

Using social media

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Introduction

The COSRT Social Media Practice Guidelines are intended to provide Members with basic guidance on the use of Social Media. They should be read in conjunction with the COSRT Code of Ethics and any guidance that employers may provide. The principles in these Guidelines apply to all forms of on-line communication, whether written, verbal or visual. Social Media can be a valuable and efficient tool if used responsibly and can have benefits for COSRT Members including:

- Building professional relationships
- Establishing a network of like-minded professionals for the benefit of sharing research and clinical experience
- Accessing resources for continuing CPD

However, the use of Social Media can also lead to unexpected and serious difficulties for the unwary. Members are strongly advised to inform themselves, e.g., by undergoing training, before becoming active on social media.

Social media practice

Every Member of COSRT should consider the following points, which are given to aid you in your decision-making regarding interactions on social media:

- Always behave on Social Media in a professional way and act within the COSRT Code of Ethics.
- Be aware that confidentiality may be limited within social media.
- Realise that what is said as a private person may be understood as being said on behalf of COSRT. Members must take care not to mislead the public into thinking that they are speaking on behalf of COSRT.
- Respect the privacy of others, do not make statements that could have a negative impact on COSRT its Members, operations, staff, guests, service users or brand.
- Be aware of the need to protect personal data of others and to comply with GDPR law.
- Do not post information or images relating to COSRT, its Members, staff, service users or guests without permission.
- Protect confidential information from improper disclosure and unauthorised communication.
- Be cautious about posting personal or confidential information.
- You are advised to be cautious in any communication via Social Media with service users. It is recommended that this position is made explicitly clear in your service user agreement, as refusal to communicate in this medium can cause offense if the reasons are not clearly understood.
- If you use email as a communication medium with service users, make sure that confidentiality settings are annotated correctly to avoid inappropriate invitations to service users from your email address e.g., through linked in, Facebook etc
- Do not be dishonest in social media postings.

- Accept responsibility for what you have posted.
- Be aware that endorsing another's post can imply that you endorse or support their viewpoint, and this could lead to you being mentioned by others in posts inappropriately.
- Realise that information shared online can easily become 'viral' and be shared with a far-reaching audience.
- Be aware that any activity on Social Media may be visible to others and may cause offence.
- Never bully, exploit or intimidate people.
- Never use a third party's identity.
- Never incite hatred or discrimination.
- Avoid inflammatory language and provoking unnecessary arguments.
- Respect the rights of people you are posting about and the opinions of others.
- Do not post anything that offends accepted social standards of decency.
- Be aware that it may not be possible to fully delete information posted online.
- Be aware that your online activities (such as researching service users or colleagues) may be visible to others and may cause offence.

If you are media-wary or media-negative interacting on social media may not be for you; you may well reinforce your own negative expectations. Plus, you may not be able to build the cooperative relationship with the media that will allow you to influence followers in a positive direction.

Remember

- Stop and think before you post.
- Always consider the possible implications for you, your practice and COSRT.
- Always act within the COSRT Code of Ethics.