



# FAW Communication Guidelines

Communication methods are forever evolving, and increasingly sports are using social networking sites and other developing media outlets of choice to connect and interact with a wide range of groups. Although seen as a very effective communication and promotion tool, this is only true if used correctly and mindfully. Together with the many positive uses and exciting opportunities emerges exposure to potential safeguarding risks to children and young people.

The Football Association of Wales recognises that these risks need to be appropriately managed.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media is a widely used term which refers to several forms of communication, which can be further divided into the following categories; Social Networking sites, Video Sharing services, Photo Sharing services, and Online Games and Virtual Reality.

Due to the accessibility and the mass audiences it can reach, the internet has a huge potential. However the potential benefits need to be weighed against the potential risks. Below is a table summarising the benefits and risks for both children / young people and organisations.

## **BENEFITS AND RISKS FACT SHEET**

	<b>To Children</b>	<b>To Organisations</b>
<b>Benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can interact with friends in real time</li><li>• Able to meet new friends or re-connect with known friends</li><li>• Allows them to be creative</li><li>• Opportunity to connect with others around the world and share interests</li><li>• Share photos, videos and music or play games</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effective means to promote services</li><li>• Assists in communicating with club members about training schedules, fixtures and team selection etc</li><li>• Create a sense of community and involvement</li><li>• Low cost and prompt means of communicating.</li></ul>
<b>Risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Potential for bullying or harassment</li><li>• Potential for grooming and sexual exploitation</li><li>• Exposure to inappropriate content</li><li>• Vulnerable to exposing personal information that could identify / locate them offline</li><li>• Regret information or photos / videos shared.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Negative publicity</li><li>• Reputation damage</li><li>• Open to allegations</li><li>• Increased in number of concerns and cases to manage / investigate</li></ul>

The FAW Safeguarding Team, in conjunction with the Child Protection in Sport Unit, has developed the following guidelines to provide a recommendation of good practice to all its stakeholders and to consider the potential risks that are associated to the improper or inappropriate use of social media and communication methods.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

- Clubs and leagues that set up websites or social networking pages have a responsibility to ensure they are operating and managing these outlets in the best interests of children and young people with appropriate safeguards in place.
- Clubs and leagues should only progress to develop social networking sites when safeguarding issues have been adequately addressed and the potential risks minimised.
- Coaches, Club officials, Referees and those in positions of trust also have a duty and responsibility to act within the best interests of children and young people, communicating with due care and consideration.
- The Football Association of Wales has an expected level of conduct from players and parent/guardians, which is referred to in these guidelines as well as separate FAW Codes of Conduct.

## **FAW SAFEGUARDING COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES – A “GOOD PRACTICE” GUIDE** *for coaches and others in position of trust and responsibility in respect of children / young people under the age of 18.*

### USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA & COMMUNICATION

The following is meant as useful guidance to support coaches and those in a position of trust and responsibility who wish to use communication tools such as text messages, emails and social media sites in good faith. The following is intended to minimise the risk of individuals being exposed to improper behaviour or improper allegations.

- Remember to act responsibly and respectfully when communicating, whether via email, website or mobile phone.
- Be mindful. **It is inappropriate for adult coaches to communicate on a one-to-one basis with players under the age of 18** (this refers to emails, social networking sites, instant messaging and text messaging). Communication between adults and children should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries.
- If using the above communication methods, you should (where possible) copy to a third party. For example, a parent/guardian or the Club Safeguarding Officer.
- It is advisable to **send group messages** rather than single messages.
- Ensure that messages only refer to specific football-related matters, e.g. fixtures, team selection, cancellations. **Do not respond to unrelated messages or engage in banter.**
- As an individual in a position of trust, you should not have any players under the age of 18 as “friends” on social networking sites. Instead encourage them to “follow”/” like” your organisation’s page.
- If a child / young person in your organisation requests to become your “friend”, you should decline if any of the following apply:
  - You are in a position of responsibility in respect of that child/young person
  - You hold a position of trust and responsibility in the organisation
  - Your contact with the child/young person is through the organisation and the parent/guardian of the child/young person does not give their consent to such contact.
- Before you post anything online, take a moment to consider what you are about to post and who will be able to view it.
- The publishing of photographs or videos on a social networking site is subject to the FAW Photography & Filming Guidelines. Do not place pictures or videos of individuals under the age of 18 online without the permission of the parent/guardian.
- Ensure you have set the appropriate Privacy settings on your social networking account; be mindful that your posts and comments can be seen by friends of friends.
- Do not post or discuss defamatory comments or opinions about other coaches, volunteers, staff, players, organisations, parents, referees/officials or FAW members. To do so would be a breach of the FAW Rules & Regulations, and may lead to disciplinary action being taken and damage to the reputation of the individual and/or their organisation.
- Remember your position as a **role model** even outside the football club setting.

