Online and Electronic Communication Policy

Using messaging services (e.g. WhatsApp, iMessage, Messenger)

Messaging services are a great way to communicate with training groups, for example to ensure everyone is informed about any changes regarding training sessions. The club wants to ensure that when using such services, we adhere to a clear protocol to protect both coaches and athletes.

- Groups should not include any athletes under 16; a parent or carer should be the point of contact for anyone under this age, and they should be the person in the group, not the young athlete. Any athletes over 16 but under 18 require verbal consent from parents to be added to the group.
- At least one nominated club official should be included in any group chat where athletes between 16-18 are included (in most cases this would be the Welfare Officer or Development Officer).
- The purpose of any group chat is to share information about training sessions or information directly relating to athletics, or club events.
- Messaging services should not be used to contact athletes under the age of 18 individually. Any communication relating to an individual athlete under 18 should be done via a parent or carer (see 'What we expect from our club volunteers' section).
- If a coach or club official receives a private message from an athlete under the age of 18, they should contact the parents drawing their attention to this policy. If individual messaging persists then they should refer the matter to the Welfare Officer.

Online behaviours

The codes of conduct the expected behavioural standards, this includes behaviour on social media. Here is some specific do's and don'ts to consider before posting on social media:

- Pause and think about what you are saying and the impact it might have
- Be careful, respectful and positive. You are personally responsible for what you post. If in doubt, don't post it.
- Think about your image – 'what do I want people to think about me or my club?'
- Consider who you are interacting with - you will likely come into contact online with under 18s. Familiarise yourself with safeguarding regulations in relation to engaging with under 18s.
- Respect confidentiality within the team e.g. tactics, squad information, announcements, coaching advice, training sessions.

- Remember many different audiences will see your posts including Club members, potential members, children, member's relatives, and friends.
- Be smart about protecting yourself, your privacy, and confidential information. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and your privacy settings.
- Don't post content that discriminates against individuals or groups on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.
- Don't write anything on social media channels that you wouldn't feel comfortable seeing in a newspaper or hearing on TV. Everything you write is treated as a direct quote i.e. 'Don't tweet what you wouldn't say to your mum/gran' or 'Think before you tweet' or 'Would I say this face to face with someone?
- Don't speak negatively about other club members, competitors, officials or governing bodies. Never use slurs, personal insults or obscenity. Be professional and respectful.
- Be in the right state of mind when you make a post. Don't post when you're angry, upset, or your judgement is impaired in any way. Be very careful what you say, do and post because once it's on a social media channel, it can go viral very quickly.
- Don't engage in on-line disputes and don't allow family or friends to argue on your behalf.

What we expect from our club volunteers

- Volunteers should be aware of this policy and behave in accordance with it
- Volunteers should seek the advice of the designated Welfare Officer if they have any concerns about the use of social media and electronic communication
- Volunteers should not communicate with children via personal accounts
- Volunteers should not 'friend' or 'follow' children from personal accounts on social media and maintain the same professional boundaries online as they would in person when using club accounts
- Volunteers should make sure any content posted on public personal accounts is accurate and appropriate as club members may 'follow' them on social media
- Rather than communicating with parents through personal social media accounts, volunteers should choose a more formal means of communication, such as face-to-face, in an email or in writing, or use a club account or website
- Emails or messages should maintain the club's tone and be written in a professional manner, e.g. in the same way you would communicate in a professional setting, avoiding kisses (X's) or using slang or inappropriate language
- Volunteers should not delete any messages or communications sent to or from club accounts
- Volunteers should undertake all online safety training offered and gain a basic knowledge of the platforms and how to report or remove inappropriate content online

- Any concerns reported through social media should be dealt with in the same way as a face-to-face disclosure, according to our safeguarding procedure
- At least one parent must be present during the delivery of any activities via video conferencing platforms at home
- Any delivery of activities to children via video conferencing platforms will be supported by an additional member of staff (even if they're not actively delivering) to ensure transparency
- Club members must not engage in 'sexting' or send pictures to anyone that are obscene

What we expect of club members

- Members should be aware of this online safety and social media policy and the behaviours set out
- We expect members behaviour online to be consistent with the guidelines set out in the code of conducts and anti-bullying statement
- Members should take the necessary steps to protect themselves online. Children follow the age restrictions set out by social media companies

What we expect of parents and carers

- Parents should be aware of this online safety policy and agree to its terms
- Parents should protect all children's privacy online and think carefully about what content they share about our sport online, where they share it and who they're sharing it with
- We expect behaviour online to be consistent with the guidelines set out in the code of conduct for parents and carers

Policy breach

Club members who breach this policy (and other related policies) will face a warning in the first instance, persistent breaches will be dealt with through the club's grievance and disciplinary policy.

Any breaches of a safeguarding nature will be addressed through the club's safeguarding policy and procedure and – where appropriate – will be reported to UK Athletics.

Whilst the club will try to moderate social media posts, if you do have any concerns or would like to make a complaint, please contact the club's Welfare Officer or Social Media Officer.

Related policies and procedures

- Club Constitution
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Codes of Conduct

Useful contact
Welfare Officers
Development Officer
Club Administrator