

# Greenwich Royals Swimming Club: Guidance on the use of social networking



## *Incorporating SwimEngland's relevant policy, as set out in Wavepower 2020-2023*

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 There is a growing awareness of the increasing communication between adults and children and indeed their peers on social networking sites. There are risks associated with these developments and Swim England (SE) has identified several issues that have led to both disciplinary and safeguarding concerns stemming from the improper or inappropriate use of such sites by its members.
- 1.2 Swim England recognises that the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and instant messaging tools such as WhatsApp, TikTok and Snapchat, continue to grow rapidly and are increasingly being used as the communication tools of choice by children.
- 1.3 Increasingly many sites provide a platform for uploading and viewing video clips, which with the latest cameras and mobile phones, becomes ever easier and can be instantaneous. More recent apps, such as Periscope, 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.
- 1.4 Whilst the ever-developing technologies provide exciting opportunities for our members, they are accompanied by dangers and negative consequences if abused by users.
- 1.5 It is important to note that misuse/ abuse conducted on social media may result in a criminal investigation and members are encouraged to directly refer criminal activity to police. This also includes action between members engaged in a Swim England or Greenwich Royals Swimming Club (GRSC) activity and in those circumstances such action may also breach the Codes of Conduct or Codes of Ethics and result in disciplinary action.
- 1.6 If "out of sport" inappropriate social media activity emerges, members are encouraged to report this directly to the social media platform provider.

### **2 Guidance for coaches, teachers, and volunteers**

- 2.1 As a coach, teacher, or volunteer of the club, you should not be in contact with young people through social networking sites if they are a member of the club you represent.

- 2.2 Should a child person in your club 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 a Swim England club and the parent/ guardian of the child does not give their consent to such contact.
- 2.3 Social networks should never be used as a medium by which to abuse or criticise members or Swim England organisations and to do so may be in breach of Swim England Regulations.
- 2.4 The publishing of a photograph or video footage on any social networking site is governed by the same requirements as those contained in the Swim England and GRSC's Photography Policy which can be found on the club website.

### **3 Coaches, teachers, and other staff who are under 18.**

- 3.1 Swim England recognises that social networking sites can be a useful tool for teachers, coaches and other volunteers within the organisation to share information. If, however, the teacher, coach or volunteer is under the age of 18, while they may be a colleague, the requirements must still be adhered to.
- 3.2 If the young coach, teacher or volunteer is aged 16 or 17, it is the view of Swim England 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 Swim England.
- 3.3 Therefore, if the parent/ guardian of a child in a position of responsibility aged 16 or 17 and the young person themselves requests to have contact with an adult 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 agrees to keep contact with the child to the discussion of matters relevant to the child's role in the club.
  - Ensure such communications are shared with an identified third person (e.g., the young person's parent/ guardian or other club coach/ teacher or officer).

## 4 Coaches/ teachers aged 18 – 21 years.

4.1 Swim England recognises that many young coaches/ teachers aged between 18 and 21 will have been members themselves before becoming a coach/ teacher and will 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.

4.2 In this circumstance, Swim England 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, Swim England 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.

## 5 Guidance to members under 18yrs

5.1 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.

5.2 Use the internet positively and do not place yourself at risk. Have a look at [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) for some useful tips.

5.3 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.

5.4 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.

5.5 Never share pictures of yourself or your friends that you would not be happy for your family to see.

5.6 Also never post or send any photographs, videos or make comments that:

- might be hurtful, untrue, or upsetting or that you may regret sharing later; or

- might be used by other people in a way you did not intend or want; or
- other people may find inappropriate.

5.7 Do not upload images of other members taking part in GRSC training activities without their permission.

5.8 Always be aware that social networking sites are a method of communication like letter writing and the spoken word, and are bound by the same laws and rules.

5.9 The delivery of social networking content is instantaneous, which can result in users reacting in the 'heat of the moment' and your content/ comments might 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 Swim England Policy and the club's Codes of Conduct.

## 6 Guidance to parents/ guardians of members under 18yrs

6.1 There have been occasions where parents/guardians of members have used social networking sites to criticise or verbally abuse a club, its officers, officials, coaches, teachers, and/or members in an inappropriate and unacceptable manner. This has, in some cases, led to the person who is the subject of the abuse to act through statutory agencies or statutory legislation to address the comments made.

6.2 GRSC has a Code of Conduct for parents and guardians which can be found on the club's website, [www.grsc.co.uk](http://www.grsc.co.uk). Please follow this code whilst your family is a member at GRSC.

6.3 Parents are expected to behave responsibly as a spectator at all training sessions, events, and activities, and treat members, coaches, committee members and parents of other members of any of our sports organisations, be that your child's club or not, with due respect.

6.4 Parents should be aware that posting any content on a social networking site that breaches the above requirements may breach the Code of Conduct for parents/guardians.

## 7 Parents/ guardians who volunteer at the same club attended by their child.

7.1 Many parents/ guardians are becoming 'friends' with their children on social networking profiles for security reasons, to ensure the wellbeing of their own child

by being able to view their child's profile. This may then give the parent access to the profiles of other children listed as 'friends' of their child. It would not be appropriate for Swim England to prevent a parent who is also a volunteer at the organisation where their child is a member from using this form of protection for their child's online activities.

7.2 Therefore, in such cases:

- The parent concerned should not have direct contact with members through the social networking website.
- Where the parent has access to their child's social networking site (i.e., knows the username and password) they must not contact any other children under the pretence of being their child.
- The parent should not accept their child's friends as friends on their own social networking site.

## 8 What to do if you have concerns

8.1 As a user of a social networking site, whether you are a child or an adult, you may have a concern about what you are seeing or being told about by another user. Swim England has drawn up a list of agencies that you can contact, anonymously if you wish, where you can raise such concerns.

- O2 and NSPCC online safety website: [o2.co.uk/help/nspcc](https://o2.co.uk/help/nspcc)
- NSPCC Share Aware: [nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety](https://nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety)
- Childline: [childline.org.uk/get-involved/childline-social-media](https://childline.org.uk/get-involved/childline-social-media)
- Child Exploitation & Online Protection Command: [ceop.police.uk/safety-centre](https://ceop.police.uk/safety-centre)
- Thinkuknow: [thinkuknow.co.uk](https://thinkuknow.co.uk)
- Our Safety Centre: [oursafetycentre.co.uk](https://oursafetycentre.co.uk)
- NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit: [thecpsu.org.uk/help-advice/topics/online-safety](https://thecpsu.org.uk/help-advice/topics/online-safety)
- Internet matters: [internetmatters.org](https://internetmatters.org)
- Childnet International: [childnet.com](https://childnet.com)