British American Football Association



*Social media Policy*

Updated August 2017

**Social Media Policy**

**Policy statement**

British American Football Association recognises the benefits of social media. This policy provides guidance for those in American football in Great Britain whether players, coaches, support staff, volunteers club officials or supporters.

This policy is not intended to stifle the positive use of social media but is to guide those in the sport to use it positively and not cause offence, embarrassment or upset.

People within the sport as defined above are subject to disciplinary action under the disciplinary procedures of the British American Football Association.

**Introduction**

The following guidelines contain practical safety measures and provide a useful starting point for the development of online safeguarding strategy and for the personal use of social media. It is important that all staff and participants familiarise themselves with this policy. The guidance is not listed in a set order or sequence as there is cross over information which applies equally to club and personal use.

**Social media guidelines of good practice**

British American Football Association has identified the need to communicate effectively with through social media and if you are considering the use of social networking, the following guidelines should be adhered to:

**1. Understand the safety aspects including what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on social media**

Become familiar with user services before setting up your account on social media. This should specifically include privacy and safety tools, the terms of service (the terms of service usually contain what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour), and how users can contact the service if they should have a concern or complaint.

**2. Reporting other breaches of terms of service**

Concerns about inappropriate content or behaviour which potentially breaches the terms of service should be reported to the service provider. The terms of service set out the legal conditions concerning use of the service including the minimum age requirement. An acceptable use policy is usually included and this makes clear what behaviour is and is not acceptable on the service i.e. harassment, defamation, obscene or abusive language, the uploading of material which is libellous, defamatory, obscene, illegal, nudity, violent etc.

**3. Decide how your webpage/profile will be managed within your club**

Management of the profile;

Decide who will have responsibility for: the setting up, management, and moderation (overseeing, reviewing and responding to posted content) of the webpage/profile. This includes the content you upload to appear, what you accept to be linked to your webpage/profile, and the communication or interaction with users. This person is most likely to have online contact with younger users, interacting with the webpage/profile; therefore there should be some level of accountability and support from the organisation.

**4. Vetting and training**

This person should be appropriately vetted and receive recognised safeguarding or child protection training. Training should also address online safeguarding issues, including what warning signs to look out for.

**5. Involve your Designated Safeguarding Person**

If you are engaging a social media or moderate your webpage/profile it is important that the club welfare officer within your club be made aware of any online safeguarding concerns and ensures concerns are handled in line with the British American Football Association Safeguarding Policy and procedures.

**6. Registration or ‘signing up’ your club**

Choose an appropriate email address to register/set up a profile/account

Ensure that only organisational rather than personal email addresses are made available on or through a profile.

**7. Security**

Keep the log-in details to the account (including the password to the account and webpage/profile) secure within your club.

**8. Privacy and safety settings**

Set the appropriate privacy level;

Consider each of the privacy and safety settings available across all aspects of the services i.e. photos, blog entries, image galleries and set the appropriate level of privacy. Failing to set appropriate privacy levels could result in messages which are defamatory, libellous or obscene appearing on your profile before you have a chance to remove it. This may result in significant personal distress, risk to the reputation of the individual, the sport and/or the club and require the intervention and/or investigation by British American Football Association, the service providers and possibly the police.

**9. Accept ‘friends’ setting and minimum user age**

You may wish to check a user profile before accepting them. Do not accept friend request from children under the minimum age for the service (usually 13 years). Report underage users to the service provider and to the young person’s parents (perhaps via the Club Welfare Officer). British American Football Association suggests that no adult in a position of trust should ‘friend’ anyone under the age of 18 nor should they accept ‘friend’ requests from anyone under age 18 unless it is on a managed team or club page where appropriate safeguarding measures are in place and with the approval and knowledge of the club CWO. Clubs should obtain signed parental permission for anyone under the age of 18 to be added to or contacted via managed social media.

**10. ‘Accept comment’ setting**

This allows a user to approve or pre moderate a comment from another user, usually a ‘friend’ before it appears on their webpage/profile. Ensure that all messages are checked before they appear on a club webpage/ profile to ensure that any inappropriate messages are blocked and if necessary reported to the service provider. This may not be possible with all social networking services. You may wish to contact the prospective service provider to establish if steps could be taken to adjust the privacy and safety settings for your needs.