#### Notes

**If player is under 16:** Parental consent required for communication between an adult and young person (this could be sought at beginning of season)

**If player is under 18:** Parents should be informed of the communication between the adult and young person.

## **Reporting Concerns**

If a player discloses a message, email or image that is inappropriate for a child/young person to have, you must inform a designated Safeguarding Officer, either at local or national level.

If a child or young person is concerned or feels uncomfortable with anything they've encountered online, they should be advised to speak to their parent/guardian or an adult they can trust, for example the Club Safeguarding Officer.

Reports about suspicious behaviour towards children and young people in an online environment should be made to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre at [www.ceop.uk](http://www.ceop.uk)



[Make a CEOP report](#)

## FAW SAFEGUARDING COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES – A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE *for Children & Young People.*

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Social networking sites are great to keep in contact with family and friends and share information and photos or videos. But just be aware of the dangers, like bullying, identity theft, being contacted by inappropriate people and exposure to adult content.

Bear in mind these good behaviours to keep you safe online:

- Use the internet safely and wisely. Do not place yourself at risk.
- Remember to set your **Privacy Settings** and not accept requests either from people you do not know, or other adults involved in football.
- Consider who you are asking to be your friend. Ensure you are communicating with the person you believe you are talking to. Not everyone is who they claim to be.
- Do not ask your club coach to be your friend on a social networking site; he/she will refuse as it would be a breach of good practice.
- Guard your privacy. Consider that others who you did not intend to see your comments, photos or videos, may be able to view them. Be careful as these may be used by other people in a way you did not intend or want.
- Never post or send comments, photos or videos that may be hurtful, upsetting and untrue. Consider the feelings of others first as you may regret this later on.
- **BE WISE** –Never give out your personal details. Keep personal information secret.
- Check with your parents/guardian before you put something on your profile.
- Check out the different settings. Think who do you want to see your information and photos. Is it just your friends who should be able to view your profile; or friends of friends; or just about anyone?
- Think before you post – what seems fun and a good idea at the time may not be in years to come. Your parents, future employers and colleagues may end up seeing it.
- Do not respond if someone sends you anything that is hurtful or makes you feel uncomfortable. Instead copy and save it and tell your parent/guardian or an adult you trust, or alternatively contact an organisation who will be able to offer you support and advice.

### “CLICK CLEVER – CLICK SAFE”

Remember to be safe online. Concentrate on these 3 steps; Zip It. Block It. Flag It.



#### ZIP IT

Keep your personal stuff private and think about what you say and do online.



#### BLOCK IT

Block people who send nasty messages and don't open unknown links and attachments.



#### FLAG IT

Flag up with someone you trust if anything upsets you or if someone asks to meet you offline.

## EMAILING, TEXTING AND OTHER COMMUNICATION METHODS

- Know who should be contacting you from your club and how.
- Together with your parent / guardian, make arrangements as to how you should be contacted.

## CONCERNS?

If you come into contact with anything that makes you feel uncomfortable or concerns you, make sure you either report directly, inform your parent/guardian or an adult you can trust or alternatively seek further advice.

