is managed by the Commercial Partnerships and Delivery team.

8. Risk management

- 8.1. Before posting, all account managers must consider if the way the copy is written, the accompanying imagery/video, or the type of post it is (for example, a poll), could offend or incite negative commentary, and make changes if it could. If in doubt, seek help and advice from the Social Media Lead.

The traffic light system

- 8.2. We follow a traffic light system to support decision-making when creating social media content for, and managing conversations with, the main accounts.
- 8.3. The system has three colour categories of risk: red is the highest, then amber and then green.
- 8.4. The system document lists key topics and according to the level of potential reputational risk, the Social Media Lead allocates a colour category and a named lead who is the subject matter expert.
- 8.5. It is a live document and can change depending on the risk levels. It is given an overall review quarterly.
- 8.6. All content and potential responses being shared by the main and team accounts that are 'red' must be approved by the Social Media Lead and Head of Profile and Campaigns before being published. Potential 'if asked' questions for any 'red' content or potential conversations must be prepared in advance, for conversation management and to ensure all angles have been considered thoroughly.
- 8.7. All content shared by the main and team accounts about 'amber' topics must be approved by the named lead before being shared.
- 8.8. Named leads must be available as soon as possible for consultation if their advice is needed to respond to a question asked by a member. Our aim is to respond to direct questions within 48 hours (in a working week).

Managing difficult conversations

- 8.9. If something you've shared on social media receives negative commentary (one negative response or more), this could put our reputation at risk. Contact the Social Media Lead for advice on how to respond and monitor. You can also refer to our guide to Staying safe on social media.

- 8.10. Do not delete a post or comment unless asked to do so by the Social Media Lead. Each case will be different and will need a separate discussion with the Social Media Lead on what action to take. It can be scary to receive a negative comment, but it's important to not ignore it as this can make things worse. If you are unsure on whether a comment is negative, always err on the side of caution and check it with the Social Media Lead.
- 8.11. If you don't know the answer to a question you've been asked, either be honest and offer the person an email address of someone who can answer it or try and find out the answer from a colleague for them. Make sure that you have the agreement of the email address owner before sharing their email address.
- 8.12. If a conversation/question is complicated or ongoing, we will aim to move it off social media as quickly as possible as it is a public forum. We will offer an email address for them to contact us on instead. Make sure that you have the agreement of the email address owner before sharing their email address.
- 8.13. Do not weigh into arguments within the occupational therapy community. If you see a conversation happening where we could provide a factual and balanced response to clarify a position from RCOT, contact the Social Media Lead.
- 8.14. If you believe that you have received more than just a negative comment and that you are experiencing online abuse, then refer to the [Get Safe Online website](#) for support.

Protecting intellectual property

- 8.15. When posting on social media:
- only use RCOT logos and branding for the purposes of RCOT business and in line with our brand guidelines. Contact the Marketing Services team for support with this
 - reference sources of information, imagery and videos you post or upload and cite them accurately
 - follow [copyright restrictions on images](#)
 - ensure you have written approval from anyone featured in any videos, images or pictures, before publishing.

Protecting confidential information

- 8.16. All RCOT colleagues, volunteers and members, and representatives of RCOT, are prohibited from using social media to:
- breach any obligations they may have relating to confidentiality, including embargoes
 - post anything related to colleagues, members, clients, business partners, vendors, any other affiliates or other stakeholders, without their permission. Read our [Data protection policy](#) for more information.

Protecting RCOT's and your reputation

- 8.17. All RCOT colleagues, volunteers and members, and representatives of RCOT, are prohibited from using social media to:

- communicate anything that might defame or damage the reputation of our organisation, staff, members, clients, business partners, suppliers, vendors, any other affiliates, or stakeholders
- communicate anything on social media that might defame or damage the reputation of other companies and individuals
- breach any other laws or ethical standards (for example, never use social media in a false or misleading way, such as by claiming to be someone other than yourself or by making misleading statements)
- post anything that could be interpreted as RCOT as an organisation being in favour of any political party, candidate or politician.

8.18. All RCOT colleagues, volunteers and members, and representatives of RCOT, must report the following:

- any accounts that use RCOT branding on their profiles and/or groups if they are not official. If you believe you have found a fake account, report it to the Social Media Lead. Don't approach them directly.
- any posts by a partner we're working with that could damage our reputation. Report it to the Social Media Lead in the first instance to discuss the best course of action.

Safeguarding

8.19. All RCOT colleagues, volunteers and members, and representatives of RCOT, are prohibited from using any type of social media account to:

- harass, bully or carelessly inflict damage to anyone in any way
- unlawfully discriminate against anyone

Online safety

8.20. Phishing is the fraudulent practice of sending messages purporting to be from reputable companies to induce individuals to reveal information, such as passwords and credit card numbers. They will quite often include a link which, if clicked on, will take you to a phishing website or infect your computer with malware. To protect yourself and RCOT from being phished on social media, follow the [Staying safe on social media](#) . If you believe that a cyber security breach has taken place, notify [Wavex immediately via wavex@service-now.com](mailto:wavex@service-now.com).

9. Breaching policy

9.1. Social media must never be used in a way that breaches any of our or the platforms' policies. Any potential or actual breaches of this policy must be reported to the Social Media Lead. If the alleged breach is substantiated, appropriate action will be taken in a timely manner.

- For staff, this will be in accordance with RCOT's disciplinary procedures.
- For members, Council will be notified and [this guidance on revoking professional](#)

membership will be followed for any circumstance where an individual may be bringing the organisation directly into disrepute.

- For volunteers, they will be removed from being admins of any community accounts (this includes both channels and groups), and [this guidance](#) on revoking professional membership will be followed for any circumstance where an individual may be bringing the organisation directly into disrepute.

10. Monitoring and review

10.1. This policy will be reviewed after 12 months, and every two years after that, unless otherwise required. As a level four policy, updates or recommendations for change will require approval from the Director of Brand and Marketing.