

Communications Policy

-Social Media

-What’s App and Texting

**Social Media**

The use of social media provides coaches and volunteers with a unique opportunity to engage and connect with online communities. Coaches/volunteers who use social media are required to familiarise themselves with the potential risks which social media can bring to children and young people and take all possible steps to minimise risks to children and young people.

Coaches and volunteers are required to fully adhere to the code of conduct pertaining to social media use. Any breaches of the code may result in disciplinary action being taken.

**Potential Risks To Children and Young People**

Potential risks can include, but are not limited to:

• Bullying by peers and people they consider ‘friends’.

• Posting personal information that could allow others to identify and/or locate a child offline;

• Sexual grooming, luring, exploitation and abuse through contact with strangers; • Exposure to inappropriate content.

• Involvement in making or distributing illegal or inappropriate content; • Theft of personal information;

• Exposure to information about and interaction with others who encourage self-harm; •Exposure to racist or hate material.

• Encouragement of violent behaviour.

• Exposure to content glorifying activities such as drug-taking or excessive drinking;

• Physical harm to young people in making video content, such as enacting and imitating stunts and risky activities.

• Leaving or running away from home because of contacts made online.

**Code Of Conduct for Coaches and Volunteers Using Social Media**

The following guidance applies to all forms of social media platforms:

• use their social networking page as a communications platform only – mainly to communicate on a generic basis with parents and guardians and children and young people, e.g. ‘training has been cancelled tonight due to adverse weather conditions’

• ensure that the highest privacy and security settings always remain activated.

• activate all swear filters to block any foul language from being disseminated to users.

• where possible monitor and view all written and visual content before accepting and posting it live

• delete and remove any inappropriate written content or images that would compromise the welfare of children and young people and/or the ethos of the Club

• be safety conscious when adding content to the Club webpage/profile

• obtain written parental/guardian consent before posting pictures of children and young people who engage in Club activities

• communicate to third parties (ie spectators or venues) that it is their responsibility to obtain parental/guardian consent before passing on images of Club activities to be posted on social networking sites. The Irish FA will not be held liable for third party actions

• ensure, if using Facebook, that they only communicate with children over the age of 13 (in line with network provider guidelines), always through an official site, and that communication relates directly to Club activities (eg training/matches);

• not accept children or young people, who they are in a position of responsibility for, as friends on their personal social networking site;

• respond to online bullying and report it to the Club Committee - what is said online should be treated as if said in real time;

• never post any written or visual material that compromises the ethos and values of the Club;

• post factual comments only. Do not enter a debate regarding a match result etc;

• display details of their social networking page on the Irish FA website so that children/young people and parents/guardians know that it is an authentic Association forum;

• promote safe and responsible use of social media;

• promote the Irish FA safeguarding page and signpost users to this so that they can obtain links to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Agency (CEOP);

• maintain professionalism at all times;

• adhere to all best practice guidelines, as outlined in this document.

Coaches/volunteers must never:

• become friends via their own social media account with young people for whom they are in a position of responsibility;

• communicate or share images via their personal social network account with children and young people involved in Club activities;

• post any written or visual material that compromises the ethos and values of the Club;

• engage in inappropriate communication with children and young people;

• engage in grooming behaviour or behaviour that could be misconstrued as grooming;

• engage in bullying behaviour on social networking sites;

• ridicule a child or young person by posting video images, whether intentionally or not.

• use foul, abusive, sectarian, racist, discriminatory or sexualised language;

• comment on individual players.

**REMEMBER:** Think before you post. All comments on Club social networking sites will be considered as public comment and will be treated as such. The Club therefore reserves the right to take disciplinary action in cases involving social networking where the welfare of a child or young person is compromised or where the actions of a member/volunteer bring the Club into disrepute.

**What’s App and Texting**

What’s App and text messaging are convenient and effective ways for coaches/volunteers to communicate with children and young people involved in Club activities. However, it is important that we consider potential risks to both parties.

Potential risks for children and young people include:

• inappropriate access to, or use or sharing of, personal details (eg name, email address, mobile phone number);

• unwanted contact by adults with malicious intent;

• bullying by peers;

• being sent offensive or inappropriate materials;

• grooming for sexual abuse via personal communication;

• direct contact and actual abuse.

Potential risks for staff include:

• misinterpretation of their communication with children and young people;

• potential investigation (either internal or by statutory agencies);

• potential disciplinary action.

**What’s App and Texting Policy: Good Practice Advice**

* Where possible, coaches/volunteers should communicate information regarding training and matches through parents and guardians.
* When updating children and young people, messages should be communicated in bundles and should be one-way.
* Written parental or guardian consent must be obtained before communicating messages directly to children and young people.
* Children and young people should only message back to acknowledge receipt of the message or for clarification. Staff have a responsibility to advise children and young people of this in advance.
* Parents and guardians should be presented with the option of being sent a copy of the message.
* Messages must never contain inappropriate, abusive or offensive material.
* Direct communication with children and young people must only take place if necessary; it should be kept minimal and relate to Club activities only.
* If a coach/volunteer is required to communicate directly with a child or young person, it is only appropriate if written parental/guardian consent has been obtained and the parent/guardian is informed in advance of what the conversation will relate to.
* The parent/guardian should also be sent a copy of the message that is being sent to their child. Where possible, however, direct communication with a player should take the form of a meeting in the presence of a parent or guardian – particularly if in relation to non-selection or behavioural issues.
* Personal details pertaining to each child or young person must be stored in a secure electronic system that is password protected. Access to such details should be kept to an absolute minimum. Permission to retain details should be obtained from both parent/guardians and children and young people.
* The Club will follow disciplinary procedures should breaches of this protocol regarding messaging be broken. The Club recognises its legal and moral duty to consult with relevant statutory agencies should indications of illegal activity (e.g. grooming for abuse) come to light.

**Guidelines for the Use of Photographic and Filming Equipment**

Tummery Athletic wants to be able to celebrate and record through photographs the participation and achievements of children and young people who take part in Club programmes.

Coaches and volunteers must take all necessary steps to protect children and young people from the inappropriate use of their images in resources, media publications, on the internet and elsewhere. Photographs can be used as a means of identifying children and young people when they are accompanied with personal information. Such information can make a child or young person vulnerable to an individual who may wish to start to ‘groom’ that child or young person for abuse, or otherwise harm them.

Secondly, the content of the photo can be used or adapted for inappropriate use. There is evidence of adapted material finding its way onto sites showing child abuse images.

By raising awareness of the potential risks, and by taking appropriate steps, the potential for misuse of images can be reduced.

Coaches/volunteers are required to take into consideration the following points when using images of children and young people for publicity purposes:

• When assessing the potential risks in the use of images, the most important factor is the potential for inappropriate use of images of children and young people

• Consider the type of images that are suitable and that appropriately represent the Club, without putting children and young people at increased risk

• The safety and welfare of children and young people taking part in Club activities should be paramount at all times

• Children and young people and their parents/guardians have a right to decide whether their photograph is taken, and how those images may be used

• Parents and guardians must provide written consent for images of their child to be taken and used in Club communications and publications

• If the child or young person is named, avoid using their photograph

• If a photograph is used, avoid naming the child or young person

• Before taking images of a child or young person, written parental or guardian consent must be obtained This ensures that parents and guardians are aware of the way the image of their child is used in representing the Club

• Only use images of children and young people in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use

• Any concerns regarding the inappropriate use of images should be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer.