

## Social Media Guidance

1. **Summary of Best Practice Guidelines**
2. **Guidance for use of Social Media**
3. **Guidance for Club Members Communicating with Under 18's in Club Roles**
4. **Guidance for Club Members Texting and Emailing Under 18's**
5. **Guidance for Parents/Guardians**
6. **Guidance for Players**

### 1. Summary of Best Practice Guidelines

In today's world, safeguarding children and young people applies as much online as it does face-to-face.

This document is informed by The FA's guidance and extends to the use of digital platforms in a football context. Such platforms include websites, email, mobile messaging and use of social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter.

Of course, these technologies have huge benefits. For example, it's so much easier nowadays for a team or club to let its players know the times of training sessions, meet-ups and match venues. However, we have to recognise that digital platforms can be misused, with increased risks to children and young people. Abbeymead Rovers Football Club takes these risks extremely seriously and it's with this in mind that the below series of guidance notes have been set out for your information.

It's essential that everyone involved within our club makes informed decisions about how they use the internet, social media, mobile phone and email communications – particularly when children and young people are involved. These risks must be appropriately managed. Everyone involved within our club must recognise that the responsibility to safeguard exists both on and off the field of play.

It's essential that clubs, parents, members and players make informed decisions about how they use the internet, mobile phone and email communications. Coaches, officials, referee mentors and those in a position of responsibility in clubs and leagues must ensure they communicate responsibly.

## 2. Guidance for use of Social Media

The following guidance aims to ensure children, young people, coaches, referees and adults in a position of trust within our club are not subjected to improper online behaviour or improper allegations.

The club has several social networking platforms with named individuals (Committee members or Senior Coaches) explicitly responsible for these, and will be used solely for football matters. Coaches, referee mentors, club officials and others in a position of trust in football need to act responsibly both on and off the field and this includes the use of electronic communications. Children and young people should be advised by their coaches, parents/carers and Club Welfare Officer (CWO) to always tell an adult they trust about communications that make them feel uncomfortable or where they've been asked not to tell their parent/guardian about the communication.

The below is best practice in relation to social networking:

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ensure all the privacy settings are locked so that that the page(s) are used explicitly for club or league matters and are not used as a place to meet, share personal details or have private conversations</li> <li>● nominate a club/league official to monitor the club/league social networking page regularly and remove access for anyone behaving inappropriately</li> <li>● make sure everyone within your club knows who is responsible for monitoring the content of the social networking areas and how to contact them</li> <li>● provide all users with The FAs best practice guidance on using social networking site</li> <li>● gain written parent/carer permission before access is given to U18s</li> <li>● inform the CWO if you have received inappropriate communications online, keeping a record of any inappropriate, threatening or offensive material as this may be needed as evidence.</li> </ul>	<p>Unless a child/young person is a direct relation, the coaches, managers, referees, medics and club officials should not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● accept as a friend, players or referees under 18 on social networking sites they are members of or share their own personal social networking sites with children or young people involved in youth football</li> <li>● make contact with children or young people known through football outside of the football context on social networking sites</li> <li>● use internet or web based communications to send personal messages of a non football nature to a child or young person</li> <li>● engage in any personal communications, 'banter' or comments.</li> </ul>



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### 3. Guidance for Club Members Communicating with Under 18s in Club Roles

Many young people play a significant role as young leaders, such as coaches and referees for Abbeymead Rovers Football Club. Their leadership role could create additional vulnerability if we do not ensure communications and interactions with adults are carried out appropriately both on and off the field and in the online environment.

They are likely to need to communicate frequently with other colleagues and The FA recognises that the use of social networking sites, forums and message boards may form an integral part of these communications and may be beneficial to their professional development with football. Making effective use of these mediums is a positive step as long as it's done appropriately.

It's important that we recognise they are not 'adults' and as such we have a responsibility to safeguard them as we do any other young person involved in football.

Following the guidance set out below will put in place helpful safeguards:

The FA recommends the following as best practice in relation to communication with 16-17 year olds who hold a position of trust and/or responsibility within football:

- Signed parental/carer consent should be given prior to email, social networking and mobile phone communications with young people holding a position of trust. Ideally the adult(s) who will be communicating in this way should be named. The purpose for the communication should be made clear.
- Both parties to only communicate for the purpose of the identified professional role(s)
- Email communications between the parties should copy in a named designated person (this could be parent/carer or club welfare officer)
- Club members appointing young referees to games should copy in another Club official, parent or carer to their communications
- If any inappropriate communication or content is shared between an adult and an U18 this should be reported immediately to the Club Welfare Officer who where necessary will seek advice from the County FA Welfare Officer and/or statutory agencies as appropriate.

**Referees/Coaches Contact details** - Mobile phone and email contact details for coaches and referees under the age of 18 should not be hosted on web pages that can be accessed by the general public and must be held securely and displayed within private areas for the purpose of the activities they are undertaking with the written permission of their parent/guardian.

#### 4. Guidance for Club Members Texting and Emailing Under-18s

The following guidance is provided not as an obstacle but to support our committee, coaches and members to manage their safeguarding responsibilities effectively.

It aims to ensure children, young people, coaches, referees and adults in a position of trust are not subjected to improper communications or improper allegations.

Written informed consent needs to be obtained from parents/carers before group email or texts are used to communicate with Under 18s.

