



# Social media

## Policy Document

Policy Index No.	Policy Sponsor	Page/s	Approved by	Date
<b>PIN026</b>	Staff and Corporate Services Directorate	6	Director of Staff and Corporate Services	10/12/14

Related policies/standards	Date
006 The IPS Computer Use, Access and Security Policy,	10/12/14
The Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2003,	
The Official Secrets Act 1963.	
See Section 5 for full list of related documents	

Legacy reference of policy	Date for review of policy	Date of issue/amendment
	10/12/2015	10/12/2014

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## IPS Policy for Social Media

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## 1. Aim of this policy

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- 1.1. To provide guidance to IPS staff on the responsible use of social media.

## 2. Purpose of this policy

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- 2.1 To provide guidance and direction to staff in order to facilitate compliance with the terms of the policy when utilising all types of online social media sites and networks and all devices to include remote devices.

## 3. Scope of this policy

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- 3.1 All IPS staff in their personal and professional use of social media channels and other social networking websites.

## 4. Procedures for implementation

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### **Information Security and Social Media**

- 4.1 Employees must not improperly disclose, during or following termination of employment, any information gained in the course of their work.
- 4.2 Participation in social networking websites and public messaging systems, whether on IPS or personal devices is prohibited during the time in which an employee is clocked in. If access to such sites is required for business purposes, prior approval must be sought from your line manager.
- 4.3 Confidential or proprietary information regarding IPS practices, policies, procedures or personal information about any prisoners, ex-prisoners, IPS employees or any other persons working, visiting or volunteering in our prisons/workplaces must not be posted or discussed on internet social networking websites, internet video hosting/sharing websites, internet discussion forums, message boards or internet chat rooms. Disclosure of this information by any means, including posting information or discussing same on the internet or on social media networking websites may also constitute a breach of the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 and the Official Secrets Act 1963.
- 4.4 A negative, defamatory or reputational damage/disrepute posting or communication by an employee about the Minister for Justice and Equality, the IPS employees or any

other persons working, visiting or volunteering in our prisons/workplaces, prisoners or ex-prisoners, could amount to a breach of discipline pursuant to the Prison (Disciplinary Code for Officers) Rules, 1996 or the Civil Service Disciplinary Code 2006 and therefore could lead to disciplinary measures being taken. Breaches of discipline, if proven can and may result in dismissal.

- 4.5 Audio or video recordings or images taken in the workplace should not be uploaded onto the internet unless permission is given by the Director General through the IPS Press Office.
- 4.6 Staff obligations and duties arising from the Official Secrets Act 1963 and the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 and their obligations and duties of privacy, confidentiality together with their duty of care towards prisoners and IPS employees apply in relation to comments made on the internet, whether the staff member is on-duty or not. Staff are reminded that comments made online could potentially result in a claim for defamation against the maker of such comments.

#### **Social Media Profiles**

- 4.7 Any IPS Institution, Directorate, Club or Association that wishes to establish a social media profile or site must ensure it is in compliance with this policy.

#### **Representing the IPS**

- 4.8 Staff should be aware of the difference in speaking “about” the IPS or be interpreted as speaking “for” the IPS. The Director General is the official spokesperson for the Irish Prison Service. The IPS Press Office is authorised and responsible for providing official comment on behalf of the Irish Prison Service to the media. The rules that apply to our communications in traditional media like newspapers, television and radio; also apply in online news or social media sites or networks. IPS logos may not be used without the prior written consent of the IPS Press Office.
- 4.9 All staff have the right to refuse their image or details being put on social media for official use and the IPS, or an IPS Club or Association must obtain the consent of staff in writing beforehand.

#### **Personal Safety**

- 4.10 Staff should use common sense for their own personal safety when using a social media platform. Details of daily routine, your location i.e. if you “check in” a particular location or simply identify that you are away from home could potentially cause risk to your personal security.

- 4.11 Always be aware of who you may be talking to online. Have caution if unidentified or anonymous users are questioning about your job, or where you work. Always remember that indiscreet discussions about being an IPS staff member or about your work in a prison setting could have potential consequences for you and your colleagues.

### **Harassment**

- 4.12 It is IPS Policy that every employee has the right to carry out his or her duties free from any form of harassment, sexual harassment or bullying. It is the responsibility of each member of staff to treat colleagues, prisoners, ex-prisoners, IPS employees or any other persons working, visiting or volunteering in our prisons/workplaces with dignity and respect and refrain from harassment, sexual harassment and bullying whether in person, traditional correspondence or online.
- 4.13 Where an employee feels this right is infringed by online comments or postings a complaint may be made under the IPS Anti Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy.

