

GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

6.2

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH CHILDREN (UNDER 18s)

FOR ALL

Version: 1.1
Published: MAY 2019



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DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH CHILDREN (UNDER 18s)

Children in football (anyone under 18) today are well-versed in online communications. But many adults are not. These guidance notes are intended to provide some best-practice suggestions for adults when communicating with under-18-year-olds, whatever their football role – player, referee etc. Whatever your adult role in football, we hope you'll find them useful.

THE DO'S & DON'T'S FOR CLUBS AND LEAGUES:

DO:

- Get signed consent from parents/ carers before communicating digitally with children;
- Explain to parents/carers the purpose and method for coaches/managers, referee mentors, club officials etc. to communicate digitally with their child;
- Only use group texts, emails or messenger apps and always copy in the parent/carer or the designated member of the club to all communications with children;
- Make sure digital communications are only in relation to specific club related activities e.g. changes in travel arrangements, training times or venue changes.

DON'T:

- Use digital communications for personal conversation, sending pictures, jokes or other items of a personal nature;
- Respond to digital communications from children other than those directly related to club matters;
- Use language that is directly (or could be misinterpreted as being) racist, sexist, derogatory, threatening, abusive or sexualised in tone.

Unless a child or young person is a direct relation, you should not:

- Accept as a friend, players or referees under the age of 18 on social networking sites of which they are members;
- Share their own personal social networking sites with children or young people involved in youth football;

- Make contact with children or young people known through football outside of the football context on social networking sites;
- Use internet or web-based communications to send personal messages of a non-football nature to a child or young person;
- Engage in any personal communications, 'banter' or comments.



THE GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNICATING WITH 16-17-YEAR-OLDS IN FOOTBALL:

The FA recommends the following as best practice when communicating with 16/17 year olds who hold a position of trust and/or responsibility within football:

- Signed parental/carer consent should be given prior to email, social networking and mobile phone communications with young people holding a position of trust. Ideally the adult(s) who will be communicating in this way should be named. The purpose for the communication should be made clear;
- Both parties to only communicate for the purpose of the identified professional role(s);
- Email and/or social media (e.g. 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;
- 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 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.





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