



# Social Media Policy

## Approval

Approved by	Owner	Dept	Date
Wellbeing and Protection Committee	Head of Wellbeing and Safe Sport Head of Operations	Operations	
Board			

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## 1. Background

- 1.1. The digital world is constantly and rapidly evolving and is increasingly being used throughout sport for communication by adults and young people on the growing array of social media sites. There are both positive and negative aspects to using social media sites that Scottish Gymnastics clubs, members and their parents/carers should be aware of.
- 1.2. It is important to acknowledge that when used properly, social media can be a very effective marketing and communications tool. However, Scottish Gymnastics has identified a number of issues that have led to both disciplinary and safeguarding concerns that stem from the improper or inappropriate use of social media and digital channels by its members, club staff and volunteers.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1. Scottish Gymnastics recognises that the use of social media sites and online gaming (e.g. Xbox, Play Station, etc.) are rapidly growing phenomena and are increasingly being used as the communication tool of choice by young people and some adults. Facebook remains the largest such site whose mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open, connected and closer together.
- 2.2. Social media sites are platforms for fostering social interaction and engagement online. They permit users to connect with others to chat online, share information, instantly message, post pictures, write 'blogs' and 'vlogs' and interact with content in various formats like text, images, videos, and more, through the creation of an online profile. This can either be publicly available to all or restricted to an approved circle of actual and/or virtual friends.
- 2.3. Social media platforms have developed to allow the uploading and viewing of video clips which, with the latest cameras and mobile phones, becomes increasingly easier, and with the development of live streaming can be instantaneous.
- 2.4. These technologies provide exciting opportunities but can be accompanied by dangers and negative consequences if not used safely or are abused by users.
- 2.5. The purpose of this guidance is to provide recommendations of good practice to all Scottish Gymnastics club members and their parents/carers, gymnastics club staff and volunteers on the use of social media sites as they relate to individual's roles in the club. If used correctly, social media can be a fun, safe and productive activity.

Note: Throughout this guidance a young person/child relates to anyone under the age of 18.

### 3. Guidance for coaches, judges, helpers/volunteers and other officers in a position of trust and responsibility in respect of children in Scottish Gymnastics club

#### 3.1. Personal accounts

- 3.1.1. Scottish Gymnastics members in a position of trust and/or responsibility (as defined in the Scottish Gymnastics Code of Practice for Coaches & Officials) should not be in contact with any young people on personal accounts through any social media sites, whether the young person is a member of their club or any other club.
- 3.1.2. Should a young person request to become a named friend on your personal social media page or request that you become a named friend on their social media page, you should decline as you are in a position of trust and responsibility within a Scottish Gymnastics registered club and this would not be appropriate. The reason for the decline can be discussed with the young person face to face and/or via their parents or carers as appropriate and necessary.

#### 3.2. Club staff & volunteers should

- 3.2.1. Be aware of this policy guidance and conduct themselves in accordance with it.
- 3.2.2. Seek the advice of the club safeguarding officer if they have any concerns about the use of the internet or social media.
- 3.2.3. Appoint members of staff to be responsible for all digital communications via social media (social media officer), with at least two unrelated people with oversight of accounts at all times.
- 3.2.4. Monitor social media accounts for and remove any inappropriate communications posted by person, reporting the circumstances to the club manager or head coach for follow up.
- 3.2.5. Communicate any messages they wish to send out to children to the designated staff responsible for the organisation's online presence.
- 3.2.6. Ensure that the relevant written permissions are in place before publishing any images of gymnasts.
- 3.2.7. Choose a more formal means of communication rather than communicating with parents through personal social media accounts, such as face-to-face, email or in writing, or use a club account or website.
- 3.2.8. Emails or messages should maintain a professional tone e.g. In the same way you would communicate in any professional work setting, avoiding kisses (XX), using slang or inappropriate language.
- 3.2.9. Undertake all online safety training offered and gain a basic knowledge of the platforms and how to report or remove inappropriate content online.
- 3.2.10. Any concerns reported through social media should be dealt with in the same way as a face-to-face disclosure, in accordance with the

Responding to Concerns Procedure prescribed in the Child Wellbeing & Protection Policy.

