



## **SWF Social Media, Online, and Media Policy**

### Introduction

This policy has been developed by Scottish Women's Football (SWF) in response to requests for advice and due to the growth of the game. The aim of this policy is the following:

- To ensure that clubs are aware of their responsibilities when it comes to social media, online content, and quotes in the media.
- To provide guidance to clubs and our members on what is deemed acceptable and unacceptable by SWF and that disciplinary action may be taken against clubs and/or individuals for failure to follow this guidance.
- To ensure all our members are responsible when using online platforms in order to help safeguard our members
- To remind our members of what support SWF can provide if they are approached or approach the media.

Websites, video content and social media (such as Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Twitter, and sites such as Youtube) are a crucial part of increasing the visibility of your club and women's and girls' football as a whole, so it must be used effectively and responsibly. Being responsible must also guide interactions with print and broadcast media too.

What's more, visibility for your players on public channels has been shown to be highly effective in attracting and retaining both players and club sponsors, because it shows they are valued.

However, online posts by clubs and individuals can also have a negative impact and conflict with the interests of SWF and all our affiliated clubs, volunteers, officials and players, which is why the following policy should be read and understood.

As will be outlined, it is essential that clubs make informed decisions about how they use online platforms. It's also essential that clubs make their own members i.e. coaches, players and officials, aware of their own responsibility and how failing to do so could result in disciplinary action against the club as a whole.

As will also be outlined, it is essential that clubs and their members understand the increasing media interest in the game and sometimes extra scrutiny that comes with this. It's therefore important that clubs and individuals are able to respond to this appropriately.

As outlined above, breach/es of this policy will result in disciplinary action in line with SWF's Disciplinary Procedures.

Everyone involved within the game recognises the responsibility to positively promote the game both on and off the field of play. Coaches, club officials, volunteers and others in a position of trust in football need to act responsibly on and off the pitch. This includes the use of electronic communications -especially given the increasing interest from media outlets to cover the game.

Clubs have a responsibility to ensure policies are in place and that these are followed by all members of that club. This includes coaches, officials, players, and those in a position of responsibility at clubs. Parents and carers should also be made aware of the club's and SWF's policy positions and recognise their role in promoting positive and safe spaces for girls and women to enjoy football whether that's on the pitch or online. Should SWF determine that parent/carer comments are not in-keeping with the ethos of SWF or bring the game into disrepute, this could result in sanctions. While individuals are responsible for their actions, clubs must work with their members and those associated with the club to show the importance of good conduct online to the benefit of their club and the game as a whole. Failure to adhere to the social media policy will likely result in a breach of our Codes of Conduct which all officials, players, parents and carers are expected to abide by.

Because of this, clubs have a responsibility for what is posted by their coaches, officials, players, and those in a position of responsibility within the club. This includes, but is not limited to, those who affiliate with the club directly i.e. Twitter Bio, where online content is posted.

Clubs also have a responsibility for what is published in the media directly themselves, by their coaches, officials, players, and those in a position of responsibility within the club. This includes, but is not limited to, content created on clubs' own channels and interviews with the media.

Clubs are responsible for ensuring all content hosted on their website, social networks, any associated message boards/blogs, or any other form of online content, abide by the Rules and Regulations of Scottish Women's Football and this policy.

**The Club (and those affiliated with it) must;**

1) Ensure that their club secretary will monitor the clubs' online and media content. These individuals will be contacted in the initial instance should SWF have any concerns or questions.

a) The Club Secretary and any appointed representatives should monitor the club's social networking pages, online, and media content regularly.

b) Where possible, clubs are recommended to establish committees to avoid any situations where any one individual can take accounts or online accounts hostage. This occurs when one individual has total control of an account with no way of any other person having access.

2) Refrain from publishing unfavourable comments about other clubs, players, match officials, referees or Scottish Women's Football and/or commentary on any controversial or potentially inflammatory subject.

a) Clubs and their members are welcome to contact SWF with any complaints or issues via email or phone. Comments within the media or online are not appropriate for resolving any issues and may lead to disciplinary action.

b) If in dialogue with the media in any capacity, SWF would like to remind clubs and their members that they are allowed to not answer questions or provide no comment.

c) SWF and competition rules are voted on by clubs at AGMs or End of Season Meetings. Therefore, any rule changes that a club wishes to put forward, should be done through the correct democratic channels. Rules are an important part of the good governance of our game and therefore it is inappropriate for social media to be used as a tool for argument or disagreement. There may be instances where this is viewed as bringing the game into disrepute.

3) Make SWF's media manager Tom Freeman aware if they or a member of their club have approached or have been approached by the media to provide comment or information.

You can contact him [tom@scotwomensfootball.com](mailto:tom@scotwomensfootball.com) or redirect media inquiries directly to him.

a) SWF requests this in order to have the opportunity to provide a statement to the media if that is appropriate or necessary

b) SWF can support clubs with difficult media attention if needed.

