ACCEPTABLE USE OF IT POLICY

Luton Town Football Club

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SOCIAL NETWORKING/ONLINE POLICY

Background

There has been a growing awareness in sport of the increasing communication by adults and young people on the various social networking sites and how this media has become a feature of social communication. There are both positive and negative aspects to using social networking sites and it is important to acknowledge that if used properly, social media can be a very effective tool.

Introduction

The Club recognises that the use of social networking sites is a rapidly growing phenomenon and is increasingly being used as a communication tool of choice by young people and more recently by adults. Facebook is the largest such site whose mission is 'to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected'.

These sites permit users to chat online, post pictures, and write 'blogs' etc, through the creation of an online profile, that can either be publicly available to all or restricted to an approved circle of electronic friends.

Sites such as YouTube and Google provide a platform for uploading and viewing video clips, which with the latest cameras and mobile phones becomes ever easier and can be almost instantaneous.

Social networking can be a great tool to promote the Club if used in the correct way.

The Club uses Facebook to link to web stories, provide videos and photos to its supporters and promote events and activities with the click of a button, instantly reaching all of our followers. The Club Twitter account adds another dimension as it allows access to a larger audience, promoting the sport through various channels and connections.

Whilst these technologies provide exciting opportunities, they are accompanied by dangers and negative consequences if abused by users.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a recommendation of best practice to all parents and players on the use of social networking sites as they relate to that individual's role in the Club. It is important to understand, however, that if used correctly, social networking can be a fun, safe and productive activity.

Note: Throughout this guidance a young person/child is anyone under the age of 18.

Guidance for Coaches and staff and other personnel in a position of trust and responsibility in respect of children in the Club

- The Club staff, in a position of trust and/or responsibility, should not be in contact with young people through social networking sites if they hold such a position in respect of that individual young person.
- Should a young person within the sphere of the Club's activities request to become a named friend on your Social Networking Page or request that you become a named friend on their Social Networking Page you should decline if any of the below apply:
    - You are in a position of responsibility in respect of that child.
    - You hold a position of trust and responsibility in the Club
    - Your contact with the child is through the Club and the parent/guardian of the child does not give their consent to such contact.

- Social networking sites should never be used as a medium by which to abuse or criticise players or the Club and to do so would be in breach of the Club's Standards of Conduct.

- The publishing of a photograph or video footage on a social networking site is governed by the same requirements as any other media – see the Club's Photography and Use of Imagery policy.

Guidance to LTFC players under the age of 18

- Do not ask your coach, staff member or club official to be your social networking site friend – they will refuse as that would breach good practice and the Club Children Policy.

- Use the internet positively and do not place yourself at risk. Have a look at www.ceop.gov.uk for some useful tips.

- Consider who you are inviting to be your friend and follow the good advice of the social networking sites to ensure you are talking to the person you believe you are talking to.

- Always remember that anything you say or share including photos, pictures and video clips posted on your site may be shared with people other than those for whom it was intended.

- Never post or send any photographs, videos or make comments that may be hurtful, insulting, offensive, abusive, threatening, untrue and upsetting and you may regret sharing later on; or used by other people in a way you did not intend or want.

- Do not put pictures of other Club players/staff on the site within the Club setting as you may breach the Club Photography and Use of Imagery Policy.

- If you do wish to upload such a picture you must get advice and consent of your parent, the other young person and their parent and a Club officer before even considering uploading such a photo. This will not prevent you having pictures of your friends on your site taken outside of the sporting arena, but it is good advice to always ensure they and their parents are happy with any picture you have of them on your site.

- Always be aware that social networking sites are a method of communication like letter writing and the spoken word. They are bound by the same laws and rules. Such technology is instant and this allows you as the user to react in the 'heat of the moment', where in the past you would have been required to write a letter which would have taken time and allowed for you to think again before sending. So never place a comment on the internet that you would not put in writing or say to the individual concerned as to do so may not only breach Club Policy but also the law.

- Use the privacy settings available on most social media sites. Facebook has different 'set up' guidelines for children to help keep you safe.

- Do not give out personal details including mobile numbers, email addresses or social networking account access to people you do not know well offline.

The advice if you are worried or feeling uncomfortable:

- Tell an adult you trust about any communications that make you feel uncomfortable or that ask you not to tell your parent/carer.

- Talk to the Club's Welfare Officer if you are unhappy about anything sent to you or said about you over the internet, on social networking sites, by text messages or via email.

