

Social Media & Digital Communications Policy

Including WhatsApp, Instagram and SportMember

Policy owner	Scottish Touch Board / Safeguarding Lead
Applies to	Players, coaches, officials, volunteers, staff, parents/carers and representatives

Purpose and principles

Scottish Touch supports the appropriate use of digital communications and social media to organise activity, communicate with participants and parents/carers, build team culture, celebrate achievement and promote Touch in Scotland. These benefits must be balanced with safeguarding, privacy, reputation and the wellbeing of everyone involved.

This policy brings together Scottish Touch expectations for official social media, junior-player communications, group messaging and parental consent. It applies whenever an individual is communicating on behalf of Scottish Touch, using an official Scottish Touch channel, or where their conduct online has a clear connection to Scottish Touch activity.

Core expectations

- Protect children and young people: particular care must be taken with anyone under 18.
- Use approved organisational or group channels wherever possible rather than private one-to-one messaging.
- Communicate respectfully and professionally. Bullying, harassment, discrimination, sexualised content, threats, abuse, humiliation and deliberate harm are not acceptable.
- Think before posting or sending. Digital content can be copied, forwarded, screenshot or shared without context.
- Respect privacy, confidentiality, consent and personal information.
- Raise concerns promptly and preserve relevant evidence where a safeguarding or conduct issue arises.

Approved platforms and their purpose

Platform	Primary purpose	Scottish Touch expectation
SportMember	Official team administration and logistics	Preferred channel for schedules, availability, attendance, team information and other routine organisational communication.
WhatsApp	Time-sensitive group communication and tour/team	Use official group chats administered by nominated

Platform	Primary purpose	Scottish Touch expectation
	logistics	Scottish Touch adults. Junior safeguards in this policy apply.
Instagram / Facebook (Meta Products)	Public-facing marketing, news and celebration	Posts on official accounts must be approved by authorised account holders and must comply with media-consent requirements.

Official accounts and administration

- Official Scottish Touch social media accounts and team accounts must be created or authorised by Scottish Touch and not treated as the personal property of an individual volunteer or coach.
- Access should be limited to nominated account administrators. Login details must be stored securely and access removed when a person leaves the role.
- Each junior or representative team using public-facing social media should have a nominated media lead or authorised administrator who is responsible for vetting content before publication.
- Account administrators must know which under-18 participants do and do not have parental/guardian media consent before posting identifiable images, video or reports.
- Where a player submits content for an official account, the authorised media lead must review it before publication.

Communicating with children and young people

Digital communication with under-18 participants must be open, transparent and connected to legitimate Scottish Touch activity. Adults in positions of trust must avoid communications that could create secrecy, dependency, blurred boundaries or the appearance of inappropriate conduct.

- Wherever possible, use SportMember or an official team/group communication channel.
- For U15 and U18 squads, a parent or person with parental responsibility should be included in relevant WhatsApp groups alongside the player where the player uses WhatsApp.
- Scottish Touch should not require an under-18 player to create a WhatsApp account. If the player does not use WhatsApp, the parent/carers must receive the relevant information through the approved channel.
- Difficult, sensitive, disciplinary, welfare, selection or safeguarding conversations should not be conducted with a young person through a group chat or informal direct-message exchange. Use an appropriate formal process and include another responsible adult where necessary.
- Avoid unnecessary private one-to-one messaging between an adult in a position of trust and an under-18 participant. Where direct contact is operationally necessary, keep it brief, factual and transparent, and copy/include a parent/carers or another authorised adult where practicable.

- Do not use disappearing-message functions, secret chats or personal social media accounts to conduct Scottish Touch business with junior players.

WhatsApp group guidance

WhatsApp may be used for selected squads, camps, tours and other time-sensitive operational communication. Groups should exist only for a defined Scottish Touch purpose and period.

- Groups must be set up or authorised by Scottish Touch and administered by the Head Coach, Assistant Coach, Team Manager or another nominated adult.
- Contact details used to establish the group should come from Scottish Touch membership or team records, not from informal third-party lists.
- Group membership should be limited to people who need the information for the activity concerned.
- Posts should relate to team logistics, agreed team culture or other legitimate Scottish Touch matters.
- No member may use a group to bully, harass, defame, discriminate against, humiliate or intentionally cause harm to another person.
- Do not share confidential medical, safeguarding, disciplinary or personal information in a group chat.
- Administrators may remove content or participants where necessary to protect welfare, maintain appropriate conduct or close the group at the end of its purpose.
- Groups should be closed or archived when the relevant squad, camp, competition or tour has finished and there is no continuing operational need.