### **Report Directly**



### **Talk To Someone you trust or Seek Further Advice**

If you decide not to share your concern with your parent/guardian, or an adult you trust, such as your Club Safeguarding Officer or coach, consider making contact with the following organisations:

- Childline: 0800 1111 / <https://www.childline.org.uk/>
- <http://www.childnet.com/>
- FAW Safeguarding: 02920 435830

## **FAW SAFEGUARDING COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES: A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE for *Organisations***

### SOCIAL MEDIA

The Football Association of Wales (FAW) understands that the use of social media is on the increase, especially by organisations seeking a more cost-effective and efficient way to communicate with their stakeholders. The FAW does not wish to discourage the use of such mediums, however we do stress that all organisations must take into consideration their responsibilities and the risks involved with social media interaction prior to engaging in it.

### **Things to Consider:**

### SOCIAL MEDIA

- Decide upon an appropriate dedicated individual at your organisation who will be responsible for managing and monitoring the content of your social media outlet. This individual should be subject to a DBS check and safeguarding training.
- The dedicated individual should monitor all postings and decide what is appropriate with regards to comments, photos of children, personal details etc. Be mindful of what is shared with others.
- Identify who should have access to upload content to your website / social networking site.
- Always involve the designated Safeguarding Officer in discussions if unsure about what to post online.
- Find out whether you can vet messages being posted. If possible enable the “accept comment” setting. This will avoid defamatory material appearing on your profile before you have the chance to remove it, which could cause distress and risk the reputation of an individual, sport or organisation.
- Do not ask users to divulge any personal details and do not refer to the personal details of any children or young people as certain information posted on a site may help identify or locate a child or young person.
- Instead of individual coaches having individual sites/pages, consider a club-only site, which would be managed and monitored by the club. This will ensure the content is appropriate, consistent and from an official source.
- Avoid using personal details to set up an account. Use the organisation’s details, e.g. email address instead.
- Avoid the risk of someone hacking into your account by keeping your log-in details secure.
- Include contact details (telephone number and website details) for your organisation. This will allow users to get in touch and verify your club’s identity.
- Take time to understand the type of media outlet you are considering. Take particular notice of possible implications and risks, and know the potential consequences of the details you post. These risks should be explained and communicated to all parties.
- Only keep information/content which is current, accurate and relevant. Remove any material that is no longer required.
- Be vigilant of any inappropriate use or issues such as bullying or inter-club slanging matches, and report any issues to the designated individual within your organisation.
- Do not voice personal opinions or engage in any conduct which could bring yourself, the organisation or the FAW into disrepute.
- Make reference to social media in your club’s policies, especially Codes of Conduct, and integrate the guidelines into your disciplinary procedures. Ensure these are effectively communicated to all parties. Please note that a template Complaints & Disciplinary Procedure is available via the FAW Safeguarding Kit Bag.
- Find out what the Privacy and Safety Settings are and how you can utilise them to your advantage. For example, with regards to image galleries and blog entries.
- Be mindful. It is illegal for anyone under the age of 13 to access social networking sites without parental consent. Report underage users to the service providers or the young person’s parents.

- Promote responsible and safe use to your audience, ensuring they understand the potential online risks and know where to report illegal or inappropriate content or communication.
- Do sign-post them to websites such as Ce-Op for further advice of online safety.

#### **REMEMBER**

- THINK before you post. Ask yourself whether the message, photo, video or information is appropriate to your target audience and whether it may create any potential safeguarding concerns.
- Inappropriate use of social media may lead to disciplinary action either from the club, league, Area Association or Football Association of Wales.



[Make a CEOP report](#)

#### EMAILING, TEXTING AND OTHER COMMUNICATION METHODS

- Obtain written consent from parents/guardians prior to group emails / texts being used to communicate to under 18s.
- Explain purpose for certain methods of communication.
- Copy in parents / guardians to emails and/or text messages
- Do not contact under 18s for any matter un-related to the club. Do not engage in personal matters or banter.
- If you receive inappropriate communication from a young person, report immediately to your Club Safeguarding Officer to decide upon action to be taken.
- Never use any language that is derogatory.