

SOCIAL MEDIA PROCEDURES

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1.0	01.11.23	Review of procedures draft
2.0	17.01.24	Minor amendments and sent out for consultation
3.0	12/04/24	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. Background

- 1.1. These Procedures are twofold. They explain how PBNI corporately uses social media as part of its wider communications strategy and they set out procedures for PBNI staff on the use of social media on a personal basis.

2. PBNI and Corporate Social Media

- 2.1. From transparent policy making through to customer service and user insight, social media is a valuable method of communicating for the public sector. Active engagement with social media presents real opportunities for PBNI to more effectively create a dialogue with stakeholders and citizens, to listen to issues being raised as well as responding to queries and building awareness of roles and responsibilities.
- 2.2. This can help build confidence in, and understanding of, PBNI and can help provide a better understanding of stakeholder and citizen views. Alongside other communications, social media can help PBNI:
 - To communicate with stakeholders, staff and the general public.
 - To consult and engage in discussion or in formulating policy and practice.
 - Be more transparent and accountable.
- 2.3. Only staff in the communications unit of PBNI can post on PBNI corporate social media channels. These staff are trained to understand what is appropriate content to post on social media channels having regard to legislation such as Data Protection law and Contempt of Court law. Staff also understand about the need to adhere to propriety in sharing content including:
 - PBNI social media should not be used to share political views.
 - It is not appropriate for PBNI to comment on the practices, decisions or operational choices of criminal justice and other partners or stakeholders.
 - It is not appropriate to post protectively marked information on PBNI social media.
 - There is always a need to be professional and respectful on PBNI social media channels.
 - PBNI prohibits the use of its social media for any purpose which would contravene any legislation or government regulation, or which might create civil liability by the user or PBNI to any person.
- 2.4. Other staff members can send information to staff in the communications unit, who will judge whether it is appropriate content to share on social media. PBNI want to encourage all staff who have good news stories, or who are attending events to contact the communications unit with that information so it may be issued via the appropriate social media platform. PBNI social media channels are important communication tools and are utilised as part of a wider communications strategy.

- 2.5. PBNI social media platforms may be viewed by PBNI staff during normal working hours and information shared with relevant staff.
- 2.6. Staff in the communications unit will regularly evaluate the reach and engagement of social media accounts.
- 2.7. Comments, posts and messages are welcome on PBNI social media sites, provided they do not contain:
 - obscene, discriminatory, offensive or racist content.
 - personal attacks, insults, or threatening or abusive language.
 - potentially illegal or libellous statements.
 - plagiarised material.
 - private or personal information published without consent.
 - references to named members of the public or staff.
 - comments unrelated to the content of the forum.
 - hyperlinks to material that is not directly related to the discussion.
 - content which breaches copyright or any other intellectual property rights.
 - commercial promotions or spam.
- 2.8. PBNI's social media sites will be regularly screened by staff in the communications unit. All postings which contain any of the above will be immediately removed.
- 2.9. PBNI will also take cognisance of taking pictures for social media and ensure that staff and others consent to photographs being uploaded.

3. PBNI Staff and Personal Social Media

- 3.1. PBNI staff who use social media are bound by the PBNI Code of Conduct, which sets out the core values and the standards of behaviour expected.
- 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.
- 3.3. The simple rule is that the principles of staff conduct covers the use of social media. Social media is a public forum and come under the same considerations that would apply to speaking in public or writing for a publication either officially or out of work.
- 3.4. Staff must adhere to Data Protection law and Contempt of Court law.

- 3.5. Staff should keep in mind that anything posted on a social media platform can potentially stay on the web forever.
- 3.6. Social media is a public forum and any content posted on any of the platforms is not secure. Therefore, staff should apply the same considerations to the use of social media as they would to speaking in public, writing something for publication either officially or outside of work. If in doubt consult your line manager and PBNI Communications Unit.
- 3.7. Staff who are also Probation Officers, and therefore registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council should also be aware of the Code of Practice as a Social Worker.
- 3.8. When using social media in either a personal or professional capacity, staff should not:
 - Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying, or harassing of, any individual.
 - Publish any content that is sexually explicit or illegal.
 - Breach PBNI confidentiality.
 - Publicly comment on any court case.
 - Bring PBNI's reputation into disrepute.
 - Breach any PBNI policy, for example Disciplinary policy, Code of Conduct, Management of Information, Internet and email usage, Dignity at Work.
 - Knowingly 'friend', 'follow' or private message service users. Further if a service user attempts to contact any staff member through staff's private social media, they should be told by their Probation Officer to desist and use the appropriate channels of communication. Staff will not contact or respond to service users via social media.
 - If PBNI staff identify themselves as a member of PBNI on social media, they should ensure their profile and related content is consistent with how they would present themselves in a work setting. They should also make it clear that somewhere on the social media platform they are using that "The views expressed are my own and do not represent the views of PBNI."

For further advice, contact the PBNI Communications Unit.