

# BACN Use of Social Media – Guidance Note for Members

## Introduction

The BACN operates a BACN Private Members Face Book (PMFB) Group. The PMFB is principally designed to allow members to converse on key issues, share best practice and to mentor each other.

## Current Terms and Conditions

On joining the BACN members are required to sign a set of Terms and Conditions and there is specific reference to the use of the PMFB and they are as follows:

- ✓ It's a closed **confidential** group for current members of the BACN only.
- ✓ All posts are the opinion of the author and not the BACN and are posted without prejudice.
- ✓ You must have your own personal FB account, not a clinic account.
- ✓ Educational, advisory & frequent themed threads will be transferred to our website Forum for reference.
- ✓ This is a self-regulated group FOR the members BY the members.
- ✓ Members must not advertise their own business or the business or products of an associate.
- ✓ Do not post photographs of patients.
- ✓ Do not share PDF's/books/articles unless COPYRIGHT free.
- ✓ If T+C's are not abided by your BACN Facebook privilege will be revoked.

# Nurses and Social Media

Nurses who are members of the BACN must adhere to the Terms and Conditions of the BACN Code of Conduct set out above but in addition must also be aware that there are other rules associated with the NMC Code of Conduct which are set out below:

“You uphold the reputation of your profession at all times. You should display a personal commitment to the standards of practice and behaviour set out in the Code. You should be a model of integrity and leadership for others to aspire to. This should lead to trust and confidence in the profession from patients, people receiving care, other healthcare professionals and the public.

## **Rule 20: Uphold the reputation of your profession at all times**

To achieve this, you must:

20.1 keep to and uphold the standards and values set out in the Code

20.2 act with honesty and integrity at all times, treating people fairly and without discrimination, bullying or harassment

20.3 be aware at all times of how your behaviour can affect and influence the behaviour of other people

20.5 treat people in a way that does not take advantage of their vulnerability or cause them upset or distress”

Further, with reference to Social Media the Code states:

“Use all forms of spoken, written and digital communication (including social media and networking sites) responsibly.” (The Code, paragraph 20.10)

Nurses and midwives may put their registration at risk, if they act in any way that is unprofessional or unlawful on social media including (but not limited to):

- Bullying, intimidating or exploiting people;
- Inciting hatred or discrimination.”

# BACN Statement on 'Use of Social Media'

The following additional statement confirming the above was recently communicated to Members by the BACN Board:

*'As BACN members we all hold in common a passion and belief in our industry and the welfare of our patients.*

*As Registered Nurses we all have a common obligation to respect the opinions of others and, irrespective of individual feelings, to act accordingly as set out by our Code.*

*Whilst it is understandable that feelings may run high, it would be extremely unfortunate if we allow ourselves, even inadvertently, to breach the standards set out by the NMC'.*

## BACN Processes and Procedures

The BACN Board have reviewed its current processes in place to deal with violations of the Code of Conduct with regard to social media and have updated the Code of Conduct, introduced a new Protocol and revised the process for dealing with possible violations.

## New Code of Conduct

The BACN welcomes and encourage your comments, questions and feedback on the PMFB Group. When you post on these page(s) please be respectful of all users, follow the social network's terms of service and avoid sharing personal information, whether it's your own or that of another person. By posting, you agree:

- You are solely responsible for the content of all information you contribute, link to, or upload.
- Everything that you post is truthful to the best of your knowledge; accurate; not misleading and offered in good faith. You have the right/knowledge to post the content/material (including but not limited to that it does not infringe upon any third party's copyright or trademark).
- When disagreeing with others' opinions, you will keep your comments appropriate and polite.

- You will not post anything that may constitute spam (e.g., posting with a degree of frequency or repetitiveness such that others may be discouraged from posting, posts that are irrelevant to the site).
- If you have any material association with BACN, and you are posting a comment about any BACN product or service, you'll state any connection that you may have to BACN (whether as a BACN Employee, Board Member, or supplier).

The BACN reserves the right to remove content immediately (subject to the discretion of the BACN 'Designated Person' with responsibility for Social Media) including links to websites we determine (at BACN's sole and absolute discretion) to be unlawful, fraudulent, threatening, libellous, defamatory, obscene or otherwise objectionable. This may include but is not limited to:

- Spam
- Personal attacks
- Expletives
- Off-topic or inflammatory comments
- Duplicate posts
- Content that references an inappropriate third party page
- Advertisements
- Content attempting to impersonate someone else
- Promotion of illegal conduct

User-generated content (such as comments, posts, or links) may represent the views of those providing the content, but they do not necessarily represent the views or policy of the BACN. References or links (provided by the BACN or by a user) to products or services do not constitute endorsements by the BACN.

# Protocol

## Social Media Posting Protocol

- 1. Be professional:** It is important that posts convey a positive, engaging attitude. How you conduct yourself in the online social media space not only reflects upon you but also directly upon the BACN and its members.
- 2. Be respectful:** Avoid using unprofessional, disagreeable or offensive online personas. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, or obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the BACN or other professional workplace. Be sensitive to topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory. Always demonstrate respect for others' points of view, even when they're not offering the same in return.
- 3. Maintain confidentiality and privacy:** Do not share confidential or proprietary information about the BACN or its members and employees including private information about individuals, such as contact information.

**4. Respect third party content:** Be careful of copyrights, trademarks, rights of publicity, and rights of privacy in your posting, including with regard to user-generated content. Do not claim authorship of something that is not yours. If you are knowingly using other parties' content, make certain that they are credited for it in your post and that they approve of you utilizing their content.

