

Guidance on the use of electronic communication

Mobile phones, text messaging, e-mail and other forms of electronic communication, have become a regular feature of the sporting landscape and there is a need to define what is and what is not permissible when communication is required between adults and children or young people.

The purpose of this guidance is to provide a recommendation of best practice to aquatics teachers, coaches and those in a position of trust regarding:

- The use of mobile phones whilst having responsibility for the supervision and safety of young people.
- Direct communication between coaches or teachers and young members of the organisation via mobile phones and e-mail.

Most mobile phones can gain access to the internet and the guidance on the use of social networking found on p. 72 applies to phones as well as tablets, laptops, desktop computers or other applicable devices.

Phoning, texting or e-mailing a young person

- Coaches and teachers should not personally hold the mobile phone numbers or e-mail addresses belonging to young members of the organisation.
- Coaches can hold the phone numbers and e-mail addresses of members' parents with their consent, in order to get messages to members. It is then the responsibility of the parent to inform the child of the message.
- In limited circumstances, it may be necessary for coaches, team managers or chaperones to have mobile phone contact details of the members, e.g. at an away camp for safeguarding reasons. In such circumstances, the individual holding the contact details must be DBS checked, have undertaken appropriate safeguarding training and have the consent of each member's parent or guardian to temporarily hold that information for the purpose of the event. The members' phone numbers should then be deleted after the event.

- Organisations and/or coaches may wish to have the ability to contact members on a group basis. This may be required in order to inform members of changes to training or lesson times, for example. It is recommended that organisations develop a secure page on their website for this purpose, which is open for members to view and is accessible through a variety of devices such as mobile phones, tablets and laptops. This page could be accessed by either the member themselves, or by their parent if preferred, as no direct one-to-one contact is available to individual members.
- Coaches of elite athletes under 18 but over 16 may, with the consent of the athlete's parent or guardian, use text messaging or e-mail to communicate with the athlete for training and competition purposes only. It is recommended that such communications are also copied to a parent or guardian to safeguard the member **and** the coach.

Use of a mobile phone by coaches and teachers

- Coaches and teachers should not take or make calls whilst supervising young members in a teaching or training session. It is permissible for a coach to make or take a call during an event, providing they are not the sole supervisor of the members and are not actively engaged during warm up or swim down at the time of the call.
- Coaches who have mobile phones with camera facilities must fulfil the obligations set out in the ASA Photography Guidance on p. 76.
- Whenever mobile phones are taken into changing rooms, the camera facility must not be used. See the ASA Changing Room Policy on p. 65.
- The publishing of a photograph of a member under 18 years should only be done with the parent's consent and it should be noted that parents and guardians have the right to refuse to have their child photographed. See parental consent/refusal of consent forms on pp. 116–117.
- If a photograph is taken for publication, it should adhere to the guidance provided in the ASA Photography Guidance on p. 76. Details which identify the individual in the photograph, such as full name, place of residence or school attended, should not be given alongside the photograph.



- In the event of a member showing a teacher or coach a text message or image which is considered to be inappropriate for a child to have, the teacher/coach must advise the nominated person at the organisation, most likely the welfare officer.

Coaches aged 18 to 21

The ASA recognises that many young coaches aged 18 to 21 will have been members themselves before becoming a coach, and will be friends with their fellow members, some of whom will still be between the ages of 16 and 17. It is therefore plausible that they will have the personal contact details for those members. The ASA accepts it would be inappropriate to require young coaches to remove the details of those members from their contact lists.

Therefore, in such cases:

- If a coach aged 18 to 21 had phone and/or e-mail details who were/are swimmers aged between 16 and 17 prior to undertaking the role of coach, the ASA does not expect them to remove those members from their contact list.
- However, the coach is advised to inform the welfare officer and the head coach.
- The head coach should make every effort to ensure the coach is not the primary coach for those specified young persons except on an occasional basis.

