



# ABBOTS YOUTH FOOTBALL CLUB

## Social Media & Communications Policy



### General principles

Abbots Youth FC's primary responsibility is to provide a safe environment in which children and young people can enjoy football.

This policy should be observed in conjunction with the [Abbots Youth Football Club Safeguarding Children Policy 8-25](#) and also the Football Association's guidance on '[Safeguarding in the digital world](#)'.

If you have any questions about this policy please contact the Club Welfare Officer.

We recognise the beneficial aspects of modern communication capabilities; however we also recognise that these can bring increased risks to children and young people. These risks must be appropriately managed.

The responsibility to safeguard exists both on and off the field of play. It is essential that all club officials (committee members, coaches/managers, assistants, first aiders, match day delegates, volunteers etc), referees, parents and players make informed decisions about how they use the internet, mobile phone and email communications. Club officials and those in a position of responsibility at Abbots Youth FC must ensure they communicate responsibly and within FA guidelines.

As members of AYFC we are all individually responsible for and need to abide by FA rules regarding comments placed online about clubs, players, managers or match officials:

- It is against AYFC and FA rules to post comments that are or maybe conceived as offensive, insulting, abusive, threatening, racist, and discriminatory or 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 officials may result in disciplinary action being taken in line with The FA's disciplinary policies and procedures.
- Comments made on websites and/or social media platforms 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.

We ask our coaches, parents, members to be aware of the following FA guidance:

<http://www.hertfordshirefa.com/about/rules-and-regulations/safeguarding-and-welfare/social-media-guidance>

## Communicating with players

All communications from Abbots Youth FC officials with players should be via parents/carers specified as the contact when the player registered with the club on the membership system for that season.

CLUB OFFICIALS MUST NOT CONTACT PLAYERS DIRECTLY THROUGH ANY FORM OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION. FOR EXAMPLE, EMAIL, TEXT, SOCIAL MEDIA – FACEBOOK, SNAPCHAT, WHATSAPP ETC. This list is not exhaustive.

If a player contacts a club official directly, any replies from the club official must include the parent/guardian and advise that future communications are done through the parent/guardian.

## Communicating with parents/guardians

Social media, networking and communications via mobile phones, as well as platforms such as Snapchat, WhatsApp etc are excellent tools when used properly and informatively. These channels should be used responsibly and for fact-based information e.g. training times, match details etc. They should not be used to communicate personal opinions on teams or players for example, non-football related matters or “banter.” What one person sees as a fun message can easily be misconstrued by another.

## Use of social media

The club’s website and social media accounts are managed by appointed administrators and only these administrators should have access rights to post communications. AYFC social media channels are used to communicate club messaging across to members of the club and beyond including using these channels for marketing and raising awareness of relevant events, recruitment, news and achievements.

Club officials may request to publish social media posts and website updates through the club’s website and social media administrators who will ensure all content complies with this policy.

If any other social media profiles/groups are created by club officials for team specific communications (e.g. WhatsApp or Facebook groups), this must be with the parent/guardian only and not include any players. Communications must be solely about football matters e.g. fixtures, cancellations and team selection. At no time should there be any personal communications, jokes, ‘banter’ or comments. It is the responsibility of the club official who setup the group to maintain this policy and raise any concerns to the Club Welfare Officer.

## FA guidance on best practice relating to social media:

Do:

- Ensure all the privacy settings are locked so that the page(s) are used explicitly for club or league matters and are not used as a place to meet, share personal details or have private conversations.
- Nominate a club official to monitor the social networking page(s) regularly and remove access for anyone behaving inappropriately.
- Make sure everyone within your club/team knows who is responsible for monitoring the content of the social networking areas and how to contact them.
- Please review the FA best practice guidelines for responsible use of text, email and social networking sites.
- Inform the Club Welfare Officer if you have received or have seen inappropriate communications via any method online, keeping a record wherever possible as this may be needed as evidence.
- Only use social networking and digital communications for factual based conversations and not opinion.

