

Good practice guidelines for setting up your club's social media accounts

The following guidelines contain practical safety measures for sports organisations and provide a useful starting point to help you develop an online safeguarding strategy. Organisations should ensure that all areas identified are addressed.

Planning your social media strategy

Think about your objectives

Your first steps are likely to be to:

- assess what you want to achieve with social media and how ready you are to go ahead
- decide whether you are principally aiming to interact with existing club members, or to provide a “shop window” for non-members, or both
- consider which types of digital media you want to use and how to integrate them with traditional media.
- consider the potential safeguarding implications of the chosen medium.

Once the club has assessed the objectives of the social media, it can then decide on the appropriate site that best meets the needs of the club.

Review your existing safeguarding policies and procedures

Review your existing safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that they address online safeguarding issues, including the potential risks to children and young people online, sexual exploitation, online grooming and cyberbullying. Remember that personal and group disputes can easily overflow from the offline to the online world.

Decide who will manage your social media

Decide who will be responsible for setting up, managing and moderating (overseeing/reviewing/responding to posted content) your web page or profile. This person will oversee the content that will appear, and will have online contact with the children and young people who interact with your webpage or profile.

Vet and train your social media manager

You must ensure that you:

- Assess the suitability of the person who will manage your social media, including undertaking an enhanced level PVG check.
- Ensure the person accesses recognised safeguarding or child protection training that addresses online safeguarding issues, including warning signs of grooming and sexual exploitation.
 - Safeguarding and Protecting Children
 - In Safe Hands

Get to know the service you want to use

Once you've identified the service you want to use (e.g. Facebook), make sure you're up to speed with the way this service operates, and the potential safeguarding implications for children, young people and staff **before** setting up your presence. Specifically, you should look at privacy and safety tools, the terms of service (these will usually cover acceptable and unacceptable behaviour), and how users can contact the service if they have a concern or complaint.

Integrate online safeguarding into your existing safeguarding strategy

Add online safeguarding issues to your current strategy, policies and procedures for safeguarding and child protection, retention and management of personal information, use of photographs, and codes of conduct/behaviour. Organisational reporting procedures should also include the reporting of potentially illegal/abusive content or activity, including child sexual abusive images and online grooming.

Setting up your social networking account

Use an official sports organisation email address

When you create a profile on a networking site such as Facebook, use an official sports organisation email address rather than a personal email address (e.g. joebloggs@aquaticsclub.co.uk rather than joebloggs@hotmail.com). This will reduce the risk of impostor or fake profiles, and is important in relation to any liability or risk for the individual who sets up the profile on behalf of the organisation. Similarly, ensure that only organisational rather than personal email addresses are made available on or through a profile.

Keep your log-in details secure

Keep the log-in details to the account (especially the password) secure within your organisation. This will reduce the risk of someone hacking into your online information. Always log out of club social media accounts as soon as you have finished using them – never leave yourself logged in, especially on mobile devices.

Set the appropriate privacy levels

Consider the privacy and safety settings available across all aspects of the services – for photos, blog entries and image galleries - and set the appropriate level of privacy. Think about your target audience and who you wish to see the content. Failing to set appropriate privacy levels could result in messages which are defamatory, libellous or obscene appearing on your profile before you have a chance to remove them. This may result in significant personal distress, risk to the reputation of the individual, the sport and/or the organisation, and require the intervention of the organisation, the service providers and possibly the police.

Set the 'Accept comment' setting so you can check messages

'Accept comment' or equivalent settings allow a user to approve or pre-moderate a comment from another user, usually a 'friend', before it appears on their web page/profile. Ensure that you check all messages before they appear on your page/group/profile so you can block any inappropriate messages and, if necessary, report them to the service provider. This may not be possible with all social networking services. If so, you could contact the service provider to establish whether you can adjust the privacy and safety settings to suit your needs.

A Facebook Page

A Facebook Page can be used to promote events, training or other club activities to the local community, other clubs and organisations. Clubs must note that this is a public page and may be viewed by anyone and as such all content should be carefully considered. Clubs should avoid posting media files of young people involved in sport with their names and any other personal information that can be used by others.

Clubs are advised to use the "Accept Comment" or equivalent tool detailed above for the page.

A Facebook Group

A Facebook Group can be used by all members of the club and restricted to the club membership, setting the group as a "Closed Group". This allows the club membership to post and see posts from others in the club without them being visible to the wider public. However, this setting will still allow people to find the group and see members of the group, but not the posts or media files.

The Privacy setting in a group should be set to members only, in turn, not accessible to persons outwith the club. Communications between coaches, officials and club representatives should follow the guidance set out in the **Social media and digital communication with young people – guidance and recommendations for coaches, volunteers, officials and designated officers** document.

The same rules would apply in terms of the posting of media files - where an athlete is pictured the personal details of the athlete should not be disclosed.

Include details so people can contact you directly

Put information on your page/group/profile about how to contact your organisation directly, including an email address and telephone number. This allows users to get in touch and verify your sports organisation. By including details of membership of sports associations, you will also enable people to see that you are a bona fide organisation.

Promote your social networking page on your sports website

Put the web address of your social networking page/group/profile on your organisation's website. This will help users to find your social networking page and will reduce the risk of people finding fake profiles. Take care to avoid targeting or encouraging potential users who are likely to be under the minimum age for the service.