



## **Communication, Images and Social Networks**

With the increased use of technology (video, photographs, social media) in rugby it is important for clubs to adopt a policy in relation to the use of photographic images of Age-Grade Players. The use of any images on websites and publications has raised concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people. The issue is not to ban such technologies but rather to assess and limit the risk of harmful behaviour that may arise due to their use.

Clubs should consider the following when using any images of young players:

- Ensure parental/ guardian agreement for the use of images/ photographs – see Parental Consent agreement in Appendix One of the IRFU Safeguarding Policy.
- Issue consent/approval/accreditation is given prior to a major event for professional photographers
- Establish what information will accompany photographs/ images, try to use group photographs without identifying Age-Grade Players by name. Use group photographs, identifying the club rather than the individual. Use only images/photographs that are suitable

## **Mobile Phones**

Most children have the use of a mobile phone. This can be a good safety tool for keeping in contact with Age-Grade Players but as phones become 'pocket-computers' users need to be mindful of the risks that can also be associated with their use.

- Seek parental permission for communications (calls/text/photographs) by players and coaches//volunteers as a method of communication regarding club events.
- Encourage the use of group texting among players and parents to inform them of activities.
- Avoid prolonged non-rugby related text conversations.
- Constant communication with individual players is not necessary
- Allow sufficient time to get information to players/parents/guardians and agree suitable times to send messages so as to not interfere with family life, work or school.
- Encourage responsible use of phones (camera/video) in certain locations of the club (e.g. changing rooms/toilets)

Age grade players should be advised:

- If you receive an offensive photo, email or message, do not reply, save it, make a note of times and dates and tell a parent or the Club Welfare Officer within the club.
- Be careful about who you give your number to and do not respond to unfamiliar numbers.
- Consider changing your phone number in cases of abuse, bullying or harassment, discuss this with your parents
- Avoid using your phone in certain locations e.g. changing rooms - inappropriate use of a camera or phone may cause upset or offence to another person.
- Treat your phone as you would any other valuable item to guard against theft

Club Website

- Use a club website to post information regarding training times, fixtures and events.
- Agree a policy regarding match reports / photographs – who submits the information and who will monitor the content on the website?
- Establish a club policy regarding blogs and social interaction through the club website.

Social Networks (Facebook, Twitter, Bee Bo etc.)

- Clubs should encourage members to be responsible regarding club activities and players and establish a guideline policy for same.
- This form of communication may not be suitable to discuss matches, performances, the opposition and match officials.
- Clubs should ensure all members are aware of policies regarding interaction between adults and age-grade players through social network sites.
- Age Grade players should be advised to communicate only with persons they know directly through such sites.