

Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy for Scottish Football – Referee Associations

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

This Practice Note applies to all members and sets out the best practice in relation to communication with young people involved at the Referee Association. The principles set out in this Practice Note also apply to children and young people who its members come into contact with through their role in football and any concerns of inappropriate communication must be reported to the Referee Association's Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer.

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 associations, including opportunities to promote activities and communicate easily with its members 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 associations 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"

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For adults

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

The Referee Association may communication with young people who are members of the Association via text or email, or possibly through social networking sites.

General Principles

DO

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate in an open and transparent manner • Only send communication via text, email or social media if it is necessary and relates to a Referee Association activity the young person is involved in • Make the young person aware of the agreed methods of communication and how the Referee Association will communicate with them • Members should communicate information regarding programmes, events, training and matches through the agreed method of communication and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ copy in another designated member of the Association to the communication ➤ only use group texts or emails, where possible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to personal mobile numbers and email addresses of the children and young people should be kept to a practical minimum and it will be recommended to any new young referee that they choose the appropriate selection on the extranet to keep their details private • Remove any offensive comments or messages from the Referee Association’s social media and group chats • Report to the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officers any offensive comments or messages sent by members and any instances of inappropriate communications from a child and/or a young person. |
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DON'T

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members must not contact or correspond privately with child or young person on a 1:1 basis who they have met through their refereeing role. If it is necessary to communicate directly with a young person who is also member of the Referee Association this should only be in connection with the football activity• Use language that is directly (or could be misinterpreted as being) racist, homophobic, sexist, derogatory, threatening, abusive or sexualised in tone | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send any messages which contain inappropriate, abusive or offensive material or that are open to misinterpretation• Use text or emails for personal conversations with children and young people who they have met through their refereeing role, including 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 Referee Association matters |
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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 Referee Association?
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">• 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 Referee Association issues• Monitor any organisational social media accounts and remove any abusive or offensive content and report the matter to the Referee Association’s Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer and the police, if a criminal matter | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members 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• Report any disclosure of abuse or bullying through social media to the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer 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	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members must not become friends with, follow or tag children and young people for whom they are in a position of authority or trust via their own social media account• Communicate with children or young person for whom they are in a position of authority or trust via social media about personal matters. 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">• Become involved in any debates concerning selection, performance or personalities – even where the subject of the discussion is anonymous• 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 

Reporting Concerns

Any inappropriate or offensive or abusive texts or emails or use of social media **must** be reported to the Referee Association's Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer and it will be dealt with in line with the Responding to Concerns Procedure. Any offensive or abusive comments posted on social media or within a shared group chat must be removed immediately. Group administrators must familiarise themselves with how to do this when the Group is set up.

The use and abuse of internet forums to target individuals or to engage contributors in debates has increased over the years and can be used as a means to upset or embarrass children and young people. If the Referee Association becomes aware of any offending comments they will be removed and/or reported to the relevant platform/site and to the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer, where appropriate.