

Online Safety and Social Media Policy

Introduction

This policy provides guidance on how our organisation uses the internet and social media and the procedures for doing so. It also outlines how we expect the staff and volunteers who work for us, and the children or young people who are members of our organisation, to behave appropriately online.

Aims

The aims of our online safety policy are:

- To protect all children and young people involved with our organisation and who make use of technology (such as mobile phones, tablets and the internet) while in our care.
- To provide staff and volunteers with policy and procedure information regarding online safety and to inform them how to respond to incidents.
- To ensure our organisation is operating in line with our values and within the law regarding how we behave online.

Understanding the online world

As part of using the internet and social media our organisation will:

- Understand the safety aspects – including what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for staff, volunteers and children – when using websites, social media, apps and other forms of digital communication.
- Be aware that it does not matter what device is being used for digital interaction, but that the same safety aspects apply whether it is a computer, mobile phone or tablet.
- When using social media platforms (including Facebook and Twitter) ensure that we adhere to relevant legislation and good practice guidelines.
- Regularly review existing safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that online safeguarding issues are fully integrated, including:
 - Making sure concerns of abuse or disclosures that take place online are written into our reporting procedures.
- Provide training for the person responsible for managing our organisation's online presence.

Managing our online presence

Our online presence through our website or social media platforms will adhere to the following guidelines:

- All social media accounts will be password protected, and at least 2 members of staff/volunteers will have access to each account and password.
- The account will be monitored by a designated person, who will have been appointed by the Regional Management Board.
- The designated person managing our online presence will seek advice from our designated safeguarding lead to advise on safeguarding requirements.
- A designated supervisor will remove inappropriate posts by children, staff or volunteers, explaining why and informing anyone who may be affected (as well as the parents of any children involved).

- Account, page and event settings will be set to 'private' so that only invited members can see their content.
- Identifying details such as child's home address, school name or telephone number should not be posted on social media platforms
- Any posts or correspondence will be consistent with our aims
- We will make sure children and young people are aware of who manages our social media accounts and who to contact if they have any concerns about the running of their account.
- Parents will be asked to give their approval for us to communicate with their children through social media or by any other means of communication.
- Parents will need to give permission for photographs or videos of their child to be posted on social media.
- All of our accounts and email addresses will be appropriate and fit for purpose.

What we expect of staff and volunteers

Staff and volunteers should:

- Be aware of this policy and behave in accordance with it.
- Seek the advice of the designated safeguarding lead if they have any concerns about the use of the internet or social media.
- Communicate any message they wish to send out to children and young people to the designated person responsible for the organisation's online presence.
- Should not 'friend' or 'follow' children or young people from personal accounts on social media.
- Make sure any content that is posted is accurate and appropriate, as young people may 'follow' them on social media.
- Should not communicate with young people via personal accounts or private messages.
- Rather than communicating with parents through personal social media accounts they should choose a more formal means of communication, such as face-to-face, in an email or in writing, or use an organisational account, profile or website.
- At least one other member of staff or volunteer should be copied into any emails sent to children or young people.
- Avoid communicating with children and young people via email outside of normal office hours.
- Emails should be signed off in a professional manner, avoiding the use of emoji's or symbols such as 'kisses' ('X's)
- Any disclosures of abuse reported through social media should be dealt with in the same way as a face-to-face disclosure, according to our reporting procedures.
- Smartphone users should respect the private lives of others and not take or distribute pictures of other people if it could invade their privacy.
- Staff and young people must not engage in 'sexting' or send pictures to anyone that are obscene, indecent or menacing.

Using mobile phones or other digital technology

When using mobile phones (or other devices) to communicate by voice, video or text (including text messaging, email and instant messaging), we'll take the following precautions to ensure young people's safety:

- Staff will avoid having children's or young people's personal mobile numbers and will instead seek contact through a parent or guardian.
- We'll seek parental permission on each occasion we need to contact children or young people directly; the purpose for each contact will be clearly identified and agreed upon.
- A method of accountability will be agreed such as copies of texts also being sent to the Regional Welfare Officer or to parents.
- Staff should have a separate phone from their personal one for any contact with parents or young people.

- Texts will be used for communicating information – such as reminding children or young people about upcoming events, which kit to bring or practice timings – and not to engage in conversation.
- If a young person misinterprets such communication and tries to engage a staff member/volunteer in conversation, the member of staff/volunteer will take the following steps:
 - End the conversation or stop replying
 - Suggest discussing the matter further at the next practice or event
 - If concerned about the child or young person, provide contact details of the Lead Welfare Officer or the appropriate agencies.

Using mobile phones during sports activities

So that all children and young people can enjoy and actively take part in our activities we discourage the use of mobile phones during such activities. As part of this policy we will:

- Make participants aware of how and who to contact if there is an emergency or a change to previously agreed arrangements with the organisation.
- Inform parents of appropriate times they can contact children who are away at camps or trips and discourage them from attempting contact outside of these times.
- Advise parents that it may not be possible to contact children during activities and provide a contact within the club or organisation who will be reachable should there be an emergency.
- Explain to young people how using mobile phones during activities has an impact on their safe awareness of their environment, and their level of participation and achievement.

Use of other digital devices and programmes

The principles in this policy apply no matter which current or future technology is used – including computers, laptops, tablets, web-enabled games consoles and Smart TVs – and whether an app, programme or website is used.