



GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

6.1

RUNNING WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

FOR ALL



Version: 1.2
Published: 2025



RUNNING WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

The following guidance is to support clubs and leagues to manage their safeguarding responsibilities effectively across their website and social media platforms.

It aims to ensure children, young people, coaches, referees and adults in a position of trust are not subjected to improper online behaviour or improper allegations.

Remember that clubs and leagues are responsible for ensuring all content hosted on their websites, social network areas and any associated message boards or blogs abides by the Rules and Regulations of The Football Association.

THE RULES:

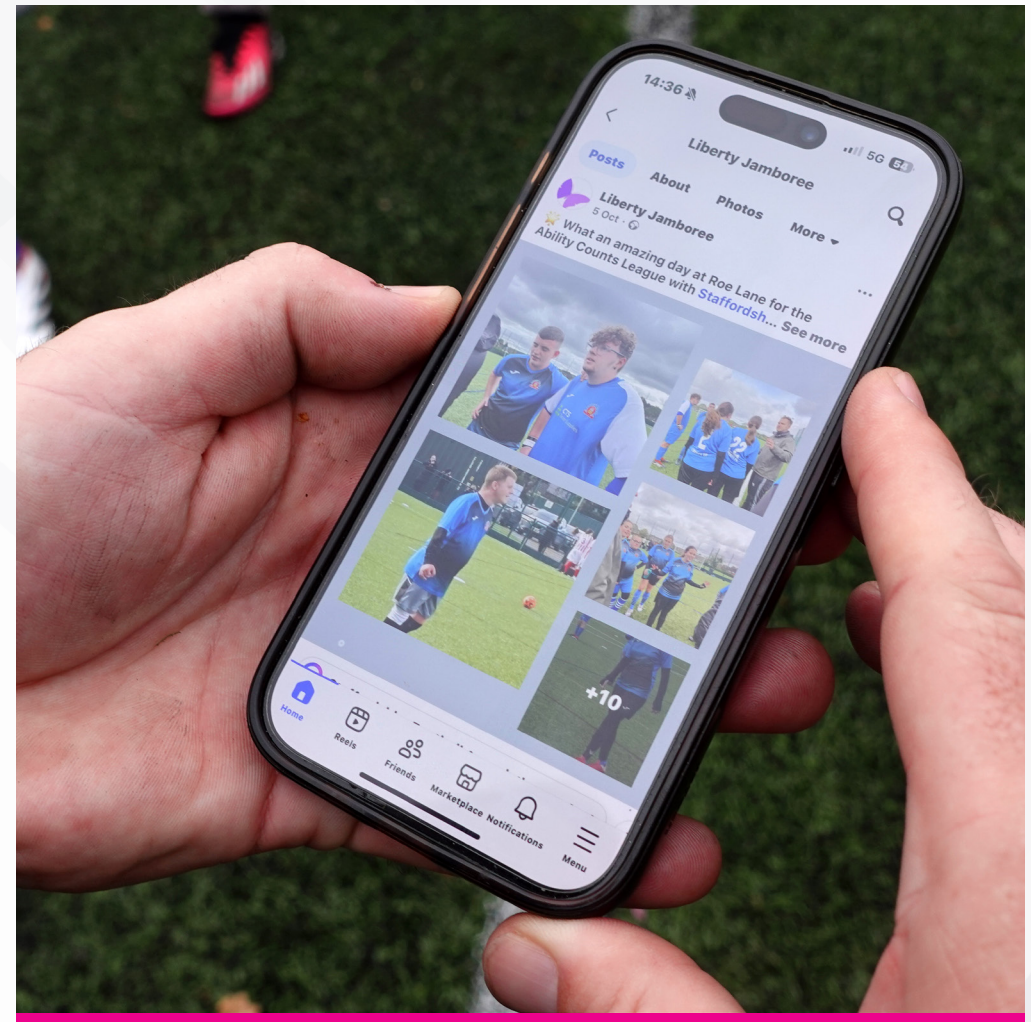
It is against FA rules to post comments that are or maybe perceived as:

- Offensive;
- Insulting;
- Abusive;
- Threatening;
- Racist;
- Discriminatory;
- Any other reference that may cause offence or harm to others.

Any such comment made on club or league websites and/or social networking sites regarding match officials may result in disciplinary action being taken in line with The FA's disciplinary policies and procedures.

Comments made on websites that are threatening, abusive or racist could lead to legal action being taken against those responsible for posting or hosting them. Comments made may attract libel claims and legal action through the civil courts if they are untrue or defamatory.

Children and young people should be advised by their coaches, parents/carers and Club Welfare Officer to always tell an adult they trust about communications that make them feel uncomfortable or where they've been asked not to tell their parent/carer about the communication.



THE DO'S & DON'T'S:

Clubs/leagues are advised to adhere to the following:

DO:

- Appoint an appropriate adult(s) to monitor the content of the website, who should also attend The FA's Safeguarding Children Course to carry out this role;
- Make sure everyone within your club/league knows who is responsible for monitoring the content of the website and social networking areas and how to contact them;
- Apply the principles within The FA's photography guidelines. See **Guidance Notes 8.3: Photographing and Filming Children**;
- Place the CEOP, 'Report Abuse' app on your website and links to the advice offered via its [ThinkUKnow.co.uk](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) programmes which give age appropriate advice to children as well as parents/carers;
- Provide a link to **TheFA.com** safeguarding section – [TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding);
- Consider the benefits of using public or private online/social media chat features against the potential risks and moderation that would be needed. If you decide to use them ensure that you are aware of security and privacy settings and only allow comments to be posted by individuals known and permitted access by the club/league;

- Remember that the club/league is responsible for all content contained on its website or social media channels. This would include content/comments endorsed and/or shared by the club/Leagues or its members on club/League public facing channels,
- Regularly monitor the content of the above and use **The FA's Grassroots Code** and '1.7 Appropriate Behaviours and Position of Trust Guidance' as a guide to acceptable behaviour online;
- Ensure privacy settings are set appropriately so that the page(s) can only be used for club or league matters and does not share personal details or host private conversations;
- U16s should not be included within message or chat groups primarily used by League/Club Officials, coaches, managers and parents/carers to arrange fixtures, availability etc. Where 16-17 Coaches, Officials or players are invited to use an official League, Club or team message or chat group it is important to get written parent/carer permission. Ideally, parents/carers are added to the chat and can view conversations.

DON'T:

- Host children's or young people's details in public areas where they can be seen or used by others to contact them. This includes the mobile phone and email of referees and coaches under the age of 18. Any details hosted should only be done with written parental/carer consent;
- Host pictures of individuals without the express permission of parents/carers;



- Post details of individuals which may lead them to be more easily approached outside of football and/or targeted for negative attention e.g. school/class/year, player profiles detailing personal information e.g. favourite foods, movies, teams etc.;
- Post or host items which may be considered to be hurtful, insulting, offensive, abusive, threatening, racist or discriminatory, or otherwise may cause offence or harm to another, or might incite such behaviour in others;
- Post or host match results for teams that are under-11. Remember the focus is on participation and learning not outcome at this age.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you need any further advice or information please contact your County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer who will be happy to help you.

Click here to find a list of [County FAs](#) and their websites. Then visit the relevant website to find your County FA's DSO.



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