



Middleton Sports Club



USE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE INCLUDING THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SERVICES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The use of mobile phones, text messaging, e-mail, social networking companies (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat,) and the wider forms of electronic communication such as phone cameras, videos, web cams, websites and blogs have become a feature of the sporting landscape.

There is significant benefit to using all or any of the forms of electronic communication:

- Attract more young people to the sessions, activities, clubs
- Improve retention rates
- Effectively signpost young people to other high quality, accredited activities and sports clubs at the end of particular programmes
- It is relatively cheap
- It is a direct way of communicating with children and young people as most have either a mobile and or an e-mail address

There is evidence that the use of mobile phones and other electronic communication being used for grooming or for other purposes such as bullying by those in positions of trust in relation to children and young people throughout sport.

The risks involved for children and young people associated with electronic communication include:

- Unwanted contact with children/young people by adult with poor intent; bullying by peers
- Being sent offensive or otherwise inappropriate materials
- Grooming for sexual abuse
- Direct contact and actual abuse

Adults should also be circumspect in their communications with children so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming.

The risk involved for adults include:

- Misinterpretation of their communication with young people
- Potential investigation (internal or by statutory agencies)
- Potential disciplinary action

Communication between children/young people and adults, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. For this reason Middleton Sports ("The club") has established a policy guiding the use of mobile phones and all other forms of electronic communication, which reflects Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) good practice guidelines.

Procedures for the use of all or any Electronic Communication:

- Club Staff or representatives are not permitted to send e-mails or text messages to Children / Young People under the age of 16. All communications relating to events, training and other information must be directed to a Child / Young Person's parent/s, legal guardian or carer.
- The club considers it acceptable for staff and coaches to send emails to children of 16 years and over provided that the following guidelines are followed:
 - Only those persons that have been through relevant safeguarding checks (e.g. enhanced level DBS checks and references) should use and have access to the text messaging system. Ideally these individuals should have also undertaken a recognised safeguarding training (e.g. "Safeguarding & Protection Children" workshop).
 - Children's and young people's e-mails addresses should be stored in either a locked secure cabinet, or on an electronic system which is password protected, with only access to those individuals identified in the first paragraph above. The e-mail addresses should not be shared with anyone else, and should only be used for the purposes of the specific sports programme.
 - When contacting children between the ages of 16 to 18 parents must also be informed of the intention to send their children e-mail messages. The reason for this is to show that The Club has taken steps to ensure their child's safety in this respect. Parents should always be copied in.
 - All e-mails must be in a group of young people, i.e. the same standard email message being sent to every member of the group. The emailing messaging system should never be used to send emails on an individual basis (i.e. to just one person), or less than 5 people.
 - All e-mails sent must make it clear to the young person receiving it who has sent the message, rather than simply giving the issuing email address or name of an individual.
 - Information to Children / Young People and parents should include details of how any concerns arising from the use of e-mailing can be reported in line with The Clubs safeguarding policies and procedures. The Clubs incident reporting form can be used for this purpose.
 - All e-mails which are sent must never contain any offensive, abusive or inappropriate language and care must be taken to avoid over-familiarity or language that could be misinterpreted or misconstrued.
 - The e-mails sent must be directly related to The Clubs programme/sessions and must not be used for any other reason.
 - Young People should not be encouraged to e-mail back: ideally it should be used as a one-way communication channel.
 - All of the e-mails sent should include a sentence at the bottom which provides Young People with the opportunity to unsubscribe from receiving any further email messages.
- Club staff or representatives are not permitted to use any form of social networking and social media organisations as a form of communication with Children / Young People as part of their professional role.