

GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

6.2

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS AND CHILDREN (UNDER-18s)

FOR ALL

PLAY SAFE

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The FA

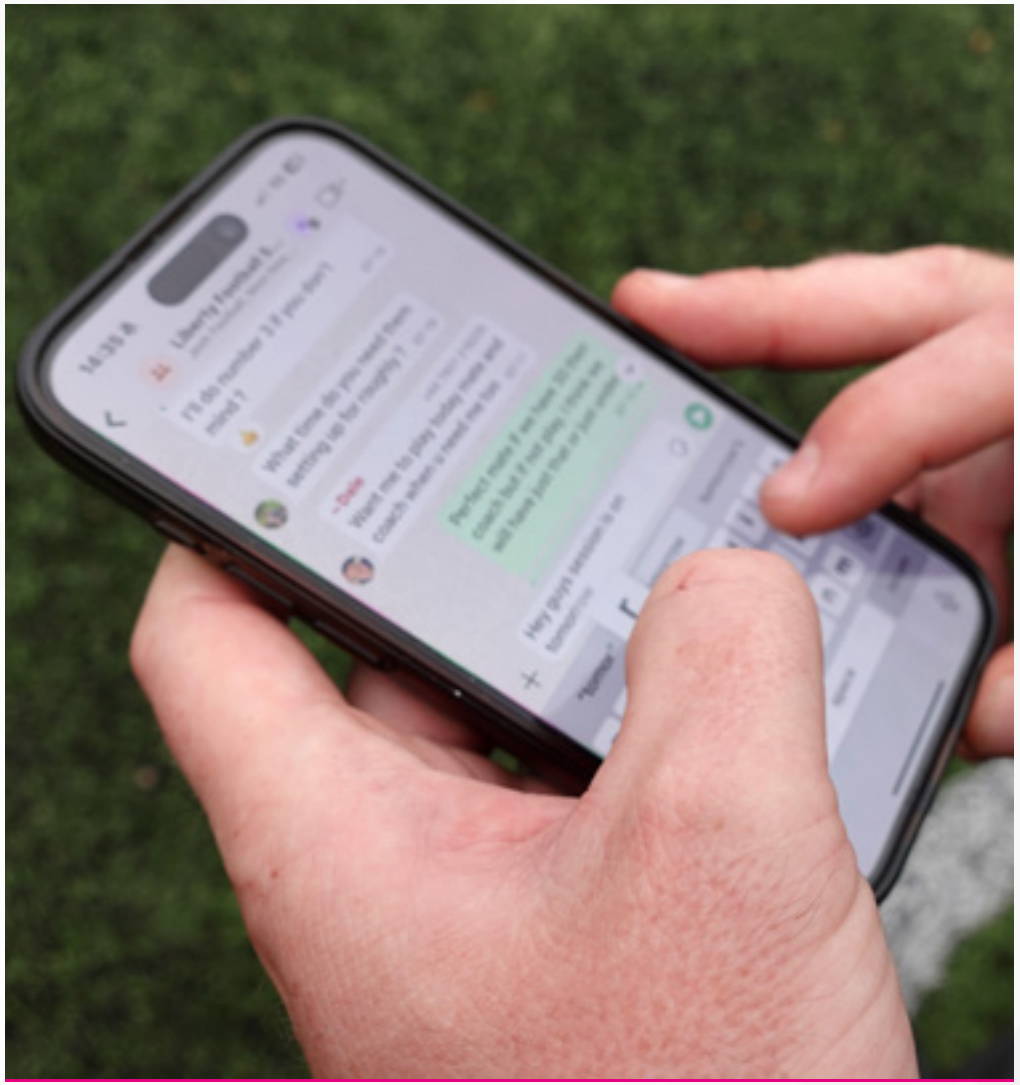
FOR ALL

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH UNDER-18s WHO HOLD A POSITION OF RESPONSIBILITY

WHEN COMMUNICATING WITH UNDER-18s WHO HOLD A POSITION OF RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN FOOTBALL, PLEASE ADHERE TO THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE.

The purpose for communications with under-18s should be made clear to all parties:

- Both parties to only communicate for the purpose of the identified professional role(s);
- Email, text/WhatsApp communications between the parties should copy in either the parent/carer or Welfare Officer, or both;
- Leagues appointing young referees to games must copy in another league official or parent/carer to their communications;
- Do not use language that is directly (or could be misinterpreted as being) racist, sexist, derogatory, threatening, abusive or sexualised in tone in any communication;
- If any inappropriate communication or content is shared between an adult and an under-18-year-old, this must be reported immediately to the Welfare Officer who will seek advice from the County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and/or statutory agencies as appropriate.
- For up-to-date guidance on parental controls when under-18s are using digital media, please visit the respective providers' websites.



DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS – VIDEO CALLS

GUIDANCE FOR COACHES/MANAGERS

League/Club meetings are nowadays often conducted online. As a Club/League official it's really important to keep appropriate boundaries in your digital space.

Please ensure you continue to apply the principles of The FA's Grassroots Code and remember that as a League/Club official. You are in a position of trust to follow the procedures outlined below to help keep you and those you are supporting safe online.

Setting up

- Always work with groups, ensure you are inclusive when engaging with under-18s;
- Wherever possible involve a second League/Club official;
- All online sessions involving under-18s must be observable and interruptible;
- Where players are aged under 18, communications must go to parents/carers to accept or decline the player's participation.
- Are there any individual circumstances which may mean their involvement may not be possible? How might you ensure they still feel included as part of the League/Club or Team?

The environment when using video facilities

- The setting for the background should be in a neutral area, avoiding anything inappropriate being heard or seen. Some apps may offer customisation of avatars, usernames and customised virtual backgrounds. What you may use for personal use may be inappropriate to represent your League/club – so think about this and make any changes, before contacting anyone;
- Do not host the session from a bedroom or other rooms/spaces where changing or other activities which may compromise safeguarding of U18s could take place;
- The background must not be blurred or obscured;
- League/Club officials must wear appropriate clothing, as should anyone else in the household. Ideally other members of the household should not be in view when running your session(s).

Session content

- The purpose of the session and what it will involve must be clearly outlined to all involved prior to the call;
- Language must be professional and appropriate. Please ensure any family members or others in the background to also behave appropriately if it is not possible for them to be out of view, and for them not to be heard during the session;
- Online video calls should be held at a reasonable time of day and be for a sensible duration.



[1] See FA Guidance Notes 1.7: Abuse of trust, available **here**.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you need any further advice or information please contact your County FA DSO 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.

If you would like to access futher digital safeguarding guidance such as that provided by the NSPCC, you will find useful links on our website **click here**.



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