



# Social Networking Guidelines

## Approval

Approved by	Name	Department	Date
Standards committee	Mike Harrison	Corporate Services	February 2018
Board	All Directors	CEO Office	March 15th 2018

## Document History

Version	Summary of Changes	Document Status	Date
1.0		Live	08/10/14
2.0	Updated terminology. Communication between coaches and any gymnast. Improved website links.	Live	15/03/18
3.0	Updated terminology – ‘helper’ changed to ‘unqualified assistant’	Live	08/12/2021

## Contents

1.	Background.....	1
2.	Introduction... ..	1
3.	Individuals in a position of trust and responsibility in respect of children in a BG club.....	2
4.	Coaches who have children that they coach in a club .....	3
5.	Coaches/Judges/Officials under 18s.....	3
6.	Members under 18.....	4
7.	Parents of members under 18 .....	5
8.	Ways to keep children safe online... ..	6
9.	Additional National guidelines... ..	6
10.	What to do if you have concerns.....	7

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 There has been a growing awareness in sport of the increasing communication by adults and young people on the rapidly developing social networking sites and how this media has become a feature of social communication. There are both positive and negative aspects to using social networking sites that British Gymnastics clubs and members should be aware of. It is important to acknowledge that if used properly, social media can be a very effective tool. However, British Gymnastics has identified a number of issues that have led to both disciplinary and safeguarding concerns which stem from the improper or inappropriate use of such sites by its members.

## **2 Introduction**

- 2.1 British Gymnastics recognise that the use of social networking sites and online gaming (Xbox, Play Station) are rapidly growing phenomenon and increasingly being used as a communication tool of choice by young people. Facebook is the largest such site whose mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected.
- 2.2 These sites permit users to chat online, instant message, post pictures, and write 'blogs' etc, through the creation of an online profile, that can either be publicly available to all or restricted to an approved circle of electronic friends.
- 2.3 Social media platforms have developed to allow the uploading and viewing of video clips, which with the latest cameras and mobile phones becomes ever easier and with the development of live streaming can be instantaneous.
- 2.4 Social networking can be a great tool to promote yourself or your club if used in the correct way. Whilst these technologies provide exciting opportunities, they are accompanied by dangers and negative consequences if abused by users.
- 2.5 The purpose of this guidance is to provide a recommendation of best practice to all British Gymnastics club members and parents on the use of social networking sites as they relate to individual's roles in the club. If used correctly, social networking can be a fun, safe and productive activity.

Note: Throughout this guidance a young person/ child relates to anyone under the age of 18.

## **3 Guidance for Coaches, Judges, unqualified assistants/volunteers and other officers in a position of trust and responsibility in respect of children in a British Gymnastics club**

- 3.1 British Gymnastics members in a position of trust and/or responsibility (as defined in the British Gymnastics Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy) should not be in contact with any young people through any social networking sites whether the young person is a member of their club or any other club.

- 3.2 Should a young person request to become a named friend on your Social Networking Page or request that you become a named friend on their Social Networking Page you should decline as you are in a position of trust and responsibility within a British Gymnastics registered club.
- 3.3 The above also applies to official club social networking sites. Only club staff (except for the following paragraph) and parents, should be permitted access.
- 3.3 Social networking sites should never be used as a medium by which to abuse or criticise British Gymnastics, affiliated Home Countries, Regional Gymnastics associations, British Gymnastics members or British Gymnastics clubs. To do so would be in breach of British Gymnastics Standards of Conduct.
- 3.4 The publishing of a photograph or video footage on a social networking site is governed by the same requirements as any other media – see the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy.

#### **4 Guidance to coaches who have children that they coach in a club.**

- 4.1 Parents are becoming members of social networking sites that their children sign up to for security reasons in order to ensure the wellbeing of their own child by being able to view their child's site. This will give the parent access via their child's site to all children listed as friends of their child. It would not be appropriate for British Gymnastics to prevent a parent who is also a coach from using this form of protection for their child's online activities.
- 4.2 Therefore, in such cases the coach can:
  - 4.2.1 Have gymnasts on the site they are accessing providing the under 18-year-old members on the site are listed as friends of their child; However, in this case the following also applies:
  - 4.2.2 The coach concerned should not have direct contact with gymnasts other than their own child through the social networking site;
  - 4.2.3 The coach should not accept such gymnasts as friends on their personal site;
  - 4.2.4 The coach should inform the Club Welfare Officer of this arrangement and a record kept of such.

