

## Social Media & Digital Communication Guidance for Clubs

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**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.

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The use of digital communication and social media continues to 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 risk.

The following guidelines should be applied to safeguard all parties when clubs and their members communicate through social media:

- all club social media accounts must be password-protected.
- the account must be monitored by two designated club members appointed by the club committee.
- the designated club members should seek advice from the club welfare officer to advise on safeguarding requirements and refer to other guidance on usage produced by UKA.
- children, young people and their parents/carers should be informed about the means of online communication used at the club.
- written permission must be sought from parents/carers to communicate with children under 18 years online and via social media.
- clubs should decline requests from children under 13 to join the club's social media accounts (under 16s for WhatsApp groups).
- parents should be copied into any messages their children are sent by the club.
- all communications from the club with children should be open, transparent and appropriate.
- messages should only be sent to communicate details of club activities such as training meeting points, training schedules, event details, competition results, club news, etc. The same standard 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 volunteers/staff and children is not permitted and would breach the UKA safeguarding policy and various codes of conduct.
- messages should never contain any offensive, abusive or inappropriate language. They should not be open to misinterpretation.
- inappropriate posts must be removed by the site monitor, and the relevant parties informed (including the parents of any children involved) and a referral made to UKA safeguarding team where necessary.
- All contact details and private information of children and young people should be kept and used in a secure manner. For example, when group emails are sent, use the Bcc section, as this will hide the individual email addresses from the group members.
- Ensure club members are complying with the UKA Social Media and Digital Guidelines for staff and volunteers, and the guidance on the safe use of activity tracker apps.

## 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 abuse 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 clubs website/social networking App, must never include personal information that could potentially allow someone to contact a child or locate them online (e.g. home address, email address, telephone number age, of a child, school, etc.).
- Children must never be portrayed in a demeaning, tasteless or a provocative manner. Children should only be portrayed in proper attire, for example club kit when competing within the context of the sport. Other attire such as tracksuits or t-shirts are appropriate.
- Information about specific events or meetings e.g. coaching sessions, must not be distributed to anyone other than to those directly concerned.

### Forums/online groups

Where a forum or group App allows for two-way communication between the club and its member's heightened monitoring is required. It is not uncommon for forums and groups to be used to target individuals or to engage contributors in debates that can cause upset and embarrassment to children and young people.

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 monitor and the appropriate UKA safeguarding procedures should be used to address poor practice or Code of Conduct breaches.

### Further support

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the UKAs safeguarding policies and procedures and in particular, the Social Media and Digital Guidelines for staff and volunteers, and the UKA activity tracker app - guidelines on safe use document.

Any concerns or enquiries should be directed to the UK Athletics safeguarding team – [safeguarding@uka.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@uka.org.uk).