



Safeguarding  
in Sport



# Communicating Online or Electronically **with Children and Young People in Sport**

JUNE 2023

## Introduction

Most adults who work with children and young people in sport do so to make a positive contribution to their development and enjoyment. However, there are a minority of adults who will become involved in sport to gain access to children and young people with the intention to harm them. For the purpose of this document, the reference to children and young people refers to any person under the age of 18.

A potentially abusive adult will seek to have one-on-one communication with a child/young person, separate from adults, parents, and peers. They do this to build trust and a relationship with the child/young person in order to abuse them. This is referred to as grooming.

To protect children and young people from the danger of abuse, all electronic and/or online communication between an adult and a child or young person should follow these rules:

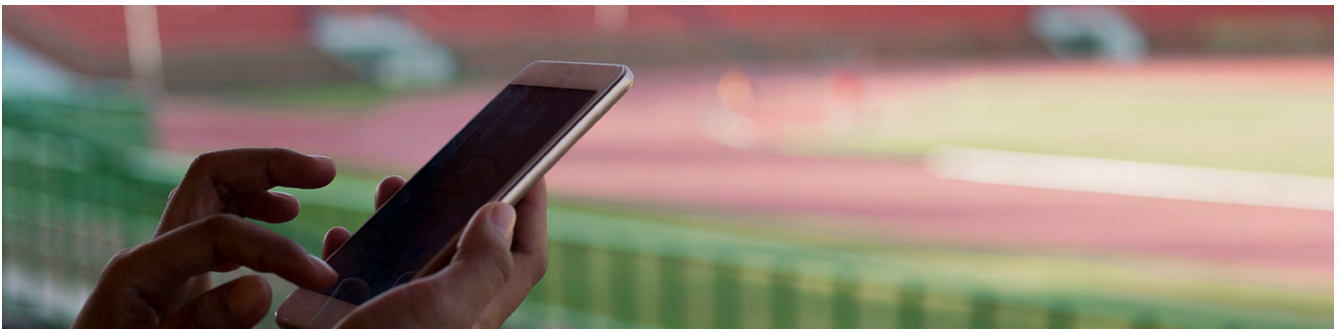
- Do not send one-on-one messages between an adult and a child or young person.
- Any electronic and/or online communication sent by sport personnel to a child or young person should include a parent/carer and a representative from the organisation.
- All electronic and/or online communication that is sent by the sport, whether it be from a coach, team manager or any other official of the organisation, must ensure that the content is directly related to their official role (e.g., a coach informing everyone that there has been a change of game time or training.)
- Teams should use sport specific communication apps (e.g. Team App) where possible to communicate with groups and teams for the purpose of their role.
- Adults should not add, friend, or follow children or young people on social media apps.

Adopting these practices provides open and transparent communication process, so that there is no misunderstanding relating to any communication undertaken with a child or young person.



## Requirements of the Organisation

- Ensure that the expectations around communications with children and young people is clearly outlined to all staff and volunteers appointed to your organisation.
- At the time of joining the organisation, inform parents/carers and children and young people of communication process that will be implemented. This may occur at a welcome meeting and/or be included in a welcome pack.
- Ensure that the organisation has a social media policy and that this is shared with everyone involved in your organisation. The social media policy should include reference to team officials not accepting, requesting, or following children or young people on social media accounts.
- Review communication processes every 12-18 months.
- Ensure officials, parents/carers and children and young people are aware of how to report concerns and/or complaints regarding communication.
- Address any complaints/concerns in accordance with the organisation's complaints procedure.



## Requirements of Appointed Officials

When communicating electronically and/or online with children and young people in your role as an appointed official (coach, team manager, administrator, etc) you are required to:

- Include an organisation representative and a parent/carer in all communication. Communication should not occur only with the child or young person.
- Ensure parents/carers and children and young people are informed of the communication process to be implemented. This may be outlined in the organisation's welcome pack, but it is appropriate to reinforce these expectations.
- If a child or young person contacts you outside of your official role, you must inform the parent/carer and your sport and in a kind manner, remind the child or young person of the communication process.
- If the child or young person is contacting you due to difficulties they are experiencing in the home, and it is reasonable to suspect that a child or young person is or is at risk of, being abused or neglected, you must act and follow the Responding to Child Abuse Allegations information as outlined in your sports Child Safeguarding Policy.
- Abide by your sport's social media policy.
- Do not request, accept, or follow children or young people on social media platforms.

## Responsibilities of Parents/Carer

- Talk to your child/children regarding how to appropriately contact their coach or an official.
- Reinforce that they should not be communicating with officials online and/or electronically without your knowledge or being part of the conversation.
- Ask your sport if they have a social media policy, and if they do, request a copy of the policy, and discuss the requirements of the policy with your child/children.
- If you become aware of any inappropriate communication, report it to your sport immediately.
- If you become aware that your child is experiencing cyber bullying, report it to the platform in which it is occurring for the harmful content to be removed. If no action is taken within 48 hours of it being reported to the platform, it can be [reported to the e-safety commission](#).
- If the cyber bullying relates to individuals from the sport, it should also be reported to the sport.

## Responsibilities of Children and Young People

- When you communicate electronically with an official from your sporting organisation include a parent/carer in any communication.
- If an adult from your sport (coach, team manager, physio) communicates with you about things that do not involve your sport, tell your parent/carer.
- If an adult from your sport asks you to keep communication a secret, tell your parent/carer.
- If you are feeling uncomfortable about a conversation that you have had, talk to your parent/carer.
- Follow your sport's social media policy and code of conduct.
- Do not request or accept to follow team officials on social media platforms.
- If you are experiencing cyber bullying, report it to the platform in which it is occurring for the harmful content to be removed. If no action is taken at least within 48 hours of it being reported to the platform, it can be [reported to the e-safety commission](#).



## Further Resources

### For Sport Organisations

[Training for peak sporting organisations and clubs | eSafety Commissioner \(https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/corporate-community-education/sporting-organisations-clubs\)](https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/corporate-community-education/sporting-organisations-clubs)

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-09/creating-an-esafe-team-culture-for-organisations-head-of-sport.pdf>

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-09/promoting-an-esafe-club-culture-checklist.pdf>

### For Parents

[Parents | eSafety Commissioner \(https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents\)](https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents)

### For Young People

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people>

### For Children

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/kids>



## Safeguarding in Sport

### CONTACT INFORMATION

To enquire, provide feedback or reproduce the contents of the document please contact:

#### **Sport Integrity Australia Safeguarding**

PO Box 1744

Fyshwick ACT 2609

[safeguarding@sportintegrity.gov.au](mailto:safeguarding@sportintegrity.gov.au)

Safe Sport Hotline: 1800 161 361

Enquiries: 1300 027 232

[WWW.SPORTINTEGRITY.GOV.AU](http://WWW.SPORTINTEGRITY.GOV.AU)