



BISHOP'S STORTFORD RUGBY CLUB

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

In the context of all matters connected with BSRFC, there is an expectation that Club members and officials will act in a respectful manner to one another and uphold the ethos of the Club. This expectation applies equally to matters which take place on and off the pitch, which include posts on social media when they have a direct connection to the Club,

It is acknowledged that social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, internet blogs and other online sites, offer tremendous opportunities for BSRFC to communicate and engage with its existing members, supporters and players, as well as more widely.

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

Those connected with the Club should be aware that comments, which bring the game into or Club disrepute, or are threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting, might lead to disciplinary action.

Key Principles

- **Social media is important to the development of the Club, the game and essential to its good administration and organisation and its use is encouraged;**
- **Social media used for team/Club administration and organisation are covered by this policy whether set up by the club or by members for those purposes;**
- **Private social media, not connected with the Club is not covered by this policy;**
- **Such Club related social media should be used for team/Club administration and organisation matters;**
- **Any social media content which appears on Club related social media should be in line with the RFU's Core Values and should not bring the game or the Club into disrepute;**
- **Individuals are responsible for what they post and should use their common sense when posting to such social media platforms;**
- **What may be regard as "banter" could be felt to be embarrassing or hurtful by particular individuals or a wider audience and care should be taken when posting;**
- **In the event that this policy is breached members may be subject to disciplinary action.**

Use of Social Media

Social media is an important method of communication for the Club, where we can express opinions, and is a key way we engage with the members of our Club, along with the wider community. It is important for us to have a policy to demonstrate how we ensure we are represented in a suitable way and can take action should the need arise. We are taking this opportunity to remind our members and officials of the importance of ensuring that all our social networking streams should be used thoughtfully and responsibly.

‘Semi’ Official Social Media

It is also acknowledged that, in addition to the Club’s official social media feeds, coaches and others with semi official roles will use social media to communicate in order to best organise matters relating to the Club and this is encouraged. Whilst these social media feeds are not directly controlled by the Club, they are for the purpose of communicating matters related to the Club and what is posted reflects upon it and should reflect its ethos.

Both official and ‘semi’ official social media are covered by this policy.

Private Social Media

In addition, there are other social media sources and groups which may be created by members or officials, not acting in any official or semi-official capacity, which are not for the purposes of communicating or organising matters related to the Club. We recognise that members and officials will use these media, to discuss matters related to the Club and the game more generally outside the official framework of the Club. It is recognised that members and officials are entitled to publish content in their private capacity on social media and that this has nothing to do with the Club.

The Club does not have a responsibility to control the content of such private social media but it is hoped that those posting will do so having regard to the need to be respectful to other Club members and officials. Whilst such social media posts are not covered by this policy, we would wish to remind members and officials that where problems arising from such posts spill over into Club related matters, they may become subject to the Club’s rules and policies.

Responsibility of social accounts

Club officials and Administrators

Club officials should ensure that the Club’s social media accounts, including its website, Twitter feeds, official emails and Facebook accounts, are run in accordance with this policy.

The Club’s Director of Communications is accountable for the monitoring and management of the Club’s social media accounts and ensuring that all other social media administrators are aware of this policy and their responsibilities in monitoring and managing the same.

Age/Team Managers and Coaches

Information linked to fixtures and team selection should be by way of Pitchero and email. Late changes can be communicated by other media and should follow the guidance in this policy.

When Age/Team Managers set up and administer social media in order to communicate effectively with coaches for the purposes of coaching, team selection, fixtures etc., they are responsible for ensuring any communication is in line with this policy.

Similarly, when Age/Team Managers set up and administer social media in order to communicate effectively with a team, parents or guardians for the purposes of coaching, team selection, fixtures etc they are responsible for ensuring any communication is in line with this policy. It is suggested that only the manager and/or other appropriate person have posting rights on such an account.

The Age Group/ Team Managers retain ultimate accountability for the setting up, monitoring and management of the Age /Team group social media accounts and ensuring that any other manager/coach posting on those accounts are aware of this policy.

All online/text/telephone communication with children in the Minis teams should be through the parents or guardian (see safeguarding).

Communication with children in the Youth teams can be directly with the child so long as the parent or guardian is copied in and/or it is otherwise in accordance with this policy (see safeguarding).

Where there are emergencies there can be contact directly with the child but only when absolutely necessary.

Managers and coaches should ensure that all communications directly linked to the Club are in line with this policy.

Members

Save as set out above, no Club member may initiate a social media outlet that is directly linked and intended to be used by BSRFC members without the express permission of the Club Executive Committee or, for Mini or Youth matters, the respective Mini or Youth Committees or Chairmen.