4) Contact SWF if inaccurate, accusatory or negative comments about the club or anyone associated with the club is posted within the media or online.

a) SWF will be willing to provide assistance where possible in these situations but it must be noted that media outlets and their individuals are responsible for their content and/or conduct.

5) Not share any private or confidential matters with the media without seeking the consent of all the parties involved. This includes, but is not limited to, communications between clubs and Scottish Women's Football.

6) Avoid hostile or harassing communications to any individual or organisation in any posts, online communications, or within the media.

a) Harassment is an offensive conduct based on a person's race, sex, gender identity, national origin, colour, disability, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, marital status, religion or any other status identified by SWF and protected by law.

7) Remember they are responsible for reviewing responses to online posts (on any website, blog, bulletin board, video sharing site or any other social media platform that promotes their club) and resolving any concerns about the propriety of the responses before they are posted.

8) If a club identifies any inaccurate, accusatory or negative comments about the club or anyone associated with the club, do not respond to the post and contact SWF for guidance/advice.

9) SWF recommends taking screenshots where applicable as proof of evidence. Comply with other SWF policies and any laws or regulations.

### **Recommendations:**

1) Appoint an appropriate representative as 'Media Manager'. These individuals should be responsible for all media enquiries and monitor media/online content regarding their club in support of the Club Secretary.

- 2) Clubs and their members should be wary of what is said around the media, especially at events where attendance is expected. This includes being wary of on and off the record comments.
- 3) Clubs should provide media training for their members when and where possible. This is especially so for those most likely to face the media i.e. first team players and coaches.
- 4) Ensure all privacy settings for any page(s) run by the clubs or their members that are not meant for public access are correct. a) GDPR regulations should also be considered at all times.
- 5) Provide all members of the club with best practice guidelines for dealing with the media and for online conduct.
- 6) Always consider WHERE any content you're publishing has been sourced. You should avoid using copyrighted or borrowed material but if used, citations and links should be provided where possible and laws/regulations must be followed at all times. When publishing direct paraphrased quotes, thoughts, ideas, photos or videos, give credit to the original publisher or author. If sharing photographs from SWF please credit photographer as per original post.
- 7) If your club decides that the most effective way of communicating to your players is via a social networking site then the club is strongly advised to set up an account in the name of the club. The access to this account should be limited and used for named members, volunteers, parents and carers solely about football matters e.g. fixtures, cancellations and team selections.
- 8) At no time should there be any personal communication or comments using a Club account on any platform.
- 9) Children and young people should be advised by their coaches and parents/carers to always tell an adult they trust about communications that make them feel uncomfortable or where they have been asked not to tell their parents/carers about the communication.
- 10) Coaches, manager etc. should avoid using social networking sites as the primary way of communications with players.
- 11) We encourage and support the practice of filming matches as it can be a valuable tool for analysis, coaching and player development, as well as increase visibility if clipped online. However, it is crucial that this is done with the consent and agreement of your opponent. We kindly request that you seek and obtain permission from your opponents before recording any matches, including letting them know whether the footage will be for internal use or published on social media. Respecting the wishes of both teams ensures that the privacy and preferences of all parties involved are upheld. If you are approached by a third party asking for rights to film and/or broadcast SWF competition matches, they must also be referred to SWF's media manager to approve broadcast rights.

## **DO**

- 1) Ensure all privacy settings are correct so that the page(s) etc. are used explicitly for club matters and are not used as a place to meet, share personal details, or have private conversations. a) GDPR regulations should also be considered at all times.
- 2) Gain written parent/carers permission before access to online pages/content is given to anyone under the age of 18.
- 3) Any individual involved with a club should Inform SWF if they have received inappropriate, threatening, or offensive material as this may be needed as evidence.

## **DON'T**

Unless a child/young person is a direct relation, the coaches, managers, referees and club officials should not;

- a) Accept as friend, players or referees under the age of 18 on social networking sites they are a member of or share their own personal social networking sites with children or young people involved in youth football.
  - b) Make contact with children or young people known through football outside of the football context on social media networking sites or by way of direct messaging
  - c) Use internet or web-based communications to send personal messages of a non-football nature to a child or young people.
  - d) Engage in any personal communications, 'Banter' or comments.
- 2) Clubs should communicate with parents and carers. In the event that is not possible, the club should implement an alternative means of communications taking into account appropriate safeguarding measures, and to be approved by SWF.
- 3) Players should be made aware that officials should not be contacting them directly on any social media platform or messaging service, and should that happen they have to tell someone.
- 4) Should a coach decide to leave a club, the club should ensure that all access to club social media platforms are removed immediately
- 5) Coaches that are considering leaving a team should not use team/club social media platforms to contact players to leave said team/club – this may be regarded as an abuse of their trusted position and subject to disciplinary action.