- 3.2.11. Any delivery of activities to children via video conferencing platforms will be supported by an additional member of staff (even if they're not actively delivering) to ensure transparency.
- 3.2.12. At least one parent/carer/guardian be present during the delivery of any activities via video conferencing platforms at home.
- 3.2.13. Make sure any content posted on public personal accounts is accurate and appropriate as club members may 'follow' them on social media.

### **3.3. Club staff & volunteers must not**

- 3.3.1. 'Friend' or 'follow' children from personal accounts on social media
- 3.3.2. Communicate with children via personal accounts
- 3.3.3. Delete any messages or communications sent to or from club accounts
- 3.3.4. Engage in the sharing or transmission of sexually explicit content, including 'sexting' or the distribution of nude or obscene images, through any digital or social media platforms

### **3.4. Club accounts**

- 3.4.1. Social media platforms must not be used to post abusive, defamatory, or critical comments about Scottish Gymnastics, its staff, volunteers, members, or affiliated clubs. Such conduct constitutes a breach of the Scottish Gymnastics Code of Practice for Coaches and Officials.


## **4. Guidance for parents who coach their own children in a club**

- 4.1. Parents are increasingly frequently becoming members of social media sites that their children are signed up to for security reasons in order to ensure the wellbeing of their own child by being able to view their child's site content and activity. This will give the parent access via their child's site to all children listed as friends of their child. It would not be appropriate for Scottish Gymnastics to prevent a parent who is also a coach from using this form of protection for their child's online activities.
- 4.2. Therefore, in such cases the coach/parent can:
  - 4.2.1. Be registered on/connect to the site they are accessing, providing the under 18-year-old members on the site are listed as friends of their child; However, in this case the following also applies:
  - 4.2.2. The coach concerned should not have direct contact with gymnasts other than their own child through the social media site;
  - 4.2.3. The coach should not accept such gymnasts as friends on their personal account;
  - 4.2.4. The coach should inform the safeguarding officer of this arrangement who should maintain a record of such.

## 5. Coaches/Judges/Club Officials who are under 18

- 5.1. Scottish Gymnastics recognises that social media sites can be a useful tool for judges, coaches and officials within Scottish Gymnastics clubs to share information with other judges, coaches or officials. If, however, the judge, coach or official is under the age of 18, while they may be a colleague, the requirements of the above paragraphs must be adhered to.
- 5.2. However, for young people aged 16 or 17 it is the view of Scottish Gymnastics that to restrict the ability to share professional information with them from other coaches, judges or officials may be detrimental in their professional development in their role in Scottish Gymnastics.
- 5.3. Therefore, in such cases, if the parent of a 16/17-year-old person in a position of responsibility and the young person themselves requests to have contact with an adult club officer or coach for the purposes of sharing professional information relevant to their role the club should:
  - 5.3.1. Gain written consent of the parent/guardian and young person to have such contact naming the individual adult and social media site concerned
  - 5.3.2. Said adult colleague must sign an agreement to restrict the contact with the young person to the discussion of matters relevant to the young person's professional role in the club
  - 5.3.3. All such communications should be shared with an identified third person (e.g. the young person's parent/carer or club safeguarding officer) and
  - 5.3.4. If the young person or the adult is found to breach the above agreement, action must be taken by the club to terminate the connection, and where appropriate, refer to Scottish Gymnastics for further consideration and action.

## 6. Staying Safe Online: A Guide for Young Gymnasts under 18

- 6.1. Lots of young people use the internet every day. A report from Ofcom in May 2025 showed that while the internet can be fun and helpful, it can also expose children to risks like cyberbullying, harmful content, and misuse of personal information.
- 6.2. Here are some tips to help you stay safe online:
  - 6.2.1. Keep your social media accounts protected with strong passwords. Only share your password with a parent or guardian if they ask.
  - 6.2.2. Don't share personal details like your address or phone number online. Check your privacy settings to make sure only people you trust can see your posts.
  - 6.2.3. Use the internet in a positive way. Don't do anything that could put you or others at risk.  
 Visit [CEOP Safety Centre](#) for great safety tips.

