

# IP Inclusive Communications Policy

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## Introduction

Communicating with the outside world, as well as within its own community of volunteers and supporters, is vital to IP Inclusive's work. It is also, however, one of our key sources of risk, in particular of reputational damage or loss of stakeholder goodwill, or in the worst case, of complaints or legal problems.

This policy is intended to mitigate such risks, and to enhance IP Inclusive's engagement both with its supporters and among the wider public.

## What and who this policy applies to

Our Communications Policy applies to everyone who handles communications for or on behalf of IP Inclusive. That includes volunteers - for example, people who communicate through our networking and support communities, or any other projects or initiatives, such as Careers in Ideas, established under the IP Inclusive banner. It also includes employees, consultants and contractors who are appointed by IP Inclusive Management (IPIM) to handle IP Inclusive communications.

The policy governs all forms of communication that are, or are likely to be, associated with IP Inclusive:

- both written and oral;
- whether through social media (including the IP Inclusive and Careers in Ideas websites) or through any other communications channel; and
- no matter who the actual or intended audience.

Those handling IP Inclusive's social media communications should also read our Social Media Guidelines. We have also published Website Content Guidelines for those who contribute content (for example blog posts) to the IP Inclusive or Careers in Ideas website. You can access both these policies from [our Policy Documents Hub](#).

## Key principles

As an organisation with a mission to improve equality, diversity and inclusion, it is important that IP Inclusive handles its communications sensitively and fairly. The following principles govern all our communications, both within our own community and with the outside world, including via social media.

- We aim to project a professional and trustworthy image; this means acting with honesty and integrity.
- We are inclusive, which means we respect other people and their beliefs and allow for differences of opinion. We celebrate open debate and take an objective and broad-minded stance in our own communications.
- However, we will not knowingly provide a platform for:
  - extreme, offensive, abusive or harmful views
  - negative opinions targeted at an individual person or organisation or a minority group, including derogatory or defamatory comments, prejudice, and all forms of bullying and harassment
  - misrepresentations of the truth, or inadequately evidenced allegations
  - crude or otherwise unseemly material
  - views that reflect badly on IP Inclusive or the IP professions
  - material that could incite any of these things in other people
- In our communications, we aim to be tolerant, moderate and uncontroversial: we operate in a potentially emotive area, but we always aim not to hurt, offend or alienate anyone.
- We communicate to encourage and share good practices, not to criticise or condemn.
- We treat all our supporters according to the same general standards and avoid discrimination of any kind, positive or negative.
- We do not use our communications to promote specific individuals or organisations, other than for purposes that are of benefit to our supporters.
- We do not undertake political campaigning or activities intended to support political campaigning.
- We do not wish to engage in dialogue with, or otherwise associate ourselves with, those who do not share these values and practices.

## Some basic rules

Please adhere to the following basic rules when handling IP Inclusive communications. If you have any queries or concerns about applying them, please speak to a member of the IP Inclusive executive or management team: you can find all our contact details via the [“Contact us” page of our website](#).

1. Please do not speak or write on behalf of IP Inclusive unless we have asked or authorised you to do so.

2. When you do, never forget your role as a representative of, and ambassador for, IP Inclusive. Please adhere to the key principles above, and act in a way that will reflect well on the organisation.
3. Use your common sense and discretion when applying those principles and assessing what your audience is likely to regard as appropriate. We recognise that this may differ between different forums. However, if in doubt, please ask for guidance from the executive or management team.
4. Whatever you write or say, make sure it is accurate and justifiable.
5. Be considerate about how you refer to other people; check with them if you can about the terminology they are comfortable with and their preferred pronouns.
6. Take care not to mix up your personal communications with your IP Inclusive ones. IP Inclusive forums should not generally be used as a platform for your personal views, unless those views are clearly aligned with the IP Inclusive objectives.
7. Limit your interactions to people and organisations you know and trust, and to relevant spheres (equality, diversity and inclusion; intellectual property).
8. If you quote, link to or otherwise endorse somebody else's content, again make sure it is a reliable source.
  - a. Steer clear of anything suspect or extreme or provocative.
  - b. If you are merely signposting something, as opposed to endorsing it, make that clear.
9. Take care not to:
  - a. infringe somebody else's copyright in the content (including images) that you include or reference in your communications. Please acknowledge the owner of any copyright work you include or refer to, and if appropriate the author as well.
  - b. make use of other people's personal data (including photographs of them) unless you have their permission.
  - c. breach anybody's confidentiality.
10. If a conversation takes an uncomfortable turn, distance yourself from it as soon as possible. Say nothing further; avoid implicating yourself by getting drawn into an online argument. If possible, close the conversation. Seek advice from the executive or management team.
11. Do not publicly criticise an individual or organisation. Lobbying and influencing have to be handled tactfully, particularly if an IP Inclusive supporter is involved. Please always refer to the executive or management team in such cases.
12. Before responding to a complaint or criticism about IP Inclusive, again please discuss with the executive or management team. Be conciliatory, sympathetic, respectful and inclusive. Apologise if appropriate.
13. Try to make your content as accessible as possible, for example:
  - a. include Alt-Text and/or an image description with any images
  - b. use the lowest possible resolution image whilst maintaining image quality
  - c. provide attachments in .pdf and .pptx formats where possible
  - d. use detailed text for hyperlinks to explain where they lead to
  - e. generally follow best practice guidelines for digital accessibility.

14. If you are asked to contribute content for a third party publication (for example an article, blog post or comment), on behalf of IP Inclusive, please discuss with the executive or management team. It's important that we send out consistent and appropriate messages and get the best out of our PR contacts.
15. Avoid communications that recipients might perceive as marketing (such as for specific IP Inclusive supporters or third party suppliers) or favouritism.
  - a. Content about IP-related job vacancies or other recruitment or outreach projects should be handled through Careers in Ideas.
  - b. It is however courteous to celebrate and express gratitude for support which people have given to IP Inclusive, for example by hosting an event, sponsoring a project, signing up to our EDI Charter or sharing relevant resources.

### **The most important two rules of all...**

...Are these:

16. Think before you communicate!
  - a. Consider how your words are likely to be received – by IP Inclusive supporters, would-be supporters and critics, and by the wider public. Is there anyone they could offend, upset, embarrass or irritate? How will they reflect on IP Inclusive? How might they be used by someone with a different agenda to yours?
  - b. Have you included anything sensitive or confidential or that isn't yours to disclose?
17. If in doubt, don't say anything.