



CHILD WELFARE & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

COMMUNICATION & SOCIAL MEDIA

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14. Communication & Social Media

14.1 The Football Association of Ireland (the “FAI”) understands that the use of Social Media helps promote football in the Republic of Ireland if used appropriately. This section outlines the standards the FAI requires when using Social Media.

14.2 This section is established to ensure the interests of Children and Young Persons participating in football are of paramount importance when using social media and other communication technology.

14.3 The section is also to ensure all Club, League and Members are aware of the negative impact social media can have on our all members and give guidance on how to avoid them.

14.4 Breach of this section may be dealt with using the disciplinary procedures which apply to each organisation and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to a Stand Down Order, ban from football related activity and / or dismissal.

14.5 The FAI and each Club, League and Member has overall responsibility for the effective operation of these guidelines.

14.6 Each individual is responsible for their own compliance with the guidelines and for ensuring that it is consistently applied.

14.7 Personal use of Social Media sites

The FAI respects your right to use Social Media for personal use however it is important to be mindful of the impact Social Media can have on others. The following conditions must be met for personal use to continue:

- a) You are responsible for your conduct when using any form of Social Media.
- b) Your personal views should not conflict with your existing role in football. You should be aware that what you publish will be public for many years.
- c) Be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people’s perceptions of the FAI and its Club, League and Members.

14.8 Using Social Media

14.8.1 When making use of any Social Media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.

14.8.2 Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party’s consent. For example, don’t discuss colleagues, competitors, coaches and / or players without their prior approval.

14.8.3 Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else’s contact details.

14.8.4 Do not engage with irate players, parents or coaches on a public forum. Organise a meeting to allow all parties to discuss possible outcomes.

14.8.5 If you are a manager, coach, club official, referee or medic you should not:

- a) accept any player or referee who is under 18 as a friend on your personal Social Media page.
- b) communicate with any person under 18 through Social Media, text message, phone or email.

c) All communications concerning under 18's should be made through parents / guardians. It is important to ensure all communications relate to specific club matters e.g. fixtures, training etc.

14.9 Setting up and running a Social Media page or other digital communication.

14.9.1 Do not use personal details to set up your organisation's Social Media page or other digital communication. You should, for example, use the organisation's email address. All account log in details should be kept safe and secure to avoid possible hacking.

14.9.2 When setting up an email address, digital communication system and / or Social Media page for your organisation (for example, a club web-site), it should be accessed by at least three administrators. These administrators should be responsible for up-loading content and monitoring posts on the site. If any of these administrators, or any other person, are behaving inappropriately their access should be removed immediately.

14.9.3 It is important to ensure everyone within your organisation is aware of who is administering your Social Media page(s) and other digital communication systems.

14.9.4 Each administrator should be familiar with the privacy and safety settings on their Social Media page and digital communication system to ensure it is for use by your organisation only.

14.9.5 Do not accept anyone under the age of 13 on your Social Media page. Report underage users to the Child's parents or the Social Media outlet.

14.9.6 Any user under the age of 18 looking to join your Social Media page should have provided written parental / guardian consent in advance.

14.9.7 No images or personal information of under 18s should be posted online without prior written consent from each parent / guardian. It is critical that no user is asked to post any personal details of under 18s as certain information could be used to identify or locate them.

14.9.8 To avoid any inappropriate material appearing on your Social Media page you should enable the appropriate privacy settings. This will allow you to manage the content on your Social Media page to avoid any distress or reputational damage.

14.9.9 The content on your page should be accurate and up to date and any material that is no longer required should be removed.

14.9.10 Any inappropriate use, such as bullying, is strictly prohibited and should be reported to the Children's Officer within your organisation.

14.9.11 Misuse of Social Media, in certain circumstances, constitutes a criminal offence and suspicious behaviour towards under 18s should be reported to the Statutory Authorities.

14.9.12 Any content which is considered inappropriate could be in breach of FAI regulations and may also be considered a legal offence.

14.9.13 If you are unsure about something you are about to post, then you should not do it. Always consider who will be able to view it and if in doubt, always discuss it with the Children's Officer within your organisation.

14.10 Photography & Filming

14.10.1 There are inherent risks in posting personal information about Children or Vulnerable Persons as it can lead to being able to identify them and their location, or it is possible that images may be subject to inappropriate use. When posting photographs or videos the following points should be considered:

a) At the start of each season it is essential that written consent is received from every Child's parent / guardian before any photography or filming takes place. This should be obtained using an appropriate consent form.