- Tell an adult you trust if an adult involved at the Club (or a referee) asks you to become their friend online, and also inform the Club's Welfare Officer.

- If you receive an image or message you find offensive, threatening or upsetting, tell an adult you trust. Make sure you copy and save the image/message elsewhere – or print it off before you remove and destroy it. It may be needed as evidence.

- You can also report concerns directly to the police at the following link: www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre.

Guidance to parents of players under the age of 18

As children grow up, parents and carers have to teach them a variety of things to ensure that they are equipped to face the challenges of the modern world. We have to teach them how to cross the road safely, how to deal with strangers and how to engage with other children and adults appropriately in a variety of different settings, including the home, school and in the world at large.

When our children go out to play, we want to know where they are going. We satisfy ourselves that they know how to get there without any mishaps or being exposed to any real dangers enroute, that they will be safe when they get there and that they will be with responsible people throughout. Typically, when our children come home, we ask them if everything was OK. We take a very close interest.

Using the internet safely requires similar skills, which is why it is important that parents and carers find out more about the internet for themselves.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, the benefits of the internet easily outweigh any drawbacks. To keep it that way, parents, and children need to know that there are places on the internet which promote racial hatred, contain violent images or pornographic material all of which adults, as well as children, may find distressing. Regrettably, it is also true that certain sites will attract a number of adults with a highly inappropriate interest in children.

Beyond these dangers, other websites have the potential to harm impressionable young people through the presentation of extremist views. Sites may be very disrespectful of other people's religious beliefs or cultural or social backgrounds or seek to distort history. Sites may also promote anorexia or self-harming, for example, in ways which might attract the attention of a particular child who could, at that moment, be going through a vulnerable or difficult phase in their life. There are other more insidious threats around too. Without the experience to distinguish between genuine and misleading messages, children may be fooled by scams of various kinds.

There are, however, a few simple steps which parents can take to help their children use the internet safely.

Some simple ways to keep children safe online

Get to know your child's online habits. Children are inquisitive. They will look to explore the internet as much as they do the real world. Knowing the sites, they go to, the people they meet there and what they do will help to keep children safe.

Stay alert to any sudden changes in mood or appearance, or to any major change in habits or to increased secretiveness. These are often tell-tale signs that something is not right.

Keep lines of communication open - tell your child they can always talk to you or another trusted adult, such as a teacher or coach, if they do end up in some sort of trouble on the internet. Make children aware that there are things on the internet which may distress them.

Spend some time surfing the internet yourself. The more that you know about the internet, the better able you are, in turn, to help your child navigate around it without coming to any harm.

Install internet filtering software showing a Child Safety Online Kitemark on your computer. Filtering products with a Kitemark have been independently tested to provide a simple and effective means of support to parents, helping to ensure that a child's online experience is a safe one. The Kitemark scheme is sponsored by the Home Office and Ofcom.

Social networking services, social media, and sport: Guidelines for safeguarding children and young people

The CPSU Briefing Document: 'Social networking services, social media and sport: Guidelines for safeguarding children and young people' gives more in depth guidance on social networking sites.

It can be accessed via the Child Protection in Sport Unit website at: www.thecpsu.org.uk

What to do if you have concerns

As a user of a social networking site, whether you are a child or an adult, you may at some time have a concern about what you are seeing or being told about by another user. Concerns may range from negative or abusive comments, and cyber bullying to suspected grooming for sexual abuse.

The Club has drawn up a list below of agencies that you can contact, anonymously if you wish, where you can raise such concerns.

www.thinkuknow.co.uk: the main UK Government website with advice for parents on how to keep children safe online

www.ceop.police.uk: the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) is the Government body dedicated to eradicating abuse of children. Concerns about inappropriate contacts between a child and an adult, including online, can be reported directly to CEOP.

www.iwf.org.uk: the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) works to remove illegal material from the internet. If you have found any material you believe to be illegal e.g. child sex abuse images, other obscene material or material which incites racial hatred, you can report it to the IWF.

A number of specialist websites contain general advice that may be of help to parents. These include www.nspcc.org.uk, www.nch.org.uk, www.barnardos.org.uk, childnet. com, youngstonewall.co.uk and www.beatbullying.org.

Childline 0800 1111 or www.Childline.org.uk is another NSPCC support service. Using this website, children can talk confidentially to NSPCC advisors online about any issues or problems they may be experiencing, using an application similar to Instant Messenger (IM).

Policy to be reviewed: Annually or on the occasion of a major reported incident, organisational or legislative change. July 2021