

# Social Media Policy

## Term

- Best Practice: Social Media and Electronic Communication with Young People.
- Advice, guidance and recommendations for coaches, volunteers, officials, judges and designated officers.
- For the purpose of this Best Practice policy, the term 'coach' is used to apply to all adults working with young people (U18) in the Academy.
- For the purpose of this Best Practice policy, electronic communication includes contact with young people via email, text messaging, social networking sites (eg Facebook, Twitter) and instant messaging systems (eg MSN).

**Introduction:** As technology develops, the internet and its range of services can be accessed through various devices including mobile phones, computers and game consoles. Although the internet has many positive uses, it provides the key method for the distribution of indecent images of children.

Furthermore, social networking sites, chat rooms and instant messaging systems are increasingly been used by online predators to 'sexually groom' children and young people. In addition, electronic communication is being used more and more by young people as a means of bullying their peers.

All adults working with young people in the Academy are asked to adhere to the following best practice guidelines.

Fundamental Movement Academy will investigate any 'coach' who is not adhering to best practice in communication with young people.

**General Good Practice:** It is inappropriate for adult coaches to communicate on a one to one basis with member under the age of 18 years by:

- text message
- e-mail
- instant messaging
- or through social networking sites

All electronic communication by the above methods should include (where possible) a copy to a third party, e.g. copy to the relevant Welfare Officer and/or the parent.

Coaches should also limit all electronic communication to activity related matters. It is advisable to always send a group message rather than single messages to one member.

For U16 members parental consent is required for communication between the adult and the young person.



For U18 members, parents should be informed and aware of the communication between the coach and young person. All coaches, staff, volunteers, parents and members should always behave responsibly and respectfully when online or texting. They should not post or discuss unfavourable comments about coaches, members, any helper or volunteer, parents.

**Text Messages:** Text messages are NOT the preferred method of communication between adults and young people.

However, where they are used, they should be group (bundled) messages and should always be copied into the . relevant welfare officer.

In the event of an emergency, individual texts may be used but again must be copied into the Welfare Officer and/or parent.

**Instant Messaging Services:** MSN, Yahoo and other instant messaging systems should not be used by adults to communicate with young members under any circumstances.

**Emails:** Emails are a positive and simple method of communication between coaches and young members and groups are easy to set up.

Group emails are preferred, although in the case of an email to one person, a copy must be sent to the Welfare Officer.

**Social Networking:** Coaches should NOT have members under the age of 18 as their 'friends' on social networking sites when the primary reason for the relationship is the activity they attend and they have a position of trust in relation to that young person.

Should a young person in your Academy request to become a named friend on your social networking page or request that you become a named friend on their page you should decline if any of the below apply:

- You are in a Coach position of responsibility in respect of that child.
- You hold a position of trust and responsibility in the Academy.
- Your contact with the child is through an Academy and the parent/guardian of the child does not give their consent to such contact.

The social network site should never be used as a medium by which to abuse or criticise Fundamental Movement Academies members.

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Coaches are advised to consider carefully what they post as some comments can be seen by friends of friends. This also applies to comments left on other people's pages and the sharing of photographs. Consider your position as a role model in this area.

The publishing of a photograph or video footage on a social networking site is governed by the same requirements as any other media.

**Club Facebook (or other social networking site) Page:** Organisations using Facebook must only accept members of the Academy as their online 'contacts' on the Academies Facebook (or other social networking site) page. This must be stated on the page and the page must be set up for that reason.

Where the Academy operates a Facebook (or other social networking site) page links may be made from the young person's page to the Academy page but additional personal links between the pages of adults and young people must not be created.

It is important that the sites privacy settings are set, ensuring that an outside person may not be able to make contact with a young person by first gaining access via the Academy social networking site.

Coaches are reminded that ALL social networking websites are restricted to people aged 13 years and over, this restriction must be adhered to.

#### **Guidance to coaches who have children that participate in the Academy where they coach/work:**

Many parents are becoming members of social networking sites that their children sign up to for security reasons. This enables them to view their child's site and help ensure the safety of their own child. This will give the parent access via their child's site to all children listed as friends of their child. It would not be appropriate for FMA to prevent a parent who is also a coach in his/her child's Academy from using this form of protection for their child's online activities. Therefore in such cases:

- The coach can have members in the Academy on the site he/she is accessing providing the under 18 year old Academy members on the site are listed as friends of his/her child or the Academy Facebook page.
- The coach concerned does not have direct contact with those members through the social networking site.
- The coach does not accept such members as friends on his/her home site.
- The coach should inform the Academy welfare officer of this arrangement.

**Coaches/workers/officials who are aged Under 18:** FMA recognises that social networking sites can be a useful tool for coaches and officials within the Academy to share information with other coaches or officials. If, however, the coach or official is under the age of 18, while they may be a colleague; these requirements must be adhered to. For young people aged 16 or 17 it is the view of FMA that to restrict the ability to share professional information with them from other coaches or officials may be detrimental in their professional development.

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Therefore in such cases if the parent of a young person in a position of responsibility aged 16/17 and the young person themselves requests to have contact with an adult club officer or coach for the purposes of sharing professional information relevant to their role:

The Academy should gain written consent of the parent/guardian and young person to have such contact naming the individual adult and social networking site concerned.

The named adult must sign an agreement to keep the contact with the young person to the discussion of matters relevant to the young person's professional role in the Academy.

All such communications should be shared with an identified 3rd person (e.g. the young person's parent/guardian or Academy Welfare Officer.)

If the young person or the adult is found to breach the above agreement action must be taken by the Academy to address the concern.

**Note to Young Members:** Young members must be reminded to set their privacy settings and not accept requests either from people unknown to them or to other adults involved in the Academy.

**Reporting Concerns:** In the event of a member showing a coach a text or instant message, image or email that is considered to be inappropriate for a child to have, the coach must inform the appropriate Welfare Officer at the Academy. If a young person is concerned with anything they have seen on the internet they are advised to speak to their Welfare Officer.

FMA aims to ensure that all children and young people within the Academy are treated with respect, valued and, at all times, "Safe" from all forms of abuse.

#### CONFIDENTIAL HELPLINES:

Child line: (Tel: 08001111) Confidential telephone advice for children who are being abused.

Child protection in Sport: (Tel: 01162347278/7280) A central point for sports organisations in relation to child protection in sport.

NSPCC Helpline: (Tel Freephone 08088005000)

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