



## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY & PROCEDURE



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Midsomer Norton RFC realises that social media has become increasingly popular in recent years, and that it can be hugely beneficial in disseminating information about the Rugby Club and/or specific age-groups. It can take many different forms, including internet forums, internet blogs, social blogs, podcasts, pictures and video. There are a wide range of platforms that the term 'social media' relates to. However, Midsomer Norton RFC recognises that the most popular channels currently used are – Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat & Instagram.

We allow coaches/team managers to set up Facebook pages for their age-groups, as long as they only approve membership of people who are known to the group. The Club's Safeguarding Officer and at least one other member of the General Committee will be on each age-groups 'page'. Midsomer Norton RFC supports the age recommendations of all major social networking sites (e.g. Facebook recommends that members should be at least 13 years of age).

Midsomer Norton RFC recognises that we live in a society that promotes free speech and freedom of expression, but we would caution that anything that you write has the potential to enter the public domain. Consequently, we would request that all social media commentary relating to Midsomer Norton RFC is of a positive nature - please think carefully before making comments that may lead to unintended consequences. Members must understand that they are responsible for their actions when using social media to communicate with or about other club members.

We require you to refrain from any negative comments about players, parents, coaches, managers, referees, clubs, etc. And we ask that you avoid gossip, slanderous comments, disruptive comments, threatening comments, and anything that could be construed as abusive, harassing, obscene, libellous, or an invasion of another's privacy (this includes text, audio, photographs and video). Whilst the club realises that a certain amount of 'banter' may take place on some forums, we would request that any language used is moderated, please remember that these forums can be viewed by a range of age groups from both genders.

Players and parents need to be aware that the Club reserves the right to take appropriate action against them if they are involved in incidents of an inappropriate nature that are considered to bring the Club's name into disrepute e.g. cyber bullying or the use of images or other material that hurt other club members.

Any reported incidents will be investigated as thoroughly as possible, and will be judged on a case by case basis.

Midsomer Norton RFC requires you to use social media outlets positively, be responsible, share your achievements, celebrate success, be gracious in defeat, be honest, and enjoy communicating and interacting.

We expect all young people and adults to be responsible users of social media and to recognise the importance of staying safe while using the Internet and other forms of communication for educational, personal and recreational use.



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Midsomer Norton RFC also use the guidance that the RFU have produced (see below)

This policy was adopted by the General Committee on  
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Signed ..... Club Official

## RFU Guidance

### **Social media for clubs**

Social networking, such as Twitter, Facebook, internet blogs and other online sites, offers tremendous opportunities for rugby to communicate and engage with a growing audience as well as its existing members, supporters and players.

The RFU is keen to promote the safe and responsible use of social networking technology but also to make its members aware of the potential risks and to share best practice.

Participants should be aware that comments which bring the game into disrepute, or are threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting, may lead to disciplinary action.

Comments that include a reference to a person’s ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, faith, gender, sexual orientation or disability may attract a high disciplinary sanction.

Comments can also attract civil and criminal action. Nearly 5,000 offences involving Facebook and Twitter were reported to police in 2012 and 653 people charged.

### **General guidance**

- These are public forums, so treat them as such
- Individuals and organisations are strictly responsible for any posting on his/their account/s
- Re-posting or re-tweeting inappropriate content represents an endorsement of that content and can be actionable
- Do not use abusive, derogatory, vulgar or sexual language
- Do not criticise or imply bias in match officials
- At all times, exercise discretion and respect for clubs, players, fans and the game’s partners
- Deleting or apologising publicly for an improper posting does not prevent disciplinary action being taken
- Consider “protecting” Tweets and changing security/visibility of Facebook accounts

### **Clubs and Constituent Bodies**

Clubs and Constituent Bodies (CBs) should be aware that they can be vicariously liable for material published by employees in the course of their employment, for example on an official website, Facebook site or Twitter feed, or published by employees outside work via a work email address or a work Twitter handle.



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Clubs can also be liable for third party comments and postings made in their website forums or on their Facebook pages.

### **We recommend that clubs and CBs:**

- Clearly identify who is responsible for posting and maintaining social networking and internet sites
- Set standards for content generated in line with the RFU's Core Values and the guidelines above
- Establish protocols for monitoring output, moderating content in online forums and removing offensive postings
- Hold members to account for any breaches

### **Safeguarding**

The RFU's Safeguarding Policy, (<http://www.englandrugby.com/governance/safeguarding/>), advises against coaches having direct personal communication with children unless in exceptional circumstances and coaches and club officials should not communicate with children through social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, nor should they be "friends" with children or comment on their status.

The RFU works closely with the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit, which provides comprehensive guidance and resources relating to this issue at, <https://thecpsu.org.uk/>

### **Players and officials**

Individuals need to understand that they are personally responsible and liable for their comments and postings. At all times, you should exercise discretion and be respectful of other players, teams, officials, organisations and brands. What you regard as "banter" could be regarded as embarrassing or hurtful by a wider audience and bring the game into disrepute.

In short, follow the general guidelines above and:

- Don't comment if you have any concerns about the consequences
- Don't link to unsuitable content
- Don't get into disputes with audience
- Don't share or elicit personal detail

### **But**

- Do show your personality and be approachable
- Do share your achievements
- Do let people know what it is like to be a player/official
- Do post regular comments to grow and engage with an audience