




SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY 2024

ENGLAND NETBALL

	England Netball Social Media Policy	
	Responsible Officer	Safeguarding & Welfare Manager
	Group Owner	Executive Team
	Date Created / Modified	June 2024
	Version	2.3
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	Applicable for	This policy is mandatory. It applies to Clubs, Regional Management Boards, County Netball Associations, organisations delivering Recognised and Authorised activity and all, Members, players, participants, connected participants, Volunteers, Staff, coaches acting in any capacity within netball.
	Summary	This Policy provides guidance for all Members, participants, connected participants, Volunteers, Staff, organisations and 3rd parties to help them understand the acceptable standards of use of Social Media in netball.

Version Control:

Person Responsible	Version and summary of changes	Date
Safeguarding and Welfare Manager	Updating or terminology and definitions. Updating links and legislation references. General simplification of guidance.	Feb 24

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PURPOSE AND SCOPE

England Netball (EN) believes that the growing range of technologies used to share, create, and discuss content and issues interactively is highly positive when used appropriately. We encourage individuals and communities to use Social Media to promote themselves, their Clubs, their achievements and the sport of netball.

However, EN will challenge anyone who uses Social Media, either intentionally or by association, to insult, slander, create a risk to personal safety, abuse, or deceive any individual, organisation, or the sport of netball.

This Policy provides guidance for all Members, participants, connected participants, Volunteers, Staff, organisations and third parties to help them understand the acceptable standards of use of Social Media in netball. It sets out best practice designed to assist everyone in understanding what the potential risks are in using Social Media and how these can be managed.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of Children, Young People, and Adults at Risk are prioritised when they are using the internet, Social Media, or mobile devices.
- Provide Staff, Volunteers, Members, and connected participants with the overarching principles that guide our approach to online safety.
- Ensure that, as an organisation, we operate in line with our values and comply with legal requirements regarding the use of online devices.

The pace of change in technology means that it is not possible to provide a definitive list of all forms of Social Media to which this Policy applies. Therefore, this policy should be understood as applying to all commonly recognised forms of Social Media. It should be read in conjunction with the Codes of Conduct, and you are reminded that misuse of Social Media can result in Disciplinary Action against any Member, connected participant, Volunteer, or Staff. Consequently, this policy applies to all Staff, Volunteers, Children, Young People, and anyone involved in EN Recognised and Authorised Activities.

FRAMEWORK

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy, and guidance which seeks to protect all Children and Young People in England. Summaries of the key legislation can be found below:

- Working together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Care Act 2014

DEFINITIONS

Adult at Risk - an individual aged 18 years or over who:

- Has needs for care and support,
- Is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and
- Is unable to safeguard or protect themselves.

Child or Young Person - is used to refer to any person below the age of 18.

Club - a collection of individuals that come together from time to time in the form of a netball club through which some or all individuals become members of England Netball.

Club Safeguarding Officer - the person with lead responsibility within a Club for ensuring safe recruitment, that the appropriate DBS checks are completed by personnel, communicating safeguarding awareness, advising on good practice, and acting on concerns, in accordance with England Netball Safeguarding Policies.

Codes of Conduct - the set of behavioural standards which England Netball establishes as the expected minimum standards of behaviour.

County or County Netball Association (CNA) - an association of Leagues, Clubs, groups and schools as determined by the Board in accordance with the Memorandum of Association or the Articles of Association or other Membership Regulations.

Disciplinary Action - action taken under the Disciplinary Regulations of England Netball.

England Netball (EN) - the All England Netball Association Limited, a private company limited by guarantee and registered in England with the registered number of 1698144.

Lead Safeguarding Officer (LSO) - the person appointed by England Netball to receive, investigate and act upon all Safeguarding matters, including developing and maintaining Safeguarding policies and procedures and advising the netball community on their implementation and application.

Member - any individual or organisation appointed as a Personal or Group Member in accordance with England Netball's Articles of Association. Where an organisation is a Member, the leader of the organisation (usually the Chair of the management group/committee) will be held to account on behalf of the organisation (Sanctions, including Interim Suspensions, may be applied to the organisation).

Recognised and Authorised Activity - means recognised versions of the game that have been authorised by England Netball.

Region or Regional Management Board (RMB) - an association of County

Netball Associations as determined by the Board, in accordance with the Memorandum or the Articles or the Membership Regulations.

Social Media - is the collective of online communications and media channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration via a range of technologies such as desktop, laptop, tablets, smartphones, gaming consoles and platforms, and other internet enable devices. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, micro blogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the different types of Social Media and examples of Social Media platforms include, but are not limited to, Facebook, YouTube, X, Google+, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Reddit.

