



GolfRSA Safeguarding Policy

Supplement 6: Communication & Social Media

[Version: January 2024]

Managing Communication

1. All clubs should have a communication policy that covers the use of communication devices and the manner in which coaches, staff, and volunteers can communicate with children and vulnerable adults.
2. The following key points should be included:
 - Adult members should not communicate with golfers under the age of 18 years by text message, social media, internet chat rooms/networking sites or e-mail.
 - All communication by the above methods should be through the parent.
 - Subject to parental consent, coaches can communicate with young people over the age of sixteen years either by group e-mails/texts or by copying correspondence to either the Club Safeguarding Officer or a senior official, as well as the parent(s).
 - Coaches should limit communications to training related issues.
 - In the event of a golfer showing a coach a text message, image or email that is considered to be inappropriate for a child to have, the coach must inform the Club Safeguarding Officer.
3. As technology has developed, the internet and its range of services can increasingly be accessed through various devices including cell phones, computers and game consoles. Although the internet has many positive uses, it provides a platform for the distribution of images of child abuse. In addition, networking sites, social media such as Tik Tok, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc. and chatrooms have increasingly been used by people for the purpose of 'grooming' children and young people for abuse, and by children as a means of bullying.

Communication with Children and Vulnerable Adults

4. It is important that club officers communicate appropriately with children and vulnerable adults in the club, be that in person, by phone, in writing, text, online, or any other form of communication.

Mobile Phone and Online Guidance

5. The development and use of cell phones has grown exponentially and communicating by text, email and instant messaging has become the norm. The intention of this guidance is to provide club officers and those in positions of trust with a better understanding of best practice in this area.
6. Coaches and club officers should only hold the contact details for children and persons with a mental disability if they have written permission from parents/carers.
7. Communication to children and persons with a mental disability should always be copied into a parent/carer and should be relevant to the golfer's participation in golf.
8. Instead of holding the contact details for children and persons with a mental disability, coaches and club officers could hold the contact details of the parents/carers of children or persons with a mental disability and ask them to pass on any relevant information to the golfer.
9. In certain situations, it may be necessary for the coach or a club official to have a child or persons with a mental disability contact number, for example if away on a training camp. In these situations, the parent/carer of the children or persons with a mental disability concerned should be advised in what type of situations the details will be used and they would need to provide permission for this. Immediately following these circumstances, the contact details should be deleted.
10. It may be required for the club to contact groups of children or vulnerable adults, for example training groups, in these cases it should be considered as to whether a secure page on the club website could be developed and accessible to relevant individuals only. This could be accessed by the parents/carers in addition to the golfers themselves as no direct contact would be made.
11. If sensitive data is held, then devices (e.g., mobile phones, laptops) should have appropriate security (e.g., passwords).
12. Additional guidance for coaches includes:
 - Avoiding taking calls, texting, or being distracting by your phone, during training sessions. If answering a call is unavoidable it is imperative that there is another individual who can supervise the session during this time.
 - If using the camera function, the coach should have the permission of the young person's parents/carers and should follow the guidelines for photography and videography.
 - If the coach enters the changing facilities for any reason the camera function of their phone should not be used under any circumstances.
 - Photographs of young people under 18 years of age should only be published if the permission of their parents/carers has been given.
 - If a photo is published, the young person's details such as their full name, location of the photograph or any details that would enable them to be found should not be

included.

- If you are shown a message or image that is considered inappropriate for a young person to have, you should inform the Club Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.

Social Media Guidance

13. Social media websites such as Twitter, Tik Tok, Facebook and Instagram are fully integrated into daily life and as such the operation of many clubs providing a convenient outlet to communicate with both current and potential members. Alongside the positive aspects of these sites there are the inherent dangers and consequences of misuse including cyber bullying, grooming, identity theft, and viewing unsuitable content.
14. As these sites are accessible to junior members as well as senior members, clubs must ensure that all posted messages have suitable content and format to avoid miscommunication of their meanings.
15. The club will need to consider:
 - What content is uploaded onto social media – photos, blogs, videos etc.;
 - How to manage who can access what information;
 - How content will be presented;
 - If there will be sanctions for the abuse of the club's social media.
16. There are a number of good practice points that clubs should follow when setting up and maintaining their social media sites including:
 - Fully integrating procedures relating to the reporting of potentially abusive or illegal content/activity to ensure that these are in line with the GolfRSA procedures;
 - Understanding acceptable and unacceptable online behaviour and ensuring that this is communicated to all users. It should be clearly outlined to users who to contact if they have concerns, along with how they can be contacted.
 - Ensure that all club officers, coaches and golfers understand the importance of protecting their privacy online and that they understand the risks of posting and sharing content which could damage both theirs and the club's reputation.
 - Ensuring that the email address used to register the account/page is suitable, including the club as the domain name. This will reduce the risk of fake accounts being set up, improving the security for both the individual monitoring the account/page as well as the user accessing it. This should include how the access details for the account/page will be kept secure to ensure the threat of hacking and misuse is reduced.
 - How the account/page will be set up and managed:
 1. As a page not a personal profile, this will enable updates to be shown in member's news feeds, the promotion of training or events and the page will appear in searches which could attract new members;
 2. Developed as a working group, ensuring that the Club Safeguarding Officer is

consulted as appropriate;

3. Including the option for comments to be reviewed before being posted to ensure they are appropriate;
4. Ensuring that permissions are granted if photographs are used, especially of athletes under 18 years of age;
5. Gaining permission of club officers for their contact details to be published;
6. Will the individual monitoring the account/page receive training before completing the role;
7. How the privacy and security settings will be appropriately set to ensure that content is appropriate for all individuals who could be accessing the page/account;
8. The ability to block individuals who should not have access or post offensive or inappropriate material;
9. Including a profanity filter where possible;
10. Including contact details for the club and appropriate club officers as this will enable users to verify the account/page, as well as knowing who to contact with any queries.
11. Think before you post anything on to the page/account – do they fit with the clubs current policies and guidance and do you have permission for any photographs or videos.

Social Media Guidance for Coaches and Club Officers

17. GolfRSA make the following recommendations for individuals who are in a position of trust and have responsibility for children and vulnerable adults within clubs:
 - Any contact with children or vulnerable adults through social media, should be relevant to their golf participation, and should be with the consent of parents/carers.
 - If a young person requests to add you as a friend on social media you should decline if you:
 1. Use your social media account for personal purposes and there is a chance your account may include photos or content that would be inappropriate or deemed unprofessional for a child or young person to view or read, or that would make you look unprofessional;
 2. Are in contact with the child through their club, and the child's parents/carers have not given permission for the contact.
 - Never use social media to attack GolfRSA, its Unions, affiliated clubs or the members of GolfRSA, its Unions, or affiliated clubs or the sport.
 - Ensure that the use of any photographs or videos is in line with GolfRSA photography guidance.

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