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MARINE FOOTBALL CLUB SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Implementation date:	July 2026
Signed by:	R Cross – Welfare Officer
Review date:	June 2027

Overview

Social media offers the opportunity for people to gather in online communities of shared interest and create, share or consume content. As a public-facing organisation Marine Football Club and Marine in the Community recognise the benefits of social media as an important tool of engagement, to communicate with and market promotions to our customers, supporters, participants and volunteers.

It is of paramount importance that Children and Adults At Risk are kept safe from abuse, it is also important that the reputation of the Club and MITC, as well as affiliated sponsors and partners, is not tarnished in any way by anyone using social media tools inappropriately, particularly in relation to any content that directly references the Club and/or Trust.

When someone clearly identifies their association with the Club or Trust or can easily be associated with Marine Football Club in this type of open forum, they are expected to behave and express themselves appropriately and in a manner that upholds the reputation of and doesn't bring the Club and/or Trust into disrepute.

The purpose of this social media policy is to provide some guiding principles for staff, players, coaches, and volunteers of the Club and Trust to follow when using social media.

Scope

This policy applies to all those associated with the Club, players, coaches, directors, trustees, staff, participants and volunteers of the Club and Trust. This policy covers all forms of social media. Social media includes, but is not limited to, activities such as:

- Groups (official and unofficial) conversing re private messaging such a Whatsapp, Texts and Email, this is especially important when it comes to the communication with children.
- Maintaining a profile page on social or business networking sites (such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.)
- Content sharing including using sites such as Flickr (photo sharing) and YouTube or TikTok (video sharing)
- Commenting on blogs for personal or business reasons
- Leaving product or service reviews on retailer sites or customer review sites
- Taking part in online votes and polls
- Taking part in conversations on public and private web forums (message boards)
- Editing a Wikipedia page

The intent of this policy is to include anything posted online where information is shared that might affect directors, employees, volunteers, players, trustees, sponsors, partners, customers, participants or supporters of the Club and/or Trust as an organisation and the reputation of the Club, the Trust, the National League, the NL Trust, the Youth Alliance League, the Football Association, and any partner competitions or organisations.

Guiding Principles

The web is not anonymous. Everyone should assume that everything they write online, especially in open forums, can be traced back to them. Individuals should be aware that they may be personally liable to prosecution, and open to claims for damages, should your actions be found to be in breach of the law. In cases of harassment, a claim that you had not intended to harass or cause offence will not in itself constitute an acceptable defence.

Due to the unique nature of football the boundaries between personal and professional profiles and any associated opinions and comments can often be blurred. As such, it is essential that Club and Trust players, coaches, directors, trustees, staff and volunteers clearly acknowledge this ambiguity when posting anything online and always consider their connection to the Club and Trust and, as such, their role as a representative of the wider Club.

When using the internet for professional or personal pursuits, all Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy staff must respect the brands of Marine Football Club/ Marine Football Club Academy our partners, sponsors, the associations to which we are members, such as the National League, Youth Alliance League or the Football Association, as well as other staff, following the guidelines in place to ensure that the intellectual property of both Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy and our affiliated associations is not compromised and the organisation is not brought into disrepute.

Usage

All Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy coaches, directors, office bearers and volunteers using social media must operate within the Marine Football Club Code of Conduct when engaging with electronic communications and social media. Such use:

- Must not contain, or link to, libelous, defamatory or harassing content – this also applies to the use of emoji symbols, illustrations or nicknames
- Must not comment on, or publish information that is confidential in any way
- Must not bring (or be perceived to bring) Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy or the sport and any affiliated governing bodies into disrepute
- Must refrain from posts supporting discrimination whether by reason of sex, sexual orientation, race, nationality, ethnic origin, colour, religion or disability
- Must not be directly linked with any players aged 18 or below from a personal social networking account
- Must not post named photographs of under 18s without parental/guardian agreement
- Must not otherwise be in breach of the Marine Football Club Player Code of Conduct and Professional Contracts.
- For Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy staff using social media, such use must not interfere with work commitments.

Staying Safe in the digital world

We all benefit from the digital world – when used appropriately. We create our own digital footprint every time we post comments, photos and videos – so be sure before you post. If you wouldn't say or do something face-to-face – then don't do it online.

The quick DO's & DON'T's:

DO:

- Use the privacy settings available on most social media sites. Facebook has different 'set up' guidelines for U18s to help to keep you safe – use them.
- Ensure you and your parents/carers know who from your club should be contacting you and how they should be doing this.

DON'T:

- Post, host, text or email things that are hurtful, insulting, offensive, abusive, threatening, or racist. This goes against football rules and could also be against the law.
- Give out personal details including mobile numbers, email addresses or social networking account access to people you don't know well offline.
- Invite your coach, manager, club officials, adult referees or mentors to become your friends online even if you get on really well with them. They have been asked not to accept such invitations.
- Say or do something online if you wouldn't do it face to-face.

