

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Safeguarding Guidance Document

There are significant benefits for organisations using texts/emails and setting up social networking sites. Not only is it cheap, it's one of the most direct forms of communication with young people. However, there are risks. Adults who seek to harm children have been known to use messaging to “groom” children. This area is now specifically addressed by the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005.

For children and young people, the safeguarding risks of these technologies include:

- Inappropriate access to, use or sharing of personal details (e.g. names, email addresses)
- Unwanted contact with children by adults with wrongful/questionable intent
- Being sent offensive or otherwise inappropriate material
- Sending offensive or otherwise inappropriate material
- Online bullying by peers
- Grooming for sexual abuse
- Direct contact and abuse

For adults, risks involved include:

- Their communication with children being misinterpreted
- Potential investigation (internal or by statutory agencies)
- Potential disciplinary action
- Suspension from the sport
- Added to the PVG Children's List and barred

Text & Emails

Staff/volunteers must consider whether it is necessary to communicate with children via text and email. The general principle is that all communications with children should be open, transparent and appropriate.

Good practice would include agreeing with children and parents/carers what kind of information will be communicated directly to children by text message and should be sent in a group communication. This information should only be “need to know” information such as the last-minute cancellation of a training session.

In the first instance parent/carer consent must be obtained for all children under 18 years. Contact should always be made at the phone number/email address the parent has provided on the child's behalf. Parents/carers should be offered the option to be copied into any messages their child will be sent. Although consent is not legally required for young people aged between 16 and 18 it is still recommended that parents are informed of the intention to send their child(ren) emails or texts. It is also good practice to obtain the consent of the 16 to 18 year-old.

The following good practice is also required:

- All phone numbers/email addresses of children and young people should be recorded and kept securely in a locked cabinet or password-protected electronic file or database
- The number of people with access to children and young people's details should be kept to a practical minimum. A record should be kept of their numbers and addresses, namely by the Club Membership Secretary
- Messages should never contain any offensive, abusive or inappropriate language. They should not be open to misinterpretation
- The organisation should be clear that messages should be sent only to communicate aquatics related matters: details of meeting points, training, match details, competition results etc. The same message should be sent to every member of the group/team
- Communication by text/email between coaches/volunteers and children/young people should include a copy to a third party e.g. copy to relevant WPO and/or parent

Internet

The internet brings with it an opportunity for organisations to extend their community profile, advertise and communicate easily with their members.

Sometimes this is done via social networking platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Thought should be given to content, tone and how sites or social networking platforms and pages will be monitored.

In terms of publishing information and pictures, the following good practice should be noted:

Permission

- Written parent/carer consent must be obtained for all children aged under 18 before publishing any information or pictures of a child. If the material is changed from the time of consent, the parents/ carers must be informed and consent provided for the changes
- Special care must be taken in relation to vulnerable children e.g. child fleeing domestic violence or a child with a disability, and consideration given to whether publication would place the child at risk
- Young athletes who have a public profile as a result of their achievements are entitled to the same protection as all other children. In these cases, common sense is required when implementing these guidelines. All decisions should reflect the best interests of the child

Use of Images and Information

- Information published on the websites/social networking sites must never include personal information that could identify a child e.g. home address, email address, telephone number of a child
- All contact must be directed to the club. Credit for achievements by a child should be restricted to first names e.g. Tracey was Player of the Year 2002
- Children must never be portrayed in a demeaning, tasteless or a provocative manner
- Information about specific events or meetings e.g. coaching sessions must not be distributed to any individuals other than to those directly concerned

Concerns

- Any concerns or enquiries about publications or the internet should be reported to the Club WPO

Social Networking Sites

The following is recommended if the club decides to allow mutual access between it and its members (including children):

Permission

- Obtain written permission from parents/carers of under 18s to allow mutual interaction with the organisation profile. Make parents/carers aware of the profile's existence, the site the child will be accessing and the restrictions of use for this preferred site
- An official agreement should be in place which states that access to members' profiles are used only to pass on relevant information or to answer questions regarding organisation or sport issues. This agreement should also be incorporated into the club rules or Code of Conduct
- Set up a club profile rather than staff/volunteer profiles. This avoids access from members to individual's profiles
- Keep the club profile on "private" – allowing only members access to it (the organisation can monitor this and accept or decline requests to join)

Concerns

- Informal online "chat" with members around subjects outside the sport/activity should be immediately discouraged.

Private matters or questions should also be discouraged. However, any disclosures should be removed from the site and dealt with in line with accordingly.

Internet Forums

There has been an increase in the use and abuse of internet forums to target individuals or to engage contributors in debates which can cause upset and embarrassment to children and young people.

Sites should be well monitored and any offending comments removed.

A coach, member of staff or volunteer should refrain from being drawn into any debates concerning selection, performance or personalities – even where the subject of the discussion is anonymous. This could be considered a breach of the code of conduct or poor practice.

Photography & Video

The aim of these guidelines is to not to prevent bona fide persons from recording footage for performance development reasons or the recording of achievements.

They aim to:

- Ensure that children are protected from the misuse of opportunities to take or manipulate film and video footage in a way that harms children or places them at risk of harm
- The possible identification of a child when an image is accompanied by personal information, which can make a child vulnerable to an individual who may wish to contact and start to 'groom' that child for abuse
- Identification and locating of children where there are safeguarding concerns, which would increase their vulnerability due to:
 - Their removal from their family for their own safety
 - Restrictions on their contact with one parent following a parental separation
 - Being a witness in criminal proceedings

Some sports take place in areas where organisers have little or no control over the environment such as open water or areas to which the public have general rights of access e.g. the open countryside. In these circumstances, organisers should take all reasonable steps to promote the safe use of photographing and filming and to respond to any concerns raised.

Key Principles:

- Scottish Swimming will take all reasonable steps to promote the safe use of photographing and filming at all events and activities with which it is associated. However, Scottish Swimming has no power to prevent individuals photographing or filming in public places
- Scottish Swimming reserves the right at all times to prohibit the use of photography, film or video at any event or activity with which it is associated
- Scottish Swimming has produced a Photographic & Video Equipment Policy

Publishing Images

Rules to remember:

- Ask for parental/athlete permission to take/use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image will be used. A photography/video consent form is one way to do this
- Images will not be shared with external agencies unless express permission is obtained from the child and parent
- If naming a child or group of children in an image, only use their first names, as this will reduce the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and out with the sport
- Never include other detailed information about an individual
- Special care must be taken in relation to vulnerable children e.g. child fleeing domestic violence, and consideration given to whether publication or use of the pictures/film would place the child at risk
- Athletes modesty is to be protected at all times:
 - Action shots should be a celebration of the sporting activity and not a sexualised image in a sporting context
 - Action shots should not be taken or retained where the photograph reveals a torn or displaced swimming costume
 - Poolside shots (non-action shots) of children should normally be above the waist only and with t-shirt being worn (Male and Female), though full club kit shots are approved
 - Athletes should only be photographed in swimwear during action shots
- Scottish Swimming will do everything reasonable in the individual circumstances to give effect to the wishes of parents and children. All actions by Scottish Swimming will be based on the best interests of the child
- No unsupervised access or 1:1 sessions will be allowed unless this has been explicitly agreed with the child and parent
- **No photography or filming will be permitted in changing areas, toilets or showers**
- All images and accompanying information will comply with Scottish Swimming policies, where this is within the control of Scottish Swimming

Use of Photographic equipment at Aquatics events

Scottish Swimming does not want to prevent parents, carers or spectators being able to take legitimate photographs or video footage of competitors.

However, there is evidence that certain individuals will visit sporting events to take inappropriate photographs or video footage of children/young people.

All Clubs should be vigilant about this possibility and implement appropriate procedures:

- Notification prior to event to clubs/parents/athletes of potential photography/filming during aquatic event
- Registration of intention to photograph will be required on the day. This enables tracking of the equipment and operator should concerns arise in the future
- Those who have sought and obtained permission to photograph or film will be formally identifiable e.g. a badge or sticker will be issued, after production of the letter/email of approval and identification
- Information about what to do if concerned about photographing and filming will be available at all events

Concerns:

Anyone behaving in a way which could reasonably be construed as inappropriate in relation to filming or photographing should be reported to the person in charge on the day. The circumstances should be reported to the person in charge on the day or Wellbeing & Protection Officer.

Where appropriate the person in charge / Wellbeing & Protection Officer should report concerns to the police.

Elite Athletes:

As young athletes progress higher up the competitive pathway within their sport, elite level events are increasingly likely to take place in a public arena. Elite young athletes who have a public profile as a result of their achievements are entitled to the same protection as all other children. In these cases, common sense is required when implementing these guidelines, for example avoiding the inclusion of names and some other personal details alongside photographs may not be practical or desirable. All decisions should reflect the best interests of the child.

Scottish Swimming provides information, guidance and support to help athletes manage the media.

Mobile Phone, Cameras & Video

There have already been a number of cases where children have been placed at risk as a result of the ability to discreetly record and transmit images through mobile phones.

There is also scope for humiliation and embarrassment if films or images are shared on popular websites such as YouTube. The use of mobile phones in this way can be very difficult to monitor.

Clubs should follow the guidelines within this section as well as adopt and follow the Acceptable Use of Mobile Phone Policy. Particular care is required in areas where personal privacy is important e.g. changing rooms, showers, bathrooms and sleeping quarters. No photographs or video footage should ever be permitted in such areas of personal privacy.

All concerns about the inappropriate use of mobile phones to record photographs or video footage will be dealt with in line with Scottish Swimming Complaints Policy and/or Disciplinary Procedure. This may include the concerns being reported to the police.