



## **SOCIAL MEDIA AND CHILDREN POLICY**

### **BACKGROUND**

The use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Bebo are a huge phenomenon and are increasingly used as a communication tool. These sites permit users to chat online, post pictures, send messages, write 'blogs' and so on, using an online profile that can be publicly available or restricted to an approved circle of online 'friends'.

### **POTENTIAL RISKS**

With all emerging technologies, there is the potential for misuse. Potential risks include cyber bullying (bullying online), grooming and potential abuse by online predators, identity theft and exposure to inappropriate content.

- Cyber bullying is one of the worst, most menacing forms of bullying because it can be so hard to escape. It can follow children and young people around 24 hours a day, targeting them whenever they are online, even at home. Bullying online is as serious as bullying in the real world and must not be tolerated.
- There are a growing number of cases in sport where adults have used social networking sites as a means of grooming children and young people for sexual abuse. The internet can be an environment where children lower their guard, as they may not see it for the public forum it is. If an adult is able to discover information about a young person's interests and social habits, they can figure out ways to appeal to them and gain their trust. Any personal information offered may also allow them to identify and locate them offline.
- There have also been a number of cases in sport where adults have used a child's online identity (i.e. identity theft) in order to groom another child for sexual abuse.
- The internet may expose children to inappropriate content including self-harm, racism, hate or adult pornography, or encourage them to post inappropriate content themselves.

### **ONLINE GROOMING**

Online grooming techniques may include:

- gathering personal details such as age, name, address, mobile phone number, name of school and photographs;
- promising meetings with sports idols or celebrities;
- offering cheap tickets to sports or other events, gifts including electronic games or software, or merchandise;
- paying a child/young person to appear naked or perform sexual acts;

- bullying and intimidating behaviour, such as threatening to tell a child/young person's parents about their communications, or saying they know where the child lives, plays golf, or goes to school.
- Asking sexual-themed questions such as 'Do you have a boyfriend?' or 'Are you a virgin?'
- Sending sexual-themed images to a child, depicting adult content of abuse of other children.
- Masquerading as a minor or assuming a false online identity in order to deceive a child.
- Using school or hobby websites (including sports) to gather information about a child's interests, likes and dislikes.

## **REPORTING CONCERNS ABOUT POSSIBLE ONLINE ABUSE**

West Cornwall Golf Club supports the Safeguarding Children in Golf processes for reporting possible online abuse.

- Any suspicions, or issues should be reported to the Club Welfare Officer immediately. Only the Child Welfare Officer, with the support of Club Management should deal with any reported issues.
- Illegal images of child sexual abuse should be reported to the Internet Watch Foundation ([www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk)) and to the police.
- Reports about suspicious behaviour towards children and young people in an online environment should be made to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, CEOP ([www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)). Law enforcement agencies and the service provider may need to take urgent steps to locate the child and/or remove the content from the internet.
- If potentially illegal material or activity is found or suspected on technology provided by the club, or that the club has access to, the evidence should be made secure and preserved. The police or the IWF can provide further advice on this when a report is made. In the case of reports about suspected illegal material held on personal devices owned by members, the report should include where the suspected illegal material can be found, for example a website address.
- Potentially illegal material should not be circulated or distributed within the club. The number of people involved in making a report should be kept to an absolute minimum, and ideally should include the Club Welfare Officer.

Where a child or young person may be in immediate danger, always dial 999 for police assistance.

## **ADVICE FOR INDIVIDUALS**

- All individuals should protect the privacy of others by ensuring their own settings are strong.
- Only ask for email addresses/mobile numbers/Facebook profiles of juniors with the prior consent of their parents. Copy parents into communications.
- Personal one-to-one texting between coaches/ volunteers and young people should be strongly discouraged.
- Be clear about the processes by which children/parents may raise their concerns
- Do not accept children as contacts on social networking sites if you hold a position of trust with children/young people.
- Where contact through social networking sites is used for professional reasons, restrict the communication to professional content and obtain written consent from parents prior to establishing contact.
- Include a third party in any communications to children, e.g. copy parents into communications.
- Ensure that any content you place on a social networking site is age appropriate. Do not use the

site to criticise or abuse others.

- Know how to report concerns.
- Know how to keep data safe and secure. This should include the personal contact data of individuals, such as mobile numbers, email addresses and social networking profiles.

### **ADVICE FOR CHILDREN**

- Consider carefully who you invite to be your friend online and make sure they are who you actually think they are. There are websites that offer advice about protecting yourself online.
- Make sure you use privacy settings so that only friends can view your profile.
- Remember that anything you post on websites may be shared with people you don't know.
- Never post comments, photos, videos, etc., that may upset someone, that are untrue or that are hurtful. Think about whether you may regret posting the content at a later date.
- If you are worried or upset about something that's been posted about you, or by texts you receive from other juniors or adults involved with the club, raise this with your Club Welfare Officer, coach or junior organiser. Do not suffer alone. You will be listened to and your concerns will be taken seriously.
- If you want to talk to someone anonymously, call Childline on 0800 1111, or contact them on the web at [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk). You can also call the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.

### **ADVICE FOR PARENTS**

- Make yourself knowledgeable about social networking platforms and how they work.
- Go on the internet with your child and agree what sites are OK to visit. Regularly check that they are staying within the agreed limits.
- Encourage your child to talk to you about what they have been doing on the internet. Make sure they feel able to speak to you if they ever feel uncomfortable, upset or threatened by anything they see online.
- Encourage children to look out for each other when they're online. Explain that it's all part of staying safe and having fun together.
- Explain to children that it's not safe to reveal personal information, such as their name, address or phone number on the internet. Encourage them to use a cool nickname rather than their own name.
- Attachments and links in emails can contain viruses and may expose children and young people to inappropriate material. Teach children to only open attachments or click on links from people they know.

### **FURTHER ADVICE FOR PARENTS OF YOUNG GOLFERS**

- If you are concerned about any texts, social networking posts or any other use of communication technology by members of the golf club, volunteers or members of staff, raise this with the club welfare officer, club secretary, or junior organiser. They will look into the matter and take appropriate action. Alternatively contact the Child Protection Lead at England Golf.
- In addition to reporting concerns to England Golf, you should immediately report possible online abuse to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) or the police. Law enforcement agencies and the internet service provider may need to take urgent steps to locate a child and/or remove the content from the internet. Where a young person may be in immediate danger, dial 999.
- Do not post/send negative or critical comments or messages about other children in the club, staff

or volunteers. If you have concerns about a person, these should be raised using appropriate channels within the club and not using social media.

- If you wish to speak to an organisation for advice, you can contact the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000.

This policy document has been approved by the management of the West Cornwall Golf Club.