

This guide will take you through the social media landscape with guidance on the following:



Purpose of the introduction to social media document



### What is the purpose of this document?

To support and guide members in the effective and appropriate use of social media as representatives of the occupational therapy profession. It provides an informative introduction to using online communities highlighting both opportunities and risks.

We hope it will encourage members to begin exploring social media and underpin the work of occupational therapists, support workers and students who are already engaging online.





## 2 Key documents

Best practice in all professional behaviour should always be governed by the following documents:

 Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Occupational Therapists

(College of Occupational Therapists, 2015)

 Professional Standards for Occupational Therapy Practice

(College of Occupational Therapists, 2015)

<u>Using social media</u>
 (College of Occupational Therapists, 2015)

It is very important you read and adhere to your employer's social media policy and guidelines. You should also read the <u>Heath and Care Professions</u>

<u>Council guidance on social media.</u>



What is social media?



## 3 What is social media?

Put simply, "social media" refers to numerous online communities (or platforms) through which you can communicate with others.

Social media enables you to communicate with individuals or groups of people around the world, and is a tool for social learning. The essence of social media is conversations.

Social media allows you to engage in conversations with a variety of people on different topics.

As an occupational therapist you can use social media to:

 Meet your CPD needs through discussions with RCOT, other occupational therapists, and experts and educators from around the world and to reach a wider audience online.

## 3 What is social media?

- Keep up-to-date on news, information and policy matters at RCOT, within the occupational therapy profession and health and social care
- Share your views and comments with RCOT or let other professional organisations know your views on their work
- Engage in and support critical reflection
- Influence health organisations or the government on matters of policy

The best way to learn about a social media platform is to have a look around at how other people are using it. When you feel ready, you can join in.



**Twitter** 



Snapchat



Facebook



Pinterest



Linkedin



Instagram



You Tube



Whatsapp



### Benefits of social media

How can social media help you in a professional context?

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How can social media help you in a professional context?

### **Build professional networks**

Social media allows you to make connections with a wide variety of people – you can connect with other occupational therapists, engage with professional bodies, charities or other relevant organisations, or listen to your service users to understand what their needs are.

Building strong professional networks gives you opportunities to influence your profession, share best practice, promote awareness and understanding of occupational therapy and increase demand for occupational therapy services.

### Increase your knowledge and skills

You can use social media to gain access to resources, learning tools, and to keep up-to-date on news stories and developments relevant to your field. RCOT's Specialist Sections and Regional groups are active on social media. You can also follow or lead discussions on subjects that will help with your professional development. Social media is a valuable tool for CPD.

Access to such wide networks of occupational therapists and other professionals around the world also gives you the chance to learn about innovative practice and political developments on a national and international scale and to influence those developments yourself. Furthermore, online technology is enabling innovative service delivery and changing the way that professionals work with service users, which you may wish to adapt to your own practice.

You can find more information in the Resources section of this document.

### Understand your service users' needs

Even if you don't use social media yourself, it is likely that you have service users for whom social media use is a meaningful occupation, or who could benefit from the networks that social media offer. For example, a service user may find it difficult to interact face-to-face but easier to share their views online.

### Benefits of social media

How can social media help you in a professional context?

### Understanding the benefits and risks

Social media can enable you to point service users towards useful networks and to help them to use online platforms safely and securely.

#### Become a leader

As you gain confidence and understanding in using social media channels, you can use your presence on these networks to direct your followers towards useful information and resources, share your own experiences and knowledge, promote occupational therapy and its benefits and provide advice to service users or members of the public. Please see the FAQs section in these guidelines for information on how to safely share advice online.

### Raise the profile of your profession

Social media provides a unique opportunity for you to share best practice and successes. You have the opportunity to connect with people who may not know anything about occupational therapy, and what you say can be shared by others to reach an even wider circle. You can use these platforms to raise awareness amongst the general public, tell the media about events and activities or influence commissioners. You can also raise the profile of your business if you are in independent practice.

