

Social Networking and Communication Policy

Team Bath Rhythmic Gymnastics needs to take advantage of the positive opportunities offered by social networking sites to engage and communicate with club members, parents, regional and national rhythmic gymnastics communities and the general public.

There are both positive and negative aspects to using social networking sites that Club members should be aware of. It is important to acknowledge that if used properly, social media can be a very effective tool; however BG has identified a number of issues that have led to both disciplinary and safeguarding concerns which stem from the improper or inappropriate use of such sites by its members. Club members should be aware of the [British Gymnastics Good Practice guidelines](#).

The Club has zero tolerance of cyber bullying. By adopting the rule of no use of social networking sites or phones during training sessions, the Club protects itself from complicity in any cyber bullying.

Where a disclosure of cyberbullying is made (where the bullying originates outside the Club but involves Club members), the Club has a duty to ask for evidence (screen shot of messages) and will pass any information onto either BG or the Police to investigate.

Guidance to gymnasts under the age of 18

During training hours:

- No gymnast should access social networking sites during club training hours;
- The use of mobile phones in the gym (during training hours or competitions) is not allowed. If you bring a phone into the gym it is your responsibility, you must abide by the club rules and you bring it at your own risk;
- Mobile phones will be collected from gymnasts at the beginning of each training session and put in a container for the duration of training. These will be given back at the end of the session. If a gymnast is found to be using their phone in the gym or has not handed it in after they have been asked (e.g. looking in pockets /timewasting etc), then parents will be contacted and appropriate action will be taken;
- If a gymnast needs to contact a parent during training this must be done through their coach.

Outside training hours:

- You should not ask your coach or a judge, helper/volunteer or club official to be your social networking site friend. They are advised to refuse as that would breach good practice and BG's [Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy](#). If you have a particular reason to be friends with a coach, judge, helper/volunteer or club official then it is essential that your written consent and your parents' written consent is obtained and submitted to the Club Welfare Officer;
- You should not be social networking 'friends' with coaches/judges from other clubs/countries or other adults such as gymnastic photographers;

- Use the internet positively and do not place yourself at risk. Have a look at www.ceop.gov.uk for some useful tips;
- Always remember that anything you say 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, untrue and upsetting and that you may regret sharing later on; used by other people in a way you did not intend or want;
- Do not put pictures of other Club members on the site within the Club setting as you may breach the [BG Photography Policy](#). If you do wish to upload such a picture you must get advice and consent from your parent, the other young person and their parent and member of the Club committee before considering uploading such a photo. This will not prevent you having pictures of your gymnastics 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', whereas in the past you would have been required to write a letter, taking time and allowing you to think again before sending. So never place a comment on the internet that you may later regret. Remember, if someone in the Club makes a cyberbullying allegation the Club will ask for evidence (e.g. screenshot) and pass on to BG or the police to investigate.

Guidance for Parents/Carers

Never use social media as a medium by which to abuse or criticise BG, BG members, volunteers, other parents or BG clubs. To do so would be in breach of BG 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 BG's [Photography Policy](#).

If you need to contact us regarding your child's gymnastics, please keep in mind the following guidelines:

- If you need to contact your child during training because of an emergency please contact their coach through the venue staff, Uni Sports Training Village – 01225 386339, Culverhay Sports Centre - 01225 480882;
- Text messaging should only be used in an emergency or if agreed with a coach in advance, for example where you are late on the way to a competition, your child is ill and cannot attend training or you have raised a concern about your child's health and wellbeing at the start of the session;
- Text messaging should not be used in other circumstances, for example asking how your child is doing with their training. Any such matters should be addressed to your child's coach by email, using the club address (admin@teambathrhythmic.com) or requesting a meeting. Any Welfare issues or concerns should be emailed to the Club Welfare Officer (bath.rhythmic.welfare@gmail.com) and they will call you if requested;

- Facebook messages to any of the coaches regarding training should not be used as a method of communication;

Guidance for Coaches/Committee Members/Adult Volunteers

- Mobile phones should only be used in the gym as a Club contact in emergencies and not for personal use.
- Do not publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes, but is not limited to, material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the club into disrepute.
- Do not use social media for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns used for actions that would put club representatives in breach of BG or club codes of conduct or policy.
- Club members in a position of trust and/or responsibility (coach, judge, volunteer or club official) should not be in contact with gymnasts through social networking sites if they hold a position of trust in respect of that individual gymnast. All communication should be done through parents.
- Coaches may however communicate with Junior and Senior gymnasts as part of a group communication but this should include at least one other coach and parents.
- If it is necessary to contact young coaches or assistant coaches via email or text then this must include another coach/parent.
- If a gymnast in the Club requests to have contact via social media with a Club member in a position of trust and/or responsibility the request should be declined.
- In exceptional circumstances where a coach, judge, volunteer or Club official has particular reason to have contact (such as if the coach over 18 yrs was a former gymnast who trained with current gymnasts and wished to remain in contact with them via social media), it is essential that the written consent of the gymnast and their parents is obtained and submitted to the Club Welfare Officer (if the adult in a position of trust and/or responsibility for the gymnast holds parental responsibility this written consent is not required).
- Never use social media as a medium by which to abuse or criticise BG, BG members or BG clubs and to do so would be in breach of BG 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 BG's [Photography Policy](#).

Access to Social Networking Sites

The club needs to ensure it conforms with service provider guidelines when communicating with and including children and young adults on social networking groups. Only children over the age of 13 with social networking accounts should be included as 'friends' on the Club Facebook page or as 'followers' on any Club twitter feed.

Facebook: Facebook stipulates that "If you are under age 13, please do not attempt to register for Facebook or provide any personal information about yourself to us. We

strongly recommend that minors 13 years of age or older ask their parents for permission before sending any information about themselves to anyone over the Internet

Twitter: Twitter says “Our Services are not directed to persons under 13. If you become aware that your child has provided us with personal information without your consent, please contact us at privacy@twitter.com. We do not knowingly collect personal information from children under 13”.

When using social networking sites in the name of the Team Bath Rhythmic Gymnastics it should be remembered that:

- Copyright is owned by the service provider i.e. all data posted on social networking sites is owned by the service provider in perpetuity.
- Data ‘deleted’ by account holders is archived and can be retrieved by either the service provider or third parties.
- Users of social network sites are able to copy or repost content which is either assumed to be for club access only or which is later removed from sites.
- Other users of the sites may have already copied or reposted content which is later removed.
- Data posted on social networking sites can be accessed and copied by third parties who are not directly linked to the club regardless of whether they are ‘followers’ or friends of club members or parents.

Safeguarding Children

It is important that the Club uses social networking safely, balancing the use of these sites while maintaining our responsibility to safeguard children associated with the Club. If the Club Welfare Officer receives a disclosure that an adult representing the Club is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner the Welfare Officer will record the disclosure in line with the Club Safeguarding Children Policy and will review the available information and act as appropriate. This is always of importance when regarding the welfare of children but has additional significance when those children and young adults are photographed or filmed wearing training leotards or during competitions.

If the disclosure reveals that the adult has used a social networking site in an inappropriate manner (within the relationship they maintain with the Club) it could result in loss of position within the Club and information being passed onto to the local child protection team, BG and/or the police.

Welfare Team

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