Social Media & Online Communication Policy

Issue: 1
Issue Date: November 2026
Review Date: November 2027
Responsible: Hitchin Netball Club Committee

The Committee is collectively responsible for ensuring this document is implemented, reviewed and updated as required.

Approval

This document was approved by the Hitchin Netball Club Committee at its meeting on 7 November 2026 and the approval is recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

Purpose

Hitchin Netball Club recognises the benefits of social media and online communication in promoting the Club and communicating with players, parents/carers, volunteers and members.

This policy sets out how social media, messaging platforms and other online communications should be used safely, appropriately and in accordance with England Netball safeguarding requirements and Codes of Conduct.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals involved in Hitchin Netball Club activities, including:

- Players
- Parents and carers
- Coaches and volunteers
- Committee members
- External providers and agencies authorised to manage communications on behalf of the Club

It applies to Club social media accounts, WhatsApp and other messaging platforms, email and other forms of online communication connected with Club activity.

Policy Statement

Hitchin Netball Club will:

- Use social media and online communication responsibly and in a way that protects the welfare, privacy and dignity of all members.
- Maintain appropriate safeguarding boundaries between adults and young people.
- Use Club-controlled accounts and approved communication channels
- Ensure content posted on behalf of the Club is appropriate, respectful and consistent with Club and England Netball Codes of Conduct.
- Protect personal and confidential information.
- Respond appropriately to concerns about online behaviour or communication.

Communication with Young People

Adults in positions of trust, including coaches and volunteers, must maintain appropriate professional boundaries when communicating with young people.

- Adults must not use personal social media accounts to friend or follow players under 18 where the relationship has arisen through netball.
- Adults must not privately message, react to or comment on the personal social media accounts of players under 18.
- Club-related communication with junior players should normally take place through parents/carers or approved Club communication channels.
- One-to-one private online communication between an adult and a young person should be avoided.
- Where direct communication with a young person is necessary, it must be appropriate, related to Club activity and conducted in accordance with Club safeguarding procedures.
- Young people must not be encouraged to use social media platforms below the platform's recommended minimum age.

WhatsApp and Group Messaging

Hitchin Netball Club uses WhatsApp and other approved messaging platforms to communicate information relating to Club activities.

- Club and year-group messaging groups must be used for appropriate Club-related communication.
- At least one parent/carer of a junior player should be included in the relevant year-group communication arrangements.
- Coaches and volunteers should communicate with junior players through parents/carers.
- Messages must be appropriate, respectful and relevant to Club activity.
- Personal or confidential information must not be shared unnecessarily.
- Concerns or sensitive safeguarding matters must not be discussed within group chats and should be referred through the appropriate Club safeguarding procedure.

Club Social Media Accounts

Official Club social media accounts may only be managed or used by individuals authorised by the Club.

The Club may appoint an external agency or service provider to create, schedule, publish or monitor content on its behalf. Any such provider must be formally authorised by the Committee and must comply with this policy, the Club's safeguarding and data protection requirements, agreed brand guidance and the terms of its contract.

The Club retains ownership and overall control of its accounts, content and associated data. Agency access must be limited to authorised personnel, protected by appropriate security measures and removed promptly when no longer required. Content must follow the Club's agreed approval arrangements, and any complaint, safeguarding concern, security incident or potentially damaging content must be referred promptly to the Club Chair.

Club accounts should have more than one authorised administrator where practicable. Posts must represent the Club appropriately and must not contain discriminatory, offensive, abusive or inappropriate content. Personal opinions must not be presented as the views of Hitchin Netball Club. Content must not be used to criticise, ridicule or undermine players, coaches, officials, volunteers, other clubs or England Netball. Photographs and videos must only be posted in accordance with the Club's Photography & Recording Policy. Personal or confidential information must not be published without appropriate authority.

Personal Social Media Use

Members, coaches, volunteers and parents/carers are responsible for their own personal use of social media.

Where an individual's connection with Hitchin Netball Club is identifiable, they should:

- Communicate respectfully and responsibly.
- Avoid content that could bring the Club or the sport into disrepute.
- Respect the privacy and dignity of other members.
- Not use social media to bully, harass, discriminate against or intimidate others.
- Follow applicable Club and England Netball Codes of Conduct.

Inappropriate Content and Online Behaviour

Inappropriate online behaviour may include:

- Bullying, harassment or discriminatory comments.
- Abusive, threatening or offensive messages.
- Inappropriate communication between an adult and a young person.
- Sharing confidential or personal information without permission.
- Posting or sharing inappropriate photographs or recordings.
- Content that may compromise the welfare or safety of a young person.

Individuals should not respond publicly to serious or safeguarding-related concerns. Evidence should be retained where appropriate and the concern reported promptly.

Reporting Concerns

Any safeguarding concern arising from social media or online communication must be reported to the Club Safeguarding Officer and managed in accordance with the Club's safeguarding procedures.

Other concerns regarding inappropriate online behaviour should be reported to an appropriate Committee member and managed under the relevant Club policy or procedure.

Serious matters may be referred to England Netball or other appropriate authorities.

Responsibilities

- Committee: Ensure this policy is implemented and appropriate Club communication channels are maintained.
- Safeguarding Officer: Provide safeguarding advice and respond to concerns involving online communication or social media.
- Coaches and Volunteers: Maintain appropriate communication boundaries and follow this policy and Club safeguarding procedures.
- Parents/Carers and Players: Use Club communication channels appropriately and report concerns where necessary.
- External Providers and Agencies: Follow this policy and agreed approval arrangements, protect account access, personal data and confidential information, and promptly report complaints, safeguarding concerns or security incidents to the designated Committee contact.

Monitoring and Review

This document will be reviewed annually, or earlier if there are changes to legislation, England Netball guidance, Club operations or other circumstances that affect its content.

The Committee is responsible for ensuring that the document remains appropriate, effective and up to date. Any amendments will be approved by the Committee and recorded as a new issue.

References and Supporting Documents

Hitchin Netball Club documents

- Safeguarding Policy
- Photography & Recording Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Privacy Notice
- Complaints & Feedback Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Codes of Conduct for coaches and volunteers, committee members, parents and carers, and players

External guidance and documents

- England Netball – Social Media Policy
- England Netball – Safeguarding Children and Young People in Netball Policy
- England Netball – Codes of Conduct
- England Netball – Guidance – Taking and Use of Photos of Young People