### Make your voice heard

Social media offers individuals the opportunity to talk directly to key influencers and leaders within their profession and related industries, members of the media, professional bodies and the general public.

You have the opportunity to have your say in important developments or bring neglected issues to the public's attention. For example, 'the ice bucket challenge' was a campaign run by a health charity which gained worldwide recognition very quickly via social media.

Many organisations, including RCOT, are keen to hear from members and interested parties on their opinions about a range of topics, including how the organisation is run.

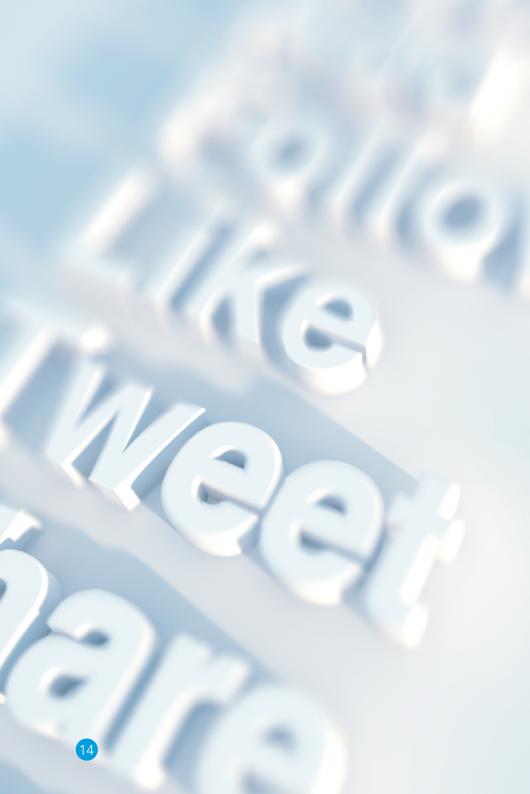
Make your voice heard.

Find out how you can promote occupational therapy



### Effective social media use

Tips on how to get the most out of social media





### Understand the different networks

Different platforms have different tones and uses. If you know what you want to get out of using social media, you will find it easier to go to the right places to get it (see appendix 1)

### Be professional

Normal rules of professional behaviour apply online in the same way they do offline. Keep in mind the image that you are portraying, and maintain confidentiality, sensitivity and security of information (e.g. if information is intended for a particular membership only) at all times.

Before you put these tips into action, the next section will explain some of the risks involved in using social media and how you can protect yourself against them.



Risks of social media

# 6 Risks of social media

### Potential pitfalls you should be aware of and how can you avoid them

If using social media is a new skill, you may occasionally make mistakes, but this is all part of the learning process. In this section you can learn how to best equip yourself to navigate the terrain without any problems.

### **Different voices**

When you enter the world of social media, you will find that there are many different people speaking, and if you use these tools successfully you may find a lot of them wanting to interact with you.

### How do you pick out the voices that you want to follow?

You can control who you follow, and if people are communicating content that is mostly not relevant to your needs or interests then you can remove them from your feed. Choose the people and discussions that are most useful to you. It is important to understand what you want to gain from using social media in order to narrow your focus to a level that is easily manageable for you.

Just because someone speaks with authority, this does not necessarily mean that they are an expert. Check who people are before you take what they are saying on face value. Be critical of what you read on social media.

You can use tools such as Wakelet (<u>www.wakelet.com</u>) and Scoop.it (<u>www.scoop.it</u>) to collect hashtag conversations together or to collect information on a particular topic.

### How do you manage the demands on your time?

Social media does require an investment in time, so you may want to restrict the number of platforms that you use. Allocate a certain amount of time regularly; it may help to prioritise your time to catch up on discussions. Be clear on your organisation's rules concerning use of social media during work hours.

