

CHILD WELFARE – ASA POLICY/GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CLUBS, COACHES AND COMMITTEE

Introduction

The following is a brief summary on the ASA's Policies and Guidance on the subjects listed in the title. A comprehensive statement can be found in Wavepower Section 2.4

Intent

The ASA recognises that the use of Social Media sites and instant messaging tools continues to grow rapidly and are increasingly being used as the communication tool of choice.

The ASA has identified a number of issues that have led to both disciplinary and safeguarding concerns stemming from the improper or inappropriate use of such sites by its members.

Guidance for Coaches, Teachers and other Staff

As a Coach, Teacher or other employee or volunteer of the organisation, you should not be in contact with young people through social networking sites if they are a member of the organisation you work for.

Should a young person in your organisation request to become "friends" via your personal social networking site, you should decline if:

- You are in a position of responsibility in respect of that child
- You hold a position of trust and/or responsibility at the Club
- Your contact with the child is through an ASA Club and the parent/guardian does not give their consent to such contact.

Social networks should never be used as a medium by which to abuse or criticise members or ASA organisations and to do so may be in breach of the ASA Rules and Regulations.

The publishing of a photograph or video footage on any social networking site is governed by the same requirements as those contained in the ASA Photography Guidance.

Coaches, Teachers and other Staff who are under 16

If the young Coach/Teacher/Staff member is under the age of 16, while they may be a colleague, the requirements of the first two paragraphs in "Guidance for Coaches, Teachers and other Staff" must still be adhered to.

Coaches, Teachers and other Staff who are 16 or 17

If the parent/guardian of a young person in a position of responsibility aged 16 or 17 **and** the young person themselves requests to have contact with an adult member of staff for the purpose of sharing professional information relevant to their role, the organisation should:

- Gain written consent from the parent/guardian and the young person to have such contact naming the individual adult and social networking site concerned
- Ensure that the named adult signs an agreement to keep contact with the young person to the discussion of matters relevant to the young person's professional role in the club

- Ensure all communications are shared with an identified third person (e.g. the young person's parent/guardian or Club Welfare officer)
- Ensure that if the young person or adult is found to be in breach of the above agreement, action must be taken by the club to address the concern and/or the breach is referred to the ASA or statutory agencies concerned.

Coaches, Teachers and other Staff who are between 18 and 21

The ASA recognises that many young Coaches aged between 18 and 21 will have been members themselves before becoming a Coach and will have been friends with their fellow members. It is therefore plausible they will have contact details for those members and be friends with them on social networking sites.

In these circumstances, the ASA accepts it would be inappropriate to require such friends to be removed from the social networking sites.

Therefore, in such cases:

- If a Coach aged between 18 and 21 had friends on their social networking site that were/are members aged 16 or 17 prior to undertaking the role of Coach, the ASA does not expect them to remove those members from their listed friends
- In such circumstances the Coach is advised to inform the Welfare Officer and Head Coach
- The Head Coach should make every effort to ensure the Coach is not the primary Coach for those specified persons except on an occasional basis.

Guidance for members of the organisation under the age of 18

There is a comprehensive list of does and don'ts listed in Section 2.4 of Wavepower.

Guidance for Parents

There have been occasions where Parents of members have used social networking sites to criticise or verbally abuse an organisation, its Officers, officials, Coaches, Teachers and/or members in an inappropriate and unacceptable manner.

This has, in some cases, lead the person who is the subject of the abuse to take action through the statutory agencies or statutory legislation to address the comments made.

All Parents are reminded that the Parents Code of Conduct applies.

Graham Stanley
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