

HAMPSHIRE RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION LIMITED

Regulation, Advice and Guidance Note 19
Sponsor Game Development Committee
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Hampshire RFU Social Media Policy

1901 Definition of Social Media:

Forms of electronic communication (such as websites for **social networking** and microblogging) on computers, tablet and smart phones, through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)

1902 Introduction

This policy is designed to provide helpful, practical information to all members, players, parents, volunteers and staff in respect of using social media effectively and positively.

As a rugby Constituent Body (CB) *Hampshire RFU* encourage the responsible use of social media. The CB realises that social media has become very important in today's society, because it allows people to connect to the online world instantly.

Social media can be hugely beneficial in disseminating information about the CB and/or specific groups within the CB. It can take many different forms, including internet forums and group chats, internet blogs, social blogs, podcasts, pictures and video. *Hampshire RFU* recognises that there are a wide range of platforms that the term 'social media/networking' relates to, for example Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

However, with such methods of communication will come a variety of risk: the privacy provided, the wide range of content that can be transmitted, including content of a violent, sexual or hateful nature, the ease with which images can be forwarded onto others and the difficulty in knowing truly who you are communicating with.

In sport, there are additional risks for children: inappropriate pressure can be exerted by adults, particularly coaches, on children or inappropriate criticism of a child's performance. An official position or role within the CB, such as coach, can carry with it a level of authority, and therefore a level of trust, that facilitates the control of a child.

It is important therefore, that all parents, staff, volunteers, coaches, officials/referees, members, or anyone working on behalf of *Hampshire RFU* are aware of this policy and agree to the following principles.

1903 Key Principles

If you wish to set up an Official Social Media page or Forum representing the CB, using its I.P (Intellectual Property), branding or Name you are required to obtain approval from the Hampshire RFU Management Board / Executive Director prior to making the forum active.

The CB shall not be held liable for any social media page, content or dispute, and shall have the right to withdraw its consent and access to IP, the use of the CB's name, photos or branding at any-time.

Safeguarding children is a key responsibility of all members and it is essential that everyone at *Hampshire RFU* considers this and acts responsibly if they are using social networking sites out of CB involvement.

Everyone at *Hampshire RFU* has a responsibility to ensure that they treat fellow members, volunteers, visitors and staff of the CB with dignity and respect.

Social media commentary relating to *Hampshire RFU* should always be of a positive nature – please think carefully before making comments that may lead to unintended consequences.

1904 Process

If you wish to set up a social media forum representing the CB in any capacity you are required to obtain approval from the *Hampshire RFU* Management Board / Executive Director prior to making the forum active.

The owner/administrator(s) of a forum using social media is required to ensure that:

- 1 All content complies with the CB's and RFU's policies and Codes of Conduct
- 2 No one posts material that is obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing discriminatory or hateful to another person or entity, including *Hampshire RFU*, its stakeholders, any club associated with *Hampshire RFU*, opposition teams, the RFU or the sport as a whole
- 3 No one's personal information is disclosed
- 4 All groups that contain children (anyone under 18 years old) as members have security and privacy settings set to 'closed' or 'secret'; i.e. They must not be open to the public.
- 5 Groups are organised so that they are either adult/coach/parent only or child/player only.

Coaches can support the development of a team ethos, and encourage independence for older age groups, by requesting that information to be shared with players is added by one of the players' representatives
- 6 All 'player only' groups for children will have TWO adult administrators who will be RFU DBS cleared and will be known to the parents/carers of the group. They will have received written permission from each parent/carer for their child to be a member of the group
- 7 Parents of players belonging to a group will be informed of the identity of the Group

Administrators at the beginning of the season, when any new player joins the group, or when there is any change in administrator
- 8 The role of Group Administrators on a player-only site is to ensure there is no inappropriate content posted on the site, such as indecent images or cyber-bullying etc. Group Administrators will not post comments, opinions or remarks on the site unless necessary for the safety of the group members
- 9 All members of the forum are 'age aware' and do not invite anyone who is not a member of the team to become part of the group
- 10 Adults acting on behalf of *Hampshire RFU* as volunteers, in a position of trust with children, will not invite or accept invitations from children/players under 18 years to become their 'friends' on social media sites.

1905 The owner/administrator(s) of a forum is required to ensure that the content published is:

- 1 Respectful of all individuals and communities with which you interact online
- 2 Polite and respectful of others' opinions, even in times of heated discussion and debate
 - a) Whilst *Hampshire RFU* recognises that a certain amount of 'banter' may take place on some forums, we would request that any language used is moderated by the group. Please remember that these forums may be viewed by a range of age groups from both genders. Do not comment in any way that you would not want to be seen in the public domain. Even comments on private groups may become public at any time.
 - b) Any grievance, criticism or resentment should be directed in person to the individual (depending on age) or respective group administrators, managers or coaches. Matters of a

more serious or contentious nature should be disclosed to the owner/administrator of the forum or CB's Safeguarding Team, if a child is involved.

- c) Serious instances or irresponsible use of social media platforms associated with *Hampshire RFU* may be referred to the Management Board, although any action taken by the Board will be judged on a case by case basis. The Union will take appropriate action to protect the Union's reputation and that of its members, volunteers, children and anyone else who is directly linked to the CB.

1906 Waiver of liability:

Hampshire RFU cannot be held liable for the views, images or posts made on platforms and this is the moderators and the posting members responsibility.

1907 In SUMMARY:

- 1 Player only or adult only CLOSED/SECRET Facebook (or other) groups,
- 2 Requests to join CHECKED with membership database via Membership Secretary before Approval.
- 3 Administrators of age group forums to be RFU DBS cleared and made known to parents of player groups.
- 4 Any queries to the *Hampshire RFU* Safeguarding Team or Management Board.
- 5 Further information about how to support children's safety online in sport can be found at:
WWW.Child Protection in Sport Unit
NSPCC
Ceops