### **Trolls**

Trolls are unpleasant individuals who post aggressive, threatening or hurtful content on social media platforms

# 6 Risks of social media

directed at other individuals or organisations. There has been a great deal of publicity around trolls in the media, but they are very rare.

Ignore them. If someone is sending you content that is upsetting or inappropriate, delete it and block that person from your profile.

You may also wish to report that person to the social media platform administrator concerned.

Make sure that you distinguish between abusive behaviour and complaints. Some users of social media may have genuine concerns or complaints that they wish to raise, and they should not be ignored. Negative comments can be viewed as an opportunity for you to raise awareness on a subject or to listen to feedback from service users. If you receive a complaint or negative comment through social media and don't feel you are able to respond yourself, you can either ask your line manager for help or refer the person to someone who can help, possibly BAOT/RCOT.

### Public spaces and security

It is easy to forget in social media spaces that everything you say is public. Security settings do not necessarily guarantee that your content will stay private. It is best to assume that everything you post on social media is available to everyone, including friends, strangers, colleagues, potential employers, and members of the media. Behaviour online, with regards to staying safe and acting professionally, is no different to behaviour offline.

Before you post anything to <u>Twitter</u>, <u>Facebook</u>, or any other social network, ask yourself if you would say this in front of your grandmother or your manager. If the answer is no, then don't post it.

Normal professional practice principles apply to your activity on social media, even if using a personal rather than professional account, so maintain confidentiality and sensitivity at all times.

You should never disclose information that makes your service users identifiable.

# 6 Risks of social media

Be aware of security with regards to any information or resources that you distribute. Some documents or other resources may be restricted in the audience that they should be made available to (for example, some documents available for download from the RCOT website are for BAOT members only). Check with the owner of the resource or your line manager if you are unsure.

Do not share personal contact details, bank information, or anything else that you do not wish to be publicly available.

If you are joining or creating a group, be aware of whether it is open or closed (see <u>Glossary</u>) and who can see the content.

Do not make sweeping negative comments about an individual or organisation, as this could be libellous. It is usually better to keep posts general, rather than singling out one person or organisation. Any message that could be construed as a threat, even if intended as a joke, could be grounds for legal action against you.

Professional or academic disputes should be dealt with through appropriate, official channels, not online.

Bear in mind that it can be incredibly difficult to remove content from social media. Even if you delete a post or a tweet, this may already have been shared, which means it now exists within other users' newsfeeds and can still be viewed. Search engines can sometimes pick up deleted content, and website caches provide access to old or deleted content. It is easy for other users to copy or take screen shots of your content and then share these after you have removed the content from your own account. Assume that everything you write on social media will be permanent, and think before you post.

In short, maintain positive, professional behaviour, and you will be fine. Professional behaviour is the same online as offline.

Information on privacy settings for each platform can be found in chapter 9.

### (6) Quick guide: Do's and don'ts



make connections with a range of health and social care professionals and service users

join in conversations about health and social care topics

record your social media CPD activity

take the opportunity to talk about your profession and its unique value

talk to professional organisations and policy makers about your views on important issues

assume that everything you post is public and can be seen by everyone (imagine your grandmother and manager are reading your posts)

assume that everything you post will be available online forever

share news, information and knowledge that will be interesting to your followers

be positive, professional and engaging



### Don't..

disclose confidential information about a service user or information that could be used to identify them

use bad language or language that could be considered rude, aggressive or insulting

share resources without checking that they are intended for public circulation

engage with trolls or people who are aggressive to you – ignore and block them

ignore genuine concerns or complaints – discuss the issue or refer them to someone who can help

discuss professional or academic disputes online

share personal contact details, bank information, or anything else that you do not want to be publicly available

share content that is malicious or inappropriate

criticise fellow colleagues



Principles for using social media

Five core principles





#### **Professionalism**

Apply the same standards of behavior online as are required offline.

### Confidentiality

Never share or disclose personal information online.

### **Accuracy**

Check the accuracy and sensitivity of information before posting online.

