

## Section 7

# Communications and Social Media

Taking photographs of players, using web sites to publicise activities, contacting parents and guardians about training and games for underage teams the use of facebook and other social media networks in addition to the videoing of events, games, training and coaching sessions are normal daily activities within most clubs. The Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport does not seek in any way to eliminate or curtail these activities but proposes certain safeguards so as to ensure that we minimise the risk or threats that inappropriate use of photographs or the recording of images may pose, particularly for young people.

## Communicating with underage players and teams

Coaches and mentors should never place themselves in a compromising position by texting or communicating via social media sites with underage players. All such communications regarding GAA activities should be sent via the parents or guardians of the underage player, unless otherwise agreed with the parents/guardians, in writing.

In general the following should apply when communicating with underage players:

- Use mobile phones, if deemed appropriate, only via a group text or email system for communicating with the parents/guardians of players. Any exception to this form of group texting can only be proceeded with following permission from parents/guardians. (see Juvenile Membership Application form)
- Do not communicate individually by text/email sites with underage players.
- Do not engage in communications with underage players via social network sites.

# Guidelines for Photographic/Recorded Images

It should be noted that having photographic and filming guidelines is not about preventing parents and guardians from taking pictures, but rather to ensure that only those who have a right to take photographs do so.

These safeguards should still permit and facilitate the recording of relevant and suitable materials, should allow us to photograph the enjoyment gained by participating in our games, should enable coaches to use the latest technology in the delivery of training skills and should also enable clubs to promote their activities in a safe and non threatening manner.

A common sense approach is required when deciding on what may or may not be appropriate as we do not wish to prohibit the recording of games, coaching sessions or celebrations at club level through the use of photography or by recording on video equipment



The key concerns regarding the use of images and photographs of children/young people relate to:

- The possible identification of children when a photograph is accompanied by personal information and its inappropriate use thereafter
- The inappropriate use, adaptation or copying of images for use in child pornography or illegal website
- The taking of inappropriate photographs or recorded images of children

It should be noted that we have little or no influence on what photographs may be taken and published in local or national newspapers as such photography is covered by a different set of guidelines. Should we ever be unhappy with the publication of such photographs or images we can address this matter with the individual newspaper or the Press Council of Ireland and the Office of the Press Ombudsman.

Photography and the recording of images in a public place do not generally require explicit or prior consent. However if an event e.g. a game or training session is taking place, involving underage players, in a public, private or local authority park, and if you are in charge of such an event you are entitled to request a person to resist from taking photos if you feel that such action or photography may be inappropriate.

In general individual children should not be identified with the exception being when they are being publicly acknowledged (e.g. an award or achievement), for which prior consent has been given.

Children and young people have a right to privacy and therefore their consent should be sought in relation to the use of personal data including images. Parental consent should also be sought and all clubs should receive signed permission from the player's parents or guardians for the recording of photographic and recorded images etc as part of the player's registration process. Information should also be provided as to how and for what purpose images will be used.

Be aware that refusal of consent should not in any way limit children or young people's participation in activities.

## BEST PRACTISE GUIDELINES:

- Ask for the player's and parental permission to use their image. This consent could be included in the annual registration form.
- All children/young people featured in recordings must be appropriately dressed.
- The photograph or recording should focus on the activity rather than a particular young person.
- In general, no personal details relating to the young person should be revealed as accompanying materials to the photograph or recorded image, with the exception being where they are being publicly acknowledged (e.g. an award or personal achievement), for which consent has been given.
- Group and team photographs may be taken but it is not necessary to match a player's name with the position in which they may be standing or seated in the team photograph. This is a precautionary recommendation based on previous examples of misuse of photographs by those who sought to exploit the gathering of young people together in an enjoyable and fun environment.
- Clubs, coaches and volunteers should be permitted to use video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid and as a means of recording special occasions; however, care should be taken in the dissemination, storage and use of such material.
- Parents and spectators taking photographs/recordings should where possible seek permission in advance from the Club/County Board and should also be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state the purpose for their photography/filming. If Club/County Board personnel are unhappy about any matter relating to such photography the permission granted should be withdrawn immediately.
- When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to a game or session ensure that they are clear about our expectations of them in relation to child protection.
- Any instances of the use of inappropriate images should be reported to the Club/County Board Children's Officer and/or appropriate Designated Person and also to the relevant statutory authorities if deemed necessary.

# Web Usage Guidelines

The world of social and digital media is an enjoyable and engaging place and is in itself a useful tool in promoting our clubs and activities within the membership and to a wider audience. As a vibrant organisation we should never shy away from using all forms of social media. But, we must be aware that while these communication tools can be used to our advantage vigilance is also required to ensure that our use of such communication methods must at all time be appropriate.

This Section of Our Games Our Code should be read in conjunction with the GAA Social Media Policies and Guidelines where more detailed information on the different forms of social media and their use is available.

A number of basic guidelines should be put in place when developing club web sites and social network sites eg Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn etc. These guidelines should be adhered to at all times.

## GENERAL WEB USAGE GUIDANCE:

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- Agree to review the overall maintenance and upkeep of the web site at regular intervals.
- Appoint a web master to manage your web site on behalf of the club.
- Ensure that the web master is answerable to a member of the Club/County Board Management Committee e.g. Chairperson, Secretary, PRO, etc.
- Decide at the outset what purpose your web site or social network page serves and include this in your content policy.
- All decisions on the appropriate use of photographic images and other similar content should be in accordance with the Guidelines for Photographic/Recorded Images.
- Agree if you will have a specific youth section and if so also agree the extent and the limitations on its content etc.
- Consult with the Club/County Board Children's Officer when designing the web site and agreeing the usage policy and content material
- The web site or social network pages should at all times reflect the ethos of our Associations. Neither are platforms for personal opinion. They are a public representation of our games and should at all times be factual and follow the parameters of good behaviour.
- Agree a procedure in the club for dealing with any complaints or concerns that may be raised about the content of your web site or social network page.
- Agree to review the overall maintenance and upkeep of the web site at regular intervals.

## WEB SITE CONTENTS POLICY

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- The Club/County Board Website and its operator must make all reasonable attempts to insure that web pages are in keeping with the ethos of our Associations and do not contain any links to questionable material. Links to external websites are meant for convenience purposes only. No endorsement of any third party products or services should be expressed or implied by any information, material or content referred to or included on, or linked from the Club website.

- Agree a Club/County Board web site content policy, following discussions at your Club Management or Executive Committee and with members, including the underage members of the Club. This content policy will promote your strategy on the safe use of the Internet and also outlines the parameters of behaviour and specifies the consequences of breaching those parameters.
- Content published on web site or social network page should at all times be factual and follow the parameters of good behaviour.
- All decisions on the appropriate use of photographic images and other similar content should be in accordance with the Guidelines for Photographic/Recorded Images.
- Pictures of children/young people which display the name of the child/young person, or in any way link the name of a child/young person with his/her picture are not permitted except on the occasion of recognition for having received an award. Prior permission must be obtained, in keeping with photographic guidelines and if deemed appropriate only first or second name should be used.
- Content must be submitted for approval to the management committee or the appointed officer.
- Advocacy of or opposition to any politically or socially controversial subjects, issues, or candidates is prohibited.
- Disparagement or promotion of any person or class of persons is prohibited.
- Text, images, sound, or other presentations not suitable for people of all ages, or links to or other promotion of businesses whose products or services are not suitable for people of all ages is prohibited.
- Content that may be considered not to maintain the dignity and decorum appropriate for our Associations is prohibited.

# Social Media Guidelines

- Clubs/county Boards should only use an organisation page on social media.
- The page should only be used as a communications platform for the club.
- The page should be administered by at least two people appointed by and answerable to the Club/County Board Executive Committee. The people appointed should be at ease with use of the social media and if possible comprise the PRO and/or Children's Officer.
- The page should be checked on a daily basis.
- Posts which do not reflect the ethos of the organisation or could be misinterpreted should be removed immediately.

## GAA SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

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This document has been created to assist, educate and guide those who use social media in an official GAA capacity.

## SOCIAL MEDIA SETUP GUIDE

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A step by step guide for setting up when setting up on social media sites, specifically Facebook and Twitter