Safeguarding

Particular care should be taken with regard to the use of social media in the context of BSRFC's Youth and Mini members. Care should be exercised when posting anything with regard to children (whether Club members or not) and consideration should be given as to whether such a post may harm a child, whether directly or indirectly. In particular, care should be taken:

- Not to disclose the personal information about a child, including but not limited to the child's name, address, or any information about a child's life, interests or activities, which would help a stranger target a child, or engage that child in conversation;
- Not to criticise or in any way demean or humiliate a child;
- When using/posting images or videos of children online, give regard to the fact that images can be downloaded and posted by others and ensure that such use is appropriate and does not make them vulnerable to contact by others or criticism.

You may wish to consider the following ways of addressing these risks:

- Use group images, rather than individual images wherever possible;

- For images of individual children, ensure consent is obtained from their parent or guardian whether by way of the registration process or otherwise;
- Only use images of children in suitable dress, to minimise the risk of inappropriate adaptation of the image;
- If a child is named on the site/group, do not include an image (individual or group). If a child features in an image on the site, do not use the child's first name or last name, either in text on the site or in the image file name.
- BSRFC will abide by all RFU recommendations regarding photo and video images and will obtain consent from the appropriate responsible person(s) before using any images of children or vulnerable adults on its website.

Many children now have access to mobile phones, tablets and other technology that allows them to communicate privately and take part in social media. It is noted that on many social media platforms children should be 13 or over, however, it is acknowledged that children younger than that will have access nevertheless and this should be borne in mind.

Particular care should be taken with any direct communication with a child, be it on the telephone, text message, email or on social media as, often, such communication is one-on-one. There is an increased risk to all concerned by such communication and it should be limited to matters which are necessary and not for general chat. If a child is under 13 then communication should be via the parent or guardian, for those over 13 the parent or guardian should be copied in or, if on the telephone, with prior consent of the parent or guardian. On social media, communication with children on closed groups should only be with the agreement of the parents and the Club. In particular:

- The communication should only be for valid Club/rugby reasons;
- No comments or content of a violent, sexual or hateful nature should be communicated;
- Care should be taken with images sent, which should only be for valid Club/rugby reasons;
- It should be recognised that children have a tendency to share/forward communications and images to others;
- Communication should not bully, criticise or put inappropriate pressure on children.

If you are in any doubt about any proposed communication with a child or one that has taken place, contact the Club's Safeguarding Officer.

The Club's safeguarding policy can be found on the website.

Use of Club Branding

The Club would like to remind members that the Club badge and other associated branding should not be used by anyone without prior written request being made to the BSRFC Executive Committee and approval given, via the Club Secretary. This includes using such branding on any social media platform.

General guidance

Members and officials are asked to use common sense when posting on social media covered by this policy, to post only content in line with the RFU's Core Values, The Club's Code of Conduct and to consider some general guidance for Club related social media:

- These are public forums, so treat them as such;

- Participants should clearly identify themselves;
- Pause before posting, it is sensible to consider the content and potential effect of what you are about to post;
- Members and officials are expected to show respect to others, including other members of BSRFC and the wider rugby community, and to act at all times within the core values of the game;
- Take care in disclosing your own personal information and do not disclose the personal information of anyone else without their express prior consent;
- Respect the rights and confidentiality of others;
- Do not use personal information, such as telephone numbers, email addresses or other personal contact details obtained through group emails or social media groups, without the express prior permission of the person whose information it is;
- Consider blind copying emails to all people within the group;
- Individuals and groups are strictly responsible for any posting on his/their account(s) and linking to, re-posting or re-tweeting inappropriate content may represent an endorsement of that content;
- 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;
- Should an administrator of the particular social media platform/group deem an article, post or comment contravenes this policy above it will be taken down at the earliest possible opportunity.

If you have access by way of administering email, text or social media to the personal information of

What may breach this policy

It is not acceptable, without good reason, to post, amongst others, items that may include inappropriate reference to a person's ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, faith, gender, sexual orientation or disability, and any member found to have posted such items may be subject to disciplinary action. Comments of this nature may also attract civil or criminal action against the author(s). In addition, any abuse of match officials, opposition, etc. may be deemed by the RFU to bring the game into disrepute and lead to disciplinary sanctions against both the author and/or the Club.

Cyber Bullying

All reports of cyber-bullying and other technology misuses relating to social media associated with the Club will be investigated fully and may result in notification to the police, where BSRFC is obliged to do so. Internal sanctions may include, but are not limited to, suspension, or banning from membership of BSRFC. The Club may also refer particular conduct on to the RFU. Members must be aware that, in certain circumstances, where a crime has been committed, they may be subject to a criminal investigation by the police over which BSRFC will have no control.

Reporting

If any Club member or official believes that this policy has been breached and wishes the Club to investigate then it should be reported to the Club's Manager of Discipline.

Sanctions

Any Club member or official breaching this policy may have their membership of the Club social media groups or platform suspended and could face disciplinary action from the Club, which could lead to suspension or expulsion from the Club and/or a referral to the RFU.