

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA



COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Information and communication technology (ICT) and social media are developing and advancing extremely quickly, meaning the way in which we communicate and receive and absorb information is changing all the time.

These advancements provide significant benefits for organisations, including opportunities to promote activities and communicate easily with children and young people, their parents/carers and the wider community through various channels e.g. text, email and social media. It allows people to connect to the world instantly and it enables organisations to disseminate information widely at a low to no cost and provide a platform to celebrate success.

In addition to the benefits there is also potential for misuse and it is the misuse of communication technology and social media that can put children and young people at considerable risk. Therefore, safeguards around its use must be put in place.

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH ICT AND SOCIAL MEDIA

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Access to inappropriate websites or inappropriate content
- Inappropriate access to, use or sharing of personal details e.g. names, email address, school
- Unwanted contact from adults or other children or young people with wrongful or questionable intent
- Receiving, sending or sharing inappropriate or offensive images, material and/or comments
- Online bullying
- Grooming for sexual abuse
- Direct contact and abuse
- A distorted view between the “real world” and the “online world”

FOR ADULTS

- Their communication with children and young people being misinterpreted
- Bullying
- Young People/Adults attempting to contact them or access personal information

The Scottish FA may contact children and young people and their parents or carers via text or email, or possibly through social networking sites, depending on the football activity that each child or young person is involved in with the Scottish FA.

This Practice Note is for members of staff and Associated Persons who use any of these methods to communicate with children and young people.



GENERAL PRINCIPLES



DO

- Communicate in an open and transparent manner
 - Only send communication via text, email or social media if it is necessary and relates to the activity the child or young person is involved in
 - Get signed consent from parents/carers before using any of these methods of communication with children or young people. Explain to the parents/carers the purpose for the communication and the method by which communication will be sent to the children and/or young people
 - Get signed consent from the young person, if they are aged 13 or over, about the agreed methods of communication, depending on the young person's maturity and ability to consent
 - Members of staff and/or Associated Persons should communicate information regarding programmes, events, training and matches through the agreed method of communication and:
 - copy in another designated member of staff or Associated Person to the communication
 - copy in the child and young person's parents/carer, if possible
 - only use group texts or emails, if possible
 - For 'private' group chats on social media, make sure that there is more than one member of staff and/or Associated Person part of the group chat who are the chat administrators
- Ensure that you verify all members of any group chats are the intended individuals and do not allow new members to join a group chat unless you have confirmation of who they are
- Any offensive comments or messages should be reported immediately to the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer and to the social media site, if appropriate. The Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer will review if there is any indication of criminality, if so evidence must not be removed. If there is no indication of criminality these comments or messages should be removed immediately
 - Keep all phone numbers and/or email addresses of children and young people in a secure and confidential place
 - Keep access to personal mobile numbers and email addresses of the children and young people to a practical minimum with only relevant members of staff and/or Associated Persons having access to this information and only when necessary to enable them to fulfil their role
 - Report to the Wellbeing and Protection Department any instances where you receive any inappropriate communications from a child and/or a young person. Do not reply. The Wellbeing and Protection Department will agree what action the Scottish FA will take e.g. notifying parents and any other appropriate individuals or agencies



DON'T

- Contact or correspond privately with a child or young person on a 1:1 basis unless in exceptional circumstances. If it is necessary to communicate directly, this should only be in connection with the football activity and must never be sent from a personal device
- Use language that is directly (or could be misinterpreted as being) racist, homophobic, sexist, derogatory, threatening, abusive or sexualised in tone
- Send any messages which contain inappropriate, abusive or offensive material or that are open to misinterpretation
- Use text or emails for personal conversation, sending pictures, jokes or other items of a personal nature
- Respond to emails from children and/or young people other than those directly related to club matters



SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET FORUMS

REMEMBER:

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS PRIVACY ONLINE.

CONSIDER 3 KEY QUESTIONS BEFORE POSTING ANYTHING ONLINE:

- 1. WOULD YOU SAY THIS IN FRONT OF YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS?**
- 2. WOULD YOU SAY THIS IN FRONT OF THE YOUNGEST CHILD AT YOUR CLUB?**
- 3. WOULD YOU SAY THIS TO A JOURNALIST AT A PRESS CONFERENCE OR IN FRONT OF YOUR COACH OR MANAGER?**

IF THE ANSWER IS NO TO ANY OF THE ABOVE THEN DO NOT POST IT ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

For further information on publishing photographs or videos of children and young people on social media see the Safe Use of Images section in the [Practice Note – Celebration](#).



SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET FORUMS



DO

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get signed consent from parents/carers and/or the young person to allow mutual interaction with the organisation profile e.g. Facebook page or Twitter account • Set up a closed (i.e. private) group chat between the team and ensure that the correct people are part of the group e.g. parents and/or another member of staff or Associated Person to ensure impartiality and monitoring. If setting up a closed group chat consideration must be given to the minimum age requirements for that particular social media site • Make parents/carers aware of the profiles existence and the site the child or young person will be accessing and the restrictions of use for this preferred site • Have an official agreement in place which states that access to members' profiles are used only to pass on relevant information or to answer questions regarding Scottish FA or football issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of staff and Associated Persons should review the privacy settings on their own social media profiles and consider whether it is appropriate for children and young people to be able to view their profiles easily • Monitor any organisational social media accounts and remove any abusive or offensive content and report the matter to the Wellbeing and Protection Department and police, if a criminal matter • Report any disclosure of abuse or bullying through social media to the Wellbeing and Protection department in line with the Responding to Concerns Procedure • Block and report anyone who is sending abusive or inappropriate messages. DO NOT respond to the post |
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DON'T

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become friends, follow or tag children and young people for whom they are in a position of authority or trust via their own social media account • Give out their password, pin or login details either face to face or online and make sure they sign out of their social media if logged in on a shared devices • Communicate with children via personal accounts or private messages. If a child or young person contacts them directly they should discourage the child or young person having conversations away from the group chats | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with children via social media about personal matters • Contact children and young people who play for other clubs or National Associations through social media as a means of attracting them to or signing them at a particular club or for the Scottish FA • Become involved in any debates concerning selection, performance or personalities — even where the subject of the discussion is anonymous |
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There has been an increase in the use and abuse of internet forums to target individuals or to engage contributors in debates which can cause upset and embarrassment to children and young people. Sites should be well monitored and any offending comments removed and reported to the relevant site and the Wellbeing and Protection Department, where appropriate.

The Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer will review if there is any indication of criminality, if so evidence must not be removed. If there is no indication of criminality these comments or messages should be removed immediately.

REPORTING CONCERNS

Any inappropriate or offensive or abusive texts or emails or use of social media must be reported to the Wellbeing and Protection Department and will be dealt with in line with the [Responding to Concerns Procedure](#).

The Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer should review if there is any indication of criminality. If there is no indication of criminality these comments or messages should be removed immediately. Group administrators must familiarise themselves with how to do this when the Group is set up.





WWW.SCOTTISHFA.CO.UK
HAMPDEN PARK | GLASGOW | G42 9AY

