

Copyright-Free Images in Campaign Materials

Good practices and managing risk

December 2025

Purpose of the guide:

Several recent instances of penalties have highlighted the need for caution when using images in campaigning materials and online. We hope this advice will prove useful to KONP nationally and our branches.

In this document, you will find a detailed step-by-step guide on how to find images for campaign materials. In Part 2, you will find more information about Copyright Law and other crucial steps to take to avoid being fined. There is also information about how to check if a copyright infringement notice is genuine. Please read the whole guide carefully.

Please note these are suggestions and guidelines only. Please take responsibility for your own image searches. Remember that legislation and technology can change rapidly and that it is always best to err on the side of caution. If you are unsure about an image, use another, or none at all.

Copyright infringement notices

Receiving a copyright infringement notice via email can be a worrying experience. Whilst the message should be taken seriously, it is important to check if the demand is genuine before taking action. **Before clicking on anything or downloading anything, take steps to confirm the authenticity of the message.**

Criminals might be attempting to scam you for money by claiming that you have to pay them to avoid legal action, or they may be trying to obtain details that could be used against you in a future scam attempt, so also be careful about sharing any personal information.

The following are suggestions to consider before paying any penalties. Please note that you will need to use your own discretion and KONP cannot be held liable for the consequences of agreeing to pay a penalty.

Tips for checking if a penalty notice is a scam

- Look at the email or letter. Does it contain strange wording, mistakes, or spelling errors? Unprofessional writing or imagery can be an indication that the notice is a scam.
- If the message seems to be giving unrealistic or urgent deadlines, this may be an indication it is from a scammer who is trying to panic you into a reaction to avoid escalation or larger fines.
- **Look carefully at the sender's email address to see if it looks fake.** Check the domain name, (e.g., name@domain.com) and look for strange symbols or characters, or typos. Also look out for mismatched display names and email addresses. Do not 'test' the address by replying to the email, as this confirms to the sender that your email address is active and may result in them marking you for future fraud attempts. [This is a useful video to find out more.](#)

- Look up the sender's organisation. Can you find a website for them? Are there reviews of them or reports of them having been involved in scams? Is there evidence of the company being a genuine company? Do they have a 'bricks and mortar' office? There may be a record of their existence by searching [Companies House](#).
- **Crucially**, if you are convinced the sender's organisation is genuine, contact them directly via the contact details on their website, and do not click on links or reply to the original email. It could still be the case that a genuine company is being impersonated by scammers.
- [Click here for more tips about how to identify a genuine website](#).
- If the email appears to come from a solicitor, you could check if they exist on the [solicitors register](#).
- If you think you have discovered a scam, there is [advice here](#) about what to do and when and how to report it.
- Only proceed, either way, once you hear back from the genuine company whether the original message is authentic or not.

Part 1: Finding images

Where to look

Avoid downloading images directly from Google, social media, or other sites. If you know the person who took a photo, for instance of a picket line or protest, check with them before you use their photo. If they work for an agency, it might even be the agency that owns the rights to use the image. **If you don't know where an image came from, don't use it.**

There are several places to look for good, free to use pictures:

- [Unsplash](#)
- [Pixabay](#)
- [Pexels](#)
- [Wikimedia Commons](#)
- [Public Domain Archive](#)
- [Flickr](#)

Purchasing Images

If you need to purchase an image—for example, from a stock photography site—**ensure you fully understand the licence you are buying.**

Most of the time I am able to find images that are free to use and copyright free. It is rare that the national office has to buy images.

Key points to check before buying an image:

- **Licence type:** Standard, extended, editorial, or commercial. Ensure it allows political/campaign use.
- **Duration of use:** Some licences expire after a set period.

- **Geographical restrictions:** Some licences limit use to specific countries or regions.
- **Medium of use:** Check whether print, online, social media, video, or merchandise use is permitted.
- **Number of copies:** Some licences cap print runs or impressions.
- **Modification rights:** Ensure you are allowed to crop, edit, or alter the image.
- **Exclusivity:** Most affordable stock images are non-exclusive, which means that other organisations might use the same image.

Beware of restrictions

Be cautious of:

- **Editorial-only images**, which cannot be used for campaigning or promotional purposes.
- **Time-limited licences**, which may require renewal

How to search for an image using Google

You can filter a search on Google so that it only shows images that have Creative Commons (CC) licenses. Please see below for a more detailed guide.

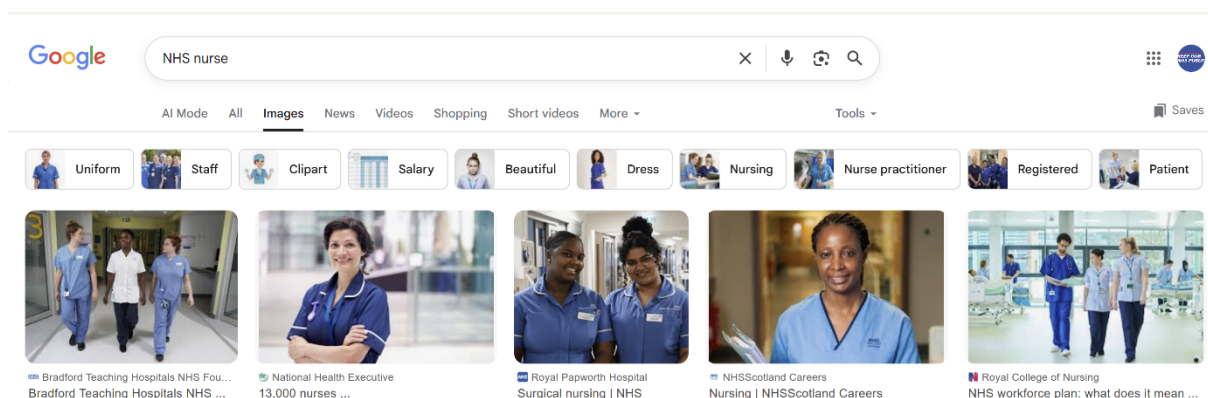
A Creative Commons licence is a public copyright licence that lets creators share their work with others under specific conditions they choose, such as allowing reuse, modification, or commercial use. Not all Creative Commons licenses will allow us to use photos, but many do.

Creative Commons licences: You can find more guidance on which CC licences can be used for free [here](#) and [here](#). Normally, CC BY and CC BY-SA are the safest to use, but always check.

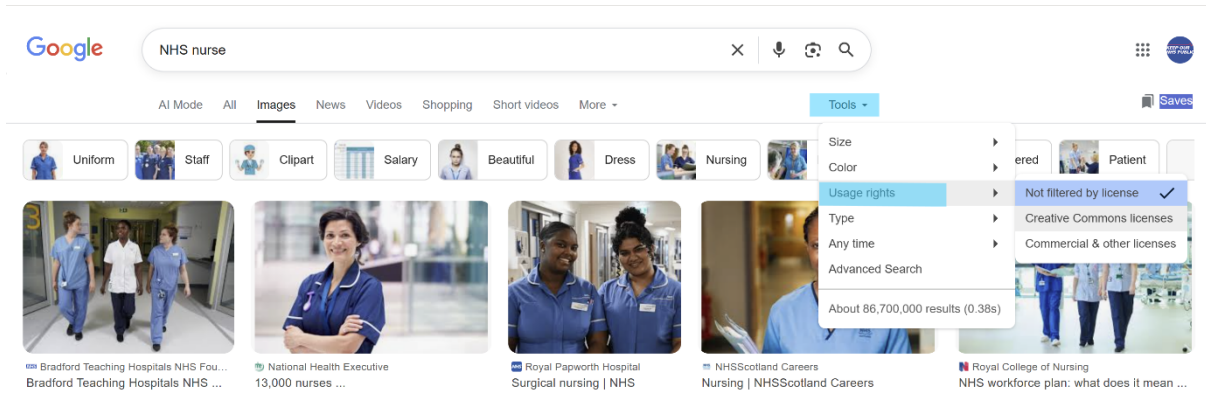
It is through filtering a search to CC licenses that you can find photos that are available for us to use.

Here is a brief example of how I search for an image to use in a leaflet:

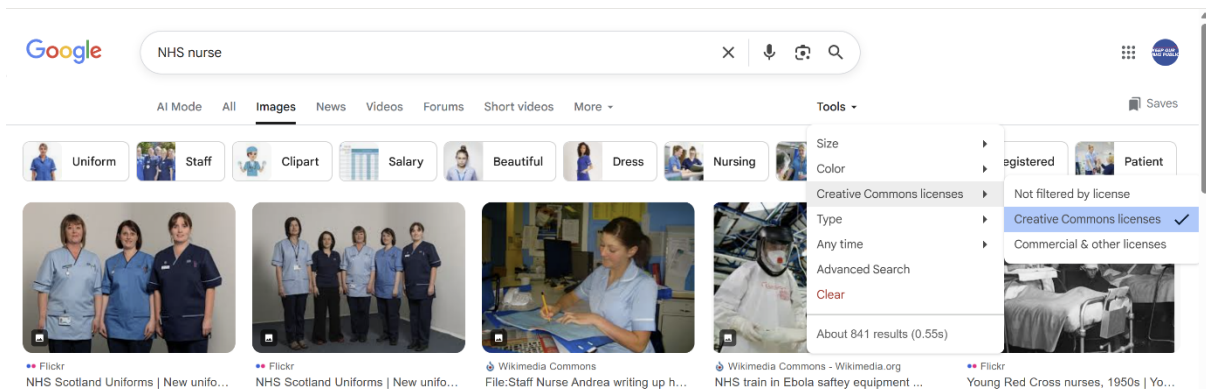
*I have searched for an image of an 'NHS nurse' on Google Images. Without using a filter, many of the images that come up will **not be free to use**.*



So, I navigate to just below the search bar, and select 'Usage rights' under 'Tools'.



