



## **E-communication and Social Media**

### **Emails**

Emails can provide an excellent opportunity to quickly disseminate information to a group of people. However, there are some risks and Clubs/Schools/Academies should be aware of good practice which includes:

- Language should be appropriate and professional;
- Emails should come from the same person for example a programme manager or head instructor;
- Emails should be about legitimate Martial art information and avoid over-familiarity
- Ideally emails should be sent to groups rather than individual children or adults at risk. If communication needs to be sent to an individual child, another adult such as their parent should be copied into the message;
- In the case of an adult at risk, a plan and agreement on how communication should be established, where appropriate with the carer or guardian, should be agreed upon. The adult at risk must be involved in this process. It has to be assumed they have capacity unless shown otherwise under the Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- For group emails, consideration should be made as to if it is appropriate to allow others access to all the recipient's email addresses by using the 'to' field or if the 'blind carbon copy' (bcc) function should be used;
- People should be given the option to opt out of receiving further emails;
- For under 16's, parental consent must be gained before collecting email addresses and parents should also be copied into the email. Parents should be able to include their own email address instead of their child's;
- For young people aged 16-18, their permission should be gained to email them and parents should be made aware that the School will be emailing their child and the reasons for this;

- If a School receives any emails of concern from a young person, the child protection policy should be followed;
- If a Martial Arts official leaves their position, they should ensure they delete any Martial Arts email addresses from their computer;
- Email addresses should not be passed on or used for other purposes without permission.

## **Text messaging**

The use of text messaging increases the vulnerability of both the young person, adult at risk and the instructor. However, it is one of the most direct forms of communication with young people, so Schools / Clubs may decide to use text messaging.

Good practice on how to reduce the risks include:

- It should be a Schools decision to use text messaging, rather than a decision taken in isolation by one person;
- The content should relate solely to School/Academy activity and should reflect the professional relationship between instructor and pupil;
- Text messages should be sent at appropriate times of the day (i.e. not overnight) and avoid language that is overly familiar or could be misinterpreted;
- Martial Arts officials with access to the young people's personal contact details should be kept to a practical minimum;
- Martial Arts officials should not allow anyone to use their phone to text a young person and they should not pass on young people's mobile phones numbers to other people;
- Consent must be obtained from young people prior to sending them text messages. For under 16's, parental consent must also be obtained, and parents should be given the option of also being sent the text message;
- For young people aged 16-18, their permission should be obtained before texting them and their parents made aware;
- Martial Arts should ensure that people know how to sensitively deal with concerns if they receive messages from a young person that could be considered inappropriate or concerning;
- Young people should be given the opportunity to request not to receive further messages.

## **Websites/social networking**

The internet provides an excellent opportunity to reach a wide audience at little cost. Martial Art Clubs/Schools/Academies use the internet to publicise themselves and keep in contact with those interested in its activities. However, Clubs/Schools/Academies must be mindful in how they present themselves

online and the risks the internet can pose to young people if not used appropriately.

Good practice guidelines include:

- The website/profile should present a professional image, ensuring all language and content is appropriate;
- The School/Academy will plan how they will manage their website/social networking profile. There should be more than one person with 'moderator' responsibilities, so content can be edited/removed quickly if necessary;
- The website/profile should be regularly monitored, and links reviewed regularly to ensure they are appropriate and working;
- Procedures and contact details for reporting any problems/concerns should be easy to locate;
- Contact details for the Martial Arts safeguarding lead is available and links established to agencies that can provide help such as Childline;
- If Martial Arts decides to publish team/player profiles of under 18's, their and their parent's permission should be sought first;
- Permission to publish photos/videos of young people should be gained from them and their parents and follow photography guidelines in the Child Protection Policy;
- The School / Academy will avoid publishing excessive personal information of under 18's i.e. never includes email address, home address, School attended etc;
- If there is a minimum age on the social networking site, Martial Arts will not target young people under this age to use it;
- Parents should be encouraged to view the website/profile as well as young people;
- If the School/Academy becomes aware of problems such as cyber bullying or a young person placing themselves at risk with the information they share on the internet, they will follow the set procedures for concerns or contact seek advice;
- Martial Arts officials, particularly instructors, should think carefully about their personal online profiles and should not be linking them to young people's pages. Any bullying and/or abuse online will be dealt with in the same manner as offline bullying and/or abuse.