- 6.2.4. Be careful who you add as a friend online. Make sure you really know who you're talking to.
- 6.2.5. Don't add your coach, judge, or club officials as friends on social media. They're not allowed to accept because of Scottish Gymnastics rules.
- 6.2.6. Think before you post! Photos, videos, and comments can be shared with people you didn't mean to share them with.
- 6.2.7. Never post or send anything that's mean, untrue, or could hurt someone. You might regret it later, and others could use it in ways you didn't expect.
- 6.2.8. Once something is online, it's hard to delete. It might be copied or shared quickly.
- 6.2.9. Don't post pictures of other club members at training or competitions unless you have permission from:
  - your parent or guardian
  - the other gymnast and their parent
  - a club officer
- 6.2.10. It's okay to share fun photos with your gymnastics friends outside of training—just make sure they're happy with it!
- 6.2.11. Social media is like talking or writing a message—it follows the same rules. Don't post anything online that you wouldn't say to someone's face or write in a letter. Think before you post!
- 6.2.12. If something online worries you or you're concerned about another gymnast, talk to a trusted adult—like your parent, coach, or the club's safeguarding officer.

### What We Expect from You

As a club member, you should:

- 6.3. Take steps to protect yourself and others when using the internet.

## 7. Guidance to parents of Scottish Gymnastics members under the age of 18

- 7.1. With the increased development of technology, a growing number of internet connected devices are available for adults and young people. The NSPCC provides [guidance](#) and [training](#) for parents and club officers on how to keep children safe online, and tips on how to [support children at different ages with their use of technology](#)
- 7.2. The internet offers many great opportunities for learning, connection, and fun - and for most families, the benefits far outweigh the risks. However, it's important to be aware that some parts of the internet can expose children (and adults) to harmful or upsetting content.
- 7.3. This includes:
  - sites that promote hate or violence
  - graphic or disturbing images

- pornographic material
- spaces that may attract adults with inappropriate intentions toward children
- as a parent, staying informed and involved in your child's online activity is one of the best ways to help keep them safe. Talk openly with your gymnast about what they see online, encourage them to come to you with concerns, and use parental controls and privacy settings where appropriate.

7.4. While many websites are safe and helpful, some can be harmful - especially to young people who are still learning to navigate the online world.

7.5. Some sites may:

- share extreme or hateful views
- disrespect religious or cultural beliefs
- spread false or misleading information
- promote unhealthy behaviours like eating disorders or self-harm

7.6. Children going through a tough time may be more vulnerable to these messages. There are also more subtle risks, like online scams or fake messages that can trick children who don't yet have the experience to spot them. As a parent, staying involved in your child's online life - talking regularly, setting boundaries, and using tools like parental controls - can help protect them from these risks.

## What we expect of parents and carers

Parents should:

Be aware of this Social Media Policy and agree to its terms

7.6.1. Parents should take all reasonable steps to protect children's privacy online and think carefully about what content they share about our sport online, where they share it and who they're sharing it with

7.6.2. Ensure their behaviour online is consistent with the guidelines set out in the Code of Conduct for Parents and Carers

## 8. Ways to keep children safe online

8.1. Get to know your child's online habits. Children are inquisitive. They will look to explore the internet as much as they do the real world. Knowing the sites they go to, the people they meet there and what the sites do to help to keep children safe.

8.2. Stay alert to any sudden changes in mood or appearance, or to any major change in habits such as increased secretiveness. These are often tell-tale signs that something is not right.

8.3. Keep lines of communication open - tell your child they can always talk to you or another trusted adult, such as a teacher, their coach or their club's safeguarding officer if they do end up in some sort of difficult situation on the internet.

