



## Leighton United Football Club

### SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS GUIDANCE

All adults working with children and young people in grassroots football are required to comply with the FA's guidance on the use of social and digital media. Leighton United aims to implement FA guidance with regard to club matters. Copies of the front pages of the current relevant FA guidance documents are appended.

This guidance covers electronic communications including email, text messaging and social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok etc.) and instant messaging systems (e.g. WhatsApp, SnapChat etc.).

#### **General Good Practice**

It is inappropriate for coaches/team managers, other club officials and volunteer helpers to communicate on a **one-to-one** basis with children and young people aged 18 and under (who are not members of their immediate family) by:

- Text messaging
- Email communications
- Instant messaging
- Social networking sites

If engagement is deemed to be essential, then a parent/carer should be copied in.

For issues that concern safeguarding and involve one or more parents/carers, a Club Welfare Officer (CWO) should be included.

#### **Responsibilities**

- The club is responsible for all content contained on its website and social networking sites and ultimately for team social media outlets (including Facebook and WhatsApp groups), and will be held accountable by The FA.
- The club expects all coaches/team managers, club officials, volunteer helpers and parents/carers to always behave responsibly and respectfully when using social or digital media. This includes not posting unfavourable comments, criticism or offensive material about any individuals (including players) or about other clubs.
- Coaches and officials are responsible for ensuring that **electronic communications be limited to team footballing or club activity matters only**. It is advisable to send group messages rather than single messages.

- The Communication Coordinator is responsible for the club's website and social networking channel content.
- CWOs have discretion to monitor club social networking to identify any safeguarding issues.

### **Do's and Don'ts for coaches/team managers, club officials and volunteer helpers**

#### **DO:**

- Use privacy settings available on most social media sites so that pages are locked and used specifically for club matters, not as a place to meet, share personal details or have private conversations.
- Coaches/team managers or their delegated adults are responsible for content and management of team Facebook and WhatsApp groups.
- Monitor team social sites to check that no inappropriate material has been posted by group members. Action when necessary.
- Ensure parents/carers know who from the club will be contacting them and how.
- Be alert for any examples of what could be construed as cyberbullying.
- Avoid online chat rooms or other potentially inappropriate services – risk of being tracked and identification of who you have been engaging with online.
- Group emails may be used but be aware that email may not be a preferred method of communication with parent/carer groups.
- Be aware that a message between two people is private, but if one person shares it, then it is considered public. If the original message was offensive etc. the person who shared it can be liable to the same action as the originator because they are classed as having posted it.
- Be mindful of how online activities could be misinterpreted or abused. Avoid actions that risk bringing coaches/team managers, the team or the club into disrepute.

#### **DON'T:**

- Put something online that you would not say face-to-face.
- Post messages that are hurtful, insulting, offensive, abusive, threatening, racist, sexist, derogatory or discriminatory.
- Post what you might consider as harmful banter or funny images – recipients may not see them that way.

- Post or host match results for teams that are under 11. In these age groups the focus should be on participation, not outcomes.
- Give out personal details including mobile numbers, home addresses, email addresses or social networking account access to people you don't know or who have not given consent.
- Accept any invitations from children or young people to become friends.
- Use text messaging because generally it is not a preferred method of communication between club officials and parent/carer groups.
- Include young people aged 18 and under in team social media outlets (such as team WhatsApp and Facebook groups) without formal parent/carer consent.
- Get involved in acrimonious electronic communications with opposing teams.

### **Young Referees**

- A parent/carer should be included in any electronic communication with young referees (aged 16 to 18).

### **Reporting Concerns**

- Speak to a CWO if concerned about anything seen on the internet, social networking sites or received via electronic messaging.
- Any inappropriate communications or content seen that has been shared between an adult and an under-18-year-old must be reported immediately to a CWO.
- CWOs will seek advice from the County FA Designated Welfare Officer as considered necessary.

### **FA Guidance**

- Guidance can be found in the safeguarding area of the FA website:  
<https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding>

Images of the front pages of the current editions of relevant documents are shown below:



GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

# 6.1

## RUNNING WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

**FOR CLUBS AND LEAGUES**

Version: 1.1  
Published: MAY 2019



GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

**6.2**

## **DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS AND CHILDREN (UNDER 18s)**

**FOR ALL**

Version: 1.1  
Published: OCTOBER 2020





GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

**6.3**

## **STAYING SAFE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD**

**FOR TEENAGERS**

Version: 1.1  
Published: MAY 2019

