



Social Media Procedures

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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 PBNI social media procedures follow the principles set out in the Cabinet Office Social Media Guidance for Civil Servants <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-media-guidance-for-civil-servants> and the Northern Ireland Civil Service Handbook use of electronic communications, section 6. <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dfp/6.11-use-of-electronic-communications.pdf>
- 1.2. These procedures have been shared with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and the Department of Justice who were consulted on the policy and procedures.
- 1.3. **These Procedures only refer to staff use of Social Media. It does not cover the use of Social Media by Service Users.**

2. PBNI and 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.
- 2.2. 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.
- 2.3. This can help build confidence in, and understanding of, PBNI and can help PBNI get a better understanding of stakeholder and citizen views. Alongside other communications, social media can help PBNI to communicate with citizens; to consult and engage in discussion or in formulating policy and practice; and be more transparent and accountable. It can be used to ask questions, to crowd-source views, or to raise awareness of roundtables and consultation events.

3. PBNI Staff and Social Media

- 3.1. Staff using their own social media platforms can help or harm PBNI's own presence on the platforms in their engagement online. Staff can help promote PBNI content by liking, commenting and sharing. Staff can also harm the image of PBNI if they engage on social media in a way contrary to the PBNI Code of Conduct.
- 3.2. Staff using social media must understand the risks and responsibilities involved in engaging on social media both in work and outside of work.
- 3.3. This document sets out the responsibilities of staff and how staff can use social media, both in a work and a private capacity, in a safe and responsible way.

4. Organisational platforms and permissions

- 4.1. PBNI uses a number of social media platforms including Twitter, LinkedIn and Youtube.
- 4.2. Content for those accounts is primarily generated by PBNI Communications Unit. However, staff are encouraged to publicise information through PBNI social media platforms and should do so by contacting the Communications Unit, who will put the content onto social media, if it appropriate to do so.
- 4.3. 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.
- 4.4. All of the PBNI accounts will be used to explain to the public the work carried out by PBNI and raise awareness of PBNI's role in changing lives for safer communities.
- 4.5. PBNI social media channels are important communication tools, to be utilised as part of a wider communications strategy.
- 4.6. Social media platforms may be viewed by PBNI staff during normal working hours and information shared with relevant staff. If inappropriate comments on PBNI social media platforms are brought to the attention of the Communications team, immediate action will be taken in accordance with moderation clauses listed below.
- 4.7. PBNI reserves the right to remove comments from PBNI's social media channels, without notification, including those which:
 - bully, harass or intimidate any individual or organisation
 - are unlawful, libellous, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful
 - are obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive
 - infringe or violate someone else's rights
 - discuss ongoing legal proceedings
 - discuss PBNI cases
 - are spam
 - advertise products or services

5. Staff Using Personal Social Media Platforms

- 5.1. PBNI staff who use social media are bound by the PBNI Code of Conduct, which sets out the core values – integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality – and the standards of behaviour expected. See <http://intranet/resources/code-of-conduct-for-staff/>
- 5.2. In particular staff should have regard to Paragraph 7 in the PBNI's Code of Conduct, which states: "*Staff of PBNI who deal with the public should do so sympathetically, efficiently, promptly and without bias or maladministration. The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct and service from all PBNI staff.*"
- 5.3. 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.
- 5.4. The simple rule is that the principles of staff conduct covers the use of social media.

- 5.5. 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.
- 5.6. This application of the Code of Conduct applies to staff regardless of whether the social media sites are accessed using PBNI IT facilities and equipment or personal networks and equipment.
- 5.7. Social media is a public forum and any content posted on any of the platforms should not be seen in anyway as secure.
- 5.8. Therefore, staff should apply the same considerations to the use of social media as they would to speaking in public or writing something for publication either officially or outside of work. If in doubt consult your line manager and PBNI Communications Unit.
- 5.9. When using social media in a personal capacity, staff should not:
- Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying, or harassing of, any individual.
 - Send images or other content that is sexually explicit or illegal.
 - Breach PBNI confidentiality.
 - Comment on any court case that PBNI is involved in or likely to be involved in.
 - 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' or 'follow' clients.
 - Take or post photographs/audio or video clips taken on PBNI premises without line management approval.
- 5.10. 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."
- 5.11. Staff members should be careful when interacting with social media accounts that references or relates to work or services associated with PBNI. It is noted that sharing, retweeting or liking are not necessarily endorsements of a particular post. PBNI staff are free to do such under the proviso that doing so does not contravene the Code of Conduct.
- 5.12. PBNI Staff should also:
- Regularly examine the privacy settings on all their personal social media accounts.
 - Think carefully about publishing any identifying information about themselves – either in their profile or in their posts – such as phone numbers, pictures of their home, their address or birthday.
 - Think before they post – if a PBNI member of staff feels unsure about posting something – then they should not post it.

- 4.7. Usage of personal devices to access the internet and/or social media platforms during work time for non-work reasons should be kept to a minimum and must adhere to PBNI Internet and E-mail usage procedures, Section 3. That is for 'reasonable personal use' outside of core time, during official breaks and/or use at any other time at management discretion. The PBNI Internet and E-mail usage procedures can be found at <http://intranet/resources/internet-and-email-usage-procedures/>
- 4.8. If anyone is found to be in breach of the social media policy and procedures it may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

For further advice, contact the Communications Unit on 90522649