



ESMBA SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AUG 2022

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The ESMBA recognises the developing range of technologies used to interactively share, create, discuss issues and content as extremely positive.

We encourage individuals and communities to use social media to promote themselves, their clubs, their achievements, and the sport of Bowls.

However, the ESMBA will challenge anyone using social media either intentionally or by association to insult, slander, abuse, attempt to deceive or create a risk to personal safety to Individuals or the sport of short mat bowls.

This Policy provides guidance for all members, volunteers, Clubs and County Associations to help them understand the acceptable standards of use of social media in bowls. It sets out best practice designed to assist everyone in effectively using social media as well as understanding what the potential risks are and how these can be managed.

Social media presents a unique set of challenges for protecting personal safety as all information posted is available to the whole world, indefinitely. Generational differences in understanding the implications of what is being posted means that there are very different perceptions of risk operating.

Whilst people get great benefits from the online communities they belong to and the instant access they have to friends from across the world, they may need guidance for their safety as to what is acceptable and safe use. The use of social media to target individuals, whether for grooming, exploitation, or the increasing incidences of cyber bullying, has created a set of risks to vulnerable people which is a real challenge to manage. Everyone is creating potential risk to themselves when they post personal information.

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SECTION 2: PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of all is paramount when using the internet and social media.
- Provide all volunteers and members with the overarching principles that guide our approach to online safety.
- Ensure that as an organisation we operate in line with our values, codes of conduct and within the law in terms of how we use online devices.

This policy is to be read as applying to all forms commonly understood to be social media and used as such. This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the ESMBA Codes of Conduct and you are reminded that misuse of social media can result in disciplinary action being taken. Therefore, this policy statement applies to all volunteers, players, clubs and county associations involved in ESMBA activities.

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SECTION 3: DEFINITIONS

Social media is the collective of online communications and media channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction and content-sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, and social networking are among the different types of social media.

Young person is used to refer to any person below the age of 18.

Disciplinary Action Means action taken under the Disciplinary Policy of the ESMBA

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SECTION 4: GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE

As a general principle it is recommended that members have a webpage/profile which is used for their bowls involvement and that they keep their personal identity, pages and profile separate. Whilst there will always be grey lines between the two, having separate online identities should assist in focusing the mind on what is and what is not appropriate content and usage, before anything is posted.

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SECTION 5: SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION

- A person should not instant message anyone under the age of 18 directly if they hold a position of trust to them.
- Any group conversations should not be used as formal points of communication
- Any group conversation set up with U18s must have permission of their parent or guardian to proceed and should include the parent/guardian.
- Any group conversations should have at least 2 administrators in it.

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SECTION 6: EMAIL COMMUNICATION

- Emails with U18s should never be sent on a 1-to-1 basis. An additional club member should always be copied in as well as parents or guardians.
- Where possible send emails from a club account not a personal email account.
- If using a club email account, ensure that 2 people can access that account.

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SECTION 7: SOCIAL NETWORKS

- Those in a position of trust and young persons (U18) should not be “friending” or “following” each other, outside of the bowling relationship.
- Communications for bowls purposes should be through sites/identities which are public and managed by the club/County and not through personal accounts. Club /County accounts should have multiple administrators.

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SECTION 8: GUIDANCE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Do:

- Keep all information private.
- Restrict your profile, ensure that only people who you want to see your post can.
- Think carefully about what you are posting and from which account if you have both a personal and club account.
- Keep club/County pages to invite or private only, this way you can monitor who is on the page.

Don't:

- Add U18s if you are in a position of trust on your social media network.
- Message, react or comment on any U18s social media account.
- Post personal opinions as an administrator of an organisation page.
- Share any information with anyone you don't know personally.

Everyone needs to be mindful that:

Social media must not be used to insult, belittle, or criticise other teams, players, officials or volunteers.

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SECTION 9: EXPRESSING PERSONAL OPINIONS ONLINE

- Expressing your opinion is fine, being rude in the way you express it or expressing discriminatory views is not and could lead to the individual who posted the comment, anyone who forwards, 'likes' or similar, and the person with administration rights for the site used, being subject to disciplinary action or criminal investigation.
- Remove an offensive message or image as soon as possible, to reduce its impact.
- Be aware that by reposting or sharing other people's comments or posts it can be taken as you are adopting the views they have expressed, and you would be accountable for the content.
- Comments made should clearly be attributable to the individual and not to the club, County, or ESMBA.

