



# Social Media Policy

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Reviewed by	C&I	Review date	15 August 2017

## 1. Purpose and scope

England Netball recognise the developing the range of technologies used to interactively share, create and discuss issues and content as extremely positive and encourages individuals and communities to use social media to promote themselves, their clubs, their achievements and the sport of netball.

However, EN will challenge anyone using social media either intentionally or by association to insult, slander, create a risk to personal safety or abuse any individual, organisation or the sport of netball.

This Policy provides guidance for all members, connected participants and staff to help them understand the acceptable standards of use of social media in netball. It sets out best practice designed to assist everyone in understanding what the potential risks are in using social media and how these can be managed.

The pace of change in technology means that it is not possible to identify a definitive list of all forms of social media which this Policy applies to, hence it is to be read as applying to all forms commonly understood to be social media and used as such. This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Codes of Conduct and you are reminded that misuse of social media can result in Disciplinary Action being taken against a member, connected participant or employee.

## 2. Definitions

**Social media** is the collective of online communications and media channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration via a range of technologies such as desktop, laptop, tablets, smartphones and other internet enable devices. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, micro blogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the different types of social media and examples of social media platforms include, but are not limited to, Facebook, YouTube, Blackberry Messenger, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+, Wikipedia, LinkedIn and Reddit.

**Young person** is used to refer to any person below the age of 18.

**Disciplinary Action** means action taken under the Disciplinary Regulations of England Netball.

## 3. Usage

Whilst clubs and athletes are encouraged to use social media to positively promote their clubs, themselves and their achievements and the sport of netball, the balance between the right to free speech and the responsibility not to insult, slander, abuse or create risks to anyone's personal safety must be borne in mind. This Policy seeks to assist each person in knowing how to achieve that balance.

## 4. Good Practice Guidance

As a general principle it is recommended that the club, athlete or individual has a webpage/profile which is used for their netball involvement and that they keep their personal identity, pages and profile separate. This will help in distinguishing between what is part of a person's private life, and what is part of their life in netball. Whilst there will always be grey lines between the two, having separate online identities should assist in focusing the mind on what is and what is not appropriate content and usage, before anything is posted.

The internet presents a unique set of challenges for protecting personal safety as all information posted is available to the whole world, indefinitely. Generational differences in understanding the implications of what is being posted means that there are very different perceptions of risk operating. Whilst young people get great benefits from the online communities they belong to and the instant access they have to friends from across the world, they may need guidance from the people with responsibility for their safety as to what is acceptable and safe use.

The use of social media to target individuals, whether for grooming or the increasing incidences of cyber bullying, has created a set of risks to vulnerable people which is a real challenge to manage. Everyone is creating potential risk to themselves when they post personal information.

*For example*, if a person posts that they are going on holiday and has their address on their page, it is easy to see that there is an increased risk to their property whilst they are away. If a top athlete posts that they are tired, injured, worried about an upcoming event, they are giving their opponents

information which provides them with psychological advantages that they would not have otherwise gained.

Thinking before you post will help reduce these sorts of unforeseen consequences.

### Texting/e-mail

Probably the most commonly used form of social media, texting is a great way to send fast, cheap communications. Generally speaking texts are more personal and private than other forms of social media and for this reason there is more associated potential risk to young people and adults at risk.

One to one contact without a parent/carer copied in to texts between a coach and a young person is inappropriate. Clubs should seek parental consent at the start of the season for text communications, with anyone under the age of 16. If this is given, clubs should use group messaging, with the Club Safeguarding Officer and any parent who requests it, copied in. Using this method, there should be no need for any adult to have individual contact with a young person in the club in the normal course of things. If there is an emergency which means that an individual young person needs to be contacted, the Club Safeguarding Officer or the parent/carer should be copied in.

Over the age of 16, parents should still be made aware of the club's practice and this Policy.

Clubs should keep a copy of the phone numbers and e-mail addresses of their members, by text/e-mail group and ensure that these are held securely and not used for any other purpose. The messages sent should always make it clear what the purpose of the communication is and contain the name of the organisation, not just a mobile number.

There should be a minimum number of administrators with access to the group and contact details. A minimum of 2 is recommended.

### [CPSU Briefing Texting and E-mail](#)

### Social networks

Social networks are the communities which develop on media applications, such as Facebook and twitter.

Adults and young persons should not be "friending" or "following" each other, outside of the netball relationship. Communications for netball purposes should be through sites/identities which are public and managed by the club. This applies to adults in a position of trust as well as to the adults who come into contact with young people through netball.

*For example*, if a coach receives a friend request from a young person who they have met at a training session, they should decline. If the club has a page or identify which allows communication via a public forum, this would be acceptable, provided the site is secure and there are no private messages being sent or received.

It is accepted that some parents/carers are friends with their children, in order to monitor the material posted and seen by them. If the adult then accepts their child's friends, this is not something which England Netball has any jurisdiction over. We are concerned about social media usage where the primary relationship is one gained through netball. Everyone needs to be mindful that:

**Social media must not be used to insult, belittle or criticise other teams, players, officials or staff of England Netball.**

Expressing your opinion is fine, being rude in the way you express it or expressing discriminatory views is not and could lead to the individual who posted the comment, anyone who forwards or positively affirms the comment, and the person with administration rights for the site used, being subject to Disciplinary Action. Anyone who has posted an offensive message or image is advised to remove the comment as soon as possible, to reduce its impact.