The advice if you're worried or feeling uncomfortable:

- Tell an adult you trust about any communications that make you feel uncomfortable or that ask you not to tell your parent/carer.
- Talk to your club's Welfare Officer if you are unhappy about anything sent to you or said about you over the internet, social networking sites, text messages or via email.
- Tell an adult you trust if an adult involved at your club (or a referee) asks you to become their friend online. Also inform your Club Welfare Officer.
- If you receive an image or message, 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. It may be needed as evidence.
- You can also report concerns directly to the police by clicking here: www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre.

Digital Communication and Children (Under 18s)

In light of the Information and Commissioner's Office (ICO) Age appropriate design: a code of practice for online services published on 2 September 2020, The FA has guidance on Digital communications and children is under review. For more information about the ICO Age appropriate design: a code of practice for online services please visit

- <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-dataprotection/key-data-protection-themes/age-appropriate-design-a-code-of-practice-for-online-services/>

Whilst this review is undertaken, we have retained guidance on communicating with 16 and 17 year olds in a position of trust role in football.

WHEN COMMUNICATING WITH 16/17 YEAR OLDS WHO HOLD A POSITION OF TRUST AND/OR RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN FOOTBALL PLEASE ADHERE TO THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE.

- 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 and/or social media communications between the parties should copy in either the parent/carer or Welfare Officer, or both.

- Leagues appointing young referees to games must copy in another league official or parent/carer to their communications.
- Do not use language that is directly (or could be misinterpreted as being) racist, sexist, derogatory, threatening, abusive or sexualised in tone in any communication.
- If any inappropriate communication or content is shared between an adult and an under-18-year-old, this must be reported immediately to the Welfare Officer who will seek advice from the County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and/or statutory agencies as appropriate.

VIDEO CALLS WITH CHILDREN - SPECIFIC GUIDANCE FOR COACHES/MANAGERS

Online video calls are a great way for coaches/managers to keep in touch with players and other coaches, by providing training ideas, tips on keeping fit and skills challenges online. As a coach/manager, it's really important to keep appropriate boundaries in your digital space.

Please ensure you continue to apply the principles of your code of conduct and remember that as a coach/manager even when encouraging players/coaching online you remain in a 'relationship of trust'. Follow the procedures outlined below to help keep you and those you are supporting safe online.

Setting up

- Always work with groups, ensure you are inclusive when engaging with players.
- Wherever possible involve a second coach/manager or club official.
- All sessions online must be observable and interruptible.
- Where players are aged under 18, communications must go to parents/ carers to accept or decline the player's participation.
- Are there any individual player circumstances which may mean their involvement may not be possible? How might you ensure they still feel included as part of the team/club?

The environment when using video facilities.

- The setting for the background should be in a neutral area, avoiding anything inappropriate being heard or seen. Some apps may offer customisation of avatars, usernames and customised virtual backgrounds. What you may use for personal use may be inappropriate to represent your club – so think about this and make any changes, before contacting anyone.
- Do not host the session from a bedroom.
- The background must not be blurred or obscured.
- Coaches/managers and players must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household. Ideally other members of the household should not be in view when running your session(s).

Session content.

- The purpose of the session and what it will involve must be clearly outlined to all involved.
- All communication provided must have an educational or supportive purpose, or both.
- Language must be professional and appropriate. Please ensure any family members or others in the background also behave appropriately, if it is not possible for them to be out of view, and for them not to be heard during the session.
- Under no circumstances should any part of the session be recorded as this may create a potential risk of hacking by child sex offenders accessing recordings of sessions. The National Crime Agency (NCA), the NCA has identified the potential for an increase in online child sexual abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The session should be kept to a reasonable length of time, or the streaming may prevent the family 'getting on' with their day.

RUNNING WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

The following guidance is to support clubs and leagues 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 online behaviour or improper allegations.

Remember that clubs and leagues are responsible for ensuring all content hosted on their websites, social network areas and any associated message boards or blogs abides by the Rules and Regulations of The Football Association.

THE RULES:

It is against FA rules to post comments that are or maybe perceived as:

- Offensive
- Insulting
- Abusive
- Threatening;
- Racist
- Discriminatory
- Any other reference that may cause offensive or harm to others.

Any such comment made on club or league websites and/or social networking sites regarding match officials may result in disciplinary action being taken in line with The FA's disciplinary policies and procedures.

Comments made on websites that are threatening, abusive or racist could lead to legal action being taken against those responsible for posting or hosting them. Comments made may attract libel claims and legal action through the civil courts if they are untrue or defamatory.

Children and young people should be advised by their coaches, parents/carers and Club Welfare Officer 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/ carer about the communication.

