
Online Safety and Social Media Guidance for Clubs

Clubs affiliated to Special Olympics Ireland and their members must behave according to the Code of Conduct they signed when becoming a member of a club and this applies to online environments also. The aim of this guidance is to support our members to engage safely online and reduce the risks associated with social media and online platforms; if they choose to engage with them.

Guidance for Club Moderators/Committees

Social media and online platforms are a great way for clubs to celebrate their achievements, promote their activities and share information with their members and supporters. Adhering to guidelines and ensuring a safe and transparent environment via these mediums allows clubs to benefit from the positive outcomes whilst minimising the risks associated with doing so. The following recommendations are advised:

- Moderators should familiarise themselves with the platforms they will use for the club
- 2 or 3 moderators on each platform with password privileges
- Ensure privacy and location settings are activated on each platform – this prevents posts from being linked to a location
- When following and befriending remember you are doing so on behalf of the club – selections should be relevant to club activities and checked as trusted pages/profiles in advance
- Coaches and volunteers should not follow/befriend athletes on social media via personal accounts
- Make sure members are aware of your comment policy and disclaimer
- When sharing or posting content consider if it reflects with your clubs ethos and the Special Olympics philosophy. If you are unsure then you should not post it and might discuss it with the other moderators
- Ensure photos are in line with the Filming and Photography Policy
- Remember your post sets a tone for members/public to engage with
- Public platforms can be a space for complaints; comments should not be deleted unless they are in breach of the comment policy. Reply and offer an alternative method to continue the conversation, e.g. via email or the procedures outlined in the Club Complaints Policy
- Moderators should avoid personal conversations in private messaging. If you feel someone needs support or help you should follow the appropriate safeguarding reporting procedures
- Clubs should talk to athletes about positively and safely using social media
- Set boundaries around communications within groups created for club information only
- Members should know who to contact if they are uncomfortable with interactions or posts, and be encouraged to do so

Athlete engagement

If the club engages via social media platforms athletes may also wish to engage with you in this way. It is important that the club informs athletes of any rules or policies they have for online engagement. The following recommendations are suggested to support athlete engagement on social media.

Athletes should:

- Follow/befriend club pages and not request personal pages of volunteers/coaches
- Set up security settings and deactivate location settings on social media platforms.
- Not share personal information with strangers or people they have met online
- Not arrange to meet someone you have met online in person, or via online meeting platforms (Zoom, WebEx etc.) unless accompanied by a trusted adult/parent/guardian
- Remember that information posted to social media is public and they should be comfortable with that before posting
- Know who to contact, and be encouraged to tell a parent/coach/volunteer, if they feel uncomfortable with any interactions online

- Tell a parent/coach/volunteer if you receive a message or photo/video which is offensive or inappropriate; you should not reply
- Remember that the Code of Conduct applies to your online behaviour
- Not take or save indecent imagery and understand that this is abuse. Taking, possessing, sharing of this image is illegal and there are consequences. Check CPSU/NSPCC website

Cyber bullying

Cyber Bullying is the use of technology to harass, threaten embarrass or target a person. This type of bullying is becoming more frequent as the bully can have access to their victims at any time and people spend so much of their time online. Cyberbullying can allow bullies to hide behind a screen and not face their victims, often offering anonymity and reduced risk of being caught; sometimes giving them more courage. For their victims it can feel like there is no escape. This is a strict breach of the Code of Conduct and should be reported to parents/coaches/guardians as soon as possible.

Below is a Template for a Comment Policy/Disclaimer

Comment Policy/Disclaimer

[CLUB NAME]'s page is a place where we post news about our club and communicate with our members and followers. We welcome comments, questions and feedback from our supporters and members of the public. We will endeavour to answer your questions as quickly as we can but an immediate response may not always be possible as the club is run by volunteers. Comments to our page do not represent the official position of [CLUB NAME]

We ask that you always treat the other people on the page with respect. We welcome constructive criticism and respectful debate but do not allow abusive comments.

We reserve the right to delete comments that are off-topic, offensive, inaccurate or potentially libellous including the following:

- Comments, links, images or videos that are obscene, profane or hateful in nature
- Posts that may be offensive to other community members
- Comments that threaten any person or organization or company
- Comments that defame or harass an individual
- Successive off-topic posts by a single person
- Repetitive posts copied and pasted or duplicated by single or multiple people
- Solicitations or advertisements
- Comments, links, images or videos that encourage illegal activity
- Any materials that infringe upon the rights of any third party
- False comments or claims about [CLUB NAME] or Special Olympics Ireland
- Provocative, inappropriate, offensive or otherwise objectionable content

Any comments that contain the names of or personal information about Special Olympics Ireland athletes, coaches, volunteers, family members or staff may be deleted to protect their privacy. Commenters who repeatedly leave inappropriate or off-topic comments will be blocked. Facebook will sometimes hide comments if it thinks that they contain spam. Comments that are very long or contain multiple links or email addresses will sometimes be perceived as spam. We check the page for this regularly and will try to unmark any comments that have been incorrectly marked as spam.

Additional Resources

[Net Aware: Your guide to social networks, apps and games \(net-aware.org.uk\)](http://net-aware.org.uk)

<https://www.webwise.ie>

<https://thecpsu.org.uk/>

<https://h2bsafetycentre.com/>

www.o2.co.uk/help/nspcc/child-protection

www.ceop.police.uk

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>