### **Publicising**

Check all your posts before making them public as it's likely that your employer, colleagues, friends and family will be able to view them once you have clicked submit.

### **Permanency**

Remember once something is posted online it's very difficult to remove it.



Social media platforms (Appendix 1)



### Social media platforms (Appendix 1)



#### Twitter

Twitter allows users to send short tweets messages of up to 280 characters. This is best suited to sharing news or short, "punchy" updates. You can choose to follow people relevant to your interests, and their tweets will appear in your newsfeed. You can also join in or follow conversations using hashtags, such as #OTalk or #ValueOfOT. (see index).

www.twitter.com



### Facebook

Facebook allows users to set up a profile giving information about themselves, and to share updates, photos and recommended webpages with people they have added as friends. On Facebook you can choose to participate in groups and follow pages belonging to organisations that interest you.

www.facebook.com



#### LinkedIn

A professional networking site, LinkedIn allow users to make connections with other professionals and to follow organisations and join discussion groups relevant to their professional interests. Organisations often make webinars, podcasts and job opportunities available through their LinkedIn pages.

www.linkedin.com



### YouTube

YouTube allows you to view and post videos on any subject, from educational or information videos, to clips of events and presentations.

www.youtube.com



#### **Pinterest**

Pinterest is an online pinboard and is a great resource for therapy ideas. It focuses on visual content, allowing you to collect images on a theme



### Social media platforms (Appendix 1)

or subject of your choosing on a selection of boards. These images will most often link to other websites or resources.

www.pinterest.com



#### **Slideshare**

<u>Slideshare</u> allows you to share PowerPoint presentations online.

www.slideshare.net



### Instagram

<u>Instagram</u> allows you to customise and share photographs and short-form videos..

www.instagram.com



#### **Flickr**

<u>Flickr</u> allows you to share photograph albums. www.flickr.com



### **Blogs**

A blog is an online journal. You can use blogs to reflect on your practice, share information and ideas on a particular topic, and to prompt discussion on a particular issue.

A number of blogging platforms are available, including

www.wordpress.com and www.blogger.com
The Royal College of Occupational Therapists
hosts its own blog on its website rcot.co.uk/blogs



### Whatsapp

<u>WhatsApp</u> is a messaging app that uses the internet to share messages, photos, videos and make phonecalls. <u>www.whatsapp.com</u>



### Snapchat

Snapchat is a mobile app that lets you share photos, videos with your contacts, but each message is only available for a limited period of time. It became well-known for its range of photo filters. www.snapchat.com







If you have concerns about privacy on any particular social media platform, please see the privacy settings page in the links below:

- **Twitter**
- Facebook
- <u>LinkedIn</u>
- YouTube
- <u>Pinterest</u>
- <u>Slideshare</u>
- <u>Instagram</u>
- <u>Flickr</u>
- Snapchat















contents



How to get started on social media





If you are wondering how to get started, all the links to different social media platforms are below to help you:

- **Twitter**
- <u>Facebook</u>
- <u>LinkedIn</u>
- **YouTube**
- **Pinterest**
- Snapchat
- <u>Instagram</u>
- **WhatsApp**





















## 11) Frequently asked questions

N.B. Most employers and organisations will have a social media policy guidance. We recommend that you check and adhere to any local recommendations and you will also need to meet your regulatory body requirements.

#### Can I use social media for CPD?

Certainly! Social media offers rich opportunities for continuing professional development, including the opportunity to discuss professional issues with other occupational therapists and your professional body. The HCPC will accept social media activity as part of your CPD portfolio if you are selected for audit, and you can discuss with the HCPC and with RCOT's Education Manager for Lifelong Learning on how best to record and reference this activity. Remember to conform to confidentiality requirements.

### Should I have separate accounts for personal and professional use?

Some people prefer to completely separate their professional life from their personal life. You should check

# 11) Frequently asked questions

the terms of use of the platform you are using, however; <u>Facebook</u>, for example, does not allow multiple accounts and if you are found to be using more than one profile these may be deleted.

Many professionals choose to set up a dedicated professional account, please check with your employer if you plan to use this within your role.

It is often easy to locate multiple accounts, so it may not be possible to keep content posted on your "personal" account hidden from those following you on your "professional" account. You should still maintain a level of responsible, professional behaviour on your personal account and you should never discuss individual service users on social media.

### Should I use my real name?

Some social media users do use a pseudonym to protect their identity. If you have a strong reason for wishing to do so, then it is certainly possible. However, we would strongly advise you to use your real name or a name by which you can be recognised. This makes you identifiable and accountable, and more credible. It also allows you to build a professional network which is accessible to you offline as well as online, and to build a professional reputation.

### Should I list where I work on my profile?

There are many benefits to identifying the type of work you do in your biography (e.g. "OT Support Worker in secure mental health unit"). However, if you are going to list the particular organisation or Trust where you work on a very open site like <a href="Iwitter">Iwitter</a>, then you should let your line manager know as they may consider that you are then officially representing the organisation in your social media activity. A note in your biography eg "All opinions expressed here are my own" will not provide immunity if you express unprofessional views and it is safer to consider that all interactions are professional.

# 11) Frequently asked questions

<u>LinkedIn</u> will include details of your work history as that is its function.

<u>Facebook</u> encourages users to list their employer on their profile.

Twitter allows you to complete a short biography where you can add your profile.

### How do I get more followers?

By following other people and joining in conversations. Find people who you are interested in – search for fellow occupational therapists, healthcare sector workers, hospitals, charities, etc. See who they are following to give you more ideas of who may be useful to you. If a conversation is happening around a topic that you are interested in or knowledgeable about, don't be afraid to join in. Look out for useful hashtag discussions or groups where you can discuss issues with like-minded people. Keep sharing useful content that your followers will want to share. As people begin to notice the value of your discussions, more people will want to follow you.

### Should I give advice to service users on social media platforms?

A service can provide generic information via social media e.g. how to look after your wrist splint, but an individual should never offer one-to-one advice with a service user. An individual (personal account) should not develop a social media 'relationship' with a service user. Normal professional behaviour applies online as well as offline and generic advice through social media should only be done with your organisation/manager's consent. Never disclose any personal information about your service users online. If someone asks for your advice, you may want to signpost useful sources of information, such as the RCOT website (www.rcot.co.uk), or avenues for finding an occupational therapist, such as their GP or the RCOT Independent Practice directory (www.cotss-ip.org.uk/).

### Should I allow service users to become friends with me on <u>Facebook</u>?

The RCOT Code of Ethics section 4.2 explains the need to maintain a professional relationship with service users. Connecting on a personal networking site like <u>Facebook</u> is not compatible with a strictly professional relationship.

Be aware that service users may choose to follow you on <u>Twitter</u>, and you will have no control over that. You will not see their tweets unless you also follow them, but they will see yours.

### Should I post content on behalf of my organisation?

Yes, but you should not speak for your organisation without first discussing it with your line manager. It is not advisable to comment on matters of policy without first discussing the issue with the members of staff in your organisation responsible for determining that policy.

Also, you should not share documents or publications without checking that these are intended for free public availability.

### How can I control who sees my content?

Most platforms have security settings that allow you to restrict who can see your content, and most allow you to send private messages, which are only visible to the sender and receiver and do not show up in public newsfeeds.

It is important to note, however, that these methods are not infallible. It is best to assume that nothing you post online is ever entirely private.



Glossary (Appendix 2)

# (12) Glossary (Appendix 2)

### **Biography**

A summary of who you are, which can contain your interests, occupation, specialism, hobbies or any other information you wish to include, which will be shown on your personal page on the social network.

