**Guidance on the use of social networking**

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 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.

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. 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.

Whilst the ever-developing technologies provide exciting opportunities for our members, they are accompanied by dangers and negative consequences if abused by users. 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 while engaged in a Swim England activity and in those circumstances such action may also breach the Codes of Conduct or Codes of Ethics and result in disciplinary action. If “out of sport” inappropriate social media activity emerges, members are encouraged to report this directly to the social media platform provider. 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.

**General Guidelines**

* 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.
* Consider who you are inviting to be your friend and follow the good advice of the social networking sites to 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 Swim England Photography Guidance (page 86). If you do wish to upload such content, you must first seek the advice and consent of your parents/guardians, the consent of the other child and their parents/guardians, 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/guardians, are happy for you to upload the image.
* Always be aware that social networking websites 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 Swim England Policy and the Code of Conduct.

**Parents/guardians of members under the age of 18**

There have been occasions where parents/ guardians 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, led the person who is the subject of the abuse to take action through statutory agencies or statutory legislation to address the comments made.

It is recommended that parents/guardians actively monitor their children’s online activity, in line with Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) advice, which is proven to help prevent the risks of harm children may face online from peers and others they may know from a club environment.

Swim England Wavepower 2020-2023 95 Swim England has a parent’s/guardian’s Code of Conduct which can be found online. <https://www.sussexswimming.org/teachers-coaches/welfare/>. This includes expectations of behaviour in club activity online, and as a spectator at all training sessions, events and activities, in treating members, coaches, committee members and parents/guardians of other members of any of our sports’ organisations, be that your child’s organisation or not, with due respect. Parents/guardians should be aware that posting any content on a social networking site that breaches the above requirements may breach the parent’s/guardian’s Code of Conduct.

**Raising Concerns**

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 – [www.o2.co.uk/help/nspcc](http://www.o2.co.uk/help/nspcc)
* NSPCC Share Aware Resources - [www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety)
* Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command – [www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre](http://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre)
* Thinkuknow – [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)
* Our Safety Centre – [www.oursafetycentre.co.uk](http://www.oursafetycentre.co.uk)
* NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit – [www.thecpsu.org.uk/help-advice/topics/online-safety](http://www.thecpsu.org.uk/help-advice/topics/online-safety%20Internet%20matters%20internetmatters.org)
* Internet matters – [www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org)
* Childnet International – [www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)
* HM Government advice on keeping children safe online - [www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers)