

Policy on the Social Media Engagement Programme of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission

Background and Purpose

In order to assist in its fulfilment of the objective as set out at section 67(1)(b) of the Garda Síochána Act, 2005 (as amended), the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) has decided to launch a Social Media Engagement Programme. This Policy sets out the purpose, and parameters for the day-to-day operation, of that Programme.

Section 67(1) of the Garda Síochána Act, 2005 (“the Act”) provides that the dual objectives of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission are:

- (a) to ensure that its functions are performed in an efficient and effective manner and with full fairness to all persons involved in complaints and investigations under Part 4 concerning the conduct of members of the Garda Síochána, and*
- (b) to promote public confidence in the process for resolving those complaints.*

In accordance with section 67(3) of the Act, GSOC has “*all powers that are necessary for, or incidental to, the performance of its functions*”; this provides the legal basis for the use of its Social Media Engagement Programme to promote its activities.

The purpose of the Social Media Engagement Programme is to increase GSOC’s visibility and to inform better the public and all stakeholders of its objectives and functions.

This Policy replaces that which was signed on 14 May 2013.

Day-to-day management of the Social Media Engagement Programme

While retaining overall direction of, and responsibility for, GSOC’s Social Media Engagement Programme, the Ombudsman Commission authorises the members of its Communications and Research Unit to manage that Programme on a day-to-day basis.

Forms of social media to be utilised

GSOC will engage in the Social Media Engagement Programme via:

- its website (www.gardaombudsman.ie); and
- its Twitter account (@GardaOmbudsman).

GSOC may decide to utilise additional/other forms of social media in the future.

Website

As part of its Social Media Engagement Programme, GSOC will provide information relevant to its functions via its website (www.gardaombudsman.ie). Such information may include details relating to:

- statistics;
- reports;
- case summaries;
- witness appeals; and/or

- press releases, etc.

This list is not exhaustive and GSOC may, from time to time, change the content of its website.

Twitter

GSOC will link relevant material from its website to its Twitter account. Such links will be used to highlight new material which may be of interest to the public.

It is important to note that:

- generally, GSOC will not respond to third party posts on its Twitter account but retains the discretion to do so;
- GSOC is not the host for Twitter and will not be held responsible for the publishing of defamatory statements on its account by any third party; and
- GSOC will not monitor or take any responsibility for discussions that are provoked by its tweets, uploaded material and/or related articles.

(Note: The law of defamation ascribes liability to the publisher of a defamatory statement: i.e. this is the person who either makes the statement or, in certain cases on the internet, the entity that hosts the defamatory statement.)

GSOC will not be obliged to follow any of its followers. If GSOC follows a Twitter account, it will not imply endorsement of any kind.

GSOC will not accept complaints made to it via Twitter. Complaints will only be accepted if made via any of the methods identified in "How do you make a complaint?" which is available on GSOC's website (www.gardaombudsman.ie).

Sending a message via Twitter will not be recognised by GSOC as contacting this organisation for official purposes. GSOC will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through Twitter. Instead, individuals are advised that GSOC's contact details are available on www.gardaombudsman.ie.

Review of Policy


The Ombudsman Commission will review this Policy over time in the light of ongoing operational experience.

Agreed:

		
Simon O'Brien Chairperson	Kieran FitzGerald Commissioner	Carmel Foley Commissioner

Date: 11th day of JUNE 2013

Seal authenticated by:


Nessa O'Doherty
Secretary to the Ombudsman Commission