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SECTION 10: GUIDANCE FOR CLUB/COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES

- Clubs setting up social media and webpages, are advised to ensure that they retain ownership and administration rights over that site. No one individual should have exclusive ownership or administration rights, including the Chair.
- The Club Safeguarding Officer must be informed about and involved in the administration of any site(s).
- All these people should be aware of the laws and good practice for protecting children from the potential risks of social media. [Keeping children safe online | NSPCC](#)
- The primary purpose of the site should be for promoting the club and the sport of short mat bowls and for communicating between members of the club.

- Privacy settings should be set so that members of the public cannot contact individuals from the club by first establishing a link with the club, via their webpage. A young person's (U18) social media account may link to the club page, but additional links between the pages of an adult and a young person, should not be made. Remember that privacy settings change frequently – keep them under review and update as necessary.
- Photos and tagging should be used with consideration for the safety implications which these bring. A photo of the team in play, without any tagging of individuals is fine but do not use tags as this allows people to be identified and then traced. Whenever a photo is going to be taken and used, make sure the individual knows and get parental consent as necessary.

All clubs should provide their members with guidance on the use of the club site and issue their members with Acceptable Use Agreements which can accompany the code of conduct, which the player, or parent / carer of a young person also signs.

Specific GUIDANCE FOR TEAM MANAGERS and GUIDANCE FOR PLAYERS is also available and can be accessed by clicking the links above.

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SECTION 11: REPORTING CONCERNS

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, as is creating and maintaining the high standards of behaviour expected of people in our sport. For these reasons, everyone is encouraged to report concerns of misuse or inappropriate usage of social media to the appropriate authority, within the world of bowls, or outside it. The first point of contact will usually be the Club Safeguarding Officer, or the Chair of the club. As mentioned above, the appropriate authority within the world of short mat bowls is the body with the power to take disciplinary action. Which level is the most appropriate will depend on the nature of the concern, but if it relates to a potential safeguarding issue, the matter must be reported to the Lead Safeguarding Officer at the ESMBA.

Threats of immediate harm or danger should be reported to the police and/or Children's Services or the Local Authority Designated Officer (where the concern relates to someone in a position of trust), contactable via your local authority or the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and reported to the Lead Safeguarding Officer at the ESMBA, following the 'Reporting a Concern' process.

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SECTION 12: USEFUL CONTACTS

There are several organisations who can provide advice and guidance on internet safety and usage, which have been referred to in the development of this policy. They are great resources to reference for the most up to date guidance.

- CPSU Online Safety
- UK Safer Internet Centre
- CEOP Safety Centre

Urgent cases should be referred to the Police and emergency services by calling 999.

NSPCC are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 0808 800 5000

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SECTION 13: GUIDANCE FOR COACHES & TEAM CAPTAINS USING SOCIAL MEDIA

We want to empower Team Managers and Coaches to utilise social media in a safe, sensible, and professional manner to promote bowls activity and avoid safeguarding issues.

The role of a coach is an important one, they are responsible for the welfare of the players and preparing for competition. This can be made all the easier by utilising social media to communicate with the players. There have been cases, however, where individuals have used it as a means of starting an inappropriate relationship, to bully or abuse. This can be avoided through effective management and implementing measures to safeguard users.

Clubs and coaches looking to use social media should consider the following points and should impose any reasonable measures they feel appropriate to uphold their own personal integrity and to promote the safety of their players:

