

**Using Facebook appropriately**

***Practice* Based Scenario**

**About this document**

This document is designed to take you through a practice-based scenario to help you reflect on what you might do if faced with a similar situation. It can be used to guide your thoughts and prompt discussion with your colleagues. Working through this document counts towards your continuing professional development (CPD). Your reflections on this document are not assessed and you do not have to send your responses to the RCSLT.

You can work through it on your own, with a colleague or supervisor, or in groups, eg as part of an RCSLT Hub or Clinical Excellence Network.

This document is broken into six parts:

1. **The scenario:** for you to read
2. **The issues to consider:** for you to gather your thoughts on practice issues relating to this scenario
3. **Next steps:** for you to plan out what you would need to do next
4. **Prompts for consideration:** RCSLT prompts for further consideration
5. **Sources of further information:** links to professional guidance
6. **Update your CPD diary:** for you to do
7. **The scenario**

**You learn that a local group of mums are talking about their SLT experiences on a Facebook group, sharing ideas and therapy experiences; you and other colleagues have been named.**

**Some have praised and others have criticised. One of your colleagues wants to write a response.**



**What do you do in this scenario?**

1. **The issues to consider**

**What do you need to consider?**

Think about the above scenario and its implications and jot down your notes about issues you may need to consider. Please feel free to use extra sheets of paper if you need. Or, if you are in a group, you may like to record on a whiteboard or flipchart.

1. **Next steps**

**What steps do you think you need to take next?**

1. **Prompts for consideration**

When thinking about situations arising on Facebook please be aware that there will be different elements to consider that will be specific to where you work. However, in situations like the one described above there are some key themes to think about.

A key concern is that the original message is very harmful: it is damaging to reputation, and therefore a possible case of defamation; and is a breach of confidentiality to you, your colleagues and possibly to the children who you are treating (as you can all be traced). It would not be advisable for you or your colleagues to respond to the Facebook comments trail as that could enflame the situation: comments and responses can be rapidly shared and viewed out of context and you do not want to engage in a dialogue over social media.

It is recommended that you think about the following prompt questions and formulate a considered strategy to deal with the problem.

Remember that if you are faced with a similar situation you will need to think about it in relation to the frameworks within which you work, such as the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) Standards, RCSLT professional guidance and resources, local and national policies and also policies of your employer (or your own policies if practising independently).

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and does not constitute legal advice.

**Prompt questions to consider**

1. Are there legal implications you need to report (eg issues of confidentiality or defamation)?
2. Which local policies should you refer to when considering your response?
3. Does your employment contract (if employed) cover this scenario?
4. If you are practising independently, do you have a social media policy?
5. Are there safeguarding issues?
6. Do you need to document the risks?
7. What are the rights and responsibilities of running a Facebook page? For a parent group/SLT service or organisation?
8. What are the benefits and drawbacks of using social media such as Facebook to engage with service users?
9. How long will this conversation remain online?
10. Is this conversation likely to be widely shared?

**Possible next steps**

1. Report the situation to your line manager or supervisor or, if you are working independently, speak to other professionals in your networks to get their opinion.
2. Research policies/guidelines on personal involvement in issues like this.
* If you are employed, seek out your employer’s guidelines.
* If you are independently employed, consider writing a social media policy if you do not already have one.
1. Are there other ways service users can provide feedback on their experiences, rather than on social media? Are service users made aware of the appropriate complaints procedure?
2. Can you explain to the parents about each child having individual needs? Consider supporting parents with their understanding.
3. Consider speaking to the group administrator about their policies regarding the kinds of posts allowed.
4. Could a local service supporter group post positive responses and information?
5. **Sources of further information**

**The following information in the professional accountability and autonomy, and professional guidance sections of the RCSLT website is also particularly relevant:**

1 - [Promote and safeguard the interests of service users and carers](https://www.rcslt.org/professional-autonomy-and-accountability-guidance#section-5)

2 - [Communicate appropriately and effectively](https://www.rcslt.org/professional-autonomy-and-accountability-guidance#section-6)

5 - [Respect confidentiality](https://www.rcslt.org/professional-autonomy-and-accountability-guidance#section-9)

6 - [Manage risk](https://www.rcslt.org/professional-autonomy-and-accountability-guidance#section-10)

[Communications technology](https://www.rcslt.org/communications-technology)

1. **Update your CPD diary**

Working through this scenario counts towards your continuing professional development (CPD). Once you have completed this scenario, please record this learning and your reflections in your CPD diary.