**5. Always let the subject matter experts respond and add value:** If you come across negative or disparaging posts about the BACN or its members, or see third parties trying to spark negative conversations, avoid the temptation to react personally, especially if the subject does not relate to your area of expertise. Contact the BACN Chair or Chief Executive to determine how/if to respond.

**6. When in doubt, do not post. Individuals are personally responsible for their words and actions:** As an individual who is authorized to post in the Private Members Facebook Group of the BACN, it is imperative that you make every effort possible to confirm that your posts are accurate and not misleading. If there is a question, hold the post until you can confirm its accuracy. Do not publish slanderous, libellous or otherwise illegal or questionable content. Exercise sound judgment and common sense, and if there is any doubt, do not post it. And please contact the BACN's Chief Executive for guidance on how/if to respond.

**7. Know that the Internet is permanent:** Once information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if you "remove/delete" it later or attempt to make it anonymous. When space does not allow all content, provide a link so the message can be expressed completely and accurately.

**8. Keep your personal views separate:** Always remember you are posting on behalf of the BACN when posting on BACN social media, so it is important to uphold and reflect the BACN's mission and values, as well as the values of the profession. Do not include personal comments. Also always consider the professional ramifications of your personal comments on your personal feeds to your personal contacts. No matter how tightly you secure the audience to these personal feeds, there is always the chance that unprofessional posts may make their way to the larger online public audience.

## **9. Transparency and affiliation with the BACN**

**BACN Social Media Platforms:** Individuals authorized to post on the BACN Social Media Platforms should disclose their relationship with the BACN when not posting under the BACN name.

If you publish content online relevant to the BACN on a personal social media account (and not through a process authorized by the BACN), you must make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the BACN. Your profile bio or about page should include a disclaimer that reads something like: "The opinions and views expressed here are my own and don't necessarily reflect those of the BACN." You should also include disclaimers on the appropriate individual posts whenever possible. For example, when retweeting a BACN post, you might add something to the tweet like "proud I worked on this project" and make sure it links to the official project website.

**Finally all BACN Members MUST follow the Association's Professional Code of Conduct Policy and all other Association policies.** Our Code of Conduct requires all Members to conduct themselves with courtesy, consideration and professionalism in their business dealings. In addition all BACN members are registered with the NMC and must observe the NMC Code of Conduct (General) and specific (Use of Social Media).

### **Violations of Protocol**

Any employee who violates this social media protocol may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the Association. Members who violate this policy may be subject to denial of access to the BACN's social media platforms and termination of certain privileges.

**BACN Rights:** BACN reserves the right to remove any posted comment or withdraw access rights for any individual who is authorized to post on behalf of the BACN at its sole discretion

In addition, the BACN reserves the right to suspend, modify, or withdraw this social media posting protocol at any time

## **Process for Dealing with Social Media Violations**

Improper use of social media will be treated in the same way as any other kind of misconduct under the BACN Code of Conduct. This will involve an investigation and consideration of suspension or other precautionary action followed by disciplinary action if appropriate.

### **Making a Complaint**

Any BACN member may make a complaint about the use of social media by another member. The complaint should be by way of a letter with a full explanation of the complaint, reference to the posting, why you believe it has breached the Code of Conduct and the basis of complaint. This will be treated by the BACN as strictly confidential and within 5 days of receipt of the complaint a decision will be made jointly by the CEO and Chair/Vice Chair as to whether or not to enact the formal process and start an investigation.

### **Investigation**

Once a decision has been made to carry out a formal investigation all parties will be informed of the process involved, date of commencement, who will carry out the investigation and a target date for completion. In certain cases consideration will be given to a brief period of suspension from using the service by the parties concerned.

Any action taken, including suspension will be reviewed frequently to ensure it is not delayed unnecessarily. It will be made clear that any action taken is neither considered as disciplinary action nor an indication of blame or guilt.

A different person will carry out the investigation (For example the BACN CEO) than will carry out the disciplinary action (BACN Board).

The investigation may involve taking witness statements, referring to other policies and procedures and compiling a report on the findings.

### **After the investigation**

A report will be presented to the BACN Board who will then decide the necessary action to take:

- No case to answer so no further action required.
- Informal action is used to try and nip problems in the bud.
- Formal action ie warnings are issued when informal action has not brought about the improvement needed or a more serious offence has been committed where informal action is not appropriate.
- For a violation offence the BACN can issue a first and then second warning letter and then go to the expulsion stage for a third offence.
- For a violation that the BACN Board deems to be gross violation of the Code then immediate expulsion from the Association can be considered.

### **Disciplinary procedure**

When taking formal disciplinary action the BACN will operate as follows:

#### **Step 1: Statement of grounds for action and invitation to meeting:**

The BACN will provide to the Member a written statement of the alleged misconduct which has led to the consideration of formal disciplinary action or expulsion from the Association. The BACN will invite the Member to a hearing to discuss the issue.

#### **Step 2: Hearing:**

Prior to the hearing the BACN will supply any information relevant to the allegation allowing the Member sufficient time to consider the detail and prepare their defence. After the meeting the BACN will inform the Member of the decision and offer the right to appeal.

#### **Step 3: Appeal:**

If the Member wishes to appeal he or she will need to inform the BACN within five working days. The BACN will invite the Member to a further hearing to discuss the appeal. The final decision will be communicated to the Member.

This Code of Conduct is effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015:

Sharon Bennett – Chair - BACN

Paul Burgess – BACN CEO