

Inappropriate use of Instant Messaging and Social Media Working Group

Agenda

Date: 12.05.2021

Attendance	
ACC Travis, South Wales Police (Chair) CC Gavin Stephens, Surrey Police Tom Cherry, Home Office Ian Balbi, Home Office Marcus Griffiths, College of Policing Alan Martin, College of Policing Garry Jones, Independent Office for Police Conduct Sarah Morely, Independent Office for Police Conduct Warren Little, Warwickshire Police Mark Lenihan, South Wales Police Sion Williams, North Wales Police	Peter Holdcroft, Metropolitan Police Richard Hammond, South Yorkshire Police Rebecca Love, West Mercia Police Colin Paine, Thames Valley Police Barry Wright, North Yorkshire Police David Twyford, West Midlands Police Laura Selvey, Nottinghamshire Police Antonio Manzo, British Transport Police Karen Ryan, Greater Manchester Police Bill Stevens, GMB Kevin Richards, South Wales Police
Apologies	
Andy Selby, British Transport Police Santi Sende, British Transport Police	Donna Lawton, Nottinghamshire Police

Action Table			
Date	Action	Owner	Update
12.05.21.01	Nominate a Communications Representative to this group	CC Stephens	NEW

1. Welcome and Introductions
<p>ACC Travis explained that he currently has NPCC responsibility for Sexual Harassment in the workplace and has been asked to pick up the NPCC lead for the inappropriate use of instant messaging and social media.</p> <p>Background</p> <p>Michael Lockwood, Director General of the IOPC wrote to CC Martin Jelley in his role as NPCC Professional Standards and Ethics Lead about a number of issues that had been identified by IOPC through some damaging investigations, where individuals are damaging public confidence by their conduct. A number of forces are already doing a lot of good work to tackle this issue and the group has been sent a number of documents from individuals.</p> <p>The intent of this group is to take these examples of work ongoing, and in consultation with College of Policing, IOPC and the Home Office, look at how we bring this together to provide tools and assistance on a national level so forces have a starting point to build their own polices and procedures. The aim is consistency and support.</p>

1. Welcome and Introductions

Sarah Morley IOPC, highlighted that there is seemingly an increasing amount of inappropriate content shared on social media, whether that be WhatsApp or Facebook, where the public are able to view. A recent matter in relation to an offensive image of George Floyd, an officer was charged to court for sending a grossly offensive image but was acquitted. Whilst the officer was acquitted, it still has a negative impact on public confidence.

Various recommendations have been made by the IOPC to individual forces as a result of cases, however it is worth taking a more thematic point of view to provide some national guidance.

ACC MT added:

- The group needs to recognise the importance of not cutting across other pieces of work, and to make sure we are checking against each of the individual portfolios.
- The NPCC have been clear that we haven't got time to wait for this, through a task and finish group we can put an effective response in the here and now.

CC Stephens explained that he is the Chair of the Communications Advisory Group for NPCC and within that, has responsibility for police use of social media. CC Stephens made the following points:

- It is important to keep distance between these two areas as there is lots of positive work ongoing there.
- National procurement process has purchased social media technology with full audit capability.
- If forces follow that procurement framework there will be auditable capability.
- At the moment officers are logging into the primary sites with no audit capability. This will be brought up in Chief Constable Council.
- There have been recent misconduct cases due to contact on social media sites where having an auditable capability was a key learning.
- CC Stephens stated he was happy to be tasked by this group into the advisory group and take actions.

A discussion was had around the experiences of the members of this group. The main points from this discussion were:

- There are overwhelming concerns about mixed personal and professional use of WhatsApp. 20/30 officers, often shift groups, communicate work matters, often inappropriate content and there are examples of discriminatory and bigoted behaviour. WhatsApp seems to drive most of the Professional Standards business at this time.
- WhatsApp has been overarching issues mainly because of its efficiency as a platform and the fact we have no auditable ability.
- Seen enormous volume of these cases in PSD space, particularly around disclosure and data protection.
- If colleagues are having work conversations on personal phones, do we ban that and provide a facility on work phones where colleagues can have these work-related conversations?
- There will always be personal groups, but we can concentrate activity on Standards of Behaviour around this.
- There is a need to get ahead of the curve as officers are using social media in new ways. Also issues with collateral intrusion, PSD download phones and establish shift groups, whole shifts are then identified as being involved in inappropriate chatter. This then drifts into Article 8 Human Rights which is a concern.
- It was noted that the Article 8 issues were largely settled with Scottish court case, and while it is not authoritative in England and Wales, it is highly influential. In that case it was ruled that police standards overrode Article 8

1. Welcome and Introductions

ACC Travis noted that the group was lacking a representative from communications and this needed to be addressed.