Don't

Unless a child/young person is a direct relation, the club officials should not:

- Accept as a friend, players or referees under 18 on social networking sites.
- Share their own personal details 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, mobile phone or web-based communications to send personal messages of non-football related nature to any child or young person.
- Engage in any personal communications, jokes, comments or "banter."

## Use of images

Any images posted on social media or the club's website must not include named individuals and the club official taking the photo must ensure that consent has been provided by the parent/guardian to use safe images on digital media (this consent is given upon registration in the membership system).

PARENTS ARE REQUESTED TO NOT POST IMAGES OF PLAYERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE PARENTS OF THOSE PLAYERS.

## Reporting of scores

Abbots Youth FC supports The FA's measures to prevent a "win at all costs" attitude, especially at younger age groups. The intention is to make results less important and to cease coaching practices that are aimed at "winning tactics". Instead, we aim to focus on long term player development, and to provide a fun playing environment for young players where they are not under pressure or concerned with results and can enjoy football and explore new football ideas and techniques.

Therefore, AYFC will:

- not publish the final score for any AYFC mini-soccer (U11 and younger) squad on any social media platform, website, associated with the Club;
- ask opposition coaches and parents to apply the same policy to their own team

**This does not mean that Under-11 football should not be celebrated and promoted.**

Reports or posts which highlight the efforts and performances of teams are encouraged, however detailing results, scores and scorers are not permitted.

Below are some examples (names used are not real) highlighting some dos and don'ts. These are not exhaustive and provide only a guide:

### **YES – IT'S OKAY TO SAY**

'A fantastic performance from the U9 team today – proud of all my players!'

'So proud of Ben scoring in his match today'

'A great effort by all our players in the game today'

'Played an away match today – some cracking goals and great efforts from the players'

### **NO – IT'S NOT OKAY TO SAY**

'So proud of my daughter Amy today, scoring in their Under-8's win over City'

'Won 2-1 away, despite the referee – well done boys'

'Beat United today – get in!'

'Great game today, our goal scorers against City were Ben, James, Paul and Jess.'

**[www.thefa.com/get-involved/respect](http://www.thefa.com/get-involved/respect)**

## **Communicating with young officials/volunteers**

### **Communicating with referees under 16**

Young referees in this age group are still minors and must be safeguarded and treated with respect. Some of these referees are as young as 14 years old and are carrying out the activity for the purposes of Duke of Edinburgh awards (DofE) etc.

For referees up to the age of 16 (aged 14 & 15) communication must only be through the parent/guardian using the provided contact details from the league. Club officials should not contact referees directly through any form of digital communication or social network sites.

### **Communicating with referees under 18.**

For referees that are aged 16 and 17, we recognise that they are not 'adults' and as such we have a responsibility to safeguard them as we do any other young person involved in football.

For referees under 18 (aged 16 & 17) communications can be direct but must include a copy to their parent/guardian.

The guidance below is based on FA recommendations for best practice in relation to communication with 16–17 year-olds who hold a position of trust and/or responsibility within football:

1. Parent/guardian consent should be given prior to email, social networking and/or mobile phone communication with young people holding a position of trust.
2. Both parties to only communicate for the purpose of organising match officials.
3. Emails between club officials and match officials under 18 should copy in their parent.

### **Volunteer Assistants**

On occasion, managers may have U14's to U18's assisting at training sessions or matches for the purposes of DofE etc. Again, these assistants are still minors and the same rules of communication as for players and referees.

### **Safeguarding children & Young People**

Children and young people must be advised by their coaches, parents/guardians and CWO to always tell an adult they trust about communications that make them feel uncomfortable or if they have been asked not to tell their parent/guardian about the communication.

IF ANY INAPPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION OR CONTENT IS SHARED BETWEEN AN ADULT AND A YOUNG PLAYER/YOUNG REFEREE, THIS SHOULD BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY TO THE CLUB WELFARE OFFICER WHO, WHERE NECESSARY, WILL SEEK ADVICE FROM THE COUNTY DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING OFFICER AND/OR STATUTORY AGENCIES.

If you have any questions about this policy please contact the Club Welfare Officer.

Club Welfare Officer – Gordon Wilson  
07931 541535