- Set up a club/team specific profile page - encourage your players to join this page and openly share appropriate information only as part of the group. No private discussions should take place, particularly between an adult and a young player. Consider including parents in this too if you have U18 bowlers.
- Be responsible - lead by example; act as a bowls ambassador for your team/club, county and country
- Not all information is for sharing - this should only be bowls/team/club information. Nothing personal, private or inappropriate. Photos and videos may be fine, but only where relevant people have specifically consented to this, particularly if U18s are involved.
- Consider other users - will the posting cause offence? Is it appropriate for everyone who is on the site? A third-party moderator should be involved; they should be DBS checked.
- Not everyone should be your friend - Being personal friends on social media with any young people whom you coach, teach etc is considered inappropriate and must be avoided due to the position of trust you are in. Consider your security and privacy settings.
- Take action - Misuse, bullying or abuse should be reported to the Safeguarding Officer or LSO or to the ESMBA Committee. Misuse may contravene codes of conduct and be subject to disciplinary or legal action. If you do have any young players as personal friends, then the ESMBA strongly advises you to remove them from your profile.
- Sensible use - **Create a guide** and provide advice on appropriate use to your players. Consider type of content/information/topics and the removal of inappropriate content. Ensure you and your players think before posting to avoid any issues.
- Be transparent - Communications should only contain basic and relevant information, nothing personal or inappropriate. Copy in a third party to promote transparency, such as parents or the SGO.
- Parents/carers - should consent to and be aware that their children will be communicating with you through these tools. They should be encouraged to be included in these messages also.

This is not an exhaustive list, and any other reasonable measures should be taken to protect you and your players. Whilst the above is guidance for the use of social media, similar considerations should be given to the use of text messaging, emails and instant messaging to contact your players.

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SECTION 14: SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR PLAYERS

National team players are in a position of greater prominence than most players and, as such, they are the role models for acceptable standards of behaviour and this is as true for their use of social media, as it is for their everyday conduct.

We encourage players to use social media, and we have no desire to control what they do online. But the ESMBA can help them think about the possible advantages and pitfalls offered by social media.

There is always a need for professional conduct and the onus remains on players to positively promote the sport, the team, and the events. It is not just your personal reputation which is important you must also protect the ESMBA. Remember the overriding factor is that social media publications must not mislead or be used for bullying or other behaviour which breaks our codes of conduct.

Players should make it clear they are posting their own views, providing image/ video rights to the owner. They should not use the ESMBA logo.

- Always think carefully before posting. Just about everything you say online could eventually be read by anyone, including your grandmother or a prospective employer.
- It's important to review your privacy settings regularly on any social network. But it's also important to remember that it's possible that everything you send or post – even to your friends – could potentially become public. Once that has happened, it could be seen by anyone and everyone, forever. Once something starts to spread on the internet, it's impossible to control it, even once you've deleted the original. An ill-advised comment or photograph could still be popping up when someone searches for your name years from now – including potential employers. So check your privacy settings regularly, but also bear in the back of your mind that you can never be completely sure that what you post online will remain private.
- People will form their opinions based on your sporting performances, but also on other aspects of you that they see portrayed publicly. Used well, social media has the potential to give you the opportunity to build a reputation for being dedicated, interesting, positive and inspiring.
- As an elite player, you have rightly earned the respect of many others across the country, from grassroots competitors and club volunteers to elite coaches and your team-mates. You can use social media to reflect positively on yourself and on bowls. Don't comment negatively on others' professional performance, be they players, officials, or coaches.
- When you post online, make sure your facts are accurate and don't swear or engage in insulting behaviour. Don't be afraid to be yourself but do so respectfully.
- Through social media, you may find yourself talking to strangers with a level of familiarity you would usually reserve for people who know you well. Remember that people who don't know you personally are less likely to pick up on the context of your comment, or to know when you're joking/being flippant. Never post anything that's rude, abusive, or discriminatory.
- Although using social media often feels like a relaxing thing to do, be aware of the effect it may have on your mental wellbeing and your performance. If you have had a high-profile disappointment, it is a good idea to resist the temptation to go online straight afterwards. Wait until the strongest emotions have subsided so you can reflect, and post with a clear head. [\[RETURN\]](#)

SECTION 15: SELF RESPONSIBILITY

The ESMBA can provide advice and guidance on using social media, but at the end of the day it's up to you individually to take responsibility for your online reputation. Make it clear that your posts are your own opinions, and not those of the ESMBA, and own what you say with pride.

Remember that you too have a responsibility to report any posts which contravene the standards expected by the ESMBA's Code of Conduct and this guidance. Anyone reporting a concern, or who is the subject of such a report, will be given advice on the procedures which are used to tackle these issues.

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