

Online Safeguarding guidelines

The internet and computers have revolutionised the way we communicate and are a fantastic tool for use in Scouting. In a fast-changing environment we need to make sure we keep ourselves up to date, and risk assess our online activities as we would in the offline world. This helps to safeguard our members and ourselves. Remember what goes online stays online and our online lives can be accessed 24/7. As Scouts, Leaders and role-models that means we need to be aware of our digital footprints, and follow the yellow card all the time we are visible to our members, carers, and supporters.

1. Email.

Email is a useful way of keeping everyone informed and getting information out to members and supporters.

Here are some 'best practice' points to think about when using email.

- It is not advisable to use personal accounts to send Scouting emails. If you do use a personal account, think about the email address that you are using, and how it reflects your Scouting role.
- You could set up a Group account or email that has shared access, so that the email can be used by others, especially if a leader leaves. This is also useful if you are using email to contact young people, as others will have access to the account.
- If sending out an email to a large number of people, use 'blind copy' to avoid sending contact details to everyone, unless you have agreement to do this.
- You should not contact any Beavers or Cubs directly, communication should be via parents and carers
- If emailing a youth member (Scouts and Explorers), always copy another leader as well as the young person's parent or carer
- A good tip is to include general details of the intended recipients on the email (e.g. "To Parents and supporters" or "To all Unit members" so recipients know who has received the email.

2. Facebook and similar social 'friend' sites.

Facebook and similar sites are a great way to promote Scouting and your activities and to get involvement from members. Here's some best practice to keep in mind when using Facebook or any other social media that allows connections between users and the setting up of 'groups' or 'circles'

- Set up any Scouting resources using a 'shared' account with at least two administrators (it's a good idea for one of these to be your GSL or DC)
- Decide on the audience you want to address
 - Everyone: Use a 'fan page' for people to 'like' to publicise what you are doing and to promote Scouting
 - Youth Members: Have a 'closed group' for youth members to plan and discuss events (with more than one leader as administrator/moderator – the GSL, ADC or ACC would be a suitable extra leader). Never encourage Scouts to break age restrictions – so, at the moment, Facebook should not be used for members of the Scout section or below (and when youth members turn 18, they should leave an Explorer Facebook group unless they are continuing as a leader of that Unit).
 - Parents and Supporters: Use an open or a closed group. Be sure to moderate the group so that there is not unsupervised contact between adults and youth members (so a separate supporters group is sensible)
- Friends: If a youth member sends a 'friend' request to a leader, they should explain that it is not appropriate and the young person should be a member of the closed group rather than a 'friend' (to avoid one-to-one contact and inappropriate access to photos, friends of friends, etc.). Leaders should not send 'friend' requests to youth members.

- If an adult leader is using a personal account they should make sure that they are using the privacy setting and should be aware of what they post online. Leaders should remember that they will be visible as a Scout Leader to others that know them through Scouting and should conduct themselves accordingly. (This is why using groups rather than direct 'friending' is best practice).
- Beware of comments that are 'just a joke'. They may not be seen that way by the recipient.
- Stay up to date with security and privacy settings, especially as these constantly change on some websites like Facebook
- Do not use a direct messaging tool to contact young people on a one to one basis

3. Twitter

Twitter is a great way of broadcasting what is going on, reporting on live events (e.g. camps, for those at home to follow the action) and interacting with other Scouting people. It is not just a broadcast medium, if you use Twitter make sure you follow and respond to other users and engage with you audience. Again, points to remember:

- Set up a 'shared' account for your Group, Section or Event
- Do not use your personal account for Scouting unless that is all you are going to tweet about (make your feed private if you do not want to limit what you tweet)
- Never follow a youth member uninvited (unless related to them)
- Never DM (Direct Message) a youth member. If a youth member DMs you, take it to email and copy someone into the conversation
- Be aware of youth members following you and behave accordingly (again, this is where using a shared account is useful)
- Regularly check who is following you and block those who are inappropriate

4. Photographs (Flickr, Instagram, Facebook, Picasa and use in the press etc)

It is not illegal or prohibited to take or share photographs of young people. However, it is advisable to inform parents and carers that you may do this, and ask for permission. You could include this information in any 'welcome pack' for new members and on subsequent permission forms remind parents if photos are being taken and what you are going to do with them. That way parents have the opportunity to say if there is a reason they don't want their child photographed/published.

- Where possible, only identify young people by their first name (if at all). If it is necessary to publish a full name (the press will often not publish a story without full names, for instance) then parental consent should be sought.
- Make sure young people's modesty and dignity is preserved in any published photographs (including on-line) and that any image represents Scouting in a positive light (see the brand guidelines)
- Adults, especially Leaders, should never make derogatory, lewd or otherwise inappropriate comments on photographs and images of young people and discourage youth members from doing so

For further information on the use of photography and safeguarding, read the updated [support resources on the Scout Association website](#)

If you have any questions about the points raised here, or need assistance with communications or the internet for Scouting, contact the ACC Communications & PR, Stephen Way.

Please also refer to the factsheets –

<http://www.scouts.org.uk/factsheets/FS103011.pdf> (Social networking)

<http://www.scouts.org.uk/factsheets/FS330086.pdf> (Email & text messaging)