After this, I select 'Creative Commons licenses'.



Now, all the images that come up should be **free to use with attribution, but always double check.**

To find out who to attribute the photo to, go to the website the photo is on, and it should be written next to or below the photo. Next, include this information in a caption. For example:



London Ambulance at Abbey Road Medical centre. Photo: Oxyman / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY 2.0

Next, enter the image information into the KONP Image Library spreadsheet, [linked here](#).

Part 2: Important things to know about copyright

Understanding 'Copyright-Free'

- 'Copyright-free' does **not always mean unrestricted**.
- Use only images that are clearly labelled as:
 - **Public Domain (CC0)** – free for any use, no credit required.
 - **Creative Commons (CC BY)** – free to use with attribution.
- Avoid No-derivatives images (this means images that cannot be edited) - see next section

Please see [Part 2: Finding images](#) for a more detailed explanation.

Checking Image Licences

Before using any image:

- Read the licence terms on the source site and ensure you use reputable source sites.
- Avoid images marked “**Non-commercial use only**” or “**No derivatives.**”
- Ensure use complies with campaign or political purposes.
- **If in doubt, use a different image.**

Record-Keeping

Maintain a record for every image used, including:

- File name and image description
- Source URL and date downloaded
- Licence type (e.g., CC0, CC BY 4.0)
- Creator's name (if attribution required)
- The specific place where you have used the image, e.g., a URL, or leaflet details.

Attribution and Credits

Where attribution is required:

- Include a credit in small text, e.g.:
Photo: Jane Smith via Unsplash (CC BY 4.0)
- For printed materials, place credits in a corner or margin.
- For online content, add credits in the caption, footer, or 'image credits' section.

Restricted Content

Do **not** use images that:

- Contain **logos, trademarks, or branded products**.

- Could **mislead audiences** or imply endorsement by individuals pictured.

It is also good practice to avoid using photos that feature **identifiable individuals** without their permission.

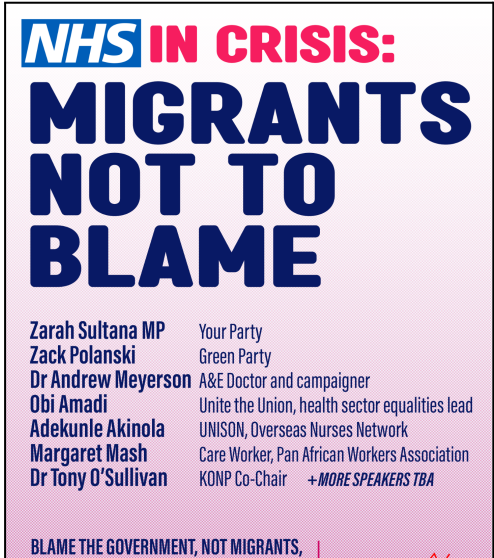
Using logos

Logos such as the NHS, Labour Party, Reform UK, or Palantir **must not be used**. If there is a logo in the background of a photo this is okay.

Please see the table below.

For instance, in **Figure 1**, the NHS logo appears in the photo. It is fine to use this photo in campaigning materials as the photo itself is copyright-free.

I have adapted **Figure 2** from a real leaflet we have used in the past. It is an example of when using the NHS logo would **not** be acceptable. Logos, even those of public institutions like the NHS or BBC, are trademarked and copyrighted. We must not use them in our campaigning materials.

	Figure 1. ACCEPTABLE <i>Nightingale Hospital in London / Photo: Number 10 / Flickr / CC BY 2.0</i>
	Figure 2. UNACCEPTABLE <i>Please note that this is an edited version of a leaflet we used to promote a meeting. In the real life version of the leaflet, we wrote 'NHS' rather than including the logo.</i>

Campaign group logos may be used with permission. For instance, if we are campaigning on something jointly with We Own It, we can put their logo on our materials – but always ask them first.

Editing and Modification

- Only edit images if the licence **permits modification**.
- Avoid altering images in a way that could **distort meaning** or **misrepresent subjects**.

Consistency and Quality

- Use images that reflect the tone, style, and political values of Keep Our NHS Public. For instance - a photo of Nigel Farage holding a baby and looking like a kind person may not be appropriate for a leaflet about Reform's dangerous NHS plans.
- Use **high-resolution images** for print (300 dpi) and **web-optimised images** (72 dpi) for online use.
- Avoid AI-generated images. These are usually copyright-free but not always.

Final Review

Before publication or printing:

- Verify image rights and attribution.
- Make a note of images used. For example, using a spreadsheet like [the template linked here](#).
- If in doubt, check with the national office or **email lucy@keepournhspublic.com**.