CC Stephens offered to help with finding a communications representative.

ACTION: Nominate a Communications Representative to this group (12.05.21.01)

CC Stephens added that the Social Media Advisory Group made a set of guidelines for legitimate use and sets up basic principles.

2. Overview of Programme

Outline Plan – Starting Point

Strategy

- Define the direction we are headed in and why
- How this can be adopted that into wider NPCC portfolios

Delivery Plan

- See agenda item 4

Policy and Procedure

- Take the best elements from force's policies, draft a proposed national policy and share it to be considered as a starting point for forces who can then draft their own.
- Provide a Checklist / Overview of key areas that forces can look at.

Communications and Marketing tools

- There is an opportunity to bring this alongside Professional Practice

Key Facts Position

- Headline data on how many staff have lost their jobs, how many hours are spent on investigations etc.

The Outline Plan was discussed, the key points raised were:

- MPS created a video but it would be good to have a single authoritative video so we can have confidence that the messaging is consistent and there is a wide range of people who will see it.
- Need to work on what we do around vulnerabilities – e.g. Probationers and Staff at certain times in their life are vulnerable
- CC Stephens added that there is a need to engage with a demographic that is not involved in this group. Are we able to engage with some teams as an advisory basis on what will land with them as we need some help from the audience we are trying to reach? Supt Love, West Mercia volunteered to look at this point.
- Due to the length of time it can take to deliver something nationally, it was suggested that the Group puts out a holding message while the work is developed. This will advise staff that we are working to tackle this issue and explain the next steps.

2. Overview of Programme

- The group agreed to releasing a position statement and early recommendations for forces to consider, such as with dual use work mobile phones.
- If we come to an early agreement about this issue, we can deal with personal / dual use via the Codes of Ethics and standards of behaviour. Forces can then look at their policies early.
- It was noted that the Code of Ethics review is 18/24 months away and we need a quick response that can be embedded in the Code of Ethics later.
- Social Media is not the problem, it is the behaviour people display on Social Media that is the problem.
- Is there something that can be done at the recruitment stage that would allow us to weed people out at that stage?
- People are asked on vetting forms if they have social media accounts. It was suggested that a better process may be to ask people to list their accounts and unique identifiers. This would assist in the vetting process and any future investigations down the line.
- Following on from recruitment, is there value in speaking to Psychologists in terms of the initial testing and what can be done to identify individuals at that stage?

It was added that:

- Technology is moving very quickly. Our Standards or Professional behaviour are good to measure behaviour, however chasing the technology is difficult.
- The public use a variety of different platforms and neighbourhood policing teams need to be able to engage with them.
- Standards of behaviour are key as the rules of engagement are the same in person as they are online.
- This has been one of the MPS biggest risks for the last two years, but the message is still not landing.

It was agreed that focussing on conduct is important, however:

- There are specific issues around technology such as disclosure.
- We don't yet fully know what the threat is. We need to define the threat.
- The Federation and Staff Associations need to help to change the culture within the organisation. Unions can potentially influence staff better than departments such as Professional Standards.

ACC Travis noted that this piece of work could be the first campaign to be run in collaboration between Police, IOPC, College of Policing, Home Office, Federation and Staff Associations. It is right that we should be bringing all these parties together on such an important piece of work.

3. Terms of Reference

Following the initial discussions, it was accepted that the Terms of Reference will need to be amended to be widened in some areas, but also narrowed in others.

It is the intention of the group to define the Terms of Reference and for them to be signed off by NPCC leads so that they are satisfied with the parameters of what this group will be looking at.

4. Delivery Plan

ACC Travis explained that there are five strands to this piece of work that require a lead:

1. Policy and procedure
2. Communications
3. Learning development and culture
4. Intervention
5. Technology and data

This was agreed by the group.

The members of the group were asked for volunteers to lead each strand. Any volunteers were asked to do so through ACC Travis' Staff Officer at **S31 Law Enforcement**.

5. Initial Actions

From the discussions in this meeting, ACC Travis outlined three things that stood out as initial actions:

1. Define what 'Good' looks like – How do we want people to use social media
2. Holding Position – What do we do in the short term
3. View of Staff – What does this mean to staff and how can we make sure the messaging lands

This was agreed by the group.

6. Frequency of Meetings

Dates for the future meetings are as follows:

24th June 2021

30th July 2021

22nd October 2021

20th January 2021

7. AOB

NIL

8. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 24th June 2021