- b) Children’s names or additional detailed information about them must not accompany any image or video. Before up-loading any images or videos of Children, written consent must be received from each parent / guardian.
- c) Any person filming or taking photographs for the relevant organisation must be Garda vetted and have completed a relevant FAI approved Safeguarding 1 basic awareness training course.
- d) If a Child within your organisation is under a court order or is in the care of the Child & Family Agency (Tusla) / HSE, their image must not be placed in the public domain without the consent of the responsible adult or social worker as relevant.
- e) Ensure that Children are appropriately dressed and only allow images to be taken on the field of play. Photographing / filming must not take place in areas of personal privacy such as changing rooms, showers, toilets and bedrooms.
- f) Camera phones should never be allowed into Children’s changing rooms, showers or toilets.
- g) If an individual who is engaged in filming / photography presents a serious concern or an immediate danger, please report the issue to your local Garda station or Tusla.
- h) Everyone wishing to film or take photos in football has a responsibility to familiarise themselves with and adhere to the following guidance. If parents / guardians, professional photographers or other spectators are intending to photograph or video at an event they should also be made aware of this section of the policy.
- i) Advise parents/carers and spectators that there can be negative consequences to sharing photos or film footage linked to information about their own or other people’s children on social media (Facebook, Twitter) – and that care should be taken about ‘tagging’; they should also be aware of general data protection regulations considerations.
- j) It is not an offence to take appropriate photographs or film footage in a public place even if asked not to do so; No-one has the right to decide who can and cannot take photos or film on public land; However if you have serious concerns about a possible child protection issue relating to the taking of photos or film footage then call the An Garda Síochána. This action should only be taken where you believe that someone may be acting unlawfully or putting a child at risk;
- k) The land or facility owner can decide whether or not photography and or filming at football activities will be permitted when carried out on private land. However, you need to make this known before allowing individuals access to the private property. If they do not comply then you may request that they leave;

14.10.2 Specific details concerning this section in relation to photography and filming should, wherever possible, be published prominently and must be announced over the public-address system, prior to the start of an event.

14.10.3 Organisations must never allow unsupervised access to Children, one to one photo sessions or photo sessions outside the event or at a Child’s home.

14.11 Parents/ Guardians Role in the children use of social media

Parents/Guardians have an important role and key responsibilities in ensuring child safety around internet and technology.

We now live in an era where children are exposed to technology and digital media from a very early age. Many young children are very adept and skilled in using technology. However, sometimes technology can be used in very damaging ways. There are apps, games and websites currently in vogue which may pose potential danger to your child. Advice and support links have been provided within the tool kit in the appendix which parents/guardians may find helpful.

14.11.1 There is a strong onus and responsibility on all parents/guardians to be vigilant regarding technology and internet usage. It is the responsibility of all parents/guardians to:

- a) Constantly monitor their child (ren)s use of technology and social media. This means checking

phones, social media website, apps and games and continuously supervising usage. Parents/Guardians should know who their child(ren) is/are communicating with and should be fully aware of what is being shared/sent/posted on social media sites. If you discover that your child is having technology/social media problems, take responsible action (s) to resolve the issue.

b) Ensure that children do not have access to phones and other equipment in their bedrooms. All equipment should be kept in a secure place at night.

c) Ensure that images/recordings captured at events by parents/guardians (if allowed at the event) are used and shared in an appropriate manner. Parents/guardians should seek consent of other parents/guardians before posting images/recordings of children other than their own on social media platforms.

d) Ensure that children comply with age requirements for certain social media sites and apps.

14.12 Protecting yourself online

14.12.1 Individuals, both adults and children should take steps to protect themselves when using social media platforms.

14.12.2 In order to limit the amount of abusive behaviour and protect individuals, various platforms have implemented functionalities and measures to actively monitor and limit the appearance of potentially harmful comments.

14.12.3 There are also security settings on various platforms available to protect you. Please refer to the social media tool kit in the appendices for more information.

14.13 When to raise concerns

14.13.1 Concerns can be raised directly to the relevant services children's officer in line with the concern-complaint section of the policy if related to that service.

14.13.2 Alternatively, there are external agencies where concerns can be raised, these are detailed within the social media tool kit within the appendices.

14.14 Legal considerations

There is essential legislation in place which you should be mindful of when using social media, to ensure you do not break the law. However, there is also legislation there to protect you.

14.14.1 Illegal online content:

- online child sexual abuse material
- activities relating to online child sexual exploitation
- intimate image abuse (intimate images and videos shared online without the person's consent)

14.14.2 Legislation to be aware of:

- CRIMINAL LAW (SEXUAL OFFENCES) ACT 2017
- Hate speech; Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022 (Bill105 of 2022)
- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018.

Links to these can be found within appendix 1.



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