

# LOUGHREA RFC

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY



**LOUGHREA RFC** members enjoy the opportunities and rewards of a community-based sports club combined with affiliation to county and IRFU associations. As a result, it is 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 Loughrea RFC is brought into disrepute nor in a way that harms its immediate and wider rugby community.

### **PURPOSE**

With social media being a prominent method of communication for the Club, where we can express opinions, and is a key way in which we engage with the members of our club, along with the wider community. It is important for us to have a policy to demonstrate how we ensure we are represented in a suitable way and can take action should the need arise. We are taking this opportunity to remind our members of the importance of ensuring that all our social networking streams need be used carefully, thoughtfully and responsibly.

### **DEFINING SOCIAL MEDIA**

Loughrea RFC have a number of social media sources, which we take advantage of: these are examples of what we currently use and does not constitute an exhaustive list:

- Facebook groups (different sections or teams in the Club).
- Facebook pages (different sections or teams in the Club).
- Twitter (Club and Age Grade accounts).
- Instagram.
- LinkedIn.
- WhatsApp groups (different sections or teams in the Club).
- Internet.

There are many others which are not named here, but these should be considered to be electronic communication where individuals can interact online, be it within applications or on web pages, where the banner includes the Club's name or branding, in part or in full.

### **CONTENT**

While the Loughrea RFC positively encourages social networking among its members, we are mindful of the need to ensure that all content is suitable for publication and does not breach any laws or common decency. It is not acceptable to post, amongst others, items that may include reference to a person's ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, faith, gender, sexual orientation or disability, and any member found to have posted such items will be subject to disciplinary action. Comments of this nature may attract civil or criminal action against the author(s). In addition, any abuse of match officials, opposition etc. may be deemed by the Connacht Branch and/or the IRFU to bring the game into disrepute and lead to disciplinary sanctions against both the author and/or the Club. Participants should be aware that comments, which bring the game into disrepute, or are threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting, may lead to disciplinary action. Comments can also attract civil and criminal action.

### **CYBER BULLYING**

All reports of cyber-bullying and other technology misuses will be investigated fully and may result in notification to An Garda Síochána where Loughrea RFC is obliged to do so. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, suspension, or banning from membership of Loughrea RFC. Members must be aware

that in certain circumstances where a crime has been committed, they may be subject to a criminal investigation by An Garda Síochána over which Loughrea RFC will have no control.

## **GENERAL GUIDANCE**

These are public forums, so we ask that members treat them as such.

- Members are expected to show respect to others, including other members of Loughrea RFC and the wider rugby community, and to act at all times within the core values of the game.
- Individuals and organisations are strictly responsible for any posting on their account(s).
- Respect the rights and confidentiality of others.
- Re-posting or re-tweeting inappropriate content represents an endorsement of that content and can be actionable.
- Do not use abusive, derogatory, vulgar or sexual language.
- Do not criticise or imply bias in match officials.
- At all times, exercise discretion and respect for clubs, players, fans and the game's partners.
- Deleting or apologising publicly for an improper posting does not prevent disciplinary action from being taken.
- Consider "protecting" Tweets and changing security/visibility of Facebook accounts.

## **DO'S & DON'T'S**

Follow the general guidelines above and:

- Do show your personality and be approachable.
- Do share your achievements.
- Do let people know what it is like to be a player/official.
- Do post regular comments to grow and engage with an audience.
- Do report any content that you encounter that is in breach of this policy.
- Don't comment if you have any concerns about the consequences.
- Don't link to unsuitable content.
- Don't get into disputes with audience.
- Don't share or elicit personal detail.
- Don't include details of individual age grade players

## **TAKE DOWN POLICY**

Loughrea RFC are aware that they can be vicariously liable for material published by its volunteers in the course of their volunteering, for example on an official website, Facebook site or Twitter feed, or published by volunteers outside the club via alternate email address or an alternate Twitter handle.

Clubs can also be liable for third party comments and postings made on any of their social media platforms.

As a result, Loughrea RFC insist that:

- Participants clearly identify themselves.
- Participants follow standards as referred to above and align to the IRFU's Core Values and the guidelines.
- Should an administrator deem an article, post or comment to be contradictory to the guidelines above it will be taken down at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The club will hold members to account for any breaches.

