



Respect



1. Social networking, websites, mobile phone and email communications

Summary of Best Practice Guidance

The FA's intention and responsibility is to safeguard children and young people involved in football. As with other leading world brands The FA uses Facebook, YouTube and Twitter as a way of getting messaging across to the widest audience possible.

Alongside the very beneficial aspects of modern communication technologies we have to recognise that there are also increased risks to children and young people. These risks must be appropriately managed.

Everyone involved in football must recognise that the responsibility to safeguard exists both on and off the field of play.

This guidance has been developed in response to requests for advice. It's essential that clubs, parents, members and players make informed decisions about how they use the internet, mobile phone and email communications.

Clubs and leagues that set up websites have a responsibility to ensure safeguards are in place. Coaches, officials, referee mentors and those in a position of responsibility in clubs and leagues must ensure they communicate responsibly.

The FA recommends that texting is not used as the primary method of communication between adults and child/young people in football.

If it's decided that the most effective way of communicating to young people is via a social networking site then the club/league is strongly advised to set up an account in the name of the club/league and explicitly for use by named members, parents and carers solely about football matters e.g. fixtures, cancellations and team selection. At no time should there be any personal communications, 'banter' or comments.

Leagues and clubs are responsible for ensuring all content hosted on their websites, social network areas and any associated message boards or blogs abide by the Rules and Regulations of The Football Association.

Clubs and leagues should appoint appropriate adults to monitor the content of their websites. Social networking is a cost effective way to communicate and easy to set up, but labour intensive to run.

Children and young people should be advised by their coaches, parents/carers and CWO to always tell an adult they trust about communications that make them feel uncomfortable or where they've been asked not to tell their parent/carer about the communication.

The FA has developed a series of guidance to encourage best practice when communicating with and about children and young people; the following range of best practice guidance is available to you via the downloads area of www.TheFA.com/footballsafes

- 1 **Social networking, websites, mobile phones, and email communications**
- 2 Running a website - Do's and Don'ts
- 3 Responsible use of Social Networking sites
- 4 Communicating responsibly with Young Leaders, Coaches and Referees Under 18
- 5 Using Texts and Emails with U18s – Do's and Don'ts
- 6 Guidance for parents/carers - Responsible use of text, email and social networking sites
- 7 Guidance for U18s using: Club WebPages, Social Networks, Email and Texts

Acknowledgements

The FA would like to acknowledge that the development of this guidance has been assisted by guidance written by the Amateur Swimming Association, England and Wales Cricket Board, Child Protection in Sport Unit and Child Exploitation Online Protection centre.



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2. Running a Website - Do's and Don'ts

Guidance for Clubs and Leagues

The following guidance is provided not as an obstacle but to support clubs and leagues to manage their safeguarding responsibilities effectively. It aims to ensure children, young people, coaches, referees and adults in a position of trust are not subjected to improper online behaviour or improper allegations.

Clubs and leagues should appoint appropriate adults to monitor the content of their websites. They should have an understanding of both the technology used and of safeguarding. This individual may be the YLWO/CWO although this is not essential. However it would be expected that the named individual(s) will have attended The FA's Safeguarding Children Workshop. You are advised to moderate your web pages on a daily basis where possible.

Clubs and leagues are responsible for ensuring all content hosted on their websites, social network areas and any associated message boards or blogs abide by the Rules and Regulations of The Football Association.

It is against FA rules to post comments that are or maybe conceived as;

- Offensive
- Insulting
- Abusive
- Threatening
- Racist
- Discriminatory
- Any other reference that may cause offensive or harm to others

Any such comment made on club or league websites and/or social networking sites regarding officials may result in disciplinary action being taken in line with The FA's Disciplinary policies and procedures.

Comments made on websites that are threatening abusive or racist could lead to legal action being taken against those responsible for posting or hosting them. Comments made may attract libel claims and legal action through the civil courts if they are untrue or defamatory.

Children and young people should be advised by their coaches, parents/carers and CWO to always tell an adult they trust about communications that make them feel uncomfortable or where they've been asked not to tell their parent/carer about the communication.