**11. Ensure that staff and volunteers, including coaches and athletes are aware of the need to protect their privacy online**

Make sure that your staff and coaches (paid and volunteers), sports athletes, students and trainees, and are aware of the need to protect their own privacy online! They should understand the risks in posting and sharing content which may damage their reputation before they link their personal webpage/profile to the clubs profile. It is inappropriate for adult coaches to communicate on a one to one basis with players under the age of 18 years through social media or instant messaging. Coaches and staff should not be “friends” with the children they coach and they should not comment on their status as this can open the adult to allegations. Young people and children within the club should be told not to ‘friend’ request members of staff as their request will not be accepted as part of club policy.

**12. Coaches and staff should not follow social media feeds or pages for anyone under the age of 18 without written parental consent.**

As your role includes a position of trust from a safeguarding standpoint, you should remain acutely aware that even by following a child on social media leaves an impression of authority especially if your role relates to selection, performance, national teams or regional work.

**13. Address safety when adding content to your webpage/profile**

Contact details;

Add information about how to contact your club including a website address, if available. Also include offline contact details for your club and information on how to contact British American Football Association. This allows users to contact your club directly and verify your organisation offline.

**14. Promote safe and responsible use**

Consider promoting safe and responsible use of social networking to your audience online. This could include uploading safety videos, messages or links onto the club webpage/profile. If you do not yet have a safe and responsible use policy or safety tips for your sport, there is a considerable amount of safety material available.

**15. Links to safety and help organisations**

Provide links to safety and support organisations on the profile including a link to the British American Football Association Child Protection Lead.

**16. Avoid taking personal details of children and young people**

Do not ask users to divulge personal details including home and email addresses, schools, mobile numbers that may help locate a child. It is best to provide the details of the event and signpost to where users can obtain further information e.g. further information can be obtained from your local club.

**17. Content – ‘Think Before You Post’**

Consider any messages, photos, videos or information – do they comply with existing policies within your organisation? (e.g. use of photographs of children). Is the content e.g. photographs and text appropriate to the audience? Always seek young person/parental permission to use the photos of those featured before adding to the sports webpage/ profile.

*Messages which are defamatory, libellous or obscene are prohibited at all times. Failure to do so may result in significant personal distress, risk to the reputation of the individual, the sport and/or the club, and may require the intervention and/or investigation by British American Football Association, the service providers and possibly the police. British American Football Association will not tolerate any posting of messages which bring the reputation of American Football in to disrepute and will handle all such instances in line with disciplinary policies. To report concerns you should contact the British American Football Association Disciplinary Manager.*

**18. Fake or impostor webpage/profiles**

Beware of fake or impostor profiles of well known or celebrity sports people. It has been known for fake or impostor profiles to be set up on social networking services. Sometimes this is intended to be fun, however fake profiles can be set up with malicious intent to ridicule and harass an individual. It can also be used to groom children by those seeking to gain a child’s trust and attempt to set up a meeting offline.

**19. Contacting the social networking provider**

There is usually a ‘contact us’ at the bottom of every page with an email address to explore how they can promote your sports profile.

**20. Sources of Safety Advice and Information**

The provision of safety advice to users of social networking services is recognised as critical. Government, law enforcement, children’s charities and the industry on both an individual and collective basis have developed a range of safety materials to encourage safe and responsible use of the internet. Most of the resources have been developed to be shared and disseminated widely – and in some cases downloadable from the websites.

British American Football Association does not hold any legal jurisdiction over personal (civil) damage to reputation (actual or perceived) made as the result of comments made or posted by another individual on social media.

British American Football Association reserves the right to monitor the social media feeds and pages of individuals in a position of trust working for or on behalf of British American Football Association to ensure appropriate safeguarding and child protection. All staff affiliated with British American Football Association agree to this and the Social Media policy by entering membership, licensing or appointment with British American Football Association.

Any breech of the Social Media Policy will be dealt with in line with safeguarding protocols and timeframes.