

Good Practice Guidelines on the use of Social Networking Sites by ASA Clubs and Club Members

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Background

There has been a growing awareness in sport of the increasing communication by adults and young people on the rapidly developing social networking sites and how this media has become a feature of social communication. There are risks associated with these developments, and the ASA has identified a number of issues that have led to both disciplinary and safeguarding concerns which stem from the improper or inappropriate use of such sites by its members.

Introduction

The ASA recognise that the use of social networking sites such as My Space, Bebo, Facebook and Twitter is a rapidly growing phenomenon and is increasingly being used as a communication tool of choice by young people and more recently by adults. Facebook is the largest such site whose “mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected”, and is reported to have in excess of five hundred million active users worldwide. A third of the UK population is reported to have a Facebook account.

These sites permit users to chat online, post pictures, and write ‘blogs’ etc, through the creation of an online profile, that can either be publicly available to all or restricted to an approved circle of electronic friends.

Sites such as You Tube and Google provide a platform for uploading and viewing video clips, which with the latest cameras and mobile phones becomes ever easier and can be almost instantaneous.

In addition to these sites, Twitter is a social networking and micro blogging service that enables users to send and read other user messages called tweets. Tweets are like online text messages of up to a maximum of 140 characters displayed on the author’s profile page. Tweets are publicly visible by default however the sender can restrict message delivery to their friends list only.

Whilst these technologies provide exciting opportunities, they are accompanied by dangers and negative consequences if abused by users.

The purpose of this guidance is to provide a recommendation of best practice to all ASA club members and parents on the use of social networking sites as they relate to that individual’s role in the ASA club.

Note: Throughout this guidance a young person/children is anyone under the age of 18.

Guidance for coaches, teachers and other officers in a position of trust and responsibility in respect of children in an ASA club

1. ASA members in a position of trust and/or responsibility (as defined in Wavepower 2009-2011 section 4 page 76) should not be in contact with young people through social networking sites if they hold such a position in respect of that individual young person.
2. Should a young person in your club request to become a named friend on your Social Networking Page or request that you become a named friend on the young persons Social Networking Page you should decline if any of the below apply:
 - You are in a position of responsibility in respect of that child.
 - You hold a position of trust and responsibility in the club.
 - Your contact with the child is through an ASA club **and** the parent/guardian of the child does not give their consent to such contact.
3. The social network site should never be used as a medium by which to abuse or criticise ASA members or ASA clubs and to do so would be in breach of ASA Law and Regulations.
4. The publishing of a photograph or video footage on a social networking site is governed by the same requirements as any other media – see the ASA Photography Policy in Wavepower Section 2 page 60.

Guidance to coaches who have children that swim in the club where they coach.

The issue has been raised that parents are becoming members of social networking sites that their children sign up to for security reasons in order to ensure the wellbeing of their own child by being able to view their child's site. This will give the parent access via their child's site to all children listed as friends of their child. It would not be appropriate for the ASA to prevent a parent who is also a coach in his/her child's club from using this form of protection for their child's online activities.

Therefore in such cases the coach can:

- Have swimmers in the club on the site he / she is accessing providing the ASA under 18 year old club members on the site are listed as friends of his / her child;
- The coach concerned does not have direct contact with those swimmers through the social networking site;
- The coach does not accept such swimmers as friends on his / her home site; and
- The coach should inform the Club Welfare Officer of this arrangement.

Coaches/teachers/officials who are under 18.

The ASA recognise social networking sites can be a useful tool for teachers, coaches and officials within ASA clubs to share information with other teachers, coaches or officials. If, however, the teacher, coach or official is under the age of 18 while they may be a colleague, the requirements of 1 and 2 above must be adhered to.

However, for young people aged 16 or 17 it is the view of the ASA that to restrict the ability to share professional information with them from other coaches, teachers or officials may be detrimental in their professional development in their role in the ASA.

Therefore in such cases if the parent of a young person in a position of responsibility aged 16/17 and the young person themselves requests to have contact with an adult club officer or coach for the purposes of sharing professional information relevant to their role the club should:

- Gain written consent of the parent/guardian and young person to have such contact naming the individual adult and social networking site concerned;
- The named adult must sign an agreement to keep the contact with the young person to the discussion of matters relevant to the young person's professional role in the club;
- All such communications should be shared with an identified 3rd person (e.g. the young person's parent/guardian or club welfare officer); and
- If the young person or the adult is found to breach the above agreement action must be taken by the club to address the concern and/or the breach referred to the ASA or the statutory agencies if appropriate.