Clubs and leagues are strongly advised to adhere to the following Do's and Don'ts.

Do:

- appoint an appropriate adult(s) to monitor the content of the website
- make sure everyone within your club knows who is responsible for monitoring the content of the club website and social networking areas and how to contact them
- apply the principles given within The FA's photography guidelines; Celebrating Football Thorough Photographs and Video
- place the CEOP, 'Report Abuse' app on your web site and the link to the www.ThinkUKnow.co.uk internet safety site provided by CEOP which gives highly effective and age appropriate advice to children, young people, parents and carers
- provide links to www.TheFA.com 'Staying Safe Online' pages
- consider what benefits you feel hosting message boards, forums or blogs will bring to the running and organisation of your club/league against the potential risks. If you decide to use these methods of communication ensure that they are password protected and only allow comments to be posted by individuals known and permitted access by the club/league
- remember that the club/league is responsible for all content contained within websites, forums blogs, tweets or social networking areas maintained by the league/club/team
- regularly monitor the content of the above and use The FA's Respect Codes of Conduct as a guide to acceptable behaviours both on and off field including behaviour online.

Don't:

- host children's or young people's details where they can be seen or used by others to contact them. Any details hosted should only be done with written parental/carer consent
- place pictures of individuals on WebPages without the express permission of parents/carers
- post irrelevant detail of individuals which may lead them to



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2. Running a Website - Do's and Don'ts

be identified e.g. school class/year, player profiles detailing personal information e.g. favourite foods, movies, teams etc.

- with regard to U8 matches please remember there should be no information published that reveal the result to the reader.
- post or host items which may be considered to be hurtful, insulting, offensive, abusive, threatening, racist or discriminatory or otherwise may cause offence or harm to another or might incite such behaviour in others.

Place the ClickCEOP app on your website and link to the www.ThinkUKnow.co.uk internet safety site provided by CEOP which gives highly effective and age appropriate advice to children, young people, parents and carers. Also place a link to The FAs guidance on safeguarding in football www.TheFA.com/footballsafesite



Support the 'Click Clever Click Safe' campaign - ZIP IT - BLOCK IT - FLAG IT which provides simple reminders for both parents and young people of good behaviours that will help keep them safe online.

<http://clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk/index.html/>



Further FA guidance is available on the following areas:

- 1 Social networking, websites, mobile phones, and email communications
- 2 **Running a website - Do's and Don'ts**
- 3 Responsible use of Social Networking sites
- 4 Communicating responsibly with Young Leaders, Coaches and Referees Under 18
- 5 Using Texts and Emails with U18s – Do's and Don'ts
- 6 Guidance for parents/carers - Responsible use of text, email and social networking sites
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3. Responsible use of social networking sites

Guidance for Clubs and Leagues

The following guidance is provided not as an obstacle but to support clubs and leagues to manage their safeguarding responsibilities effectively. It aims to ensure children, young people, coaches, referees and adults in a position of trust are not subjected to improper online behaviour or improper allegations.

If a club decides that the most effective way of communicating to young people is via a social networking site then the club is **strongly advised to set up an account in the name of the club** and explicitly for use by named club members, parents and carers solely about football matters e.g. fixtures, cancellations and team selection.

Coaches, referee mentors, club officials and others in a position of trust in football need to act responsibly both on and off the field and this includes the use of electronic communications.

Therefore The FA would suggest that as a general principle coaches, managers etc should avoid using social networking sites as the primary way of communicating with players. Children and young people should be advised by their coaches, parents/carers and CWO to always tell an adult they trust about communications that make them feel uncomfortable or where they've been asked not to tell their parent/carer about the communication.

The following is best practice in relation to social networking.

Do

- ensure all the privacy settings are locked so that that the page(s) are used explicitly for club or league matters and are not used as a place to meet, share personal details or have private conversations
- nominate a club/league official to monitor the club/league social networking page regularly and remove access for anyone behaving inappropriately
- make sure everyone within your club knows who is responsible for monitoring the content of the social networking areas and how to contact them
- provide all users with The FAs best practice guidance on using social networking sites

- gain written parent/carer permission before access is given to U18s
- inform the CWO if you have received inappropriate communications online, keeping a record of any inappropriate, threatening or offensive material as this may be needed as evidence.

