



BASINGSTOKE
RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB



Social Media Policy, Procedures and Guidance

1. Statement of intent – Rationale

As a club Basingstoke RFC encourages the responsible use of social media. The club realises that social media has become increasingly popular in recent years, because it allows people to connect in the online world instantly.

Social media can be hugely beneficial in disseminating information about the Rugby Club and/or specific groups within the club. It is also a popular forum for developing personal and business relationships. It can take many different forms, including internet forums and group chats, internet blogs, social blogs, podcasts, pictures and video. Basingstoke RFC recognises that there are a wide range of platforms that the term 'social media/networking' relates to, for example X, Facebook, Instagram, Ticktock and YouTube.

2. Introduction

Social media is defined as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Social media includes web-based and mobile technologies that turn communication into active dialogue.

This policy is designed to provide helpful, practical advice to all members, players, parents, volunteers and staff in respect of using social media effectively and positively.

The risks posed by such methods of communication arise from a variety of issues: the privacy provided, the wide range of content that can be transmitted, including content of a violent,

sexual or hateful nature, the ease with which images can be forwarded onto others and the difficulty in knowing truly who you are communicating with.

In sport, there are additional risks for children: inappropriate pressure can be exerted by adults, particularly coaches, on children or inappropriate criticism of a child's performance. An official position or role within a club, such as coach, can carry with it a level of authority, and engender a level of trust, that facilitates the control of a child.

It is important therefore, that **all** parents, players, staff, volunteers, coaches, officials/referees, board/trustee members, or anyone working on behalf of Basingstoke RFC are aware of this policy and agree to the following principles:

- Safeguarding children is a key responsibility of all stakeholders, and it is essential that everyone at Basingstoke RFC considers this and acts responsibly if they are using social networking sites out of club involvement.
- All stakeholders at Basingstoke RFC have a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of the club, and to treat fellow stakeholders of the club with dignity and respect.
- It is important to protect Basingstoke RFC from allegations and misinterpretations which can arise from the use of social networking sites. Consequently, we would request that all social media commentary relating to Basingstoke RFC is of a positive nature – **please think carefully before making comments that may lead to unintended consequences.**

3. Communication

SPOND

Basingstoke RFC uses Club Spond for all official communication between coaches, committee members, teams, adult players and parents (to share with children). Any communication outside of this must abide by the code of conduct below:

If anyone wishes to set up a social media forum representing the Club in any capacity they are required to obtain approval from the club board or committee prior to making the forum active. The owner/administrator(s) of a forum using social media is required to ensure that:

- All content complies with the Club's and RFU's policies and Codes of Conduct
- No one posts material that is obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing discriminatory or hateful to another person or entity, including Basingstoke RFC, its

stakeholders, any club associated with Basingstoke RFC, opposition teams, the RFU or the sport as a whole

- No one's personal information is disclosed; for under 18s this included anything that could identify them, for example full name, school, etc.
 - All groups that contain children (under 18 years old) as members have security and privacy settings set to 'closed' or 'secret'; i.e. they are not open to the public. Information about the difference between these groups within Facebook and how they are operated can be found [here](#)
 - Groups are organised so that they are either **adult/coach/parent** only or **child/under 18yo player only**. Coaches can support the development of a team ethos by requesting that information to be shared with players is only added by one of the player representatives
 - All 'player only' groups for children will have **TWO adult group administrators** who will be DBS cleared and will be known to the parents/carers of the group. They will have received written permission from each parent/carer for their child to be a member of the group:
 - Parents of players belonging to a group will be informed of the identity of the Group Administrators at the beginning of the season, when any new player joins the group, or when there is any change in administrator
 - The role of group administrators in a player-only group is to ensure there is no inappropriate content posted on the site, such as indecent images or cyber-bullying etc.
 - Group administrators **will not** post information, videos, photos, comments, opinions or remarks in the group/on the site unless necessary for the safety of the group members.
 - All members of the forum are '**age aware**' and do not invite anyone who is not a member of the team to become part of the group
 - Adults acting on behalf of Basingstoke RFC as volunteers, in a position of trust with children, **will not** follow, invite or accept invitations from children/players under 18 years to become their 'friends' on social media sites
1. The owner/administrator(s) of a forum is required to ensure that the content published is:
 - Respectful of all individuals and communities with which you interact online
 - Polite and respectful of others' opinions, even in times of heated discussion and debate
 2. Whilst Basingstoke RFC recognises that a certain amount of 'banter' may take place on some forums, we would request that any language used is moderated. Please remember that these forums, particularly public ones, may be viewed by a range of people.