The speed and variety in the development of social media forums, means that posts can be generated rapidly and spread to a wider audience in a very short space of time. All members, connected participants, staff and members of the public can and should report any misuse of social media to the Appropriate Authority (the local County Association, Regional Management Board or the Compliance

and Inclusion Team at England Netball), so that appropriate action can be taken to maintain the high standards of behaviour expected within the sport of netball.

### Twitter

When using Twitter or similar tools, reposting other people's comments or posts can be taken as you adopting the views they have expressed and you would be accountable for the content.

Comments made should clearly be attributable to the individual and not to the club, County, Region or England Netball.

## 5. Setting up Club Webpages

Clubs setting up webpages, including Facebook pages, are advised to ensure that they retain ownership and administration rights over that site. No one individual should have exclusive ownership or administration rights, including the Chair. The CSO should be informed about and involved in the administration of any site(s). All these people should be aware of the law and good practice for protecting children from the potential risks of social media.

The primary purpose of the site should be for promoting the club and the sport of netball and for communicating between members of the club. Privacy settings should be set so that members of the public cannot contact individuals from the club by first establishing a link with the club, via their webpage.

Links from a young person's personal page to the club site may be made, but additional links between the pages of an adult and a young person, should not be made. Remember that privacy settings change frequently – keep them under review and update as necessary.

Photos and tagging should be used with consideration for the safety implications which these bring. A photo of the team in play, without any tagging of individuals is fine. Do not use tags as this allows people to be identified and then traced. Whenever a photo is going to be taken and used, make sure the individual knows and get parental consent [[Taking and Use of Photographic and Recorded Images of Young People](#)].

All clubs should provide their members with guidance on the use of the club site and issue their members with [Acceptable Use Agreements](#), which the parent/carer of a young person also signs. A template Acceptable Use Agreement is appended to this policy.

## 6. Athletes' usage

Young Performance athletes are in a position of greater prominence than most players in the sport of netball, and this increases as they progress up the Performance Pathway and to possible National Squad membership. As such, these athletes are the role models for acceptable standards of behaviour and this is as true for their use of social media, as it is for their everyday conduct.

Athletes are encouraged to show their personality and engage with their fans when using social media. There is a need for professional conduct at all times and the onus remains on them to promote the sport, the team and the events. They are reminded that sponsorship deals depend on the public perception of the sport and they are the public face of the sport. Deals can be lost on the basis of the behaviour of any one athlete, so it is not just your personal reputation which is important to protect and nurture. Remember the overriding factor is that the tweets or posts must not mislead.

Showing your personality and sharing your performances helps show what it takes to be a top athlete and attracts people to you. Make regular use of your pages/posts so that your fans feel you invest in them and that they have a relationship with you.

Athletes should make it clear they are posting their own views. They should not use the England Netball logo, which is owned by England Netball.

You are advised to think carefully about what you post, before you post it. Rivals can gain significant psychological advantages by reading of injury troubles or nerves about events. As a rule of thumb, avoid posting during competition time; operate a 3 hour embargo either side of a game, so that you don't post in haste and regret at leisure. Never criticise the umpires and officials.

The Lifestyle Coach can provide advice and support to athletes about their use of social media.

Remember that you too have a responsibility to report any posts which contravene the standards expected by England Netball's Code of Conduct and this Policy.

Anyone reporting a concern, or who is the subject of such a report, will be given advice on the procedures which are used to tackle these issues.

## 7. [Reporting Concerns](#)

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, as is creating and maintaining the high standards of behaviour expected of people in the sport of netball. For these reasons, everyone is encouraged to report concerns of misuse or inappropriate usage of social media to the Appropriate Authority, within the world of netball, or outside it.

The first point of contact will usually be the Club Safeguarding Officer, or the Chair of the club. As mentioned above, the Appropriate Authority within the world of netball is the body with the power to take Disciplinary Action. Which level is the most appropriate will depend on the nature of the concern, but if it relates to a potential safeguarding issue, the matter must be reported to the Lead Child Protection Officer at England Netball.

**Threats of immediate harm or danger should be reported to the police and/or Children's Services or the Local Authority Designated Officer** (where the concern relates to someone in a position of trust), contactable via your local authority and the Local Safeguarding Children Board and reported to the Lead Child Protection Officer at England Netball, following the [Reporting a Concern process](#).

Whilst the law does not move as fast as technology, there is legislation and government guidance which applies to social media usage, including:-

- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Protection from Harassment Act 2003
- Defamation Act 1996
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights
- Working Together 2013.

Prosecutions may be taken for comments/content posted on line.

*For example* those which are offensive, insight hatred or are of an intimidating nature.

England Netball may also take Disciplinary Action against individuals using social media inappropriately.

## 8. [Useful contacts](#)

There are a number of organisations who can provide advice and guidance on internet safety and usage, which have been referred to in the development of this policy. They are great resources to reference for the most up to date guidance.

- ✧ [CPSU Online Safety](#)
- ✧ [CPSU](#)
- ✧ [UK Safer Internet Centre](#)
- ✧ [CEOP Safety Centre](#)