

## POLICY ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NURSING STAFF AND HEALTH CARE ASSISTANTS


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### Document Change History

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## 1.0 Introduction

The use of the internet and Information Technology is now part of our daily lives with every nurse having access to a computer at work and at home. The growing popularity of social networking sites such as Snap chat, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter has raised the risks of health care workers experiencing potentially serious legal and professional repercussions through the inappropriate use of this recent technology (RCN, 2009).

Social network sites are publicly accessible. They allow people to upload personal detail, photos, videos and notes and allow links with friend's profiles. Privacy is a concern for these sites as information can be misused.

In March 2011 the NMC stated that there were 25,789,200 people aged 18 and older in the UK on Facebook. 77,580 of these list their occupation as nurse, midwife or health visitor. NMC, 2011.

Based on the population figures in the UK the NMC estimated that 355,000 nurses and midwives are on Facebook. **In Ireland in 2016 there are 1.8 million users of Facebook 53% are aged between 15-24 years. There are 7000,000 people logging on to twitter each day in Ireland, as a country there are 1 million tweets sent each day.**

## 2.0 Definition of Social Media

Social media describes forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and microblogging/messaging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos). The number of opportunities and platforms for social media is increasing exponentially. This increase in platforms, coupled with increased access to these platforms via the use of mobile phones (Smart phones), provides instant opportunities to post items on networks with little time to reflect on the action (National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), 2011).

## 3.0 Applicable to


All nursing grades of staff undergraduate, post registration and qualified staff. All healthcare assistants and staff reporting to nursing.

## 4.0 Points to note

The RCN (2009) NMBI (2013) and the NMC (2011) have given guidance to their members on the do's and don'ts of social media.

### **Nurses and midwives put their registration at risk and should:**

- Never share confidential patient information online.
- Never post inappropriate comments about colleagues or patients.
- Never share/like or accept pages set up by parents or patients.
- Never comment on anything to do with their working day in OLCHC.

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- Not comment on blogs or sites created by parents/patients guardians or friends of patients for any reason.
- Never use sites to bully or intimidate colleagues.
- Never pursue personal relationships with patients or parents of patients.
- Never distribute sexually explicit material.
- Never use the social network in an unlawful way (NMC, 2011)

**The NMC recommend that nurses and midwives separate personal and professional life completely:**

- Take care when identifying yourself as a nurse or midwife that you act responsibly and uphold the reputation of your profession.
- Protect your privacy adjusting your settings.
- Do not build relationships with patients or former patients on Facebook or a social networking/messaging site.
- Do not discuss work online, including complaints, patient conversation or complaints about colleagues this information can find its way into the wrong hands, use the processes in the organisation to verbalize complaints or concerns.
- Never take a patient photo and post it on Facebook or any social networking/messaging site.
- Never upload a photo taken within the work environment.

## 5.0 References

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (2014) *The Code of professional conduct and Ethics*, NMBI, Dublin.

An Bord Altranais (2002) *Recording clinical practice guidance to nurses and midwives*. An Bord Altranais, Dublin.

National Council of State Boards of Nursing (2011) *A nurse's guide to the use of social media*; NCSBN, USA.

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (2013) *Guidance for Nurses and Midwives on Social Media and Social Networking*. NMBI, Dublin, Ireland.

OLCHC (2017) *Guidelines for nurses on the use of personal mobile phones at work*; OLCHC Dublin

Royal College of Nursing (2009) *Legal advice for RCN members using the internet*; RCN, UK.

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