### **Protecting Employees from Online Abuse**

- 4.14 Given the nature of and the high levels of participation in social media sites in Ireland, IPS employees may from time to time become target for abuse or defamation by members of the public through comments made and published on the internet or on social networks.
- 4.15 Where this occurs, IPS local line management will work to support its employees in every way possible. Responsibility for responding to staff concerns about and co-ordinating the response to abusive online comments, in relation to their profession, rests with local line management, as it does with all staff health, safety and welfare issues.

### **Monitoring and Maintenance**

- 4.16 All staff must comply with the principles set out in this policy.
- 4.17 Like all employee policies, it is the responsibility of local line management to address any issues that arise in relation to breaches of this policy and to report these breaches to the Personnel Officer. There is also a significant personal responsibility placed on each employee.

### **Information Requests**

- 4.18 Any requests from the media, public representatives or other organisations for official comment from the IPS on any topic should be referred to the IPS Press Office.

## **Social Media Policy Principles**

4.19 Please refer to Appendix I for our list of Social Media Principles.

### **Breaches of this Policy**

4.20 Misuse or abuse of social and digital media can cause significant injury to third parties and can also impact negatively on the reputation of the IPS. This is particularly relevant in the context of safeguarding prisoner care, staff safety and personal information. The IPS is potentially liable for injury caused by misuse or abuse of social and digital media channels by its employees.

4.21 A breach of this policy which may be considered a breach of discipline pursuant to the prison disciplinary rules or the civil service disciplinary code can be investigated and employees may be denied access to the organisation's information technology resources during this investigation, and may be subject to disciplinary action, including suspension and dismissal.

### **More Information**

4.22 For more information on Digital and Social Media issues, please contact the IPS Press Office at 043 3335203 or [pressoffice@irishprisons.ie](mailto:pressoffice@irishprisons.ie)

## **5. Related Policies/Documents**

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The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003,

The Official Secrets Act 1963,

PIN 006 - the IPS Computer Use, Access and Security Policy

SI No. 289/1996 - The Prison (Disciplinary Code for Officers) Rules 1996 as amended by SI No. 438/2009 – The Prison (Disciplinary Code for Officers) (Amendment) Rules 2009 ("The Prison Disciplinary Rules")

Circular 14/2006: Civil Service Disciplinary Code revised in accordance with the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Act 2005 ("the Civil Service Disciplinary Code").

## **6. Definitions**

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**IPS** – Irish Prison Service

## Appendix I – IPS Social Media Policy Principles

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### **General Rule of Thumb**

Employees should refrain from posting fraudulent, harassing, embarrassing, sexually explicit, profane, intimidating, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate or unlawful material on social media.

### **Avoid work talk**

As a general rule you should avoid talking about your job or where you work. **However**, if you chose to discuss work related matters or matters that are within your area of responsibility, bear in mind the requirements of sections 4.1 - 4.6 of the IPS Social Media Policy **and** an appropriate disclaimer should make clear that you are speaking on your own behalf and not on behalf of or as an agent of the IPS. Employees should not use social media to bring the IPS into disrepute.

### **Personal Information**

Be careful about what personal information you share online. Be careful about what information you share about your job or workplace on-line. Know who you are talking to at all times. Never disclose personal information about prisoners or other staff members.

### **Respect diversity**

Avoid making comments that are defamatory insulting or harassing, or remarks that could be offensive to others such as comments including but not limited to race, religion, sexual orientation, gender or age. Be aware of the IPS core values and policies.

### **Confidential Information**

By the nature of your job or position you may be privy to confidential or sensitive information. Never share or divulge this information online. Do not divulge personal information regarding prisoners, prisons, or colleagues as to do so may cause offence or, more importantly, breach the Official Secrets Act, the Data Protection Acts and any other relevant legislation or policies.

### **IPS Identity**

Never use the IPS logo in your online communications or profiles without permission from the Press Office.

## **Personal Use**

Social media sites cannot and should not be accessed on IPS equipment. Social media on personal devices must also not be accessed during core working times. Use should be limited to non-working times such as breaks and lunch periods. Social media use must not interfere with your job.

## **Images and recordings**

Do not post, upload, like or share any audio or video recordings or images taken in the workplace unless the image or recording has been approved as official by the Director General through the IPS Press Office. Usable official images are available on IRIS. Audio or video recordings or images taken outside the work place but which negatively represent the Irish Prison Service should also not be uploaded, liked or shared.

## **Disciplinary Action**

Be aware that anything posted on a social media platform that could bring the IPS into disrepute could be deemed a breach of discipline pursuant to the prison disciplinary rules or the civil service disciplinary code and therefore could result in disciplinary action.

## **Think before you post!**

Anything that you post is ultimately your responsibility and everything posted online is permanent and public even with privacy settings in place.

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