Staff - those employed or holding any other form of contract with England Netball whether on full time, part time, or zero hours contracts.

Volunteer(s) - any person who gives their time and talents freely to make netball happen and is not paid more than out of pocket expenses. For the avoidance of doubt this means, any person providing assistance or support to England Netball, County or Regional Netball Associations, leagues or Clubs from time to time otherwise than as Staff and including but not limited to any person providing assistance at Leagues / competitions / tournaments / Clubs.

USAGE

Whilst Clubs and Players are encouraged to use Social Media to positively promote their Clubs, themselves, and their achievements and the sport of netball, the balance between the right to free speech and the responsibility not to insult, slander, abuse or create risks to anyone's personal safety must be borne in mind. This Policy seeks to assist all platform users in knowing how to achieve that balance.

As well as public facing Social Media outlets, we seek to provide guidance on how Clubs use social media and instant messaging apps to communicate with players and parents safely and appropriately.

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE

As a general principle, it is recommended that the Club, players, organisation, or individual has a webpage/profile which is used for their netball involvement and that they keep their personal identity, pages, and profile separate. This will help in distinguishing between what is part of a person's private life, and what is part of their life in netball. Whilst there will always be grey lines between the two, having separate online identities should assist in focusing the mind on what is and what is not appropriate content and usage, before anything is posted.

Social Media as defined above, presents a unique set of challenges for protecting personal safety as all information posted is available to the whole

world, indefinitely. Generational differences in understanding the implications of what is being posted means that there are very different perceptions of risk. Whilst Children and Young People and some Adults at Risk get great benefits from the online communities they belong to and the instant access they have to friends from across the world, they may need guidance for their safety as to what is acceptable and safe use.

The use of Social Media to target individuals, whether for grooming, exploitation, or the increasing incidences of cyber bullying or financial abuse, has created a set of risks to vulnerable people which is a real challenge to manage. Everyone is creating potential risk to themselves when they post personal information.

For example, if a person posts that they are going on holiday and has their address on their page, it is easy to see that there is an increased risk to their property whilst they are away. If a top player posts that they are tired, injured, worried about an upcoming event, they are giving their opponents information which provides them with psychological advantages that they would not have otherwise gained.

Instant messaging applications (informal communications)

- As a person in a position of trust, do not instant message anyone under the age of 18 directly.
- Any group conversation that is for the purposes of communicating between people in a position of trust and under 18s (i.e. U18 Netball Team) must contain the parent or guardian of the people under 18.
- It is best practice to include the Club Safeguarding Officer or another committee member in groups involving a coach.
- Any group conversations should have at least two adult administrators in it.

Emailing (formal communication)

- Emails should never be sent to individuals under 18 on a 1-2-1 basis. An additional Club member, as well as the parents or guardians, should always be copied. If appropriate, the under 18 individual may also be copied in.
- Emails should be sent from a Club account not a personal email account.
- If using a Club email account, ensure that two people can access that account.
- If in an emergency, direct communication is required with an under 18, ensure that another Club member and a parent or guardian are copied in.

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social networks are the communities which develop on media applications or via the internet, such as Facebook and X.

Those in a position of trust should not be “friending” or “following” Children and Young People or those with reduced mental capacity. Communications for netball purposes should be through sites/identities that are public and managed by the Club, not through personal accounts. Club accounts should have multiple administrators. This applies to adults in a position of trust as well as other adults who come into contact with young people through netball.

For example, if a coach receives a friend request from a Child or Young Person who they have met at a training session, they should decline. If the Club has a page which allows communication via a public forum, this would be acceptable, provided the site is secure and there are no private messages being exchanged.

General guidance for Social Media use

Do:

- Keep all information private. Do not share any information with anyone you don't know personally.
- Restrict your profile, ensure that only those you want to see your post can
- Think carefully about what you're posting and from which account if you have both a personal and Club account.
- Keep Club pages 'invitation' or private only, this way you can monitor who is on the page.

Don't:

- Add under 18s if you are in a position of trust on any Social Media network.
- Message, react, or comment on an under 18's Social Media account.
- Post personal opinions as an administrator of an organisation page.
- Encourage young people to use sites or platforms that are below the recommended age for them (many have an over-13 policy).

It is accepted that some parents/carers are friends with their children, to monitor the material posted and seen by them. If the adult then accepts their child's friends, this is not something which EN has any jurisdiction over. We are concerned about Social Media usage where the primary relationship is one gained through netball.

