



Bridgwater & Albion RFC Social Media Policy

Social Media Policy

Introduction

Members of Bridgwater & Albion RFC enjoy the opportunities and rewards of a community-based sports club combined with affiliation to county and national rugby union associations. It is subsequently expected that members will uphold the ethos of the Club in all social media interactions. Members will not act in such a way that the image of Bridgwater & Albion RFC is brought into disrepute nor in a way that harms it's immediate and wider rugby community.

Purpose

With social media a prominent method of communication for the Club, where we can express opinions, and is a key way we engage with the members of our club, along with the wider community, it is important for us to have a policy to demonstrate how we ensure we are represented in a suitable way and can take action should the need arise. We are taking this opportunity to remind our members of the importance of ensuring that all our social networking streams should be used thoughtfully and responsibly.

Defining Social Media

We have several social media sources, examples can include those below, but this does not constitute an exhaustive list:

- Facebook groups (different sections or teams in the Club).
- Facebook pages (different sections or teams in the Club).
- Twitter
- Instagram.
- LinkedIn.
- WhatsApp

There are many others which are not named here, but these should all be considered to be electronic communication where individuals can interact online, be it within applications or on web pages, where the banner includes the Club's name or branding, in part or in full.



Bridgwater & Albion RFC Social Media Policy

Content

While the Club positively encourages social networking among members, we are mindful of the need to ensure that all content is suitable for publication and does not breach any laws or common decency. It is not acceptable to post, amongst others, items that may include reference to a person's ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, faith, gender, sexual orientation or disability, and any member found to have posted such items will be subject to disciplinary action. Comments of this nature may attract civil or criminal action against the author(s). In addition, any abuse of match officials, opposition etc may be deemed by the RFU to bring the game into disrepute and lead to disciplinary sanctions against both the author and/or the Club. Participants should be aware that comments which bring the game into disrepute, or are threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting, may lead to disciplinary action. Comments can also attract civil and criminal action: nearly 5,000 offences involving Facebook and Twitter were reported to police in 2012 and 653 people charged.

Cyber Bullying

All reports of cyber-bullying and other technology misuses will be investigated fully and may result in notification to the police where BARFC Rugby Club is obliged to do so. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, suspension, or banning from membership of BARFC Rugby Club. Members 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 BARFC Rugby Club will have no control.

General Guidance

These are public forums, so treat them as such.

- Members are expected to show respect to others, including other members of BARFC Rugby Club and the wider rugby community, and to act at all times within the core values of the game.
- Individuals and organisations are strictly responsible for any posting on their account(s).
- Respect the rights and confidentiality of others.
- Re-posting or re-tweeting inappropriate content represents an endorsement of that content and can be actionable.
- Do not use abusive, derogatory, vulgar or sexual language.
- Do not criticise or imply bias in match officials.
- At all times, exercise discretion and respect for clubs, players, fans and the game's partners.
- Deleting or apologising publicly for an improper posting does not prevent disciplinary action being taken.
- Consider "protecting" Tweets and changing security/visibility of Facebook accounts.



Bridgwater & Albion RFC Social Media Policy

Do's and Don'ts

Follow the general guidelines above and:

- Do show your personality and be approachable.
- Do share your achievements.
- Do let people know what it is like to be a player/official.
- Do post regular comments to grow and engage with an audience.
- Do report any content that you encounter that is in breach of this policy.
- Don't comment if you have any concerns about the consequences.
- Don't link to unsuitable content.
- Don't get into disputes with audience.
- Don't share or elicit personal detail.

Take down policy

Clubs are aware that they can be vicariously liable for material published by employees in the course of their employment, for example on an official website, Facebook site or Twitter feed, or published by employees outside work via a work email address or a work Twitter handle.

Clubs can also be liable for third party comments and postings made on any of their social media platforms.

We insist that:

- Participants clearly identify themselves.
- Participants follow standards mentioned above and align to the RFU's Core Values and the guidelines.
- Should an administrator deem an article, post or comment contradicts the guidelines above it will be taken down at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The club will hold members to account for any breaches.

Reporting

Any grievance, criticism or resentment should be directed in person to the individual or respective managers or coaches. Matters of a more serious or contentious nature should be discussed with the Club's Executive Committee, via the Club Secretary or Safeguarding Officer.

Use of the Club Badge

The Club would like to remind members that the Club badge should not be used by anyone without prior written request being made to Executive Committee and approval given.



Bridgwater & Albion RFC Social Media Policy

Safeguarding

In the same way that Bridgwater & Albion RFC has responsibility for the physical safety of Youth members when on the Club's premises, Bridgwater & Albion RFC must also ensure that there is nothing on its website nor social media, which could harm a child, directly or indirectly. Bridgwater & Albion RFC is responsible for the content of its Website. Social media content, which can be posted by all members, will be moderated to ensure inappropriate content is removed.

