



Digital Social Media & Online Investigation Service Definition



Document title	Digital Social Media & Online Investigation Service Definition		
Reference No.	IF-SER-021	Version	1.0
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Issue date	27/01/2026		

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Document Control

Version	Name	Comment	Date
0.1	Lisa Washer	Draft Template	07/01/2026
0.2	Simon Young	Review and editing	27/01/2026
1.0	Lisa Washer	Final review and publish	27/01/2026

Correlation Chart

Clause	FSR Code of Practice v2	ISO/IEC 17025:2017	ILAC-G19 :06/2022	ISO 9001:2015	ISO/IEC 27001:2022
Review of Requests, Tenders and Contracts	16	7.1	4.1, 4.7	8	4.2



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1. Digital Social Media & Online Investigation Service

1.1 Service Overview

- 1.1.1 The Digital Social Media & Online Investigation Service provides structured investigation and analysis of social media platforms, online services, forums, websites, applications and other publicly accessible digital environments to support investigations, intelligence gathering, litigation, regulatory enquiries, and internal reviews.
- 1.1.2 The service focuses on the lawful and proportionate identification, collection, analysis, and interpretation of online content and activity to identify and preserve content, establish digital footprints, behavioural patterns, relationships, and timelines. All activities are conducted using recognised investigative methodologies, with clear documentation and auditability to support defensible outcomes.

1.2 Service Objectives

- 1.2.1 The objectives of the Digital Social Media & Online Investigation Service are to:
- a) Identify and analyse relevant social media and online activity
 - b) Establish timelines, patterns, and associations
 - c) Preserve online material in a defensible manner
 - d) Support investigative, legal, and regulatory decision-making
 - e) Provide clear, evidence-based reporting



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2. Service Features

2.1.1 Key features of the service include:

- a) **OSINT-Led Investigation** – Lawful use of publicly available information
- b) **Multi-Platform Coverage** – Social media, forums, websites, applications and online services
- c) **Defensible Capture Methods** – Evidentially sound preservation of online content
- d) **Pattern and Behaviour Analysis** – Identification of trends, risks, and anomalies
- e) **Audit-Ready Outputs** – Transparent documentation and reporting



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3. Service Benefits

3.1.1 The service delivers the following benefits:

- a) Clear insight into online behaviour and activity
- b) Identification of relationships, networks, and influence
- c) Reduced risk of unlawful or unethical online investigation
- d) Defensible evidence suitable for legal or regulatory scrutiny
- e) Preservation of volatile data
- f) Improved investigative focus and efficiency



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4. Scope of Service

- 4.1.1 The service is delivered in alignment with applicable data protection, privacy, and investigatory laws and with platform terms of service. Investigations are limited to lawfully accessible information and are conducted in a proportionate and ethical manner. Engagements may be coordinated through legal counsel where required.

4.2 In-scope activities

- 4.2.1 The Digital Social Media & Online Investigation Service includes:
- a) Investigation scoping and objective definition
 - b) Identification of relevant platforms, websites, applications and online sources
 - c) Open-source intelligence (OSINT) collection from public sources
 - d) Social media profile and content analysis
 - e) Online identity and digital footprint analysis
 - f) Capture and preservation of online content and artefacts
 - g) Timeline reconstruction of online activity
 - h) Link and relationship analysis between online entities
 - i) Correlation with other investigative evidence
 - j) Reporting and investigative briefings

4.3 Out-of-scope activities

- 4.3.1 Unless agreed separately, the following are excluded:
- a) Interception, monitoring, or access to private accounts
 - b) Use of deception, impersonation, or intrusive techniques
 - c) Circumvention of platform security or access controls
 - d) Provision of legal advice or regulatory interpretation
 - e) Continuous monitoring or surveillance services

4.4 Assumptions, Dependencies and Constraints

- 4.4.1 Delivery of the Digital Social Media & Online Investigation Service is based on the following assumptions:
- a) The client has lawful authority and a valid legal basis to conduct online and social media investigations, including the collection and analysis of publicly available information.



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- b) Investigative objectives, scope, subjects of interest, platforms, and timeframes are clearly defined and agreed prior to commencement.
- c) All activities are limited to information that is lawfully accessible without deception, impersonation, or circumvention of platform security controls.
- d) The client will provide timely contextual information, including background details, risk considerations, and intended use of findings, to support accurate analysis and interpretation.
- e) Any legal privilege, confidentiality, disclosure sensitivities, or regulatory considerations are identified and communicated at the outset or as they arise during the engagement.
- f) Investigations are conducted in accordance with applicable laws, organisational policies, and platform terms of service.

4.4.2 Delivery of the Digital Social Media & Online Investigation Service is dependent on the following factors:

- a) Availability and accessibility of relevant online content, profiles, and platforms at the time of investigation.
- b) Stability of social media platforms, websites, and online services, including continued access to publicly available information.
- c) Cooperation and timely input from client stakeholders, including legal, compliance, HR, security, or investigation teams.
- d) Timely decision-making by the client regarding scope changes, escalation, or prioritisation of investigative leads.
- e) Availability of specialist investigative resources and secure systems appropriate to the sensitivity of the engagement.
- f) Accurate identification of subjects, accounts, or entities of interest to avoid misattribution.