Everyone needs to be mindful that:

Social Media must not be used to insult, belittle, or criticise other teams, players, officials, or staff of EN.

Expressing opinion online

Expressing your opinion is fine, being rude in the way you express it, or expressing discriminatory views is not and could lead to the individual who posted the comment, or anyone who forwards or positively affirms the comment, and the person with administration rights for the site used, being subject to Disciplinary Action or criminal investigation. Anyone who has posted an offensive message or image is advised to remove the comment as soon as possible, to reduce its impact.

The speed and variety in the development of Social Media forums, means that posts can be generated rapidly and spread to a wider audience in a very short space of time. All Members, connected participants, Staff, and members of the public can and should report any misuse of Social Media to the appropriate authority (the local County Netball Association, Regional Management Board, or the Compliance Team at EN), so that appropriate action can be taken to maintain the high standards of behaviour expected within the sport of netball. Any reports should be well founded and not as a matter of person opinion. In addition, any reports should be provided with evidence.

Reposting/Sharing

When using Twitter or similar tools, reposting other people's comments or posts can be taken as you adopting the views they have expressed, and you would be accountable for the content.

Comments made should clearly be attributable to the individual and not to the Club, County, Region, or EN.

SETTING UP CLUB WEBPAGES

Clubs setting up webpages, or Social Media profiles, are advised to ensure that they retain ownership and administration rights over them. No single individual should have exclusive ownership or administration rights, including the Chair. The Club Safeguarding Officer should be involved in the administration of any site(s). All these people should be aware of the laws (as per those listed in Sections 2 & 9) and good practice for protecting Children and Young People from the potential risks of Social Media.

The primary purpose of the site should be for promoting the Club, the sport of netball, and for communicating between members of the Club. Privacy settings should be set so that members of the public cannot contact individuals from the Club by first establishing a link with the Club, via their webpage.

A Child or Young Person's Social Media account may link to the Club page, but additional links between the pages of an adult and a Child or Young Person, should not be made. Remember that privacy settings change frequently – keep them under review and update as necessary.

The tagging of people and posting of photos should be done having considered safety and safeguarding implications. A photo of the team in play, without tagging individuals is fine. Do not use tags as this allows people to be identified and then traced. Whenever a photo is going to be taken and used, make sure the individual knows and get parental consent. For the EN policy on this: [Taking and Use of Photographic and Recorded Images of Young People](#).

All Clubs should provide their members with guidance on the use of the Club site and issue their members with 'Acceptable Use Agreements', which the parent/carer of a Child and Young Person also signs. A template 'Acceptable Use Agreement' is appended to this policy.

When administrators move on, passwords should be changed to avoid inappropriate use. It is good practice for clubs to encourage the safe use of social media among their younger players.

ADVICE FOR COACHES USING SOCIAL MEDIA

We want to empower netball coaches to utilise Social Media in a safe, sensible and professional manner to promote netball activity and avoid safeguarding issues.

Your role as a coach is an important one, where you are responsible for the welfare of your players and preparing them for coaching, training, and competition. This can be made easier for you by utilising Social Media to communicate with your players.

Guidance

Concerns have been raised about the use of Social Media in sport. There have been cases where individuals have used it as a means of starting an inappropriate relationship, to bully, or abuse. This can be avoided through effective management and implementing measures to safeguard users.

Clubs and coaches looking to use Social Media and instant messaging apps should consider the following points and should take reasonable measures to uphold their own personal integrity and to promote the safety of their players:

- **Make the most of it** - it is a great way to communicate and share team/coaching info.
- **Research and use the best app for your purposes** - some can set age chat limits. Club-Force, Spond, and Heja are alternatives to WhatsApp.

