



1. Rationale

Websites are a key part of the daily operation of most clubs. They are probably the most flexible way to communicate with members, and to anyone interested in joining a club. They also have the potential to be a very safe way to communicate with children, given their wide accessibility. However, in the same way that a club has responsibility for the physical safety of a junior member when visiting the club's premises, that club must also ensure that there is nothing on its website which could harm a child, directly or indirectly. A club is responsible for the content of its website and also cannot distance itself from the content of any other websites, social media or weblogs it has linked to its own website.

This club policy is written around a framework of three overlapping areas:

- The Law

The legal constraints on websites include libel or defamation of character, and the criminal law concerning data protection and the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour.

- Child Protection

With a healthy mini/junior membership, there are also three main child protection risks associated with website content:

Inappropriate content (for example violent, sexual or hateful content). Although it is possible to impose restrictions on access, it is overwhelmingly likely that children will be able to access all areas of a club's website. Indeed, most clubs will positively want the website to generate interest among children. The risk applies both to text on the club's website, and on any linked websites;

Bullying. This could be material on the site which criticises or humiliates a child. It could also be information which places undue pressure on the child to participate in some aspect of a club's activities;

Disclosing personal information about a child to people accessing the website. This could be 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.

- The Regulations of the Rugby Football Union

5.12 Actions prejudicial to the interests of the game.



2. General Rules

Bicester Rugby Union Football Club will appoint webmasters, who will be responsible for posting all new content on the official BRUFC web pages (currently Rugby First and Pitchero). If a webmaster is in the slightest doubt as to a content suitability, they should not permit it to be posted, or should remove it if already posted, and defer the decision to the senior club committee as the final arbiter, who are ultimately responsible for the content of the club's internet presence.

- Webmasters will be members of the club, hold a current CRB certificate, have attended a Safeguarding Course and have their appointment confirmed by the senior club committee and recorded in their minutes.
- The webmasters will have access to all the club's websites and are authorised by the senior committee to remove inappropriate content. Therefore login account details must not be changed without the permission of the senior club committee, nor should accounts be deleted without permission from the senior club committee.
- Each webmaster will be responsible for the management of any content they authorise to be posted onto the club's websites, and will ensure that that content is updated regularly so that it remains fresh and relevant. Out-of-date and inaccurate content must be removed promptly.
- All web content must be checked that it is appropriate to be seen by children, and that it does not have the potential to bully, before it is included on the website.
- Where members of the public can email comments which would then appear on the website (often called a message board, or chatroom, or discussion forum) the content of these emails should be checked before appearing on the websites. Publication will not be automatic.
- If a webmaster receives any complaints about content, the content in question should be removed immediately, and reinstated only once the complaint has been resolved.
- Personal information about children over and above the child's name will not feature on the websites.
- Links to another website will not be placed on the club's website unless a webmaster has checked the site's content and is satisfied that the content is appropriate. The club acknowledges that it is good practice to discuss any proposed link with the owner of the other website, and obtain the owner's assurance that the linked site is designed to be suitable for children at all times of the day or night (some websites' content is different and more adult during the night). If the linked site has marketing content aimed at children, the webmaster should obtain a further assurance from the other website owner that it complies with ASA guidelines.
- The content of linked sites should be checked thoroughly at least once every 6 months and reported in the senior club committee minutes.

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- If the club learns of any concerns over the content of the linked site, it should investigate immediately. Unless it is clear that there is no need for concern, the link should be removed immediately, and any decision to restore only made after the concern has been investigated.



3. Photos and Video

Photos and video clips can make any child featured vulnerable to grooming if information about the child (name, address, activities or interests) is also disclosed. Furthermore, posting an image on the website carries a risk that the image could be taken and adapted for an inappropriate use.

The club will comply with the current RFU guidelines:

- Use group images, rather than individual images.
- For images of individual children (such as in action shots) where possible use models or illustrations.
- 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, 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.
- Parents (in this guidance, the term "parents" covers whoever cares for the child), and the child if old enough to understand, should be notified of the intended use of an image on the website. The image should not be used if the parents or the child object (a requirement of the Data Protection Act as well as good child protection practice), and ideally clubs should obtain positive written consent. Where a club regularly uses certain types of image, such as team photos or match photos, notification and a consent request should be included in the information given to junior members and their parents upon joining the club.
- If consent was given initially, but is subsequently withdrawn by parent or child, the image should be removed from the site.



4. Mobile and on-line communication with children

Technology is moving very fast in this area. There are now many different ways for people to communicate. In addition to land-lines, there are mobile phones for voice and text, and most new phones incorporate cameras that take still shots and video. Two-way video calling is set to grow fast. On-line communication can be by email, instant messaging, chatrooms, and social networking sites.

The risks posed by such methods of communication arise from:

- The privacy. It is usually one-to-one (often chatrooms have the facility for individuals to communicate 1:1 within the chatroom).
- The wide range of content that can be transmitted, including content of a violent, sexual or hateful nature.
- The ease with which images can be forwarded onto others.
- The difficulty in knowing truly who you are communicating with. Where grooming happens, it often involves this type of communication.

In sport, there are additional risks:

- Inappropriate pressure can be exerted by adults, particularly coaches, on children (such as to play when injured).
- There can be inappropriate criticism of a child's performance.
- An official position or role within a club, such as Coach, can carry with it a level of authority, and engender a level of trust, that facilitates the control of a child.
- Club Officials and Coaches will not communicate with individual children by text or on-line at any time, on any matter, unless there is an immediate risk to the welfare of that child which can be lessened by such contact.
- When communication by phone is needed, where possible Club Officials and Coaches should speak to the parent of a child.
- Club Officials and Coaches can speak to individual children on mobile phones provided they have prior consent from the child's parents, and from the child if old enough to understand.
- If the club needs to communicate club-related information to children by email (such as training or match details), it should use email groups comprising email addresses given by parents. Such club emails will only come from specific designated individuals, and children and their parents should know who these designated individuals are. Lists of the individuals within these groups (names only) should be publicised within the club, and easily available through the relevant team manager, a webmaster or from the senior club committee. Individuals must consent before they are included in the lists, and must be removed from the list if they wish to leave.



5. Guidelines for members using social networking media

Bicester RUFC recognises that some of its members will use social networking media for their own personal and private use, however:

- You must not use the Bicester Rugby Union Football Club logo or name without consent of the senior club committee.
- As a member of the club, you are bound by the RFU regulations concerning actions prejudicial to the interests of the game.
- If you identify yourself as a member of the club, you must make it clear that any opinions expressed are your own and do not reflect the position of the club.