



## **Website Guidance for Clubs**

With increased use of websites and social media sites as communication tools within sport it is important that guidance is given to ensure the safe use of these interactive social networks to protect everyone involved in your club. The information below is intended to provide guidance to your club on ways to protect your members while using these communication tools as well as providing information on what is deemed acceptable/unacceptable behaviour.

- Agree a club website policy also known as an Acceptable Use Policy ("AUP") following discussions at your Club Management or Executive Committee and with members, including any junior club members. This AUP will promote your strategy on the safe use of the Internet and also outlines the parameters of behaviour and specifies the consequences of breaching those parameters.
- Decide at the outset what purpose your website serves.
- Appoint a web master to manage your web site on behalf of the club.
- Ensure that the web master is answerable to a member of the Club's Management Committee such as Chairperson, Secretary, PRO.
- The Club Management Committee should agree at the outset the style, design and content policy of the web site with the appointed web master, prior to going on-line.
- Agree if you will have a specific youth section and if so also agree the extent and the limitations on its content etc.
- Decisions on the appropriate use of photographic images and other similar content should be in accordance with the Guidelines for Photographic/Recorded Images as outlined elsewhere in the document.
- Consider the age of children and young people when deciding on the web site policy.
- Consult with the Club's Children Officer and/or Designated Safeguarding Officer when designing the web site and agreeing the usage policy and content material.
- Agree to review the overall maintenance and upkeep of the web site at regular intervals.
- Agree a procedure in the club for dealing with any complaints or concerns that may be raised about the content of your website.

## **Message Boards and Public Forums**

Increasingly club websites now include a message board or other form of public forum. Such boards can add interest to a website and promote social networking, club camaraderie and interesting

debates. However they are not without their dangers and club's should be aware of this and make decisions on accessibility to such forums.

Posts on such boards often use inappropriate language which is read by younger members. Derisive statements or criticism of younger participants can be very hurtful and may be seen as form of bullying.

### **Guideline for Message Boards**

1. Decide if the forum is open to all or is only for registered members.
2. Ensure that moderators are appointed with the ability to delete inappropriate material.
3. Set out clear parameters for what is acceptable or not acceptable.
4. Appoint a person to deal with any complaints which may be brought by parents or young people in regard to published material.
5. Have systems in place to ban abusers of the board.

### **Use of Mobile Phones**

Mobile phones are often given to children for security, enabling parents to keep in touch and make sure they are safe. Young people value their phones highly as it offers a sense of independence. In addition mobile phones allow quick and easy access which can make for safe and efficient ways to carry out club business. However such technology has also allowed an increase in direct personal contact with young people, in some cases used to cross personal boundaries and cause harm to young people. Within clubs there is a need to encourage responsible and secure use of mobile phones by adults and young people.

#### **As a young person remember:**

1. If you receive an offensive photo, email or message, do not reply, save it, make a note of times and dates and tell a parent or Children's Officer/Safeguarding Officer within the club
2. Be careful about who you give your number to and don't respond to unfamiliar numbers
3. Change your phone number in cases of bullying or harassment
4. Do not use your phone in certain situations- inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person e.g. in changing rooms
5. Treat your phone as you would any other valuable item and protect from theft.

#### **As a Coach / Leader remember:**

1. Use group texts for communication among athletes and inform parents of this at the outset of the season
2. If it is not appropriate to have constant one-to-one communication with individual athletes

3. Do not use your phone in certain situations- inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person e.g. in changing rooms

### **Use of Social Networking Sites**

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are becoming increasingly popular. They provide an easy method of communication and allow people to chat to each other. However they are not without their problems and all coaches / leaders should be aware of:

- They should not engage in any inappropriate chat with young members nor should they use such sites to criticise a player's performance or skill development
- Inappropriate, derogatory or defamatory remarks or unseemly language should never be used
- Leaders and mentors should also warn young people about the language and remarks which they say on these sites
- Many funding bodies and external partners or sponsors access sites like this on a regular basis
- Young people may do themselves a disservice if they are not careful about what they post