

# **4.11 Guidance on mobile phones and social networking sites**

## **Mobile phones**

A number of sports have experience of cases where members have misused text messaging and other forms of electronic communication. The outcomes have been concerning for young people. They include:

- Mobile phones and other electronic communication for grooming or other purposes by persons in positions of trust in relation to children throughout sport.
- Young members becoming very distressed as a result of bullying via their mobiles by persons in positions of trust and other club members who have contacted them without parental knowledge.
- Inappropriate conversations between persons in a position of trust and young people who have found it hard to disclose due to the imbalance of power between themselves and the adult concerned.
- Most mobile phones now have a camera facility and are covered by the policy on photography (See 4.7 Good Practice Guidance on Photography and Video). In some sports who use communal or village changing rooms, club members and the public have been found to take inappropriate photos of fellow members leading to police action.

It is therefore important that clubs adopt the good practice guidance below that acknowledges the potential risks and additional vulnerability of children and young people, and advises against the use of mobile phone contact and other forms of electronic communication between persons in a position of trust and members under the age of 18.

### **Good Practice Guidance on mobile phones**

Voluntary helpers and those in a position of trust.

- Should not request or hold the mobile phone numbers or email addresses of the children they instruct.
- Should not make or take calls, access the internet or text on their mobile while instructing children.

- Should not show or allow any child to see any adult or inappropriate material they have on their phone.
- Should not ignore any inappropriate material shown to them by a child on their phone.
- Should not use their phone to take photos except where they fulfil the requirements of the photographic policy.
- Should have the landline and mobile phone numbers and email addresses for parents/carers including emergency contact details.

### ***Junior members***

- Should not request the mobile phone contact details of their instructor or other relevant club officers.
- Should not take their phones into training venue unless they are turned off while under instruction and in the changing venue.
- Should not take any photos with their mobile phone unless they comply with the photography policy.
- Should report any concerns they have as to the use of mobile phones by any other member, parent, officer, Club helper or instructor.

### **Social networking sites on mobile phones and computers**

A number of sports have experience of cases where members have misused the medium of electronic communication. There is evidence of the use of electronic communication for grooming or other purposes by instructors and others in positions of trust in relation to children throughout sport. Additionally there have been examples of children, instructors, helpers and officers posting inappropriate, inflammatory and sometimes illegal messages on sites such as Facebook. It must be remembered many smart phones will also have the facility to access the internet and these sites.

For this reason we recommend all clubs adopt the good practice guidance that acknowledges the potential risks and additional vulnerability of children and young people.

## **Good Practice Guidance – Social networking sites**

### ***Instructors and voluntary helpers and those in a position of trust.***

- Should not accept any request to be a “*Friend*” of their students if they are in a position of responsibility over them and should report all such requests to the CWO unless the junior member concerned is a relative.
- Should not use the social network site as a medium by which to abuse or criticise BSAC members or clubs.
- Should not publish photos of BSAC members on a social networking unless they follow the guidance in the club photography guidance.

### ***Junior members***

- Should not accept any request to be a “*Friend*” of their club instructors or others in a position of responsibility in the club and should report all such requests to the CWO unless the adult concerned is a relative.
- Should not use the social network site as a medium by which to abuse or criticise BSAC members or clubs.
- Should not publish photos of BSAC members on social networking unless they follow the guidance in the club photography guidance.

## **General advice to Students using Social Networking Sites**

Should use the internet safely and not place yourself at risk. Have a look at the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre website [www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk) for some useful tips.

Only invite or accept as Friends people you know directly or have knowledge of through friends and family.

Always consider any photos of you or your friends before posting them on social networking sites – CEOP give good guidelines to follow.

Always consider that posting comments on social networking sites is the same as writing it in a letter or saying it directly to the person, but can be accessed by many other

interested parties. Such postings are bound by the same laws and rules and you may find the comment you makes breaches those laws or rules. Technology also allows you to act “in the heat of the moment” and say something you later regret. Good advice is never put on the internet something you would not say to that person directly.

Never meet someone you have met on line without your parents being aware and preferably accompanying you to the meeting and always meet in a neutral public place.

The Child Protection in Sport Unit Briefing Document “*Social Networking Services, Social Media and Sport: Guidelines for Safeguarding Children and Young People*” gives more in depth guidance and can be accessed from the CPSU website: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)