

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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## Document Control

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1.0	01.11.23	Review of policy draft
2.0	17.01.24	Minor amendments and sent out for consultation
3.0	08.05.24	Minor amendments following consultation
4.0	14.06.24	Amendments following PPC

## Alternative Formats

This documentation can be made available in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, disk, audio tape or in an ethnic-minority language upon request. Requests for alternative formats can be made to PBNI.

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## **1. Rationale**

- 1.1. This policy is twofold. It sets out how PBNI will use social media as a means of communicating corporately and it also sets out the standards expected of members of staff who use social media in a personal capacity.
- 1.2. Social media is a term used to describe a range of online applications which allow users to create and share content.

## **2. PBNI Corporate Social Media**

- 2.1. PBNI corporately use social media, in accordance with legislation as a platform for:
  - Communicating with staff, stakeholders and the wider public.
  - Raising awareness and understanding of our role.
  - Promotion of services and events.
  - Complementing other PBNI communication channels such as the PBNI website.
  - Engaging with media.
  - Engaging with stakeholders.
- 2.2. Social media enables Probation staff to be accessible and visible to their communities and can be used as an effective means to positively impact on the achievement of operational and corporate objectives.
- 2.3. PBNI welcomes comments from members of the public on social media channels however any which contain content deemed unsuitable will be removed.
- 2.4. PBNI's social media sites are currently as follows:
  - Facebook page for PBNI
  - X(formerly Twitter) page for PBNI
  - YouTube account for PBNI
  - Instagram for PBNI
  - LinkedIn for PBNI
- 2.5. PBNI will select its social media platforms carefully taking account of functionality, stability, support, resilience, longevity, capacity, and ability to increase participation.

## **3. Personal Social Media Accounts**

- 3.1. In using personal social media, members of staff must ensure that their activity is in accordance with legislation and that it is consistent with their responsibilities as set out in the Code of Conduct and all other PBNI policies and procedures including the Dignity at Work policy, and Discipline Policy. All PBNI staff must adhere and uphold PBNI values.
- 3.2. All PBNI staff who use social media are expected to adhere to the same standards of propriety as would be expected in any other public forum, be it

during work or in their own time. The simple rule to remember is that the principles covering the use of social media by PBNI in both a work and personal capacity are the same as those that apply for any other activity under the Staff Code of Conduct.

- 3.3. Social media is a public forum, and the same considerations apply to using social media as speaking in public or writing for a publication either officially or out of work.
- 3.4. This policy applies regardless of whether the social media sites are accessed using PBNI IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.
- 3.5. Members of PBNI are free to use social media in their own time. But they should always be mindful of their duties not to disclose official information and should not take part in any public activity which compromises, or might be seen to compromise, the services delivered by PBNI.
- 3.6. Staff should not breach PBNI confidentiality nor bring PBNI's reputation into disrepute. This may lead to disciplinary procedures being taken.
- 3.7. This policy needs to be read in conjunction with the Social Media Procedures and alongside PBNI policies relating to the use of Internet and Email.
- 3.8. This policy covers Board Members, full time staff, part-time staff, agency staff, placements and volunteers.

#### **4. Aim**

- 4.1. The purpose of this policy and the associated procedures is to set out the Probation Board for Northern Ireland's (PBNI) overall approach to the use of corporate social media and provide clear procedures for staff in relation to their personal use of social media.

#### **5. Objectives**

- 5.1. To set out how PBNI use corporate social media channels to raise awareness and understanding of the role of probation.
- 5.2. To ensure PBNI staff understand that when using social media in a personal capacity the same standards are expected of them as in any other public forum. That is, they adhere to PBNI standards of behaviour as set out in the Code of Conduct.

#### **6. Programmes and Projects**

- 6.1. PBNI Communications Unit can give advice and guidance in relation to all social media matters.
- 6.2. Staff should also note that if a service user tries to contact a probation officer or make a complaint through social media platforms, the contact should be treated like any other form of contact such as email, mail or phone. The

contact should receive a response and be asked to make direct contact with the relevant probation officer or complaints unit.

**7. Resources**

- 7.1. There is a resourcing need to ensure there is sufficient communications staff to maintain the PBNl social media channels.

**8. Communications and Training**

- 8.1. PBNl staff who are responsible for updated corporate PBNl social media accounts will be trained on an ongoing basis. This policy will be communicated to all staff.

**9. Monitoring and Evaluation**

- 9.1. This policy will also be kept under review to ensure it is in keeping with current legislation and good practice.
- 9.2. All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they read and understand it.

**10. Review**

- 10.1. This policy will be reviewed four years from the date of approval. Interim reviews may also be prompted by feedback, and/or identified changes in practice.

**11. Non-compliance**

- 11.1. Breach of this Policy by employees may merit consideration under the Board's Disciplinary Policy.