



# INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Technology advances extremely quickly, meaning ways in which we communicate and receive and absorb information are changing all the time. This provides a great opportunity for organisations to promote their activities and communicate easily with members. But it can also put children and young people at considerable risk, which is why safeguards must be put in place.

Whether your organisation is considering setting up a social networking page or using email to inform young people about match details, be aware that the following guidelines should be met:

- Where possible, try to ensure that no one is excluded, e.g. young people who may not have access to a mobile phone/internet etc.
- that written permission is sought from parents/carers for all children under 16 years.
- that the need for the technology is clearly identified and its use is specific.
- that it is the organisation who is communicating information – one-to-one interaction is strongly discouraged, and safeguards should be in place and settings adjusted to prevent this happening.
- children and young people should be briefed about the introduction of the technology. They should also be given information on how to keep themselves safe and who to report any concerns to in **Scottish Volleyball Association**.
- All concerns about the inappropriate use of technology will be dealt with in line with **Scottish Volleyball Association** Disciplinary Procedure and/or Procedure for Responding to Concerns about a Child/Concerns About the Conduct of a Member of Staff or Volunteer. This may include the concerns being reported to the police.

Further advice is available from the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) (see [useful contacts](#)).

## 1. COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY<sup>2</sup>

There are significant benefits for organisations using texts/emails and setting up social networking sites. Not only is it cheap, it's one of the most direct forms of communication with young people. However, there are risks. Adults who seek to harm children have been known to use messaging to "groom" children. This area is now specifically addressed by the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005.

For children and young people, the safeguarding risks of these technologies include:

- inappropriate access to, use or sharing of personal details (e.g. names, email addresses).
- unwanted contact with children by adults with wrongful/questionable intent.
- being sent offensive or otherwise inappropriate material.
- online bullying by peers.
- grooming for sexual abuse.
- direct contact and abuse.

For adults, risks involved include:

- their communication with children being misinterpreted.
- potential investigation (internal or by statutory agencies).
- potential disciplinary action.

### 1.2 TEXT/EMAIL

Staff/volunteers must consider whether it is necessary to communicate with children via text and email. The general principle is that all communications with children should be open, transparent and appropriate.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit: Text and Email Messaging-Safeguarding Guidelines

Good practice would include agreeing with children and parents/carers what kind of information will be communicated directly to children by text message. This information should only be “need to know” information such as the last-minute cancellation of a training session.

In the first instance parent/carer consent must be obtained for all children under 16 years. Contact should always be made at the phone number/email address the parent has provided on the child’s behalf. Parents/carers should be offered the option to be copied into any messages their child will be sent. Although consent is not legally required for young people aged between 16 and 18 it is still recommended that parents are informed of the intention to send their child(ren) emails or texts. It is also good practice to obtain the consent of the 16 to 18-year-old.

The following good practice is also required:

- All phone numbers/email addresses of children and young people should be recorded and kept securely in a locked cabinet or password-protected electronic file or database.
- The number of people with access to children and young people’s details should be kept to a practical minimum. A record should be kept of their numbers/addresses (preferably by **Scottish Volleyball Association** Child Protection & Wellbeing Officer).
- Messages should never contain any offensive, abusive or inappropriate language. They should not be open to misinterpretation.
- The organisation should be clear that messages should be sent only to communicate details of meeting points, training, match details, competition results etc. The same message should be sent to every member of the group/team. One-to-one messaging arrangements between coaches/volunteers and children should be strongly discouraged.

### 1.3 INTERNET

The internet brings with it an opportunity for organisations to extend their community profile, advertise and communicate easily with their members. Sometimes this is done via social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Thought should be given to content, tone and how sites or social networking 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 16 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 violence 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 websites/social networking sites must never include personal information that could identify a child e.g. home address, email address, telephone number of a child. All contact must be directed to **Scottish Volleyball Association**. Credit for achievements by a child should be restricted to first names e.g. Tracey was Player of the Year 2002.
- Children must never be portrayed in a demeaning, tasteless or a provocative manner. Children should never be portrayed in a state of partial undress, other than when depicting an action shot within the context of the sport. Attire such as tracksuits or t-shirts may be more appropriate.
- Information about specific events or meetings e.g. coaching sessions must not be distributed to any individuals other than to those directly concerned.

## Concerns

- Any concerns or enquiries about publications or the internet should be reported to **Scottish Volleyball Association** Child Protection & Wellbeing Officer.

## 1.4 SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

The following is recommended if the organisation decides to allow mutual access between it and its members (including children):

### Permission

- Obtain written permission from parents/carers of under 16s to allow mutual interaction with the organisation profile. Make parents/carers aware of the profile's existence, the site the child will be accessing and the restrictions of use for this preferred site.
- An official agreement should be in place which states that access to members' profiles are used only to pass on relevant information or to answer questions regarding organisation or sport issues. This agreement should also be incorporated into the **Scottish Volleyball Association** Rules or Code of Conduct.
- Set up a **Scottish Volleyball Association** profile rather than staff/volunteer profiles. This avoids access from members to individual's profiles.
- Keep the **Scottish Volleyball Association** profile on "private"- allowing only members access to it (the organisation can monitor this and accept or decline requests to join).

### Concerns

- Informal online "chat" with members around subjects outside the sport/activity should be immediately discouraged. Private matters or questions should also be discouraged. However, any disclosures should be removed from the site and dealt with in line with Responding to Concerns about a Child/Concerns About the Conduct of a Member of Staff/Volunteer.

## 1.5 INTERNET FORUMS

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. A coach, member of staff or volunteer should refrain from being drawn into any debates concerning selection, performance or personalities – even where the subject of the discussion is anonymous. This could be considered a breach of the code of conduct or poor practice.

## 1.6 MOBILE PHONE CAMERAS/VIDEOS

There have already been a number of cases where children have been placed at risk as a result of the ability to discreetly record and transmit images through mobile phones. There is also scope for humiliation and embarrassment if films or images are shared on popular websites such as YouTube. The use of mobile phones in this way can be very difficult to monitor.

The *Procedure for the use of Photographs, Film and Video* should be observed in relation to the use of mobile phones as cameras/videos. Care is required in areas where personal privacy is important e.g. changing rooms, bathrooms and sleeping quarters. No photographs or video footage should ever be permitted in such areas of personal privacy.

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