4.4.3 The following constraints may impact scope, timelines, certainty, or outcomes of the investigation:

- a) Online content is inherently volatile; posts, profiles, or accounts may be modified, restricted, or removed without notice.
- b) Privacy settings, platform restrictions, or jurisdictional limitations may restrict visibility into certain content or interactions.
- c) OSINT and online investigations rely on publicly available information and cannot access private communications or restricted data.
- d) Attribution of online activity may be limited by anonymity, pseudonymous accounts, shared devices, or spoofed identities.



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- e) Platform terms of service and legal restrictions may limit the methods available for collection or analysis.
- f) Findings represent a point-in-time assessment based on the information available at the time of investigation.
- g) Online investigations identify indicators, patterns, and behaviours but do not, in isolation, establish intent or wrongdoing.
- h) Best practice prioritises lawful, ethical, and defensible investigation over speed, which may affect delivery timelines.
- i) Service delivery is subject to specialist availability, technical feasibility, and agreed commercial terms.



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5. Service Delivery Model

- 5.1.1 The Digital Social Media & Online Investigation Service is provided on an ad-hoc or project basis. Scope, timelines, service levels, and fees are agreed per engagement.
- 5.1.2 All collected material is handled using secure systems, controlled access, and confidentiality safeguards. Data is retained only for the agreed purpose and duration.

5.2 Engagement Approach

- 5.2.1 The Digital Social Media & Online Investigation Service is delivered through a structured, phased approach:
- a) **Engagement Initiation and Scoping** – Confirmation of objectives, lawful authority, and constraints
 - b) **Source Identification and Collection** – Identification and capture of relevant online material
 - c) **Analysis and Intelligence Development** – Timeline, pattern, and link analysis
 - d) **Validation and Quality Review** – Verification of findings and limitations
 - e) **Reporting and Briefing** – Delivery of investigative outputs and advisory support

5.3 Reporting and Deliverables

- 5.3.1 Deliverables may include:
- a) Investigative reports and summaries
 - b) Preserved copies of online content and artefacts
 - c) Timeline and relationship analysis outputs
 - d) Methodology and limitation statements
 - e) Intelligence briefings for stakeholders



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6. Exit and Offboarding

- 6.1.1 Upon completion, collected data is securely returned, retained, or destroyed in accordance with agreed instructions and applicable legal obligations. Access is revoked and formal engagement closure confirmed.



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7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Service Provider Responsibilities

- 7.1.1 The service provider is responsible for delivering the Digital Social Media & Online Investigation Service in accordance with the agreed scope, applicable legal and regulatory requirements, and recognised investigative and OSINT best practice. This includes advising on investigation strategy, proportionality, and lawful approaches to the collection and analysis of online and social media information.
- 7.1.2 The service provider will identify relevant online platforms, social media accounts, websites, forums, and other publicly accessible sources and will conduct structured collection and analysis of online content and activity. Responsibilities include capturing and preserving online material in a defensible manner, analysing digital footprints and behavioural patterns, reconstructing timelines, and identifying relationships or networks of interest.
- 7.1.3 The service provider is responsible for maintaining secure handling of all collected material, ensuring auditability, and documenting methodologies, assumptions, limitations, and confidence levels. Quality assurance activities are undertaken to validate findings, and any risks, uncertainties, or legal or ethical considerations are escalated promptly. The service provider does not engage in intrusive techniques, impersonation, or unauthorised access and operates strictly within lawful and ethical boundaries.

7.2 Client Responsibilities

- 7.2.1 The client is responsible for confirming lawful authority and legal basis to conduct online investigations and for defining the objectives, scope, and intended use of findings. This includes identifying relevant subjects, platforms, timeframes, and contextual background information to support accurate interpretation.
- 7.2.2 The client retains responsibility for investigative decisions, legal interpretation, and any actions taken as a result of the findings. The client is also responsible for communications with courts, regulators, inquiry bodies, or other external stakeholders and for ensuring that organisational policies and governance frameworks are applied to the use of online investigation outputs.

7.3 Legal, Compliance, and Governance Responsibilities (Where Applicable)

- 7.3.1 Where legal counsel, compliance teams, or governance stakeholders are involved, these parties are responsible for advising on legal, regulatory, and ethical frameworks governing online investigations, including data protection, privacy, employment law, and platform terms of service. They may review investigative outputs, advise on disclosure or escalation requirements, and oversee legally privileged handling where appropriate.



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7.4 Joint Responsibilities

- 7.4.1 The service provider and client share responsibility for effective communication, timely decision-making, and escalation of issues that may impact scope, timelines, legal compliance, or evidential defensibility. All parties are responsible for maintaining confidentiality, ensuring proportionality, and supporting transparent, auditable, and ethical investigation practices.

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