

Fitness and Activity Tracker Devices and Apps – guidelines on safe use

Note: The terms 'child' and 'young person' describe any person under the age of 18. References to 'parents' should be read as parents and carers inclusively.

1. Introduction

1.1 UK Athletics and the four home country athletics federations (HCAF) are committed to providing a safe and enjoyable athletics environment for children and young people under 18 years.

1.2 The growing use of wearable products to track and record training and exercise, and the associated Apps such as Strava, Garmin Connect, Fitbit, etc., have allowed athletes and runners to record their training session and race data, and share the details with others who can view and comment on them. More recently these devices can record personal and sensitive health related data such as heart rate and sleep data.

1.3 Apps of this type encourage and indeed rely on the open sharing of data with other members and whilst there are clear training and coaching benefits from using these products, there are also inherent safeguarding risks, particularly for children, if appropriate steps to maintain the privacy of key information are not taken.

1.4 In some cases users can unwittingly provide others with their regular training times, routes and home location. As well as this, unless the correct privacy settings are used, anyone can view the record and leave comments and this function is known to be open to abuse.

1.5 To ensure children and young people, are using these devices and Apps safely we recommend the following steps are taken. The advice is also suitable for anyone over 18 who are using these Apps. These steps will make the sensitive information less accessible to anyone outside of those you immediately follow, or who follow you on the App,

- It is recommended that a parent/carer and the child review and set their privacy settings when they sign up to an App, and periodically thereafter to control what is shared and with whom. It is the users (and their parents) responsibility to ensure the profile is safe.
- Ensure you comply with the age requirements for each device/App. For example, due to privacy laws and regulations, Garmin has an age limit of 16 years of age or older in order to use any of their apps or programs including Garmin Connect. Strava's users on the other hand must be over 13 years old but their terms are especially protective of health-related data, so if someone is under 16, they must not upload heart rate data and will not receive heart rate analysis.
- Check that the activity tracker App account is set up with the correct privacy settings which should be set to known followers only. Each App will have a guide on how this is done.
- Check the contact details such as personal email address is set as private.
- Ensure home address and any other frequented locations are set as private.
- Check that the young person know who to talk to if someone makes them feel uncomfortable online.

- Ensure they know how to report and block others on the activity tracker Apps they use.

2. Clubs and Training Groups

2.1 Some clubs and coaches might want to set up a private group on an activity tracker App to support training programs and provide motivation. In such cases it is important that the correct individual privacy settings are chosen as whilst membership of a group itself may be limited, there is a potential safeguarding risk if appropriate privacy settings are not set in each participant's account.

2.2 If the steps at 1.5 above are not taken by each group member, then profiles, activity and location information of group members can still potentially be viewed by any user of an App.

2.3 If an athletics coach, group or club sets up a Strava group, for example, then they must properly administrate that group. A nominated adult member should administrate the group and record and report any behaviours or comments deemed inappropriate or a cause for concern to the club welfare officer or to UKA.

2.4 Where someone is below the age of 18, the group administrator will require written confirmation from the parent/carer that the child can join the group and that their settings have been set as at 1.5 above.

3. Conduct when using an App.

3.1 The purpose of the comment section on these apps is to allow others to provide praise and constructive feedback to other users on their performance. UKA and the HCAF will not accept abusive, threatening, or inappropriate comments, especially when made towards a child or young person's profile.

3.2 Adult members of a private group, created by a club or coaching group and suitably administrated, can comment appropriately, and only where necessary, on a child or young person's profile, where the child or young person is a member of the same group, but shall not interact on a one-to-one basis via the app with children and young people.

4. Reporting inappropriate and concerning behaviour.

If you have a concern about someone's behaviour in relation to Strava, Garmin connect, etc., you must report it to the club welfare officer and to the UKA safeguarding Team. Where possible take a screenshot of the relevant profile or comment and send this with the required details to the safeguarding team by completing the form [here](#). Alternatively you can email the details to safeguarding@uka.org.uk.