



Truth Recovery Independent Panel
Seeking the Truth

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Who this Policy Applies to

1.1 This policy applies to all members of the Truth Recovery Independent Panel.

2. Purpose of this Policy

2.1 All members of the Truth Recovery Independent Panel ('the Independent Panel') are expected to ensure that their activity on social media does not compromise the perception of, or undermine the objectivity and credibility of, the Independent Panel and its investigation. It is vital that the Independent Panel retains the trust of those who engage with its members, those who participant in its work, and the public. This policy is in place to outline responsible usage of social media by Panel members.

2.2 This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), Wikipedia, Instagram, WhatsApp, Tik Tok, YouTube and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to use of social media for business purposes as well as personal use that may affect the Independent Panel's work in any way.

2.3 This policy does not intend to limit freedom of speech for Panel members, rather, it intends to address only the aspects of social media usage necessary to protect the Independent Panel's reputation and the credibility of its investigation.

2.4 The overriding principle of this policy is that all Panel members are representatives of the Independent Panel, both offline and when online, including on social media. All Panel members have a duty in relation to conduct, propriety and confidentiality, and are expected to ensure that their use of social media does not risk bringing the work of the Independent Panel into disrepute.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1** Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy sits with the Independent Panel Secretariat Team ('the Secretariat'). The Secretariat will review this policy periodically and provide advice to the Independent Panel's Co-Chairs on any changes needed to ensure that it draws upon best practice and reflects developments in social media use and technology.
- 3.2** All Panel members are expected to ensure that they read and understand this policy and adhere to the specific practices described in this document.
- 3.3** Panel members' social media activity and accounts will not be monitored. Any complaints received in relation to the misuse of social media by a Panel member will be handled by the Independent Panel Co-Chairs. Any complaint in relation to the misuse of social media by the Independent Panel Co-Chairs will be forwarded to The Executive Office ('TEO'). For further information, please refer to the Independent Panel's Complaints Procedure.
- 3.4** Questions regarding the information in, or implementation of, this policy should be directed to the Secretariat at secretariat@independentpanel.org.uk.

4. Guidelines for Responsible Use of Social Media

4.1 Disclosing Affiliation with the Independent Panel

- a) Panel members who disclose their affiliation with the Independent Panel on social media, must state that their personal views do not represent those of the Independent Panel. They should ensure that their profile and any content they post, or share is consistent with the professional image they present to stakeholders and colleagues as a Panel member.

4.2 Interacting with Official Independent Panel Posts

- a) The views / position of the Independent Panel will be published on the Independent Panel's official social media accounts. Panel members are encouraged to repost or share posts published on the Independent Panel's official social media accounts to spread awareness and enhance the reach of the posts.

- b) If a Panel member chooses to engage with posts from the Independent Panel's official social media accounts, they should make clear that they are a member of the Independent Panel, by either having this in their bio, or by explicitly stating it in the individual post.

4.3 Posting Personal Opinions

- a) Panel members are advised to exercise caution when considering posting personal opinions on social media regarding issues which may be directly, or indirectly relevant to the Independent Panel's work.
- b) Panel members who choose to post a personal opinion on social media regarding an issue which may be directly, or indirectly relevant to the Independent Panel's work, are expected to make it explicitly clear that this is their own view, and not the view of the Independent Panel.
- c) Panel members are expected to be respectful to others when making public statements and / or sending direct messages on social media. Panel members should be aware that any communication posted on a social media account or messaging service – even closed ones like Facebook and WhatsApp – can be shared outside of their network.
- d) Panel members should be aware that it is possible for social media users to connect the work they do for the Independent Panel with other social media postings. The likelihood of this is increased if Panel members declare on social media that they are a member of the Independent Panel. It is therefore important to remember that when posting in a personal capacity, Panel members may still easily be identified by other users as working for the Panel, even if they don't state it.
- e) Panel members who are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of posting a statement on social media, are advised to discuss it with the Independent Panel Co-Chairs. The Independent Panel Co-Chairs may seek advice from the Secretariat and / or the Independent Panel's media relations advisors.