- **You should have a 'coach' profile that is separate from your private one.**
- **Set up a Club/team specific communication group** - encourage your players to join this page and openly share appropriate information only as part of the group. No private discussions should take place, particularly between an adult and a young player. Consider including parents in this too.
- **Be responsible** - lead by example, acting as an ambassador for your team/Club, County, Region, and netball.
- **Not all information is for sharing** - this should only be netball/team/Club information. Nothing personal, private, or inappropriate. Photos and videos may be fine, but only where parents and carers have specifically consented to this.
- **Confidential information** – such as names and addresses relating to club members, parents, coaches, and others should not be published on public platforms.
- **Consider other users** - will the posting cause offence? Is it appropriate for everyone who is on the site? A third-party moderator should be involved; they should be DBS checked. This could be your Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO) or a member of your committee.
- **Consider netball-life balance** - for example, texting/messaging at midnight could interfere with people's sleep. Or too much messaging during exam season could cause undue stress.
- **Being personal friends** on Social Media with the Children or Young People whom you coach, teach etc. is inappropriate and must be avoided due to the position of trust you are in. Communicating with Children and Young People should not be on a personal level, but via Club Facebook pages, group emails etc. Consider your security and privacy settings.
- **Take action** - Misuse, bullying, or abuse should be reported to the CSO, or to the EN Compliance Team. Misuse may contravene Codes of Conduct and be subject to disciplinary or legal action. If you do have any young players as personal friends, then EN strongly advises you to remove them from your profile.
- **Sensible use** - Create a guide and provide advice on appropriate use to your players. Consider type of content/information/topics and the removal of inappropriate content. Ensure you and your players think before posting to avoid any issues.
- **Be transparent** - Communications should only contain basic and relevant information, nothing personal or inappropriate. Copy in a third party to promote transparency, such as parents, the CSO. Think -

would anyone think my messages were inappropriate?

- **Parents/carers should consent** to and be aware that their children will be communicating with you through these tools. They should be encouraged to be included in these messages also.

This is not an exhaustive list, and any other reasonable measures should be taken to protect you and your players. Whilst the above is guidance for the use of Social Media, similar considerations should be given to the use of text messaging, emails, and instant messaging to contact your players.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR PLAYERS

Netball players also need to be careful about their online behaviour and presence. Elite or performance players in particular are role models and ambassadors for the sport, for younger players and for women as a whole.

We encourage engaging with fans and promoting netball as a sport for all.

High profile players should:

- Understand they are in the public eye.
- Know that what they do and say on social media is open to public and media scrutiny.
- Ideally have separate public and private accounts.
- Avoid criticising other players, teams, or officials on their social media feeds, posts, or in comments linked to other people's content.
- Avoid making derogatory comments – particularly in relation to physical difference.
- Always demonstrate respect for fair sport, equality, and diversity, for fellow players, Staff, officials and Volunteers.
- Consider their own safety and privacy and that of team-mates, family, and friends. Consider privacy settings, which friend, or other offers of connection to accept.
- Be careful not to engage in online communication or relationships that are inappropriate because of the other person's age or other vulnerability.
- Remember that some of their audience could be critical of aspects of their performance or appearance. Try not to engage in online arguments. Report online bullying, abuse, or stalking to the authorities and reach out for support from your team-mates, or EN.

In summary:

Before you publish material, content, or comments, PAUSE and THINK:

- How will this be perceived by others (family, friends, sponsors, public, other players, officials, the media), what is the likely reaction?
- Does this reflect how you want people to perceive you?
- How could this influence the image of your team, your sport (and perhaps your country)?
- Is this likely to cause offence?
If it is humour, will others perceive it as such?

REPORTING CONCERNS

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, as is creating and maintaining the high standards of behaviour expected of people in the sport of netball. For these reasons, everyone is encouraged to report concerns of misuse or inappropriate usage of Social Media or instant messaging to the Appropriate Authority within the world of netball, or outside it.

The first point of contact will usually be the Club Safeguarding Officer, or the Chair of the Club. As mentioned above, the Appropriate authority within the world of netball is EN. Which level is the most appropriate will depend on the nature of the concern, but if it relates to a potential safeguarding issue, the matter must be reported to the Lead Safeguarding Officer (Safeguarding and Welfare Manager) at EN.

Threats of immediate harm or danger should be reported to the police and/or Children's Social Services (where the concern relates to someone in a position of trust), contactable via your local authority and reported to the Lead Safeguarding Officer (Safeguarding and Welfare Manager) at EN, following the [Reporting a Concern process](#).

The following legislation and government guidance which applies to Social Media usage, includes:

- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Protection from Harassment Act 2003
- Defamation Act 1996
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights

- Equality Act 2010
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- General Data Protection Regulation 2018

Prosecutions may be taken for comments/content posted online. For example, those which are offensive, incite hatred, or are of an intimidating nature.

EN may also take Disciplinary Action against individuals using Social Media inappropriately or refer comments of a criminal nature to the police.

USEFUL CONTACTS

The following organisations are a good source of the most up to date guidance.

- [CPSU Online Safety](#)
- [CPSU](#)
- [WhatsApp go-to guide for sports | CPSU \(thecpsu.org.uk\)](#)
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#)
- [CEOP Safety Centre](#)

CONTACT ENGLAND NETBALL

Report a concern via besafe@englandnetball.co.uk. Urgent cases should be referred to the Police by calling 999.

NSPCC are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 0808 800 5000.