SOCIAL MEDIA & DIGITAL COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES FOR CLUBS

Communication technology and social media continues grow in popularity and can provide clubs with a wide range of benefits. Whilst we encourage clubs and athletes to use social media responsibly, they should be aware that if misused it has the potential to put children and young people at considerable risk.

The following guidelines should be applied to safeguard all parties when communicating through social media:

- all communications from the club with children should be open, transparent and appropriate
- messages should only be sent to communicate details of meeting points, training, match details, competition results etc. The same message should be sent to every member of the group/team
- it should always be clear that it is the club who is communicating information – one-to-one messaging arrangements between sports volunteers/staff should be strongly discouraged and safeguards should be in place and settings adjusted to prevent this happening
- messages should never contain any offensive, abusive or inappropriate language. They should not be open to misinterpretation
- written permission must be sought from parents/carers to communicate with children under 18 years via technology/social media
- parents should be offered the option to be copied in to any messages their child will be sent
- children and young people should be informed about the means of communication at the club. They should also be given information on how to keep themselves safe and who to report any concerns to in the [Club's Name]
- All concerns about the inappropriate use of technology and social media will be dealt with in line with the Procedure for *Responding to Concerns about a Child*. This may include the concerns being reported to police
- All phone numbers/email addresses of children and young people should be recorded and kept securely in a locked cabinet or password-protected electronic file or database
- The number of people with access to children and young people's details should be kept to a practical minimum. A record should be kept of their numbers/addresses by the Club Child Wellbeing & Protection Officer

Club Websites/Social Media Sites

Websites/Social Media sites provide an opportunity for a club to extend their community profile, advertise and communicate easily with their members. Thought should be given to consent, tone and how sites and pages will be monitored. In terms of publishing information and pictures the following good practice should be noted:

Permission

- Written parent/carer consent must be obtained for all children aged under 18 before publishing any information or pictures of a child. If the material is changed from the time of consent, the parents/carers must be informed and consent provided for the changes.

- Special care must be taken in relation to vulnerable children e.g. child fleeing domestic violence or a child with a disability, and consideration given to whether publication would place the child at risk.
- Young athletes who have a public profile as a result of their achievements are entitled to the same protection as all other children. In these cases, common sense is required when implementing these guidelines. All decisions should reflect the best interests of the child.

Use of Images and Information

- Information published on the websites/social networking sites must never include personal information that could identify a child e.g. home address, email address, telephone number of a child. All contact must be directed to [Club Name]. Credit for achievements by a child should be restricted to first names e.g. Tracey was Player of the Year 2002.
- Children must never be portrayed in a demeaning, tasteless or a provocative manner. Children should never be portrayed in a state of partial undress, other than when depicting an action shot within the context of the sport. Attire such as tracksuits or t-shirts may be more appropriate.
- Information about specific events or meetings e.g. coaching sessions must not be distributed to any individuals other than to those directly concerned.

Forums

Where a site allows for two-way communication between the club and its members heightened monitoring is required. From time to time forums can be used to target individuals or to engage contributors in debates that can cause upset and embarrassment to children and young people.

Coaches, member of staff or volunteer should refrain from being drawn into debates concerning selection, performance or personalities – even where the subject of discussion is anonymous.

Any offending comments should be removed by the club and appropriate procedures should be used to address poor practice or Code of Conduct breaches.

Concerns

Any concerns or enquiries should be reported to [Club Name] Child Wellbeing & Protection Officer.

Further guidance

For more specific information on the use of social media for Sport Coaches, Volunteers and Athletes' see additional guidance on social media on this website.