When posting on social media there are two key risks to guard against:

1. **Disclosing personal information about a child on social media:** this could be the child's name, address, or any information about a child's life, interests or activities which would help a stranger target a child or engage that child in conversation.
2. **Abusive or inappropriate content (photos, video or text), on social media:** this includes material which criticises or humiliates a child. It could also be information which places undue pressure on the child to participate in some aspect of a club's activities.

Online Photos and video

Photos and video clips can make any child featured vulnerable to grooming if information about the child (name, address, activities or interests) is also disclosed. Furthermore, posting an image on social media carries a risk that the image could be taken and adapted for an inappropriate use.

RFU Recommendations:

- Use group images, rather than individual images.
- For images of individual children (such as in action shots) where possible use models or illustrations.
- Only use images of children in suitable dress, to minimise the risk of inappropriate adaptation of the image
- If a child is named on the site, do not include an image (individual or group). If a child features in an image on the site, do not use the child's first name or last name, either in text on the site or in the image file name.

Bridgwater & Albion RFC will abide by all RFU recommendations regarding photo and video images and will obtain consent from the appropriate responsible person(s) before using any images of children or vulnerable adults on its website. Consent request clauses are included in the registration form which is completed each season and are also held by the club age group administrators.



Bridgwater & Albion RFC Social Media Policy

Webcams and Live Image Streams

Bridgwater & Albion RFC will not use webcams to stream live images of children or vulnerable adults and if use of a webcam to broadcast images of children or vulnerable adults is requested, the Safeguarding Officer at Bridgwater & Albion RFC will seek RFU guidance before permission is granted.

Mobile and Online Communication with Children

Technology is moving very fast and there are now many ways for people to communicate, most mobile phones incorporate cameras that take still shots and video and two-way video calling is commonplace. Online communication can be by email, instant messaging and social networking sites.

The risks posed by such methods of communication arise from:

- The privacy. It is often one-to-one
- The wide range of content that can be transmitted, including content of a violent, sexual or hateful nature
- The ease with which images can be forwarded onto others
- The difficulty in knowing truly who you are communicating with. Where grooming happens, it often involves this type of communication.

In sport, there are additional risks:

- Inappropriate pressure can be exerted by adults, particularly coaches, on children (such as to play when injured)
- There can be inappropriate criticism of a young player's performance
- An official position or role within a club, such as Coach, can carry with it a level of authority and engender a level of trust that facilitates the control of a child.

Against this background, Bridgwater & Albion RFC will abide by all RFU guidance with regard to mobile and online communication with children and vulnerable adults and will cascade any information for them to the parents (or carer) of that child or vulnerable adult. Bridgwater & Albion RFC will not directly contact a child or vulnerable adult directly by mobile phone unless prior consent is given by the parent or carer.



Bridgwater & Albion RFC Social Media Policy

Club Guidelines:

- All Age Group communications –Emails should only be sent using email groups comprising email addresses given by parents. An email should not be sent to a child unless the parent is also copied. Such emails should only come from age group coaches or administrators as communicated to Parents.
- Other Online (Social Media) Services. No Club Member may initiate a social media outlet that is directly linked and intended to be used by Bridgwater & Albion RFC members without the express permission of the Club Executive Committee or, for Mini or Youth matters, the respective Youth Committee. Administrators of social media outlets must ensure the content complies with the policies above.

Further:

Twitter can be used for broadcasting information but must not be used for 1-1 (Direct) Messaging between Adults and Young People. Content must conform to the Website and Message Board policy above

Facebook. Communication via Facebook is permitted only via public club Facebook pages where the content is public and conforms to the Website and Message Board policy above. Private, closed groups and 1-1 messaging between Coaches and Young People must have the permission of the club

Other online and social media services whether public or private are not permitted. Requests to add other services to the approved list should be directed to the Club Safeguarding Officer.

SMS Messaging (Texting): Club Officials and Coaches should only communicate directly with individual children by text at any time, on any matter, if the parent or carer is copied on such communication or there is an immediate risk to the welfare of that child which can be lessened by such contact.

Telephone: When communication by phone is needed, Club Officials and Coaches can speak to individual young people on phones provided they have prior consent from the child's parents or carer and from the young person if old enough to understand.

Sanctions

Any club member failing foul of this policy could face disciplinary action from the Club, which could lead to expulsion from the Club.

References: RFU Guidance

Formal Issue Agreed Geoff Sluman, Head of Rugby & Vice-Chair. Feb 2020