



Electronic Communications & Social Media Policy

NEWPORT COUNTY AFC

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Updated by	Shaun Bowden
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1. Electronic Communications & Social Media

Newport County Association Football Club's commitment to safeguarding exists both on the field of play and in the wider context and operation of the Club. Coaches, club officials, volunteers, and others in a position of trust in football need to act responsibly both on and off the field. This includes the use of electronic communications and social internet interaction.

Clubs and leagues that set up websites and use web-based applications have a responsibility to ensure safeguards are in place. Clubs are responsible for ensuring all content hosted on their websites, social network areas and any associated message boards or blogs abide by the Rules and Regulations of The English Football League (EFL) and The Football Association (FA).

Newport County AFC engages with its supporters daily via our social media channels and website.

We predominantly use X (Twitter), Facebook and Instagram to keep our fans updated on club and team matters, provide live breaking news, match reports, and share club videos and images.

Newport County AFC welcomes feedback from supporters via our social media channels. We greatly value such engagement and interaction which you can share via fanfeedback@newport-county.co.uk

We also appreciate supporters are entitled to voice their criticisms of the club when appropriate. However, as a family and community club, we will not tolerate social media comments that are threatening, abusive, discriminatory, insulting or that contain obscene language, irrespective of whether such comments are aimed at other supporters, the club, its staff, or volunteers.

In such circumstances, we will take appropriate action against the individuals concerned. This may include temporary or permanent bans from the club's social media pages, and user accounts being reported to the relevant authorities, as well as potential temporary and permanent Rodney Parade stadium bans. In extreme cases, the club will not hesitate to involve the police and the courts.

Electronic communications and social media use include, but is not limited to:

- Maintaining a profile page on social or business networking sites (such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Content sharing using sites such as Flickr (photo sharing) and YouTube (video sharing)
- Commenting on blogs or vlogs for personal or business reasons
- Leaving product or service reviews on retailer sites or customer review sites
- Taking part in online votes and polls
- Taking part in conversations on public and private web forums (message boards)
- Editing a Wikipedia page.

The web is not anonymous. Newport County Association Football Club, coaches, directors, office staff, volunteers and supporters should assume that everything they write online, especially in open forums, can be traced back to them. Individuals should be aware that they may be personally liable to prosecution, and open to claims for damages, should your actions be found to be in breach of the law. In cases of harassment, a claim that you had not intended to harass or cause offence will not in itself constitute an acceptable defence.

This policy applies to all players, coaches, directors, staff, volunteers and supporters of Newport County Association Football Club.

Newport County AFC abide to the following policy measures to ensure safeguarding exists within the realms of electronic communication and social media engagement:

The Club

1. Refrain from publishing comments about other clubs, players, or referees and any controversial or potentially inflammatory subjects.
2. Avoid hostile or harassing communications in any posts or other online communications. Harassment is the act of systematic and/or continued unwanted and annoying actions of one party or a group, including threats and demands.
3. Abstain from comments based on a person`s race, sex, gender identity, national origin, colour, disability, age sexual orientation, marital status, religion, or any other status identified by The Equality Act 2010.
4. Identify all copyrighted or borrowed material with citations and links. When publishing direct paraphrased quotes, thoughts, ideas, photos, or videos, give credit to the original publisher or author.
5. Regarding any website, blog, chat room, video-sharing site, bulletin board or other social media that promotes the Club, the Club accepts responsibility for reviewing responses to online posts and resolving any concerns about the propriety of the responses before they are posted.
6. If a blogger or any other online participant posts an inaccurate, accessory, or negative comment about the club or anyone associated with the club, the Club shall not respond to the post and contact The Club`s Chief Operating Officer for guidance/advice.

Employees

1. Do not post personal remarks in relation to the management or operation of the Club, club officials, match officials, children, parent/carers or opposition teams, or any family members of those groups.
2. Do not use text or emails for personal exchanges, sending pictures, jokes or other items of a personal nature or engage in any `banter` or comments with or about any other person at this club.
3. Do not use internet or web based mobile phone apps, or other form of communications, to send personal messages to a child or young person. Only Microsoft Teams messages to Scholars will be permitted, though the majority of communications should go through group communications .
4. Refrain from responding directly to emails or texts from young people. In these instances, it is recommended that a colleague is copied into an email, and/or the U18 parent if appropriate and safe to do so, for safeguarding purposes.
5. Under no circumstances should language that is directly (or could be misinterpreted as being) racist, sexist, derogatory, threatening, abusive or sexualised in tone, be used in any electronic communication or post.
6. Do not accept as a friend, or friend request on social networking sites, any academy players or any person employed or volunteering at the club who is under the age of 18.

7. Do not share your own personal social networking sites with children or young people involved at the football club or ask them to be your 'friend'.
8. Do not contact children or young people known through football, outside of the football context on social networking sites.
9. Do not use the Club's official communication platforms to make posts or comments of a personal or non-footballing nature.