### **Board** (on <u>Pinterest</u>)

On <u>Pinterest</u> you create individual pages, known as boards, which represent a particular topic or theme. You can choose which pieces of content (usually images taken from other websites) you would like to place on each board.

#### Follow / Unfollow

On <u>Twitter</u> (and some other social networking sites) you can choose to follow other people or organisations, which means that the content they share will show up in your newsfeed. You can reverse this decision by visiting their profile – when you hover over the "Following" box you will be given the option to "Unfollow". They will not be notified that you have done so.

#### Friend / Unfriend

On Facebook, if you wish to connect with another person, you send them a friend request by visiting their profile page and clicking on the "Add Friend" button. They are then given the chance to accept or reject this request. If they accept, you will then be connected: their content will show up in your newsfeed and your content will show up in theirs.

If you decide that you are not interested in their content or not comfortable being connected to this person, you can disconnect from (or "unfriend") them by visiting their profile, clicking on the "Friend" button at the top of their page and selecting the "Unfriend" option. They will not be notified that you have done so.

### **Friend Request**

If you receive a friend request, <u>Facebook</u> will notify you that someone has requested to be your friend. If you wish to go ahead and connect to that person, click "Confirm". You will then be able to see each other's

# (12) Glossary (Appendix 2)

content, your updates will appear in their newsfeed, and their updates will appear in yours. If you do not know this person or for any reason do not wish to connect with that person then simply click "Ignore". This request will remain on your friend request page until you visit that page and click "Delete Request". You are under no obligation to respond to friend requests and the other person will only receive a notification if you accept their request, not if you ignore or delete it.

### Group (on Facebook)

Groups are pages on Facebook where individuals gather around a particular area of interest. They enable discussion and sharing of information. Some groups are "open", which means that all content is visible to all Facebook users, whereas others are "closed" which means a user needs to join the group in order to see the content. Sometimes your request to join will need to be approved by a group administrator.

### Hashtag

Hashtags are most commonly used on <u>Twitter</u>, or on photo-sharing sites like <u>Instagram</u>. They can also be used on <u>Facebook</u>, but they are less popular and less effective. A hashtag is used to identify a particular topic to make it searchable. This means that if you are having a discussion on a particular issue, you can include a hashtag to enable you to follow all contributions.

You do this by including the # symbol followed by your chosen word or phrase (do not include punctuation or spaces). For example, if you are tweeting from the RCOT Annual Conference 2019, you can include the hashtag #RCOT2019 in your tweet; when you then search for #RCOT2019 you will see all the tweets that refer to the conference, making it easier for you to join in the discussion and see what information has been posted.

### **Like** (on <u>Facebook</u>)

Under any piece of content on <u>Facebook</u> you will see a "Like" option. You can click that if you find the

information interesting or engaging. The person who posted that content will be notified. If you post interesting or entertaining content, you will find that your friends will "like" it. When someone likes your post, this post will show up in their newsfeed and be visible to all their friends (including those that are not your "friends" on Facebook).

### Newsfeed (feed)

Your newsfeed (sometimes referred to as your "feed") is the content that is displayed on the homepage of a social networking site. This is all the content that has been posted by the people that you follow or are friends with.

### Page (on Facebook)

A "page" can be created by an organisation or celebrity to provide updates about their work, projects and events. You can search for people or organisations that are of interest to you and then click "Like" on their page to have their updates appear in your newsfeed.

#### **Platform**

Platform is the term that refers to a particular social networking software provider. The term "platform" just refers to the individual website. Facebook is a platform, Twitter is a platform. Think of it as the stage on which your content stands.

### Podcast / Vlog

A podcast is an audio recording of a speech or discussion, normally quite short, that can be downloaded or streamed from the internet. Vlogs are the same, but use video. Many organisations offer podcasts or vlogs to provide regular informative broadcasts to users. Some radio shows offer podcasts, which will be a summary of recent shows or extra content packaged in a downloadable or streamable format.

