

**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

**Purpose and Scope**

Motherwell Football Club Community Trust recognises the developing range of technologies used to interactively share, create and discuss issues and content as extremely positive, and encourages individuals and communities to use social media to promote themselves, their clubs, their achievements and the sport of football.

However, Motherwell Football Club Community Trust will challenge anyone using social media either intentionally or by association to insult, slander, create a risk to personal safety or abuse any individual, organisation or the sport of football.

This Policy provides guidance for all members, connected participants and staff to help them understand the acceptable standards of use of social media at Motherwell Football Club Community Trust. It sets out best practice designed to assist everyone in understanding what the potential risks are in using social media and how these can be managed.

The pace of change in technology means that it is not possible to identify a definitive list of all forms of social media which this Policy applies to, hence it is to be read as applying to all forms commonly understood to be social media and used as such. This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Codes of Conduct and you are reminded that misuse of social media can result in Disciplinary Action being taken against a member, connected participant or employee.

**Definitions**

**Social media** is the collective of online communications and media channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration via a range of technologies such as desktop, laptop, tablets, smartphones and other internet enable devices. Websites and applications dedicated to [forums,](http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/discussion-board-discussion-group-message-board-online-forum) [micro blogging](http://searchmobilecomputing.techtarget.com/definition/microblogging), [social networking](http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/social-networking), [social bookmarking](http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/social-bookmarking), [social curation](http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/social-curation), and [wiki](http://searchsoa.techtarget.com/definition/wiki)s are among the different types of social media and examples of social media platforms included, are, but not limited to, Facebook, YouTube, Blackberry Messenger, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+, Wikipedia, LinkedIn and Reddit.

**Young person** is used to refer to any person below the age of 18.

**Disciplinary action** means action taken under the Disciplinary Policy of Motherwell Football Club Community Trust.

**Usage**

Whilst clubs and athletes are encouraged to use social media to positively promote their clubs, themselves, their achievements and the sport of football, the balance between the right to free speech and the responsibility not to insult, slander, abuse or create risks to anyone’s personal safety must be borne in mind. This Policy seeks to assist each person in knowing how to achieve that balance.

**Good Practice Guidance**

No team, coach or individual will set up a social media channel in the name of a team, coach or individual associated with Motherwell Football Club Community Trust. No player, coach or individual will send out social media messages purporting to be on behalf of Motherwell Football Club Community Trust or any staff thereof.

The internet presents a unique set of challenges for protecting personal safety as all information posted is available to the whole world, indefinitely. Generational differences in understanding the implications of what is being posted means that there are very different perceptions of risk operating. Whilst young people get great benefits from the online communities they belong to and the instant access they have to friends from across the world, they may need guidance from the people with responsibility for their safety as to what is acceptable and safe use.

The use of social media to target individuals, whether for grooming or the increasing incidences of cyber bullying, has created a set of risks to vulnerable people which is a real challenge to manage. Everyone is creating potential risk to themselves when they post personal information.

*For example*, if a person posts that they are going on holiday and has their address on their page, it is easy to see that there is an increased risk to their property whilst they are away. If a top athlete posts that they are tired, injured, worried about an upcoming event, they are giving their opponents information which provides them with psychological advantages that they would not have otherwise gained.

Thinking before you post will help reduce these sorts of unforeseen consequences.

**Texting/E-mail**

Probably the most commonly used form of social media, texting is a great way to send fast, cheap communications. Generally speaking texts are more personal and private than other forms of social media and for this reason there is more associated potential risk to young people and adults at risk.

One-to-one contact without a parent/carer copied in to texts between a coach and a young person is inappropriate. Motherwell Football Club Community Trust coaches are strictly forbidden to send text communications to anyone under the age of 16. If this occurs, Motherwell Football Club Community Trust must be informed of this immediately and severe disciplinary action will be taken. If there is an emergency which means that an individual young person needs to be contacted, the Motherwell Football Club Community Trust Safeguarding Officer or the parent/carer should be copied in.

