

Online Safety Guidance

Online technology has advanced and changed the way people communicate and interact on a daily basis. Sports organisations, coaches and others involved in providing activities for children and young people are increasingly using the internet and social media to promote sport and communicate with them. These forms of digital media and communication can provide great benefits. However, they can also pose potential safeguarding risks to children and young people.

What online safety means in sport

It's important that your club or organisation has an online safety policy and/or acceptable use policy, procedures and specific codes of conduct in place to promote a safe online environment for children and young people.

Your club or organisation should ensure that everyone involved (including coaches, volunteers, administrators, parents and children) understands and complies with their responsibilities within these policies.

Potential risks for young people

Online safety risks can include, but are not limited to:

- bullying by peers and people they consider 'friends'
- posting personal information that can identify and locate a child offline
- sexual grooming, luring, exploitation and abuse, and contact with strangers
- exposure to inappropriate content
- exposure to racist or hate material
- encouragement to post sexual images and videos of themselves online
- encouragement of violent behaviour, such as 'happy slapping'
- glorifying activities such as drug taking or excessive drinking
- physical harm to young people in making video content, such as enacting and imitating stunts and risk-taking activities
- leaving and running away from home as a result of contacts made online

Social Networking

Social networking services allow users to create their own content and share it with a vast network of individuals. These are sometimes called online communities.

Online social networking sites – such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram – enable interaction between groups of people with similar interests and hobbies.

Social network users establish an online 'profile' containing information about themselves. This might include:

- personal information
- social events
- activities and interests
- friends
- photos or videos

What social media means for sport

Social media provides unique opportunities for sports organisations to engage and develop relationships with people in a creative and dynamic forum where users are active participants. It is widely used to promote sports activities, campaigns and events. Groups, clubs and other sports organisations also use it to communicate with coaches, officials and participants (including young people) regarding club news.

Your sports club or organisation needs to consider:

- how to best present information and activities online
- addressing safeguards for young people using or accessing social networks
- the type of content to upload, including photos, blogs, video clips, podcasting and discussion groups
- advice for users on linking and sharing content from the club site on their personal webpages or profiles
- guidance to ensure that interactions with users take place in an appropriate manner

3 good-practice guidelines for social networking

The following guidelines contain practical safety measures for sports clubs and organisations, and provide a useful starting point for the development of an online safeguarding strategy.

1. Be clear about what you want to achieve by using social networking websites. For example, do you aim to:
 - enable two-way interaction with users?
 - provide and publish information for users?
 - receive information from users?
 - offer a mixture of these elements?
2. Research available social media platforms and options with particular reference to your planned use and target audiences.
3. Develop an acceptable use policy and/or online safety policy for your club or organisation. You also need to have procedures and specific codes of conduct in place to promote a safe online environment for children and young people.

Useful contacts

Organisation	Contact Details
Child Protection in Support Unit (CPSU)	www.thecpsu.org.uk
Net Aware- Social Networking	www.net-aware.org.uk
O2 and NSPCC online safety support	www.o2.co.uk/help/nspcc
NSPCC	www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety
NSPCC Share Aware	www.nspcc.org.uk/shareaware
Child Exploitation and Online Protection	www.ceop.org.uk
Think U know	www.thinkuknow.co.uk
Child Net	www.childnet.com
Safer Internet	www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources

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