### **Post**

A post is a piece of content or message that you are putting onto a social networking site (such as a tweet

# (12) Glossary (Appendix 2)

on <u>Twitter</u> or a status update on <u>Facebook</u>). The act of placing that message online is called "posting".

### **Security settings**

Some social networking sites allow you to restrict who can see your content – each platform has different mechanisms for doing this, but you can find details on their site.

#### **Share**

On <u>Facebook</u>, underneath every post you will see a "Share" option. If you click on this, it will show up in your newsfeed and be visible to all your friends. <u>Twitter</u> has a similar mechanism, called "Retweet" – simply click on this button underneath someone else's tweet for that tweet to be displayed to your followers.

### Status update

On the homepage of <u>Facebook</u> you will see a white bar that asks you to update your friends on what you are doing, thinking or feeling. This is called your status

update. It will show up on your profile and appear in your friends' newsfeeds.

#### **Stream**

You can "stream" audio or video content by listening or watching directly through the internet without downloading or uploading a file.

#### **Tweet**

Each message you post on <u>Twitter</u> is called a "tweet". Your tweets will appear in the newsfeed of those who are following you. Your newsfeed will contain the tweets of all those you are following. Bear in mind that even people who are not following you can see your tweets through searches or referrals unless you have made your account private in your security settings.

#### Webinar

A webinar is an online seminar, usually involving the host showing a presentation on a website. Participants can view the presentation and contribute using a messaging service (or by phone)



# 13 Index: who to follow

Suggestions of people, organisations, groups and discussions that you may find useful on social media		Specialist Sections	
platforms:		@RCOT CYPF	Children, Young People & Families
Twitter		@RCOT Housing	Housing
Who to follow at RCOT		@RCOT IP	Independent Practice
@theRCOT	Royal College of Occupational Therapists	@RCOT_MH_	Mental Health
@RCOTstudents	RCOT's Education Manager, supporting current and prospective students	@RCOT NP	Neurological Practice
		@RCOT OP	Older People
@EnquiriesRCOT	RCOT's Professional Enquiries Service	@RCOT OPC	Oncology and Palliative Care
		@RCOT PLD	People with Learning Disabilities
		@RCOT TMH	Trauma and Musculoskeletal Health
		@RCOT_Work	Work

## 13 Index: who to follow

### **Facebook**

Royal College of Occupational Therapists

### **Specialist Sections:**

RCOT Specialist Section Children and Young People

**RCOT Specialist Section** Mental Health

RCOT Specialist Section Neurological Practice

RCOT Specialist Section People with Learning Disabilities

RCOT Specialist Section Trauma and Musculoskeletal Health

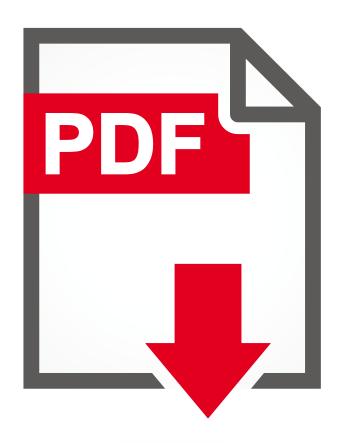
**RCOT Specialist Section** Independent Practice

RCOT Specialist Section Oncology and Palliative Care

**RCOT Specialist Section** Work



Further reading





• HR and Social Media in the NHS: The Essential Guide for HR Directors and Managers

NHS Employers

- Social media guidance for pharmacists
   Royal Pharmaceutical Society
- Social Media + Healthcare
   Backman, Cecilia; Dolack, Susan; Dunyak, Denise; Lutz, Laurie; Tegen, Anne;
   Warner, Diana. "Social Media + Healthcare." Journal of AHIMA 82, no.3
   (March 2011): 20-25.
- Social Media Highway Code
   Royal College of General Practitioners

(The Royal College of Occupational Therapists is the trading name and a subsidiary of the British Association of Occupational Therapists)