



## English Schools' FA – Communicating responsibly with Under 18s:

### Communicating responsibly with Young Leaders, Coaches and Referees U18

Many young people play a significant role as young leaders, coaches, medics and referees for Associations. Their leadership role could create additional vulnerability if we do not ensure communications and interactions with adults are carried out appropriately both on and off the field and in the online environment.

They are likely to need to communicate frequently with other colleagues and the ESFA recognises that the use of social networking sites, forums and message boards may form an integral part of these communications and may be beneficial to their professional development with football. Making effective use of these mediums is a positive step as long as it's done appropriately.

It's important that we recognise they are not 'adults' and as such we have a responsibility to safeguard them as we do any other young person involved in football. Following this guidance will put in place helpful safeguards.

Read:

- The ESFAs 'Best Practice Guidance Social networking sites, mobile phones and email communications'
- Follow The FA/ESFAs 'Using Texts and Emails with U18s - Do's and Don'ts' guidance and
- 'Responsible use of social networking sites' guidance.

Referees/Coaches Contact details Mobile phone and email contact details for coaches and referees under the age of 18 should not be hosted on Web Pages that can be accessed by the general public and must be held securely and displayed within private areas for the purpose of the activities they are undertaking with the written permission of their parent/carer.

The ESFA recommends the following as best practice in relation to communication with 16-17 year olds who hold a position of trust and/or responsibility within football:

- Signed parental/carer consent should be given prior to email, social networking and mobile phone communications with young people holding a position of trust. Ideally the adult(s) who will be communicating in this way should be named.
- The purpose for the communication should be made clear.
- Both parties to only communicate for the purpose of the identified professional role(s)

- Email communications between the parties should copy in a named designated person (this could be parent/carer or Association Welfare Officer)
- Leagues appointing young referees to games should copy in another league official, parent or carer to their communications
- If any inappropriate communication or content is shared between an adult and an U18 this should be reported immediately to the Association Welfare Officer who, where necessary, will seek advice from their ESFA National Welfare Officer.

### **Communicating with U18 Referees**

Please Note: These referees may well be contacted by a variety of appointment secretaries or clubs seeking a referee for a game. Consequently it would be acceptable to indicate the role rather than the named individual(s) in this instance.

Further ESFA guidance is available on the following areas:

1. Social networking, websites, mobile phones, and email communications
2. Running a website - Do's and Don'ts
3. Responsible use of Social Networking sites
4. Communicating responsibly with Young Leaders, Coaches and Referees Under 18 5  
Using Texts and Emails with U18s – Do's and Don'ts
5. Guidance for parents/carers - Responsible use of text, email and social networking sites
6. Guidance for U18s using: Association Web Pages, Social Networks, Email and Texts

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