



Responsible use of Social Networking sites

Guidance for Associations

The following guidance is provided not as an obstacle but to support Associations to manage their safeguarding responsibilities effectively. It aims to ensure children, young people, coaches, referees and adults in a position of trust are not subjected to improper online behaviour or improper allegations.

If an Association decides that the most effective way of communicating to young people is via a social networking site then the Association is strongly advised to set up an account in the name of the Association and explicitly for use by named Association members, parents and carers solely about football matters e.g. fixtures, cancellations and team selection.

Coaches, referee mentors, Association officials and others in a position of trust in football need to act responsibly both on and off the field and this includes the use of electronic communications.

Therefore The ESFA/FA would suggest that as a general principle coaches, managers etc should avoid using social networking sites as the primary way of communicating with players. Children and young people should be advised by their coaches, parents/carers and Welfare Officer to always tell an adult they trust about communications that make them feel uncomfortable or where they've been asked not to tell their parent/carer about the communication.

The following is best practice in relation to social networking:

Do

- ensure all the privacy settings are locked so that that the page(s) are used explicitly for Association matters and are not used as a place to meet, share personal details or have private conversations
- nominate an Association official to monitor the Association's social networking page regularly and remove access for anyone behaving inappropriately
- make sure everyone within your Association knows who is responsible for monitoring the content of the social networking areas and how to contact them
- provide all users with The ESFA/FAs best practice guidance on using social networking sites
- gain written parent/carer permission before access is given to U18s
- inform the Welfare Officer if you have received inappropriate communications online, keeping a record of any inappropriate, threatening or offensive material as this may be needed as evidence.

Don't

Unless a child/young person is a direct relation, the coaches, managers, referees, medics and Association officials should not:

- accept as a friend, players or referees U18 on social networking sites they are members of or share their own personal social networking sites with children or young people involved in youth football
- make contact with children or young people known through football outside of the football context on social networking sites
- use internet or web based communications to send personal messages of a non football nature to a child or young person
- engage in any personal communications, 'banter' or comments.

Further ESFA/FA guidance is available on the following areas:

- 1 Social networking, websites, mobile phones, and email communications
- 2 Running a website - Do's and Don'ts
- 3 Responsible use of Social Networking sites
- 4 Communicating responsibly with Young Leaders, Coaches and Referees Under 18
- 5 Using Texts and Emails with U18s – Do's and Don'ts
- 6 Guidance for parents/carers - Responsible use of text, email and social networking sites
- 7 Guidance for U18s using: Association WebPages, Social Networks, Email and Texts

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