



Guidance to Coaches, Teachers, Staff and Members on the use of social networking

Taken from Wavepower 2016-19

There has been a growing awareness of the increasing communication between adults and young people on social networking sites. 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 stemming from the improper or inappropriate use of such sites by its members.

The ASA recognises that the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and instant messaging tools such as Whatsapp and Snapchat, continue to grow rapidly and are increasingly being used as the communication tools of choice by young people.

These social networking sites permit users to chat online, post or send pictures, comment on and share content, and write 'blogs' or updates through the creation of an online profile. These can either be publicly available to all, or can be restricted to an approved circle of electronic friends.

Sites such as YouTube 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. More recent apps, such as Periscope and Meerkat, allow mobile phone users to stream content directly from their phones, bypassing some of the steps required in uploading videos to YouTube or to social networks such as Facebook.

In addition to these sites, Twitter is a social networking and micro-blogging service that enables users to send and read other users' messages known as 'tweets'. Tweets are 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 followers list only.

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

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 of the child 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 18:

The ASA recognises that social networking sites can be a useful tool for teachers, coaches and other staff within the organisation to share information with other teachers, coaches or staff. If, however, the teacher, coach or staff member is under the age of 16, while they may be a colleague, the requirements of the first two points above must still be adhered to.

If the young coach/teacher/staff member is 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 staff may be detrimental in their professional development of their role in the ASA.

Therefore, in such cases, if the parent 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 purposes of sharing professional information relevant to their role, the organisation should:

- Gain written consent from the parent/guardian and young person to have such contact, naming the individual adult and social networking site concerned.
- Ensure 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 such 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 the adult is found to breach the above agreement, action must be taken by the club to address the concern and/or ensure that the breach is referred to the ASA or the statutory agencies if appropriate.

Coaches aged 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 have been friends with their fellow members, some of whom will be between the ages of 16 and 17. It is therefore plausible they will have contact details for those members and be friends with them on social networking sites, and be able to communicate via other methods of electronic communication.

In this circumstance, the ASA accepts it would be inappropriate to require such friends to be removed from their 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 young persons except on an occasional basis.

Guidance to members of the organisation under the age of 18:

- Do not ask your coach or teacher to be your friend on any social networking site – they will refuse as that would breach good practice.
- Use the internet positively and do not place yourself at risk. Have a look at www.thinkuknow.co.uk for some useful tips.
- Consider who you are inviting to be your friend and follow the good advice of the social networking sites to ensure make sure you are talking to the person you believe you are talking to.
- Always remember that any communication, comments, photos and video clips posted on a social networking site may be shared with more people than you originally intended.
- Never share pictures of yourself or your friends that you wouldn't be happy for your family to see. Also never post or send any photographs, videos or make comments that:

May be hurtful, untrue or upsetting or that you may regret sharing later on.

May be used by other people in a way you did not intend or want.

Other people may find inappropriate.

- Do not upload images of other members taking part in your organisation's training, activities or events as you may breach the ASA Photography Guidance. If you do wish to upload such content, you must first seek the advice and consent of your parents, the consent of the other young person(s) and their parents, and an officer of the organisation before taking any action. This will not prevent you having images of your friends from the organisation on your personal social networking site, as long as they were taken outside of the sporting arena. Even so, it is still a good idea to check that any person in the image, and their parents, are happy for you to upload the image.
- 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. The delivery of social networking content is instantaneous and this can sometimes result in users reacting in the 'heat of the moment', and your content/ comments may spread far from that of your own social network of friends. This is a major difference between the present and the past in which you would have written 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 out loud to someone. To do so may breach ASA Policy and also the law.