

What is social media?

'Social Media' refers to the latest generation of interactive online services such as blogs, discussion forums, podcasts and instant messaging. Social Media includes:

- Social networking sites e.g. Bebo, Facebook, Piczo, Hi5 and MySpace
- Micro-blogging services e.g. Twitter
- Video-sharing services e.g. You Tube
- Photo-sharing services e.g. Flickr, Snapchat
- Online games and virtual reality e.g. second life

Social media is a dynamic, constantly evolving form of communication that allows people to take part in online communities, generate content and share information with others. Users can now access interactive services across a multitude of services and devices, such as mobile phones, tablets, games consoles and personal computers. Social media services are particularly popular with children and young people, as they offer opportunities to be creative, connect with others all over the world and share interests. However, the use of social media also introduces a range of potential safeguarding risks to children and young people. It is important that your club or centre take appropriate steps to ensure your safeguarding strategies, policies and procedures address online safety issues.

The CPSU (Child Protection in Sport Unit) has developed a comprehensive document for sports organisations on the use of social media services; the full document is available to download from the Safeguarding pages of your home nation website. We recommend you read the full document if you are considering using social media to promote your club or centre.

The following information is a summary of the CPSU guidance document.

Planning your social media strategy

1. Think about your objectives

Assess what you want to achieve from the social media service and whether you are ready to go ahead. Decide if you are aiming to interact with users, publish information or both. Consider which types of social media you want to use and how to integrate them with traditional media. Consider the potential safeguarding implications of the chosen medium.

2. Integrate online safeguarding into your existing safeguarding strategies

Ensure that online safeguarding issues are integrated into all existing safeguarding strategies, policies and procedures at your club or centre. These should include documents such as retention and management of personal information, use of photographs and Club/ Centre code of conduct/ behaviour.

3. Cyber bullying

Clubs and Centres should take seriously any allegation of online bullying between members and any concerns raised should be investigated and appropriate action taken to deter or sanction anyone found bullying. All members should be made aware that bullying of any type is unacceptable.

4. Decide who will manage your social media

Decide who will be responsible for setting up, managing and moderating your social media. This person will oversee, review and respond to the content and decide what is appropriate. Be aware that this person could have online contact with the children and young people who interact with your chosen social media service, therefore, you must ensure their suitability.

5. Get to know the services you want to use

Once you have identified the social media service(s) you want to use, make sure you are up to speed with the way the service operates and the potential safeguarding implications for young people, volunteers and staff before setting up the service. Specifically look at the privacy and safety tools, the terms of service and how users can contact the service if they have a concern or complaint.

6. Promoting Safety online

- Do not target children who are likely to be under the minimum requirement age for the social media service - which is usually 13 years (check with the service provider).
- Do not accept 'friend' requests from children under the minimum age requirement.
- Avoid taking personal details of children and young people.
- Be careful how you use images of children.
- Remind people to protect their privacy online.
- Think before you post!
- Promote safe and responsible social networking.
- Provide links to safety and support organisations.

7. Reporting Concerns

Any concerns arising from potentially illegal/ abusive online content or activity, including child sexual abuse images and online grooming, should be immediately referred to the club/ centre welfare officer and reported to the police (where a child may be in immediate danger, always dial 999 for police assistance). Law enforcement agencies and the service provider may need to take urgent steps to locate the child and/ or remove the content from the internet.

What are the potential risks to children and young people using social media?

As with all emerging technologies there is the potential for misuse. Risks associated with social media include: bullying, grooming and potential abuse by online predators, identity theft and exposure to inappropriate content including; self-harm, racism, hate and adult pornography.

The government's Byron Review 2008, sets out the risks to children posed by the Internet and illustrated by the following grid:

	Commercial risk	Aggressive risk	Sexual risk	Values
Content	Adverts, spam, sponsorship, personal information	Violent or hateful content	Pornographic or unwelcome sexual content	Bias/ racist misleading information
Contact	Tracking/ harvesting personal information	Being bullied, harassed or stalked	Meeting strangers; being groomed	Self-harm, unwelcome persuasions
Conduct	Illegal downloading, hacking, gambling, financial scams, terrorism	Bullying or harassing another	Creating and uploading inappropriate material	Providing misleading information or advice

Potential risks can include, but are not limited to:

- Bullying by peers and people they consider 'friends'.
- Posting personal information that can identify and locate a child offline.
- Sexual grooming, luring, exploitation and abuse, contact with strangers.
- Exposure to inappropriate and/ or content.
- Involvement in making or distributing illegal or inappropriate content.
- Theft of personal information.
- Exposure to information and interaction with others who encourage self-harm.
- Exposure to racist or hate material.
- Encouragement of violent behaviour, such as 'happy slapping'.
- Glorifying activities such as drug taking or excessive drinking.
- Physical harm to young people in making video content, such as enacting and imitating stunts and risk taking activities.
- Leaving and running away from home as a result of contacts made online.

Potential indicators of online grooming and sexual exploitation

There are cases where adults have used social media as a means for grooming children and young people for sexual abuse. Online grooming techniques can include:

- Gathering personal details, such as age, name, address, mobile number, name of school and photographs.
- Promising meetings with sports idols or celebrities or offers of merchandise.
- Offering cheap tickets to sporting or music events.
- Offering material gifts including electronic games, music or software.
- Paying young people to appear naked and perform sexual acts.
- Bullying and intimidating behaviour such as threatening to expose the child by contacting their parents to inform them of their child's communication or postings on a social networking site, and/or saying they know where the child lives, plays sport, or goes to school.
- Asking sexually themed questions, such as 'do you have a boyfriend?' or 'are you a virgin?'
- Asking to meet children and young people offline.
- Sending sexually themed images to a child, depicting adult content or the abuse of other children.
- Masquerading as a minor or assuming a false identity on a social networking site to deceive a child.
- Using a school or hobby sites (including sports) to gather information about a child's interests likes and dislikes. Most social networking sites set a child's web page/ profile to private by default to reduce the risk of personal information being shared in a public area of the site.

Useful contacts

Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU)

www.thecpsu.org.uk

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)

The CEOP is a police organisation concerned with the protection of children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation, with particular focus on the online environment.

www.ceop.police.uk

Childnet International

Childnet International is a charity that is helping to make the internet a safe place for children. It has developed a set of award-winning resources called 'Know IT All' that aim to educate young people, parents, teachers and volunteers about safe and positive use of the internet.

www.childnet.com

Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)

The IWF is the UK internet hotline for reporting illegal online content.

www.iwf.org.uk