

A photograph of three children, two girls and one boy, looking intently at a tablet held by one of the girls. The boy is wearing a red football kit with a crest. The girls are wearing a purple jacket and a grey hoodie. The background shows a blurred indoor setting with some posters.

GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

6.2

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH CHILDREN (UNDER 18s)

FOR ALL

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DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH CHILDREN (UNDER 18s)

Children in football (anyone under 18) today are well-versed in online communications. But many adults are not. These guidance notes are intended to provide some best-practice suggestions for adults when communicating with under-18-year-olds, whatever their football role – player, referee etc. And whatever your adult role in football, we hope you'll find them useful.

THE DO's & DON'T's FOR CLUBS AND LEAGUES:

DO:

- Get signed consent from parents/ carers before communicating digitally with children;
- Explain to parents/carers the purpose and method for coaches/managers, referee mentors, club officials etc. to communicate digitally with their child;
- Only use group texts, emails or messenger apps and always copy in the parent/carer or the designated member of the club to all communications with children;

- Make sure digital communications are only in relation to specific club related activities e.g. changes in travel arrangements, training times or venue changes.

DON'T:

- Use digital communications for personal conversation, sending pictures, jokes or other items of a personal nature;
- Respond to digital communications from children other than those directly related to club matters;
- Use language that is directly (or could be misinterpreted as being) racist, sexist, derogatory, threatening, abusive or sexualised in tone.

THE DO's & DON'T's:

Unless a child or young person is a direct relation, you should not:

- Accept as a friend, players or referees under the age of 18 on social networking sites of which they are members;
- Share their own personal social networking sites with children or young people involved in youth football;

- Make contact with children or young people known through football outside of the football context on social networking sites;
- Use internet or web-based communications to send personal messages of a non-football nature to a child or young person ;
- Engage in any personal communications, 'banter' or comments.



THE GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNICATING WITH 16-17-YEAR-OLDS IN FOOTBALL:

The FA recommends the following as best practice when communicating with 16/17 year olds who hold a position of trust and/or responsibility within football:

- Signed parental/carers consent should be given prior to email, social networking and mobile phone communications with young people holding a position of trust. Ideally the adult(s) who will be communicating in this way should be named. The purpose for the communication should be made clear;
- Both parties to only communicate for the purpose of the identified professional role(s);
- Email communications between the parties should copy in a named designated person (this could be parent/carers or Welfare Officer);
- Leagues appointing young referees to games should copy in another league official or parent/carers to their communications;
- If any inappropriate communication or content is shared between an adult and an under-18-year-old, this should be reported immediately to the Welfare Officer who will seek advice from the County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and/or statutory agencies as appropriate.

THE GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNICATING WITH UNDER-18-YEAR-OLD REFEREES:

These referees may well be contacted by a variety of appointment secretaries or clubs seeking a referee for a game. Consequently it would be acceptable to indicate the role rather than the named individual(s) in this instance.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you need any further advice or information please contact your County FA DSO who will be happy to help you.

[Click here](#) to find a list of County FAs and their websites. Then visit the relevant website to find your County FA's DSO.





The Football Association
Wembley Stadium
London HA9 0WS
T: +44 (0)800 169 1863
F: +44 (0)800 169 1864
W: TheFA.com