Don't

Unless a child/young person is a direct relation, the coaches, managers, referees, medics and club officials should not:

- accept as a friend, players or referees U18 on social networking sites they are members of or share their own personal social networking sites with children or young people involved in youth football
- make contact with children or young people known through football outside of the football context on social networking sites
- use internet or web based communications to send personal messages of a non football nature to a child or young person
- engage in any personal communications, 'banter' or comments.

Further FA guidance is available on the following areas:

- 1 Social networking, websites, mobile phones, and email communications
- 2 Running a website - Do's and Don'ts
- 3 **Responsible use of Social Networking sites**
- 4 Communicating responsibly with Young Leaders, Coaches and Referees Under 18
- 5 Using Texts and Emails with U18s – Do's and Don'ts
- 6 Guidance for parents/carers - Responsible use of text, email and social networking sites
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4. Communicating responsibly with Young Leaders, Coaches and Referees U18

Guidance for Clubs and Leagues

Many young people play a significant role as young leaders, coaches, medics and referees for clubs. Their leadership role could create additional vulnerability if we do not ensure communications and interactions with adults are carried out appropriately both on and off the field and in the online environment.

They are likely to need to communicate frequently with other colleagues and The FA recognises that the use of social networking sites, forums and message boards may form an integral part of these communications and may be beneficial to their professional development with football. Making effective use of these mediums is a positive step as long as it's done appropriately.

It's important that we recognise they are not 'adults' and as such we have a responsibility to safeguard them as we do any other young person involved in football. Following this guidance will put in place helpful safeguards.

Read The FAs 'Best Practice Guidance Social networking sites, mobile phones and email communications'; follow The FAs 'Using Texts and Emails with U18s - Do's and Don'ts' guidance and 'Responsible use of social networking sites' guidance.

Referees/Coaches Contact details

Mobile phone and email contact details for coaches and referees under the age of 18 should not be hosted on WebPages that can be accessed by the general public and must be held securely and displayed within private areas for the purpose of the activities they are undertaking with the written permission of their parent/carer.

The FA recommends the following as best practice in relation to communication with 16-17 year olds who hold a position of trust and/or responsibility within football:

1. Signed parental/carer consent should be given prior to email, social networking and mobile phone communications with young people holding a position of trust. Ideally the adult(s) who will be communicating in this way should be named. The purpose for the communication should be made clear.

2. Both parties to only communicate for the purpose of the identified professional role(s)
3. Email communications between the parties should copy in a named designated person (this could be parent/carer or club welfare officer)
4. Leagues appointing young referees to games should copy in another league official, parent or carer to their communications
5. If any inappropriate communication or content is shared between an adult and an U18 this should be reported immediately to the Club Welfare Officer who where necessary will seek advice from the County FA Welfare Officer and/or statutory agencies as appropriate.

Communicating with U18 Referees

Please Note: These referees may well be contacted by a variety of appointment secretaries or clubs seeking a referee for a game. Consequently it would be acceptable to indicate the role rather than the named individual(s) in this instance

Further FA guidance is available on the following areas:

1. Social networking, websites, mobile phones, and email communications
2. Running a website - Do's and Don'ts
3. Responsible use of Social Networking sites
4. **Communicating responsibly with Young Leaders, Coaches and Referees Under 18**
5. Using Texts and Emails with U18s – Do's and Don'ts
6. Guidance for parents/carers - Responsible use of text, email and social networking sites
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5. Using Texts and Emails with U18s - Do's and Don'ts

Guidance for Clubs and Leagues

The following guidance is provided not as an obstacle but to support clubs and leagues to manage their safeguarding responsibilities effectively. It aims to ensure children, young people, coaches, referees and adults in a position of trust are not subjected to improper communications or improper allegations. Written informed consent needs to be obtained from parents/carers before group email or texts are used to communicate with U18s.