4.4 Provision of Advice

- a) Panel members should note that if they provide advice on social media in a personal capacity on matters which relate to the Independent Panel's responsibilities, it is often easy for them to be identified as connected to the Independent Panel. Therefore, their advice may be interpreted as official advice from the Independent Panel. Panel members are advised to

avoid exposing themselves to a situation where their advice or views could potentially be interpreted as those of the Independent Panel. Panel members should inform the Independent Panel Co-Chairs and Secretariat as soon as possible if they think that there is a risk that this may have occurred.

4.5 Business Use of Social Media

- a) Panel members must not use their personal social media accounts to speak on behalf of the Independent Panel, this includes the expression of opinions or provision of advice as explained above. As outlined in Section 4.2 (a), the views / position of the Independent Panel will be published on the official social media accounts.
- b) Panel members who are contacted through a personal social media account for comments about the work of the Independent Panel, are expected to direct the enquiry to the Secretariat mailbox at secretariat@independentpanel.org.uk.

4.6 Managing Negativity

- a) If any Panel member comes across postings about the Independent Panel which are positive or negative in tone, they should inform the Independent Panel Co-Chairs and the Secretariat. This will ensure a better understanding of the perceptions held about the Independent Panel.
- b) If a negative post raises significant concern, particularly if it is misinformation about the Independent Panel (or a Panel member) and its work, the Independent Panel Co-Chairs will consult the Independent Panel's media relations advisors on the best course of action to address this.
- c) Panel members are advised not to engage in direct conversations with any accounts that are responding to posts from the Independent Panel's official social media accounts.
- d) If any Panel member, when dealing with the Independent Panel's stakeholders, is subject to harassment or derogatory comments on social media, they should bring this to the attention of the Independent Panel Co-Chairs and the Secretariat immediately. If an incident is reported to the Independent Panel Co-Chairs, they will decide on the best course of action to address this unacceptable behaviour and may seek legal advice.

4.7 Privacy Settings

- a) The privacy settings on social media apps, messaging services apps and websites should give Panel members control over how their personal information is used. Panel members who use social media are advised to check their privacy settings before using a particular service and to review them regularly, particularly after any new settings are introduced.

5. Prohibited Use of Social Media

5.1 Panel members must not make any social media posts or send direct messages through social media that could damage the Independent Panel's reputation, or the credibility of its investigation, directly or indirectly.

5.2 Panel members must not use social media to:

- defame or disparage any individual or organisation;
- to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against any individual;
- to make false or misleading statements;
- to directly or indirectly make derogatory comments or use offensive or inappropriate language on social media, whether through a public post or direct message;
- post comments about sensitive Independent Panel related business;
- disclose confidential information or do anything to jeopardise the Independent Panel's investigation.

5.3 When making personal use of social media, Panel members must not imply that they are posting on behalf of the Panel. Panel members should write in the first person and use a personal email address on personal accounts.

5.4 Panel members are expected to respect the confidentiality of Panel meetings and discussions and must not share - on their personal social media accounts - any details of Independent Panel events or work which has not been announced by the Independent Panel on its official social media accounts.

5.5 Panel members are reminded of their duty set out in section 10 of their public appointment letters, to comply with the requirements under the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations regarding obtaining, using and storing information provided to Panel members, including information published on, or shared / received through social media accounts.

6. Breach of this Policy

6.1 Panel members who breach this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including the possible termination of their public appointment in the case of misconduct, depending on the nature of the breach identified. Examples of what may be regarded as gross misconduct include (but are not limited to):

- maliciously posting derogatory or offensive comments
- the deliberate or negligent disclosure of confidential and sensitive information about the Independent Panel's discussions and / or work; and
- posting comments which may cause harm to the reputation of the Independent Panel or damage the credibility of its investigation.

6.2 All breaches will be investigated in accordance with the Code of Conduct and the Seven Principles of Public Life ('The Nolan Principles') set out in the Terms and Conditions of Panel members' public appointments. The level of disciplinary action to be taken, if any, will be a matter of judgement for the Independent Panel Co-Chairs in the first instance. Any breach assessed as gross misconduct, will be forward to TEO. A breach of this policy by the Independent Panel Co-Chairs will be investigated by TEO.

6.3 A Panel member may be required to remove any social media post that the Independent Panel's Co-Chairs consider to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.