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Deputy Thomas Pringle

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Dear Deputy Pringle

To ask the Minister for Health if his Department has published guidelines for behaviour for persons employed by the State in the health services on the use of social media; the regulations in place; the way in which they are enforced with regard to use of offensive or racist language on online platforms by current staff members

The Digital Age provides us all with an opportunity to communicate widely in real-time and across multiple digital channels and devices. We can share content, opinions and third-party information. But with this opportunity comes a responsibility to respect others, share fact only and remain courteous at all times. Social media provides the HSE with an opportunity to communicate with members of the public.

The HSE has social media guidelines document for staff. The purpose of these guidelines is to inform HSE staff of best practice when posting on social media and digital channels whether in a professional or personal capacity. Guidelines available at:- <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/communications/digital/social-media/social-media-and-digital-policy/>

When posting on social media, we ask our staff to remember the importance of confidentiality. Data protection laws protect us all as employees, employers and citizens, any breaches can affect the organisation's reputation or affect patients' rights to confidentiality. As per the terms and conditions of employment, our staff should not discuss or disclose any information of a confidential nature except in the proper course of their employment.

I trust this helps to answer your questions, and I can help with anything else, please let me know

Yours truly,

Mary Brodie

Communications Division