Do:

- get signed consent from parents/carers before using either of these methods of communication with children or young people
- explain to parents/carers and club members the purpose and method for coaches, team managers, referee mentors, club officials etc to communicate by either text, email or both with their son/daughter
- only use group texts or emails and always copy in the parent/carer or the designated member of the club to all communications with young people
- make sure texts or emails are only in relation to specific club related activities e.g. informing young people about changes in travel arrangements, training times or venue changes etc
- report to the club welfare officer any instance(s) where you have received any inappropriate communications from a young person. The club welfare officer will then agree what action the club will take, notifying parents/carers and any other appropriate individuals or agencies

Don't

- use text or emails for personal conversation, sending pictures, jokes or other items of a personal nature
- respond to emails from young people other than those directly related to club matters. Advise your club welfare officer of any non club related emails you receive
- use language that is directly (or could be misinterpreted as being) racist, sexist, derogatory, threatening, abusive or sexualised in tone

Further FA guidance is available on the following areas:

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- 4 Communicating responsibly with Young Leaders, Coaches and Referees Under 18
- 5 **Using Texts and Emails with U18s – Do's and Don'ts**
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6. Guidance for parents/carers

Responsible use of text, email and social networking sites.

Whilst the internet brings many benefits and opportunities it also opens up some new risks and challenges. That's why The FA has teamed up with the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre to promote online safety and vigilance.

We would ask that you as a parent/carer to be aware of the following best practice promoted within football:

- Ensure you are aware of how coaches, managers and other members of the club or league should communicate with your son/daughter
- Show an interest in the communications between the club, you and your son or daughter. Open communication about club and league activities/issues often mean concerns are picked up early and issues can be resolved easily
- Familiarise yourself with The FAs guidance for clubs in relation to websites, text messaging and social networking sites
- Familiarise yourself with the social networking sites your child is using. Did you know children U13 are not supposed to use facebook? 13-17 year olds are given different 'set up' security features within facebook so please ensure that they are set up correctly using their real DOB and haven't bypassed this
- If you are not getting copied into club/team text messages or emails raise this with the club and ask that you are added into these communications immediately
- Know who your club welfare officer is and how to contact them if you have any concerns about the content of club/league web pages or in relation to the welfare of your son/daughter
- Ensure you tell your child to tell someone they trust about communications that make them feel uncomfortable or where they've been asked not to tell their parent/carer about the communication
- Remember as a member of a club you are responsible for and need to abide by club protocol/policy and FA Rules and Regulations regarding comments that you place online about

the league, club, players, managers and/or match officials

- Look at the guidance offered by the Child Exploitation Online Protection (CEOP) centre; they provide guidance for parents/carers, children and young people. They also provide the most up to date guidance for online environments
- The FA Respect Codes of Conduct give guidance on appropriate behaviour which can be related equally to match day, training and online environments <http://www.thefa.com/Leagues/Respect/CodesofConduct>
- Follow the guidance given by the Government's 'Click Clever Click Safe' campaign; ZIP IT - BLOCK IT - FLAG IT. This simple 3 point guidance provides an everyday reminder of good behaviour that will help keep young people safe online
- If your son or daughter receives images or messages which are offensive, threatening, or unsuitable please copy and save then elsewhere or print them off before removing or destroying them. They may be needed as evidence by the Club Welfare Officer or other agencies involved in the protection of children online
- If you have serious online concerns for the welfare of your son or daughter report it directly to CEOP using the report button below and speak to the club welfare officer as soon as possible

Look at the guidance offered by CEOP. They provide guidance for parents/carers, children and young people on how to stay safe online. This can be found via:

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents> and <http://www.ceop.net>



You may also want to look at the Click Clever Click Safe guidance <http://clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk/index.html/>





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6. Guidance for parents/carers

Further FA guidance is available on the following areas:

- 1 Social networking, websites, mobile phones, and email communications
- 2 Running a website - Do's and Don'ts
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