8.4. Make children aware that there are things on the internet which may distress them.

- 8.5. Spend time with your child(ren) surfing the internet together. Explain which applications (apps), games/gaming and social media platforms that are acceptable for them to use and the reason why others are not suitable.
- 8.6. If your child(ren) mentions that they wish to use an app, gaming or social media platform that you have not permitted them to, research it and, where applicable, explain the reason it is not appropriate for your child(ren).
- 8.7. Spend some time surfing the internet yourself. The more that you know about the internet, the more able you are, in turn, to help your child(ren) navigate around it without coming to any harm.
- 8.8. Set parental controls on your child(ren)'s devices. Remember to include any smart devices in the home, such as smart televisions.
- 8.9. Install internet filtering software showing a Child Safety Online Kitemark on your computer. Filtering products with a Kitemark have been independently tested to provide a simple and effective means of support to parents, helping to ensure that a child(ren)'s online experience is a safe one. The Kitemark scheme is sponsored by the Home Office and Ofcom.
- 8.10. There have also been occasions where parents of Scottish Gymnastics members have used social media sites to criticise or verbally abuse gymnastics clubs, its officers, officials, coaches, judges, and gymnasts in an inappropriate and unacceptable manner. In some cases, this has led the person who is the subject of the verbal abuse to take action through statutory agencies or legislation to address the comments made. Scottish Gymnastics members, including parents/carers, found to be abusing or working outside of these good practice guidelines, may be subject to disciplinary action or investigation as outlined in the Scottish Gymnastics complaints and disciplinary procedures, and any criminality will also be referred to the Police.

## 9. Additional National guidance

- 9.1. The NSPCC's [Child Protection in Sport Unit \(CPSU\)](#) provides a wealth of advice and guidance. Their website provides additional guidance regarding social media services, social media and sport. Additionally, [Safety Net Kids](#) provides specific advice for children.

## 10. Policy Breach

- 10.1. Club members who breach this policy guidance (and other related policies) will face a warning in the first instance. Persistent breaches will be dealt with through the Scottish Gymnastics conduct in sport process.
- 10.2. Any breaches of a safeguarding nature will be addressed through the Scottish Gymnastics Child Wellbeing & Protection Policy and Procedures.
- 10.3. Whilst the club will try to moderate social media posts, if you do have any concerns or would like to make a complaint, please contact the club safeguarding officer or club social media officer.

## 11. What to do if you have concerns

- 11.1. As a user of a social media site, whether you are a child, young person or an adult, you may at some time have a concern about what you are seeing or being told about by another user. Concerns may range from negative or abusive comments and cyber bullying to suspected grooming for sexual abuse or radicalisation.
- 11.2. Scottish Gymnastics has compiled a list of agencies you can contact, anonymously if you wish, and raise such concerns:
  - 11.2.1. [thinkuknow.co.uk](http://thinkuknow.co.uk): the main UK Government website with advice for parents on how to keep children safe online.
  - 11.2.2. [ceop.police.uk](http://ceop.police.uk): the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) is the Government body dedicated to eradicating abuse of children. Concerns about inappropriate contacts between a child and an adult, including online, can be reported directly to CEOP.
  - 11.2.3. [iwf.org.uk](http://iwf.org.uk): the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) works to remove illegal material from the internet. If you have found any material you believe to be illegal e.g. child sex abuse images, other obscene material or material which incites racial hatred, you can report it to the IWF.
  - 11.2.4. Children First is Scotland's national children's charity. If you have concerns about a child or an adult's behaviour in sport, or for further information, contact them by calling 0141 419 1156 or by email at [cwps@childrenfirst.org.uk](mailto:cwps@childrenfirst.org.uk)
  - 11.2.5. A number of specialist websites contain general advice that may be of help to parents. These include [Barnardos](#), [NSPCC](#), and [respectme](#).
  - 11.2.6. Other sites can offer parents support on broader issues, including [familylives](#)
  - 11.2.7. Scottish Gymnastics wellbeing and safe sport team [safeguarding@scottishgymnastics.org](mailto:safeguarding@scottishgymnastics.org)
  - 11.2.8. Childline 0800 1111 or [Childline.org.uk](http://Childline.org.uk) is another NSPCC support service. Using this website, children can talk confidentially to NSPCC advisors online about any issues or problems they may be experiencing, using an application similar to Instant Messenger (IM).
  - 11.2.9. Stop It Now freephone 0808 1000 900 or [stopitnow.org.uk](http://stopitnow.org.uk)
  - 11.2.10. Local Police, or if you are unsure of the force you need to speak to call 101 and they will direct you or in an emergency situation call 999.
  - 11.2.11. Local Authority Children's Services are available for advice and guidance.

You can find further information, guidance and checklists on our [online safety website page](#).