

Social Media Policy

Introduction

Members of Gateshead and Whickham ASC enjoy the opportunities and rewards of a community-based sports club and it is therefore 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 the Club is brought into disrepute nor in a way that harms its immediate and wider swimming community image.

For the purposes of this policy the term members extends to parents/carers/appropriate adults with children who are members of the club and we expect them to abide by these same standards.

Purpose

Social media is an essential communication tool to engage with the members of our club as well as the wider community. It is therefore important to have a policy to ensure this is used in a suitable and respectful way and the club can take action should the need arise. This is also an opportunity to remind our members of the importance of ensuring that all our social networking streams should be used thoughtfully and responsibly.

Our Social Media

We have a number of social media sources including but not restricted to:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- WhatsApp groups
- Zoom
- Band

Please note that our official online channels which we established, and monitor are:

Facebook: Gateshead and Whickham Swimming Club [Gateshead and Whickham Swimming Club | Facebook](#)

Twitter and Instagram: @gawswim

Content

The Club encourages social networking among members but it is essential that we ensure all content is suitable for publication and does not breach any laws or common decency. We recognise the difficulty of managing access to social media and we ask all parents/carers of the club to talk to their children about the do's and don'ts of such access and to be equally mindful when posting in their own capacity.

It is not acceptable to post, amongst others, items that may include reference to:

- ethnic origin
- race
- nationality
- faith
- gender
- sexual orientation
- disability

Any member found to have posted items of this nature where they are deemed to reflect negatively on the club could be subject to disciplinary action. In this context that action could also extend to parents/carers if the Executive Committee consider the breach is sufficiently serious.

Cyber Bullying

All reports of cyber-bullying or any online misuse will be investigated fully and if applicable will result in notification to the police. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, suspension, or banning from membership of GAWE.

If a crime has been committed, the member may be subject to a criminal investigation by the police and, as is usual in those circumstances, the club will have no influence over the investigation or the outcome.

Please adhere to the following rules:

- Always show respect to other members of the club as well as the wider community
- Always respect people's rights and confidentiality
- Remember that any posting is the individual's responsibility
- Re-posting or re-tweeting inappropriate content represents an endorsement of that content and can in itself be subject to action/sanctions
- Do not use abusive, derogatory, vulgar or sexual language
- Do not criticise or imply bias in coaches
- Don't make comments which undermine the committee, members or coaches
- Deleting or apologising publicly for an improper posting does not prevent disciplinary action being taken
- Report any content that you encounter that is in breach of this policy
- Don't comment if you have any concerns about the consequences of doing so
- Don't link to unsuitable content
- Don't get into disputes with audience
- Don't share or elicit personal detail

General Do's and Don'ts

Facebook / Twitter / Instagram

Currently these accounts are managed centrally within the club so any postings from parents/members should be limited to comments only rather than the original thread. However, we have included a list of do's/don't to remember when commenting:

Do	Don't
Share practical information where the original post might call for that – for example if someone has made a general enquiry about the club feel free to link to our website or refer them on to a committee member	Discuss individual coaches or techniques or release information that has not yet been published on our website
Share success/encouragement of swimmers	Discuss personal information or make derogatory comments about performance
Encourage fundraising ie Easyfundraising if the original post lends itself to that	Raise queries relating to operations of the club which would normally be addressed to squad reps, committee members
Share/re tweet posts which you think will portray the club in a positive light or promote the club among friends/social media contacts	Raise issues which could cause offence or place undue pressure on coaches, committee members or swimmers
	Advertise or promote businesses that are not recognised and endorsed by the club e.g. sponsors (recommendations relating to swimming items are acceptable)
	Swimmers should not request to friend or follow coaches. Guidance for Coaches aged 18 to 21 It is recognised that many young coaches aged 18 to 21 will have been members of the club themselves before becoming a coach and will still be friends with younger members. It is therefore plausible that they will have the personal contact details for these members. Swim England 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 has phone or email details of swimmers aged between 16 and 17 prior to undertaking the role of the coach, GAW 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.
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Communication groups ie What'sApp

These groups are an information service provided by Squad Reps to swimmers through their parents/carers.