Over the age of 16, parents should still be made aware of the Motherwell Football Club Community Trust’s practice and this Policy.

Motherwell Football Club Community Trust keeps a copy of the phone numbers and e-mail addresses of their members, by text/e-mail group and ensures that these are held securely and not used for any other purpose. The messages sent should always make it clear what the purpose of the communication is and contain the name of the organisation, not just a mobile number.

There should be a minimum number of administrators with access to the group and contact details. A minimum of 2 is recommended.

**Social Networks**

Social networks are the communities which develop on media applications, such as Facebook and Twitter.

Adults and young persons should not be “friending” or “following” each other outside of the football relationship. Communications for football purposes should be through sites/identities which are public and managed by Motherwell Football Club Community Trust. This applies to adults in a position of trust as well as to the adults who come into contact with young people through football.

*For example*, if a coach receives a friend request from a young person who they have met at a training session, they should decline. Motherwell Football Club Community Trust does not currently have a Facebook page.

It is accepted that some parents/carers are friends with their children, in order to monitor the material posted and seen by them. If the adult then accepts their child’s friends, this is not something which Motherwell Football Club Community Trust has any jurisdiction over. We are concerned about social media usage where the primary relationship is one gained through football. Everyone needs to be mindful that:

**Social media must not be used to insult, belittle or criticise other teams, players, officials or staff of Motherwell Football Club Community Trust.**

Expressing your opinion is fine, being rude in the *way* you express it or expressing discriminatory views is *not* and could lead to the individual who posted the comment, anyone who forwards or positively affirms the comment, and the person with administration rights for the site used, being subject to Disciplinary Action. Anyone who has posted an offensive message or image is advised to remove the comment as soon as possible, to reduce its impact.

The speed and variety in the development of social media forums, means that posts can be generated rapidly and spread to a wider audience in a very short space of time. All members, connected participants, staff and members of the public can and should report any misuse of social media to Motherwell Football Club Community Trust so that appropriate action can be taken to maintain the high standards of behaviour expected within the Trust.

**Twitter**

When using Twitter or similar tools, reposting other people’s comments or posts can be taken as you adopting the views they have expressed and you would be accountable for the content.

Please refrain from posting negative comments about any activity of Motherwell Football Club or Motherwell Football Club Community Trust. Concerns, questions and enquiries must always be emailed to community@motherwellfc.co.uk or by telephone to 01698 239926.

**Setting Up Club Webpages**

No team, coach or individual shall have their own social media site in the name of Motherwell Football Club Community Trust.

**Reporting Concerns**

 Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility, as is creating and maintaining the high standards of behaviour expected of people in the sport of football. For these reasons, everyone is encouraged to report concerns of misuse or inappropriate usage of social media to Motherwell Football Club Community Trust, within the world of football, or outside it.

 The first point of contact will usually be the Club Safeguarding Officer. As mentioned above, Motherwell Football Club Community Trust has the power to take Disciplinary Action. Which level is the most appropriate will depend on thenature of the concern, but if it relates to a potential safeguarding issue, the matter must be reported to Motherwell Football Club Community Trust.

**Threats of immediate harm or danger should be reported to the police and/or Children’s Services or the Local Authority Designated Officer**

Whilst the law does not move as fast as technology, there is legislation and government guidance which applies to social media usage, including:

* Malicious Communications Act 1988
* Protection from Harassment Act 2003
* Defamation Act 1996
* Data Protection Act 1998
* Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights
* Working Together 2013.

Prosecutions may be taken for comments/content posted on line.

*For example,* those which are offensive, insight hatred or are of an intimidating nature.

Motherwell Football Club Community Trust may also take Disciplinary Action against individuals using social media inappropriately.

**Useful Contacts**

There are a number of organisations who can provide advice and guidance on internet safety and usage, which have been referred to in the development of this policy. They are great resources to reference for the most up to date guidance.

🕸 Children First

🕸 [UK Safer Internet Centre](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/)

🕸 [CEOP Safety Centre](http://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre)