



Wolverhampton Schools' Football Association

Social Media Policy

It is essential that our club, volunteers, members and players make informed decisions about how they use the internet, mobile phone and email communications. Social media (including personal and professional websites, blogs, chat rooms and bulletin boards; social networks, such as Facebook, Linked-In, Twitter and Instagram; video-sharing sites such as YouTube; and e-mail) are a common means of communication and self-expression.

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

Coaches, club officials, volunteers 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.

Clubs and leagues that set up websites have a responsibility to ensure safeguards are in place.

Coaches, officials and those in a position of responsibility in clubs and must ensure they communicate responsibly.

Clubs are responsible for ensuring all content hosted on their websites, social network areas and any associated message boards or blogs abide by not only the club rules, but also the Rules and Regulations of the Associations that they are affiliated to i.e. FA and ESFA.

The club should:-

1. Refrain from publishing comments about other clubs, players or referees and any controversial or potentially inflammatory subjects.
2. Avoid hostile or harassing communications in any posts or other online communications. Harassment is any offensive conduct based on a person's race, sex, gender identity, national origin, colour, disability, age sexual orientation, veteran status, marital status, religion or any other status identified by the FA or ESFA and protected by law.
3. Identify all copyrighted or borrowed material with citations and links. When publishing direct paraphrased quotes, thoughts, ideas, photos or videos, give credit to the original publisher or author.

4. If it maintains a website, blog, chat room, video-sharing site, bulletin board or other social media that promotes their club, should remember they are responsible for reviewing responses to online posts and resolving any concerns about the propriety of the responses before they are posted.

5. If a blogger or any other online participant posts an inaccurate, accessory or negative comment about the club or anyone associated with the club, do not respond to the post and contact the FA or ESFA for guidance/advice.

Recommendations

If your club decides that the most effective way of communicating to your players 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 members, volunteers, 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.

Clubs should appoint an appropriate adult(s) 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 and parents/ carers to always tell an adult they trust about communications that makes them feel uncomfortable or where they have been asked not to tell their parents/ carer about communication.

Therefore we would suggest that as a general principle coaches, managers etc. should avoid using social networking sites as the primary way of communications with players.

Do

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

- Gain written parent/carer permission before access is given to U18s.
- Inform the FA / ESFA if you have received 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, 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.