Mobile and online communication

There are now many ways for people to communicate online, including email, instant messaging or social networking sites. The risks posed by such methods of communication arise from a variety of issues:

- the privacy provided
- the wide range of content that can be transmitted, including content of a violent, sexual or hateful nature
- the ease with which images can be forwarded onto others
- the difficulty in knowing truly who you are communicating with

In sport, there are additional risks: inappropriate pressure can be exerted by adults, particularly coaches, on children or inappropriate criticism of a child's performance. An official position or role within a club, such as a coach, can carry with it a level of authority, and engender a level of trust, that facilitates the control of a child.

Against this background, a club needs to establish rules covering how adults connected with that club communicate with children connected with that club. It is therefore recommended that:

- When communicating by phone, where possible volunteers should speak to the parent of a child
- Volunteers should not communicate with individual children by text or online at any time, on any matter, unless there is an immediate risk to the welfare of that child which can be lessened by such contact
- If a club needs to communicate club-related information to children by email (such as training or match details), it should use email groups comprising email addresses given by parents.
- Volunteers shouldn't communicate by email on a one-to-one basis with a child; if replying to an email from a child the parent should be copied into the response
- Volunteers should not communicate with children through social networking sites such as Facebook. Coaches should not be "friends" with the children they coach.

Children led messaging groups

It is more than likely that children, particularly those old enough to be active on social media and online messaging apps, will set up groups where they can message each other in privacy,

commonly referred to as 'group chats' . Group chats are often set up using WhatsApp, or other social media apps such as Facebook messenger, and Instagram.

While we do not want to prohibit children communicating with their team mates, it is important that our children are educated about how to do this safely. Basingstoke RFC encourage children to never:

- Share anything online that they would not want released into the public. Once an image is put online, whether via social media posts or shared in a group chat, it is very hard to retrieve it
- Engage in abusive or bullying behaviour towards another person in or out of the group chat
- Share images of a sexual nature, whether of themselves or others

If children are do create and engage in player only group chats while being part of the club, they must understand how to keep themselves safe .

In all cases, the above guidelines should be considered when determining the most appropriate method of communication in any given circumstances

Do not comment in a way that you would not want to be seen in the public domain. Even comments on private groups may become public at any time.

4. Grievance

Any grievance, criticism or resentment should be directed in person to the individual (depending on age) or respective group administrators, managers or coaches. Matters of a more serious or contentious nature should be disclosed to the owner/administrator of the forum or [Club's Safeguarding Team](#), if a child is involved.

Serious instances or irresponsible use of social media platforms associated with Basingstoke RFC may be referred to the Committee of the Club, although any action taken by the Committee will be judged on a case by case basis. The club will take appropriate action to protect the club's reputation and that of its members, volunteers, children and anyone else who is directly linked to the club.

5. In Summary

The club expects the following:

- Child only or adult only CLOSED forum/chat groups,
- Requests to join are CHECKED with membership database via BRFC Office or team managers/ administrators before approval
- Administrators of club age group forums/chats are to be DBS cleared and made known to parents of child only groups.
- Any queries to the BRFC Safeguarding Team or Club Committee.

Further information about how to support **children's safety online in sport** can be found here: [Child Protection in Sport Unit](#)

WhatsApp advice and guidance can be found here:

<https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/tools/whatsapp-go-to-guide-for-sports/>

This policy has been adopted in accordance with the club constitution.

Signed: *LMottram*

Name: Laurence Mottram

Position: Chair of Governance

Date: 24th February 2026

For further information about Basingstoke RFC Policies and guidance please visit our full document area at <https://www.basingstokerfc.com/information/club-documents>