



Guidance for use of Social Media and Communications

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines on the proper use of social media communications. 'Social media' in the context of these guidelines refers to a number of online platforms:

- Blogs (written, video, podcasts)
- Micro-blogging websites e.g. Twitter
- Social networks e.g. Facebook, foursquare, LinkedIn, MySpace, Bebo
- Forums/message boards
- Content-sharing (photos, videos, audio) e.g. Instagram, YouTube, Flickr, Flotrack
- Any other website where user comments are an available feature
- E-mail communication between club members relating to HRC

This guidance will be reviewed before the club expands to accept junior members under the age of 18.

Online Conduct and Codes of Conduct

Individuals involved in the sport in a number of roles are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the relevant codes of conducts. Roles which have a specific code of conduct include:

- Athletes
- Coaches
- Volunteers

The behaviours covered in these codes of conducts include online behaviour, such as when using social media.

HRC Safeguards

To support the correct and proper use of social media and communication, HRC has the following safeguards in place:

- DBS checks for all coaches
- Appointed Club Welfare Officer
- HRC Constitution
- HRC Codes of Conduct
- HRC Disciplinary Procedure.

In addition, regular reviews and observations of “communications healthiness” take place and any instances of improper communications are challenged and addressed immediately.

Good Practice Points

Whilst HRC has well balanced and motivated officials and club members, it is well aware of the club’s obligations in supporting the correct and proper use of social media and communication within the club environment.

The following “Good Practice Points” are therefore recommended to all club members in order to avoid safeguarding issues to occur or any accusations of improper conduct:

- Nothing should be said that is or might be deemed/perceived to be offensive, nasty, derogatory or pornographic in nature bring the sport, club or other organisations into disrepute, for example, by:
 - making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups;
 - posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content;
 - being seen to support (for example by ‘liking’ on Facebook or retweeting on Twitter) a comment or post that would fall into any of the above categories (note: a comment may be retweeted purely to make people aware of it but this may be misconstrued as showing support for the statement retweeted).
- Take particular care in posting photos. There may be permission and/or copyright issues
- Remember that no communication online can be completely secure and it is therefore best to assume that any information posted to a social networking site could become public, even if posted in a closed community. Never discuss material of a confidential or sensitive nature online
- Pay particular attention in considering how any digital communication might appear to a third party. Compared with a conversation in the real world, technology increases the potential for messages to be seen out of context, misinterpreted or forwarded to others
- Pay particular attention with email conversations where multiple persons are involved as email recipients. It may be improper and/or inappropriate to continue to include them all in some ensuing email conversation threads.

Any communications made through social media should not:

- breach confidentiality, for example by: - giving away information about an individual (such as an athlete, club member or fellow volunteer) or organisation that is confidential - revealing information held by a club, individual or organisation in the sport where there would be reasonable expectation of confidentiality

- breach copyright, for example by: - using someone else's images or written content without permission; or failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something
- do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by: - making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age; - using social media to bully another individual; or - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive. No comment should ever be made about an individual or subject that:
 - exposes someone to hatred, ridicule or contempt
 - causes them to be shunned or avoided
 - lowers them in the estimation of 'right thinking' members of society
 - disparages them in their office, profession or trade.

Social media can be used in a positive way, for example, to make people aware of events, activities or work that you are involved in within the sport and to make positive statements about the successes and activities of athletes, coaches, clubs, volunteers and officials. You may be able to use Social Media to raise awareness of work done by organisations you are involved in or to answer queries people make have about the availability of support, information or services.

Security and Identify Theft

People should be aware that social networking websites are a public forum, particularly if you are part of a "network". You should not assume that your entries on any website will remain private. Most online communities have their own rules and guidelines, which you should always follow.

Reporting Concerns & Disciplinary Action

As a user of a social networking site, you may at some time have a concern about what you are seeing or being told about by another user. Concerns may range from negative or abusive comments, and cyber bullying to suspected grooming. If you have any such concerns, you should contact an HRC Welfare Officer in the first instance for guidance.

If you believe that you have witnessed possible criminal activity, please report this activity to the Police.