#### **5 Coaches/Judges/Club officials who are under 18.**

- 5.1 British Gymnastics recognise that social networking sites can be a useful tool for judges, coaches and officials within British Gymnastics clubs to share information with other judges, coaches or officials. If, however, the judge, coach or official is under the age of 18 while they may be a colleague, the requirements of the above paragraphs must be adhered to.

- 5.2 However, for young people aged 16 or 17 it is the view of BG, that to restrict the ability to share professional information with them from other coaches, judges or officials may be detrimental in their professional development in their role in British Gymnastics.
- 5.3 Therefore, in such cases if the parent of a young person in a position of responsibility aged 16/17 and the young person themselves requests to have contact with an adult club officer or coach for the purposes of sharing professional information relevant to their role the club should:
- 5.3.1 Gain written consent of the parent/guardian and young person to have such contact naming the individual adult and social networking site concerned;
  - 5.3.2 The named adult must sign an agreement to keep the contact with the young person to the discussion of matters relevant to the young person's professional role in the club;
  - 5.3.3 All such communications should be shared with an identified 3rd person (e.g. the young person's parent/guardian or Club Welfare Officer); and
  - 5.3.4 If the young person or the adult is found to breach the above agreement, action must be taken by the club, cease the connection and where appropriate referred to British Gymnastics for further consideration and action.

## **6 Guidance to British Gymnastics members under the age of 18**

- 6.1 In December 2017, UNICEF published a report 'State of the World's Children 2017' which outlined the increased number of young people that are using the internet. The report also examined how the internet increases children's vulnerability to risks and harms, including misuse of their private information, access to harmful content, and cyberbullying <https://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/unicef-make-digital-world-safer-children/>
- 6.2 To protect yourself online, British Gymnastics provide the following guidance:
- 6.2.1 Do not ask your coach, judge, unqualified assistant/volunteer or club official to be your social networking site friend – they will refuse as that would breach good practice and the British Gymnastics Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy.
  - 6.2.2 Use the internet positively and do not place yourself at risk. Have a look at [www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk) for some useful tips.
  - 6.2.3 Consider who you are inviting to be your friend and follow the good advice of the social networking sites to ensure you are talking to the person you believe you are talking to.
  - 6.2.4 Never share your personal details online and ensure your privacy settings are secure.

- 6.2.5 Ensure that your social media platforms are password protected and that you do not share this password, unless your parent/guardian requests it.
- 6.2.6 Always remember that anything you say including photos, pictures and video clips posted on your site may be shared with people other than those for whom it was intended.
- 6.2.7 Never post, share or send any photographs, videos or make comments that may be hurtful, untrue and upsetting and you may regret sharing later on or used by other people in a way you did not intend or want.
- 6.2.8 Remember that it can be difficult to delete information that has been uploaded to the internet, it may have been shared or copied as soon as it is uploaded.
- 6.2.9 Do not put pictures of other club members on your site within the club setting as you may breach the British Gymnastics Photography Policy. If you do wish to upload such a picture you must get advice and consent from your parent, the other young person and their parent and a club officer before considering uploading such a photo. This will not prevent you having pictures of your gymnastics friends on your site taken outside of the sporting arena, but it is good advice to always ensure they and their parents are happy with any picture you have of them on your site.
- 6.2.10 Always be aware that social networking sites are a method of communication like email and the spoken word. They are bound by the same laws and rules. Such technology is instant and this allows you as the user to react in the 'heat of the moment', where in the past you would have been required to write a letter which would have taken time and allowed for you to think again before sending. So never place a comment on the internet that you would not put in writing or say to the individual concerned as to do so may not only breach British Gymnastics Policy but also the law.
- 6.2.11 Remember to report any concerns you have to a responsible adult.

## **7 Guidance to parents of British Gymnastics members under the age of 18**

- 7.1 With the increased development of technology, a number of internet connected devices are available for adults and young people. The NSPCC (<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/technology-toys-and-the-internet/>) provides guidance and training for parents on how to keep your child(ren) safe.
- 7.2 In the overwhelming majority of cases, the benefits of the internet easily outweigh any drawbacks. To keep it that way, parents and children need to know that there are places on the internet which promote racial hatred, contain violent images or pornographic material all of which adults, as well as children, may find distressing. Regrettably it is also

true that certain sites will attract a number of adults with a highly inappropriate interest in children.