## REPORTING

Any grievance, criticism or resentment should be directed in person to the individual or respective managers or coaches. Matters of a more serious or contentious nature should be discussed with the Club's Executive Committee, via the Club Secretary, by emailing to [secretary@loughrearfc.ie](mailto:secretary@loughrearfc.ie)

## SAFEGUARDING

In the same way that Loughrea RFC has responsibility for the physical safety of Age Grade Players and members when on the Club's premises, Loughrea RFC must also ensure that there is nothing on its website nor social media, which could harm a child, directly or indirectly. Loughrea RFC is responsible for the content of its Website and its social media channels. Social media content that is posted by members, will be moderated to ensure inappropriate content is removed.

When posting on social media there are two key risks to guard against:

1. **Disclosing personal information about a child on social media:** this could be the child's name, address, or any information about a child's life, interests or activities which would help a stranger target a child, or engage that child in conversation.
2. **Abusive or inappropriate content (photos, video or text), on social media:** this includes material which criticises or humiliates a child. It could also be information which places undue pressure on the child to participate in some aspect of a clubs' activities.

## ONLINE PHOTOS AND VIDEO

Photos and video clips can make any child featured vulnerable to grooming if information about the child (name, address, activities or interests) is also disclosed. Furthermore, posting an image on social media carries a risk that the image could be taken and adapted for an inappropriate use.

The following guidelines should be adhered to prior to posting any image on any form of social media.

1. Ensure parental/ guardian agreement for the use of images/ photographs.
2. Ensure consent/approval/accreditation is given prior to the event.
3. Establish what type of images/photographs will be allowed to ensure suitability.
4. Establish what information will accompany these photographs/ images, ensure players are not identified by name.
5. Use group photographs, identifying the club rather than the individual. Use only images/photographs that are suitable.
6. Encourage the use of group photographs, identifying the club rather than the individual.

## MOBILE AND ONLINE COMMUNICAION WITH CHILDREN

Technology is moving very fast in this area. There are now many different ways for people to communicate. In addition to landlines, there are mobile phones for voice and text, and most new phones incorporate cameras that take still images and video. Two-way video calling is commonplace. Online communication can be by email, instant messaging and social networking sites.

The risks posed by such methods of communication arise from:

- The privacy, It is often one-to-one
- The wide range of content that can be transmitted, including content of a violent, sexual or hateful nature.

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- The ease with which images can be forwarded on to others.
- The difficulty in knowing truly who you are communicating with. Where grooming happens, it often involves this type of communication.

In sport, there are additional risks:

- Inappropriate pressure can be exerted by adults, particularly coaches, on children (such as to play when injured).
- There can be inappropriate criticism of a young player's performance.
- An official position or role within a club, such as Coach, can carry with it a level of authority and engender a level of trust that facilitates the control of a child.

## CLUB GUIDELINES

- All Age Group communications – for example fixture information, team selection – should be sent via the Club newsletter. Emails, texts and WhatsApp's should only be sent using groups comprising contact details given by parents. An email or message should not be sent to a child unless the parent is also copied. Such emails and messages should only come from age group coaches or administrators as communicated to Parents.
- Other Online (Social Media) Services. No Club Member may initiate a social media outlet that is directly linked and intended to be used by Loughrea RFC members without the express permission of the Club Executive Committee or, for Age Grade matters. Administrators of social media outlets must ensure the content complies with the Website and Message Board policy above.

**Twitter:** can be used for broadcasting information but must not be used for 1-1 (Direct) Messaging between Adults and Young People. Content must conform to the Website and Message Board policy above.

**Facebook:** Communication via Facebook is permitted only via public club Facebook pages where the content is public and conforms to the Website and Message Board policy above. Private, closed groups and 1-1 messaging between Coaches and Young People must have the permission of the club.

Other online and social media services whether public or private are not permitted. Requests to add other services to the approved list should be directed to the Club Welfare Officer.

**SMS Messaging (Texting):** Club Officials and Coaches should only communicate directly with individual children by text at any time, on any matter, if the parent or carer is copied on such communication or there is an immediate risk to the welfare of that child which can be lessened by such contact.

**Telephone:** When communication by phone is needed, Club Officials and Coaches can speak to individual young people on phones provided they have prior consent from the child's parents or carer and from the young person if old enough to understand.

## SANCTIONS

Any club member failing foul of this policy could face disciplinary action from the Club, which could lead to expulsion from the Club.

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## REFERENCES

IRFU Guidance – Best Practice:

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/>

IRFU Guidance – Images:

<https://irfu-admin.soticcloud.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Images.pdf>

IRFU Guidance – Communications and Social Media:

<https://irfu-admin.soticcloud.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Communications-Social-Media.pdf>

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