SportMember guidance

SportMember is Scottish Touch's preferred organisational platform for routine team administration and logistics. Using a central platform reduces unnecessary private messaging and provides a clearer record of team information.

- Use SportMember for fixtures, training schedules, availability, attendance, event information, reminders and other routine team logistics wherever practical.
- Only collect and display information that is necessary for the relevant Scottish Touch purpose.
- Access should be role-based and removed when it is no longer needed.
- Coaches and managers should avoid transferring personal information from SportMember into informal chats unless operationally necessary.
- Safeguarding concerns, sensitive medical details, complaints and disciplinary matters should be handled through the appropriate confidential Scottish Touch process rather than posted in team feeds or general messages.

Instagram and public social media

- Only authorised individuals may post through official Scottish Touch or team accounts.
- Content should promote Touch positively and must not undermine the reputation, safety or dignity of participants, officials, volunteers, opponents or partner organisations.

- For identifiable under-18s, check that the necessary parent/guardian media consent has been obtained before publication.
- Where consent has not been granted, reasonable steps must be taken not to publish identifiable images or personal reports about that young person.
- Do not publish unnecessary personal information such as home addresses, personal telephone numbers, school details, travel-room allocations or information that could create a safeguarding risk.
- Where practical, avoid identifying a child by full name alongside information that unnecessarily reveals their exact location or routine.
- Official accounts should not engage in hostile arguments, discriminatory discussion or inappropriate direct messaging.

Photography, video and parental/guardian consent

Scottish Touch wants to celebrate participation and achievement while respecting the wishes of families. For participants under 18, media use must follow the consent arrangements adopted by Scottish Touch.

- Parents/guardians should be told how Scottish Touch may use photographs, video and written reports, including use on Instagram, the Scottish Touch website and other official promotional channels.
- Consent should be recorded in the approved Scottish Touch consent process and made available to the relevant Team Manager or media lead.
- Parents/guardians may decline media consent. Scottish Touch will respect that decision and take reasonable steps to prevent identifiable use by Scottish Touch-controlled channels.
- Players must not assume that another player has media consent. Content intended for an official team account should be passed to the authorised media lead for review.
- Event organisers, broadcasters or independent third parties may operate their own media arrangements. These should be addressed separately where relevant.

Standards for players, coaches, volunteers and parents/carers

Everyone connected with Scottish Touch is expected to apply the same standards online that would be expected in person.

- Do not bully, insult, threaten, harass, discriminate against or deliberately embarrass another person.
- Do not post or forward offensive, sexualised, abusive, discriminatory or humiliating content.
- Do not share private team, medical, safeguarding, selection or disciplinary information without authority.
- Do not impersonate Scottish Touch or present personal opinions as official Scottish Touch statements.
- If asked by an authorised Scottish Touch representative to remove content connected with Scottish Touch because it breaches this policy or creates a safeguarding concern, do so promptly.
- If you make a genuine mistake, remove or correct the content promptly and, where appropriate, apologise.

Concerns, harmful content and evidence

If a player, parent/carer, coach, volunteer or official receives or sees online content that is threatening, abusive, sexual, discriminatory, bullying or otherwise concerning, they should tell an appropriate Scottish Touch adult or safeguarding contact as soon as possible.

- Where safe to do so, preserve evidence before deleting or blocking content - for example by taking a screenshot or saving the message, date, time and account details.
- Do not circulate harmful content more widely than necessary to report the concern.
- Immediate danger or suspected criminal conduct should be referred to the appropriate emergency service or Police Scotland.
- Safeguarding concerns should be handled under Scottish Touch safeguarding procedures. Other conduct issues may be addressed through the relevant complaints, disciplinary or code-of-conduct process.

Breaches of this policy

A breach may result in content being removed, account access being withdrawn, removal from a group, a safeguarding response, a complaint or disciplinary process, or other proportionate action. Serious concerns may be referred to statutory authorities or other relevant organisations.

Data protection and retention

Personal information shared through digital platforms must be handled in accordance with Scottish Touch data-protection and privacy requirements. Administrators should only retain information for as long as it is needed for the purpose for which it was collected, subject to any safeguarding, complaint, legal or record-retention requirements.

Policy review

This policy should be reviewed periodically and when Scottish Touch introduces a new communication platform, materially changes its safeguarding arrangements, or relevant legal, regulatory or platform requirements change.