The below is best practice in relation to texting and emailing under-18s:

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● get signed consent from parents/carers before using either of these methods of communication with children or young people</li> <li>● explain to parents/carers the purpose and method for coaches, team managers, referee mentors, club officials etc to communicate by either text, email or both with their son/daughter</li> <li>● only use group texts or emails and always copy in the parent/carer or the designated member of the club to all communications with young people</li> <li>● make sure texts or emails are only in relation to specific club related activities e.g. informing young people about changes in travel arrangements, training times or venue changes etc</li> <li>● report to the club welfare officer any instance(s) where you have received any inappropriate communications from a young person. The club welfare officer will then agree what action the club will take, notifying parents/carers and any other appropriate individuals or agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● use text or emails for personal conversation, sending pictures, jokes or other items of a personal nature</li> <li>● respond to emails from young people other than those directly related to club matters. Advise the Club Welfare Officer, Sallie Lavis, of any non club related emails you receive</li> <li>● use language that is directly (or could be misinterpreted as being) racist, sexist, derogatory, threatening, abusive or sexualised in tone</li> </ul>



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## 5. Guidance for Parents/Guardians

Whilst the internet brings many benefits and opportunities it also opens up some new risks and challenges. That's why The FA has teamed up with the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre to promote online safety and vigilance.

As a club, Abbeymead Rovers Football Club would ask that you as a parent/guardian to be aware of the following best practice promoted within football:

- Ensure you are aware of how coaches, managers and other members of the club or league should communicate with your son/daughter
- Show an interest in the communications between the club, you and your son or daughter. Open communication about club and league activities/issues often mean concerns are picked up early and issues can be resolved easily
- Familiarise yourself with The FAs guidance for clubs in relation to websites, text messaging and social networking sites
- Familiarise yourself with the social networking sites your child is using. Did you know children under 13 are not supposed to use Facebook? 13-17 year olds are given different 'set up' security features within Facebook so please ensure that they are set up correctly using their real DOB and haven't bypassed this.
- If you are not getting copied into club/team text messages or emails raise this with the club and ask that you are added into these communications immediately
- Know who your club welfare officer is and how to contact them if you have any concerns about the content of club/league web pages or in relation to the welfare of your son/daughter
- Ensure you tell your child to tell someone they trust about communications that make them feel uncomfortable or where they've been asked not to tell their parent/carer about the communication
- Remember as a member of Abbeymead Rovers FC you are responsible for and need to abide by club protocol/policy and FA Rules and Regulations regarding comments that you place online about the league, club, players, managers and/or match officials
- Look at the guidance offered by the Child Exploitation Online Protection (CEOP) centre; they provide guidance for parents/ carers, children and young people. They also provide the most up to date guidance for online environments
- The FA Respect Codes of Conduct give guidance on appropriate behaviour which can be related equally to match day, training and online environments  
<http://www.thefa.com/Leagues/Respect/CodesofConduct>
- Follow the guidance given by the Government's 'Click Clever Click Safe' campaign; ZIP IT - BLOCK IT - FLAG IT. This simple 3 point guidance provides an everyday reminder of good behaviour that will help keep young people safe online
- If your son or daughter receives images or messages which are offensive, threatening, or unsuitable please copy and save them elsewhere or print them off before removing or destroying them. They may be needed as evidence by the Club Welfare Officer or other agencies involved in the protection of children online
- If you have serious online concerns for the welfare of your son or daughter report it directly to CEOP and speak to the club welfare officer as soon as possible. Look at the guidance offered by CEOP. They provide guidance for parents/guardians, children and young people



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on how to stay safe online. This can be found via: <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents> and <http://www.ceop.net>

## 6. Guidance for Players

Mobile technology is a key part of everyday life including how and where you can find information about football. Whether it's about professional teams you follow or your own team or club it's a great way to get and share information. At Abbeymead Rovers FC we want you to be able to safely use social networks, the internet, texts and email to get the information you need.

We have produced the guidance below to keep us all safe and to ensure that we respect each other:

- Tell an adult you trust about any communications that make you feel uncomfortable or that asks you not to tell your parent/carer
- Know who from Abbeymead Rovers Football Club should be contacting you, and how they should be contacting you
- You can talk to Abbeymead Rovers Football Club's Welfare Officer, Sallie Lavis, if you are unhappy about anything sent to you or said about you over the internet, social networking sites, text messages or via email
- Don't post, host, text or email things that are hurtful, insulting, offensive, abusive, threatening, or racist as this would go against Abbeymead Rovers Football Club rules, FA rules, and could also be against the law
- Don't give out personal details including mobile numbers, email addresses or social networking account access to people you don't know well offline
- Facebook has different 'set up' guidelines for U18s to help to keep you safe – use them
- Even if you get on with your coach, manager, club officials, adult referees or mentors, don't invite them to become your friends online, they have been asked not to accept such invitations
- Tell an adult you trust if an adult involved at Abbeymead Rovers Football Club or within refereeing asks you to become their friend online and inform our Club Welfare Officer, Sallie Lavis.
- If you receive an image or message which you find offensive, threatening or upsetting, tell an adult you trust. Make sure you copy and save the image/message elsewhere or print it off before you remove and destroy it because this may be needed as evidence
- You can also report concerns directly to the police by clicking by using the link below [www.clickCEOP.net](http://www.clickCEOP.net)

*If you want to know more about how to keep safe online follow the links below*

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>

<http://clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk/index.html/>

*TheFA.com/Footballsafes Let's make football safe - not sorry*

**Last Updated: May 2020**