- 7.3 Beyond these dangers, other websites have the potential to harm impressionable young people through the presentation of extremist views. Sites may be very disrespectful of other people's religious beliefs or cultural backgrounds or seek to distort history. Sites may also promote anorexia or self-harming, for example, in ways which might attract the attention of a particular child who could, at that moment, be going through a vulnerable or difficult phase in their life. There are other more insidious threats around too. Without the experience to distinguish between genuine and misleading messages, children may be fooled by scams of various kinds.

There are however, a few simple steps which parents can take to help their children use the internet safely.

## **8 Ways to keep children safe online**

- 8.1 Get to know your child's online habits. Children are inquisitive. They will look to explore the internet as much as they do the real world. Knowing the sites they go to, the people they meet there and what they do will help to keep children safe.
- 8.2 Stay alert to any sudden changes in mood or appearance, or to any major change in habits or to increased secretiveness. These are often tell-tale signs that something is not right.
- 8.3 Keep lines of communication open - tell your child they can always talk to you or another trusted adult, such as a teacher or Club Welfare Officer, if they do end up in some sort of trouble on the internet. Make children aware that there are things on the internet which may distress them.
- 8.4 Spend time with your child(ren) surfing the internet together. Explain the Applications (App), games and social media platforms that are acceptable for them to use and the reason for others not being suitable.
- 8.5 If your child(ren) mentions that they wish to use an App, game or social media platform that you have not permitted them to, research the area and explain the reason it is not acceptable.
- 8.6 Spend some time surfing the internet yourself. The more that you know about the internet, the better able you are, in turn, to help your child navigate around it without coming to any harm.
- 8.7 Set parental controls.
- 8.8 Install internet filtering software showing a Child Safety Online Kitemark on your computer. Filtering products with a Kitemark have been independently tested to provide a simple and effective means of support to parents, helping to ensure that a child's online

experience is a safe one. The Kitemark scheme is sponsored by the [Home Office](#) and [Ofcom](#).

- 8.9 There have also been occasions where parents of British Gymnastics members have used social networking sites to criticise or verbally abuse gymnastics clubs, its officers, officials, coaches, judges, and gymnasts in an inappropriate and unacceptable manner. This has in some cases led the person who is the subject of the verbal abuse to take action through statutory agencies or statutory legislation to address the comments made. British Gymnastics members found to be abusing or working outside of these good practice guidelines, may be subject to disciplinary action or investigation as outlined in the British Gymnastics Complaints & Disciplinary Procedures.

## 9 Additional National guidance

- 9.1 The Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) provides a wealth of advice and guidance. In particular, their website provides additional guidance regarding Social networking services, social media and sport It can be accessed via <http://thecpsu.org.uk>. Additionally, Safety Net Kids provides specific advice for children at: <http://www.safetynetkids.org.uk/personal-safety/staying-safe-online/>

## 10 What to do if you have concerns

- 10.1 As a user of a social networking site, whether you are a child, young person or an adult, you may at some time have a concern about what you are seeing or being told about by another user. Concerns may range from negative or abusive comments and cyber bullying to suspected grooming for sexual abuse.
- 10.2 British Gymnastics has compiled a list of agencies that can be contacted, anonymously if you wish, where such concerns can be raised:
- 10.2.1 [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk): the main UK Government website with advice for parents on how to keep children safe online.
  - 10.2.2 [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk): the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) is the Government body dedicated to eradicating abuse of children. Concerns about inappropriate contacts between a child and an adult, including online, can be reported directly to CEOP. Reporting can be accessed by pressing the CEOP button on the BG website's CEOP page.
  - 10.2.3 [www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk): the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) works to remove illegal material from the internet. If you have found any material you believe to be illegal e.g. child sex abuse images, other obscene material or material which incites racial hatred, you can report it to the IWF.

- 10.2.4 A number of specialist websites contain general advice that may be of help to parents. These include [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk), [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk), and [www.beatbullying.org](http://www.beatbullying.org).
- 10.2.5 Other sites can offer parents support on broader issues. These include <https://www.familylives.org.uk/>
- 10.2.6 British Gymnastics Safeguarding and Compliance Team on 0345 129 7129 ext 2346
- 10.2.7 Childline 0800 1111 or [www.Childline.org.uk](http://www.Childline.org.uk) is another NSPCC support service. Using this website, children can talk confidentially to NSPCC advisors online about any issues or problems they may be experiencing, using an application similar to Instant Messenger (IM).
- 10.2.8 Stop It Now freephone 0808 1000 900 or [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk)
- 10.2.9 The Local Police, or if you unsure of the force you need to speak to call 101 and they will direct you or in an emergency situation call 999.
- 10.2.10 Local Authority Children’s Services are available for advice and guidance – their number appears in the phone book.