



Social and Digital Media Policy and Guidance for Social Care Ireland (SCI) Board Members and Employees

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The Social and Digital Media Policy and Guidance document, provides guidance and direction to SCI Board Members and employees when utilising all types of online social media sites and networks. This policy applies to all SCI employees/Board Members either participating personally, or communicating on behalf of SCI, while online.

This proposed guidance document should not be considered in isolation but needs to be read in conjunction with a number of other SCI policy documents, including the Data Protection Guidelines, and the SCI Code of Conduct and the SCI Child Protection Policy. *(Please also refer to Part 4 of the CORU: Social Care Workers Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics)*

Misuse or abuse of social and digital media can cause significant injury to third parties and can also impact negatively on the credibility of SCI. This is particularly relevant in the context of safeguarding the care provided by SCI and personal information. SCI is potentially vicariously liable for injury caused by misuse or abuse of social and digital media channels by its employees and/or Board Members. Consequently, SCI takes any misuse or abuse of social and digital media by SCI employees/Board Members very seriously and can lead to significant disciplinary and legal actions.

Like all employee policies, it is the responsibility of line management/Chair of the Board to address any issues that arise in relation to breach of these policies and regulations. There is also a significant personal responsibility placed on each employee/Board Member.

Information Security Policy

Each user is responsible for respecting and protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the information they process at all times.

Electronic Communications Policy

Confidential information regarding SCI business practices and procedures or personal information about any SCI employees or Board Members 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.

SCI reserves the right to take such action as it deems appropriate against users who breach the conditions of these policies or Data Protection regulations. SCI employees/Board Members who breach these policies may be denied access to the organisation's information technology resources, and may be subject to disciplinary action, including suspension and dismissal as provided for in the SCI Disciplinary Procedure.



SCI Code of Standards and Behaviour

There is an implied term of mutual trust and confidence between employer and employee in all employment contracts. A very negative, defamatory or damaging posting or communication by an employee may entitle the employer to proceed with the SCI Disciplinary Process, including investigation, and discipline up to dismissal if warranted. This also relates to all SCI Members as well as any members of the Board of SCI, and the Chair of SCI will address any such matters.

If defamatory material is posted on a social networking site, defamation claims may arise against the SCI Member/employee and/or Board Member.

Employees must not improperly disclose, during or following termination of employment, information gained in the course of their work. SCI Board Members are also responsible for non-disclosure of such information.

Employees and/or Board Members are expected to comply with the SCI Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the code will constitute a breach of the terms of employment/Board tenure and may result in disciplinary action being pursued in accordance with agreed procedures.

Social Media Policy

Representing SCI:

The same 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.

Should an SCI employee or Board Member wish to establish a social media profile for SCI they should seek authorisation and approval from the Board of SCI. No SCI employee/Board Member is authorised to establish such a profile, page or site without completing this process and receiving the appropriate guidance and advice. A delegated individual will then be responsible for the ongoing management and governance of authorised social media pages or profiles and consequently must be familiar with this policy document. Examples of existing SCI social media sites include:

www.facebook.com/socialcareireland

www.twitter.com/socialcareireland

www.instagram.com/socialcareireland

SCI will ensure that any official comments made online meet our obligations under the Data Protection Act, especially in relation to private information. It will also be cognisant of any copyrights, trademarks, rights of publicity, and other third-party rights in the online social media space, including user-generated content (UGC).

Any requests from the media, public representatives or other organisations for official comment from SCI on any topic should be referred to the Board of Directors.

SCI will ensure, through its network of experts, that information given in an official capacity from SCI through social media is accurate and up to date.



Personal Social Media Profiles

If you choose to identify yourself as an employee/member/Board Member of SCI on social media profiles, or in your commentary on personal topics within social media sites, it is important to use common sense and discretion, and be aware of the nature of your comments and their possible consequences. It is important that all employees, members and/or Board Members are aware of the implications of engaging in forms of social media and online conversations that reference SCI or your association with SCI. Data Protection requirements, defamation law and basic duty of care all still apply in comments that are made while off-duty and online.