Guidance to ASA members under the age of 18

1. Do not ask your club coach or teacher to be your social networking site friend – they will refuse as that would breach good practice.
2. Use the internet positively and do not place yourself at risk. Have a look at www.ceop.gov.uk for some useful tips.
3. Consider who you are inviting to be your friend and follow the good advice of the social networking sites to ensure you are talking to the person you believe you are talking to.
4. Always remember that anything you say including photos, pictures and video clips posted on your site may be shared with people other than those for whom it was intended.
5. Never post or send any photographs, videos or make comments that may be:
 - hurtful, untrue and upsetting and you may regret sharing later on; or
 - may be used by other people in a way you did not intend or want.
6. Do not put pictures of other club members on the site within the club setting as you may breach the ASA Photography Policy. If you do wish to upload such a picture you must get advice and consent of your parent, the other young person and their parent and a club officer before even considering uploading such a photo. This will not prevent you having pictures of your swimming friends on your site taken outside of the sporting arena but it is good advice to always ensure they and their parents are happy with any picture you have of them on your site.
7. Always be aware that social networking sites are a method of communication like letter writing and the spoken word. They are bound by the same laws and rules. Such technology is instant and this allows you as the user to react in the 'heat of the moment', where in the past you would have been required to write a letter which would have taken time and allowed for you to think again before sending. So never place a comment on the internet

that you would not put in writing or say to the individual concerned as to do so may not only breach ASA Policy but also the law.

Guidance to parents of ASA members under the age of 18

There have been occasions where parents of ASA members have used social networking sites to criticise or verbally abuse swimming clubs, its officers, officials, coaches, teachers, and swimmers in an inappropriate and unacceptable manner. This has in some cases led the person who is the subject of the verbal abuse to take action through statutory agencies or statutory legislation to address the comments made.

The ASA has produced a parent's code of conduct which can be found in Section 2 of Wave power. Section 6 of this Policy states that parents are expected to:

“Behave responsibly as a spectator at training and treat swimmers, coaches, committee members and parents of yours and other clubs with due respect meeting the ASA commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion”.

Parents should be aware that posting messages, comments or any other media on a social networking site that breaches the above requirement of a parent in an ASA club will breach the ASA Parents Code of Conduct.

Social networking services, social media and sport: Guidelines for safeguarding children and young people

The CPSU Briefing Document “Social networking services, social media and sport: Guidelines for safeguarding children and young people” gives more in depth guidance on social networking sites. It can be accessed via the British Swimming or Child Protection in Sport Unit website at www.cpsu.org.uk.

Further to the above the ASA Web Team has produced a user guide for parents and swimmers for Twitter, which is available to view on the ASA website at www.swimming.org.

What to do if you have concerns

As a user of a social networking site, whether you are a child or an adult, 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 for sexual abuse.

The ASA have drawn up a list below of agencies that you can contact, anonymously if you wish, where you can raise such concerns.

- The Child Exploitation online Protection Unit (CEOP) at www.ceop.gov.uk or by pressing the CEOP button on Facebook or on the “Child Power” section of the ASA website.

- The ASA through Swimline 0808 100 4001.
- If you are under 18 use the “Your Chance to Talk” form on the “Child Power” section of the ASA website.
- Childline 0800 1111 or www.Childline.org.uk.
- www.childnet.org.uk which is a NSPCC support service specifically for young people.
- www.childline.org.uk is another NSPCC support service. Using this website, children can talk confidentially to NSPCC advisors online about any issues or problems they may be experiencing, using an application similar to Instant Messenger (IM). Stop It Now freephone 0808 1000 900.
- The Local Police or Children’s Services – their number appears in the phone book.
- The NSPCC helpline 0800 800 5000 or www.nspcc.org.uk for adults concerned about the welfare or safety of a child.
- The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) www.iwf.org.uk The IWF was established by the internet industry to provide a UK internet hotline which can be anonymous for the public and IT professionals to report criminal online content in a secure and confidential way.

They work in partnership with other agencies to minimise the availability of this content, specifically:

- child sexual abuse images hosted anywhere in the world.
- criminally obscene adult content hosted in the UK.
- incitement to racial hatred content hosted in the UK.
- non-photographic child sexual abuse images hosted in the UK.

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