

TDI *Explainer*

Photography and social media policies

Many of us will be responsible for running spaces or activities where children or vulnerable adults can be photographed, and these images shared on social media. This Explainer outlines some things we might want to think about to help us keep everyone safe.

Why do we need formal policies on photography and social media?

In previous Explainers, we've talked about the ways in which offenders seek to access victims. In an increasingly online world, photographs and information attached to them are one way in which offenders can find out about potential victims. They are also a way of creating openings for relationships built around pretended shared interests or needs that the offender can fulfil.

We have a responsibility to think about the way that images are created and how they are shared.

How do we balance risks?

Restrictions on photography and the making of videos have become less contentious in recent years, and most members of the public understand the potential risks. Managers of organisations and spaces open to the public have the right to set restrictions on entry, including rules around if and when cameras or camera phones can be used.

As ever, though, we are trying to strike a balance:

Parents and other relatives will have an understandable desire to record events in their children's lives, and children will also want records of times they have spent with friends.



There are a variety of risks we want to control, not just the misuse of images, but also the right to privacy of those who don't want to be pictured or have their images shared online. This can include people who might be placed at risk if their locations can be identified.

Some photography issues to consider:

Are there some spaces, or situations, in which photography is never allowed (such as spaces or times when people are changing clothes)?

Can we restrict photography to self-contained groups of people who agree to be photographed?

Is there an approval process for allowing people to take photos, including verifying their identity and agreeing to how images can be used?

How will the photographer ensure that all who are being photographed give their consent?

What records need to be kept of these approvals, and for how long?

Some media policy issues to consider:

Before photos can be shared, we need to think about who might be able to access them, how long the image might persist and what this might do for the individual's public image.

Are there certain sites we would never want images shared on?

Can we offer access to images in a controlled way—for instance through private groups or password controlled areas on our own websites?

What information do we want attached to images? We probably don't want to identify children or vulnerable adults, or other aspects of their life which would make them identifiable, such as location.

How can we get buy-in to our policies?

We are going to want to be as open and clear about our policies as we can be. This might go as far as making written agreement to them a condition of participation in our activities.

Policies are easier to enforce if we explain them. Most people will agree to a balancing of risk when they can see that balance is sensible and thought through.

Further questions you might want to think about:

Are there examples of policies we can borrow ideas from? What does the law say about images and the risks they pose? What can go wrong?



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