



2.13 Guidance note: Online protection and safety

Photographs, films, video clips and social media are a great way to publicise football activities and programmes. They can be used to celebrate achievements, promote activities and keep people updated. Footage might also be recorded for performance development and analysis.

Risks for adults	Risks for children
<p>Their communication with children may be misinterpreted, leading to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Potential investigation· Potential disciplinary action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Inappropriate access to, use or sharing of personal details, e.g. names, email addresses or phone numbers· Unwanted contact with adults with wrongful or questionable intent· Being sent offensive or otherwise inappropriate material· Online bullying· Grooming for sexual abuse

General principles

Think carefully about connections made online. Once someone is connected, sends a message or adds someone as a friend or follower, they can see everything posted unless care is taken with privacy settings. To be on the safe side, nothing should be posted on social media without permission. This includes direct messaging with children and posting comments on social media sites that could compromise the well-being of a child, cause him/her harm, or bring the association/club into disrepute.

Coaches and volunteers should not be online 'friends' with children in their teams using their personal social media. Group texts or messages that include parents or through a club/organisation webpage or chat facility should be used rather than personal pages such as Facebook. This keeps information safe and transparent. Everyone can see what is being said, and it is less likely that intentions will be misunderstood.

Messages, images or videos that are abusive, discriminatory or sexually explicit should never be posted online. All communication should be through parents or guardians where possible and unless agreed otherwise.

If abusive, discriminatory or sexually explicit messages or posts are received, they should be reported to the child safeguarding focal point. Anyone behaving in a way that could reasonably be viewed as inappropriate, in relation to the filming or photographing of children or the use of social media, should be reported. Any such materials received should NOT be sent to the focal point as this can be considered an offence under international law. Instead, the focal point should be alerted that such materials have been received.

In many cases, the best response is no response, as engaging in replies can escalate the situation. Do not delete messages or other materials until the focal point has been informed as they may be needed for evidence.

Mainstream media

It can be difficult to monitor and control the coverage that the mainstream media give to football. This is especially the case when they are not invited by clubs/organisations. However, when the media are invited, some guidance can be provided on how they can help safeguard children.

This includes:

- Making sure that parents and children give consent for the use of their photos/videos, and identifying any children who have not given permission to the media in advance;
- Informing the media that the organisation aims to create a safe, fun environment for all children, and explaining the commitment to safeguarding;
- Asking the media not to take photos of children that might be seen as exploitative or harmful, e.g. photos/videos of children who are undressed;
- Indicating restricted access areas and asking the media to respect them;
- Instructing the media not to enter changing facilities, under any circumstances;
- Asking the media not to publish children's private information, such as addresses.