If an employee/member/Board Member comments online in a personal capacity while identified as an employee/member/Board Member of SCI, these comments can be attributed or perceived as the official position of SCI.

The Board of Directors may use the SCI employee policies referenced above in addressing any inappropriate comments or activities by employees online.

Personal blogs created by SCI employees/members/Board Members, including microblogs like Twitter accounts, should have a clear disclaimer that the views expressed by the author in the blog are the author's alone and do not represent the views of SCI. Authors should write clearly and in the first person, to clarify that the views or comments are personal.

Social media activities should not interfere with SCI work commitments. SCI logos and trademarks may not be used without the prior written consent of SCI.

Remember, when using social media in personal time:

1. Be respectful of all individuals, races, religions and cultures; how you conduct yourself in the online social media space not only reflects on you – it is a direct reflection on your professionalism and your employer.
2. Think before you post. Anything you post that is inaccurate, unfair, or breaking confidentiality and privacy standards will ultimately be your responsibility.
3. You may come across negative posts about SCI but should avoid responding yourself. It is your professional obligation to forward any such posts to the Board of Directors, who will deal with such comments on behalf of SCI.
4. Be conscious when mixing your business and personal lives. Online, your personal and business profiles are likely to intersect. SCI respects the privacy of all employees, but you must remember that colleagues/members may have access to the online content you post. Keep this in mind when publishing information online that can be seen by more than friends and family and know that information originally intended just for friends and family can be forwarded on very easily.
5. Know that the Internet is permanent. Once information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if you “remove/delete” it later or attempt to make it anonymous.
6. Be aware of both compliments and criticism of SCI. Even if you are not an official spokesperson for SCI, you can be a vital asset in monitoring the social media landscape. If you come across positive or negative remarks about SCI online that you believe are important, consider sharing them by forwarding them to info@socialcareireland.ie



Protecting Employees from Online Abuse

Given the nature of and the high levels of participation in social media sites like Facebook in Ireland, SCI employees and/or Board Members may from time to time become the victim of abuse or defamation by members of the public through comments made and published on the internet or on social networks.

Where this occurs, the SCI Board of Directors will work to support its employees in every way possible. Responsibility for responding to concerns about and co-ordinating the response to abusive online comments rests with the Board, as is does with all staff health safety and welfare issues.

Where employees/Board Members are notified of or are concerned about an abusive or defamatory post, profile, comment or page relating to a SCI employee or Board Member, this should be reported immediately to the Chair of SCI. The Chair of SCI should arrange for the post to be reviewed, and where possible or appropriate, the post should be reported as abuse with the relevant site's existing reporting process. A screenshot should be recorded of the comment.

The SCI Board is available to assist in responding to cases such as this, by providing access to sites such as Facebook to allow for online reporting, and also by giving advice on how to approach website or network owners and publishers directly in relation to reporting abusive content. In cases of defamation, the Chair of SCI may, where appropriate, choose to seek legal advice, notify SCI Insurers as a serious incident that may require further investigation and action by the organisation.

For further information or queries, please email info@socialcareireland.ie

Child and Adult Safeguarding and Social Media

The many benefits of the use of technology, online interactive media and electronic information sharing need to be balanced with the rights of children, families and employees to privacy, personal integrity and dignity, and the risks that can be associated with the use of such devices and media.

All use of the internet, photographic and recording devices will be considered within our risk / capacity assessment process for children and/or vulnerable adults.

Photography and recording of children while they are in attendance at any SCI event or group supported by SCI must only be done with the express permission of a parent or guardian for those under 18 years of age.

Images and recordings are stored safely and disposed of/deleted when no longer needed for the purpose for which they were taken.

We request that photos or images taken of children and/or vulnerable adults while attending any SCI event or group are not posted elsewhere by others without consent.

Children's Agreement

Where possible, in addition to parents' consent, children's agreement is obtained to:

- Take their photograph.
- Record or use their voice and/or activity.
- Display or share their photos or recordings.