Players

1. Must not post, host, text or email communications that are hurtful, insulting, offensive, abusive, threatening, or relating to the protected characteristics noted in The Equality Act 2010.
2. Should not make personal comments in relation to the management or operation of the club, club officials, match officials, players, opposition team member(s), or any family members of those above.
3. When engaging with fans, be it of Newport County AFC, any other club, or the sport as a whole, players must not be, or be perceived to be insulting, threatening, abusive or inciting, as well as following the aforementioned guidelines surrounding protected characteristics.
4. Must not bring (or be perceived to bring) Newport County Association Football Club or the sport and any affiliated governing bodies into disrepute.
5. Must not give out personal details online including mobile numbers, email addresses or social networking account access, regardless of whether they are your own or a separate individual.
6. Posts must not contain, nor link to, pornographic or indecent content.
7. Must not reveal information about training, fixtures, contractual agreements, or any other player or club operational details and procedures using social media posts.
8. Must not post information pertaining to the Club, its employees, other clubs and wider employees of governing bodies and the sport as a whole, which the Player knows to be false, inaccurate or exaggerated.
9. Ensure that the intellectual property and brand of Newport County AFC and its partners, sponsors and associations in which Newport County AFC are members are not compromised or bought into disrepute from posts or comments made across social platforms. If in doubt when using brand imagery, slogans, and other property, please consult with the Club's Media Manager.
10. Must not use official Newport County AFC materials, intellectual property or copyrighted material to promote personal projects, without the prior written consent of the Media Manager.
11. As well as direct communications, care must be taken to avoid any affiliation with posts or comments which breach any of the above noted guidelines. This includes 'likes', 'retweets' or any other form of redistribution or approval of such communications or interactions.

Parent Guidance

1. Know who the Club's Senior Safeguarding Manager is and how to contact them if you have any concerns about the content of club web pages or in relation to the welfare of their child. This information can be found on the Club website or can be asked by phoning or emailing the Club.

2. Ensure they are aware of how coaches, managers and other members of the club should communicate with your child.
3. Become familiar with the Club's communication practices. If the club uses text messages or emails as a source of communication, they may request to be copied into anything sent to their child.
4. Show an interest in the communications between the Club, parents and their child. Open communication about club activities/issues often means that concerns are picked up early and issues can be resolved in a swifter and more efficient manner.
5. Familiarise themselves with both the FA and The Football League's guidance for clubs in relation to websites, text messaging and social networking sites.
6. Ensure their child understands that they should tell someone that they trust about communications that make them feel uncomfortable or when they've been asked not to tell their parent/carer or coach about the communication.
7. Inform the club's Senior Safeguarding Manager as soon as possible if they or their child receives any inappropriate communication from any member of staff/volunteer or other person associated with the club, and they should try to save the communication.
8. Do not use social media to speak ill of the Club or any staff or associates, or to comment on players, training or matches.
9. Remember as a parent/carer of a child at the Club, they are responsible for them and their child abiding by the club policy, The Football League Policy Guidance and The FA Rules and Regulations regarding comments online about the club or club officials, The Football League, players, managers, match officials, opposing teams players or family members of any of those groups.

Online abuse is a growing and worrying trend in professional sport. Vile abuse of club players, staff or volunteers can have a significant impact on individuals and their families and Newport County AFC has a duty of care to all those who work, play or volunteer for our club. We remain extremely appreciative of the magnificent support the club receives from Exiles fans and recognise the issues referred to in this statement relate to a tiny minority of social media users. Nevertheless, it is important that the club makes its position clear on these matters for the benefit of our players, staff and volunteers, and most of our fantastic supporters.

Should an individual attached to the club be in receipt of any online abuse, the following steps will help to gain help and support:

- Do not delete the messages or images. Please save them as these can be used as evidence if necessary.
- Consider blocking the user straight away, as this will stop further messages/images reaching you.
- Please report the abuse as soon as possible to a member of the Senior Management or Safeguarding Team.

Aim to protect your children and young people from the outset:

- Ensure that you know how to set your privacy settings on each app/social media site.
- Always ensure that your location is switched off.
- Do not post pictures on your social media account that may determine the area in which you live or the school that you attend.
- Ensure that you give your permission for that photograph to be taken and shared of yourself.

- Consider your future when posting on social media. You will set a digital footprint that will last forever and could affect future career opportunities.
- Consider the minimum age of use for social media apps.
- Parents/Carers – please use safeguarding sites such as Ineqe, SafeToNet, National Online Safety and ThinkUKnow, which have a number of resources which show you how to set privacy settings and some offer some great parental control apps.
- Contact your internet provider as they can help to limit access on certain devices in your home or between certain times.
- Common Sense Media will also help you to keep up to date on the latest apps that young people may be using and the recommended age ratings.
- If you are uncomfortable with how someone has been communicating with you online, or have sent sexual images, you can also report this directly to CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command) <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>
- <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> have a host of resources and advice available, along with age-appropriate games for your young people to learn about keeping themselves safe online.

If you are concerned about the behaviour of any member of staff, volunteer, player or spectator, please contact a member of the Senior Management or Safeguarding Team, who will investigate concerns further.

A breach of this policy will be considered by senior management. All reports of cyberbullying and other technology misuses will be investigated fully and may result in notification to the police where Newport County Association Football Club is obliged to do so. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to verbal warning, written warnings, suspension, or banning/termination from Newport County Association Football Club. Everyone must be aware that in certain circumstances where a crime has been committed, they may be subject to a criminal investigation by the police over which Newport County Association Football Club will have no control.

Senior Safeguarding Manager

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