Do	Don't
Consider whether a response is required ie remember it makes it harder to find important information if every member replies with thank you	Raise issues in the group environment which would cause offence or place undue pressure on coaches, committee or swimmers
Consider the level of detail you include in any response	Include unnecessary personal information about your child
Consider if a private message is more appropriate to the squad rep	Discuss coaches or techniques
Consider whether your comments could cause offence to other members of the group	Use this forum to voice any complaints
Ask training related questions e.g., re timings etc	Discuss coaches training techniques or approaches
Share practical information e.g., road closures	
Show respect for the squad rep and other members of the group at all times	
Remember reps are volunteers as are committee members with other commitments – a quick reply might not always be possible	

Band

Band is a recent addition to our social media package and is currently limited to children/parents in Groups 4/5. The groups are operated by our Head Coach and our Safeguarding/Welfare officer acts as moderator. Band is currently utilised for sharing of squad/session information to swimmers, training/technique videos and general instructions relating to their attendance from the Head Coach.

This policy will be updated as/when our use of Band evolves. For now, please see the recommended do's/don'ts for that service.

Do	Don't
Encourage your swimmers to regularly check in on Band and respond to any requests from their coach accordingly	Let swimmers become overburdened or concerned by any requests on Band – the coach is always available to speak to if they

	haven't been able to complete that week's appraisal for example due to other pressures.
Check the parent/carer Band group so you can see what information has been shared with your swimmer	Ask questions on Band which are already covered elsewhere – e.g. via your squad WhatsApp group or on the website
Ask questions but please limit comments or replies back to the Coach – remember a face-to-face discussion is always preferable to a protracted online discussion	Challenge coaching techniques or approach
Only use band to notify a change in attendance if there is a last-minute change/emergency	Don't include extensive personal information about your swimmer Use Band as an alternative means of interacting with the coach. First choice should always be to speak to the coach directly if feasible to do so

Zoom

Zoom is an essential tool to communicate during periods of lockdown.

Please do not share the log in details with anybody outside of the club. For sessions aimed at swimmers, parents should ensure they are at home when these sessions take place and are welcome to join any session.

Use of photography online

- Use group images wherever possible, with the consent of those involved and their parents/carers
- Only use images of children in suitable dress
- If a child features in an image on the site, always ensure parental consent
- Please see also our mobile phone policy for members and parents/carers (link to be included once on website)

Mobile and Online Communication with Children

The Club will not contact a child directly by mobile phone or via social media messaging services unless prior consent is given by the parent or carer and only in exceptional circumstances e.g., the child is the only person in the family with a mobile phone. Coaches and teachers should not personally hold the mobile phone numbers or email addresses belonging to Junior members of the club unless they would otherwise do so e.g. because they are a family member.

Please see link to our mobile phone policy (to include link)

Take down policy

The Club reserves the right to remove any appropriate posts or comments on any of the club's social media platforms.

GAWE reserves the right to remove offenders from being part of any social media groups if rules are not followed.

Reporting

Any members wishing to report a breach of social media policy should email clubsecretary@gawswim.org.uk

Safeguarding

Safeguarding our children online is the responsibility of all members and will be moderated to ensure inappropriate content is removed.

It is not acceptable:

- To disclose **any** personal information about a child which would help a stranger target a child, or engage that child in conversation
- To use **any** abusive or inappropriate content – photos, video or text. This includes any material which could potentially humiliate, criticise or place pressure on any child

If you have any concerns over safeguarding or wish to report a safeguarding issue please contact childprotectionofficer@gawswim.org.uk

Sanctions

All reports of cyberbullying and other technology misuses will be investigated fully and may result in notification to the police. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, suspension, or banning from Gateshead and Whickham Swimming Club.