THE DO's & DON'T's:

Clubs/leagues are advised to adhere to the following:

DO:

- Appoint an appropriate adult(s) to monitor the content of the website, who should also attend The FA's Safeguarding Children Workshop to carry out this role.
- Make sure everyone within your club/ league knows who is responsible for monitoring the content of the website and social networking areas and how to contact them.
- Apply the principles within The FA's photography guidelines.

See Guidance Notes 8.3 and the Club Photography policy: Photographing and Filming Children.

- Place the CEOP, 'Report Abuse' app on your web site and links to the advice offered via its ThinkUKnow.co.uk programmes which give age appropriate advice to children as well as parents/carers.

- Provide a link to TheFA.com safeguarding section – [TheFA.com/football-rules governance/safeguarding](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding).

- Consider the benefits hosting message boards, forums or blogs will bring to your club/league against the potential risks. If you decide to use them ensure that they are password protected and only allow comments to be posted by individuals known and permitted access by the club/league.
- Remember that the club/league is responsible for all content contained on its website, forum blogs, tweets or social networking areas.
- Regularly monitor the content of the above and use The FA's 'Respect Codes of Conduct' and 'Relationships of Trust Statement' as a guide to acceptable behaviour online
- Ensure privacy settings are locked so that the page(s) are used explicitly for club or league matters and not as a place to meet, share personal details or have private conversations.
- Get written parent/carer permission before access to view your club/league social media platforms is given to under-18s.

DON'T:

- Host children's or young people's details where they can be seen or used by others to contact them. This includes the mobile phone and email of referees and coaches under the age of 18. Any details hosted should only be done with written parental/carer consent.
- Host pictures of individuals without the express permission of parents/carers.
- Post detail of individuals which may lead them to be identified e.g. school/class/ year, player profiles detailing personal information e.g. favourite foods, movies, teams etc..
- Post or host items which may be considered to be hurtful, insulting, offensive, abusive, threatening, racist or discriminatory or otherwise may cause offence or harm to another or might incite such behaviour in others.
- Post or host match results for teams that are under-11. Remember the focus is on participation not outcome at this age.

Branding & Intellectual Property

It is important that any trademarks belonging to Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy or any affiliated competition or governing body, are not used in personal social media applications, except where such use can be considered incidental – (where incidents is taken to mean “happening in subordinate conjunction with something else”) Official Marine Football Club or Trust Blogs, Social Pages & Online Forums.

When creating a new website, social networking page or forum that is in any way or can in any way be judged to be associated with Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy care should be taken to ensure the appropriate person is given permission to create the page or forum.

Similarly, appropriate permissions must be obtained for the use of logos or images. Images of children may not be replicated on any site without the permission of the child's parents and/or guardian.

For official Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy blogs, social pages and online forums:

- Posts must not contain, nor link to, pornographic or indecent content
- Some hosted sites may sell the right to advertise on their sites through “pop up” content, which may be of a questionable nature. This type of hosted site should not be used for online forum or social pages as the nature of “pop up” content cannot be controlled.
- Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy members must not use official Marine Football Club/ Marine Football Club Academy pages to promote personal projects

All materials published or used must respect the copyright of third parties.

- Social networking sites allow photographs, videos and comments to be shared with thousands of other users. Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy players, coaches, directors, office bearers and volunteers must recognise that it may not be appropriate to share photographs, videos and comments in this way.
- For example, there may be an expectation that photographs taken at private Marine football Club, the Trust or Academy functions will not appear publicly or on the internet. In certain situations, Marine Football Club/ Marine Football Club Academy players, coaches, directors, office bearers and volunteers could potentially breach the Privacy Act or inadvertently make Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy liable for breach of copyright.
- Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy players, coaches, directors, office bearers and volunteers should be considerate to others in such circumstances and should not post information when they have been asked not to or consent has not been sought and given. They must also remove information about another person should they be asked to do so.
- Under no circumstances should offensive comments be made about Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy, club staff or any affiliated partners or sponsors online.

Breach of Policy

Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy monitors online activity in relation to the club and the sport. Detected breaches of this policy should be reported to Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy. If detected, a breach of this policy may, following investigation, result in formal disciplinary action from Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy under the Marine Football Club or Trust disciplinary procedures detailed in the Club's Code of Conduct. A breach of this policy may also amount to breaches of other Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy documents and policies.

Disciplinary action may involve a verbal or written warning or, in serious cases, termination of employment or engagement with Marine Football Club and Trust.

Consultation or Advice

This policy has been developed to provide guidance for Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy players, coaches, directors, office bearers and volunteers in a new area of social interaction. Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy players, coaches, directors, office bearers and volunteers who are unsure of their rights, liabilities or actions online and seek clarification should contact a member of the relevant board/committee within Marine Football Club, the Trust or Academy via: secretary@marinefc.com.