**CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS USING SOCIAL MEDIA WITHIN IRISH FA PROGRAMMES**

The following guidance applies to all forms of social media platforms

• Before engaging in social media use, staff and volunteers are required to seek permission from their line manager and to inform the Director of Football Development and the Child Welfare Department of their intentions.

• All social media accounts must be set up using an official Irish FA address, and never a personal one, in order to reduce the risk of the establishment of impostor or fake profiles.

• Staff and volunteers who use social media assume overall responsibility for managing and moderating their accounts. However line managers have a responsibility to police such accounts to ensure that all content is appropriate and in line with Association policies.

• Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with safety aspects pertaining to social media use – this includes awareness of what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behaviour as an employee / volunteer on a social-networking service.

• Staff and volunteers must keep abreast of current legislation and good practice guidance pertaining to social media companies and adhere to all relevant legislation relating to communications, e.g. Communications Act 2003, Malicious Communications Act 1998 etc.

• Staff and volunteers must be aware of how this policy feeds into other policies outlined in this document, i.e. the Equality and Anti-bullying Policies and the Reporting Procedures.

• Staff and volunteers have a legal and moral duty to respond to any indications that illegal activity (e.g. grooming for abuse) is taking place by informing the Child Welfare Department, who will refer the concern on to the relevant statutory agencies and service providers.

**Staff and volunteers must:**

• use their social-networking page as a communications platform only – mainly to communicate on a generic basis with parents and guardians and children and young people, e.g. ‘training has been cancelled tonight due to adverse weather conditions’

• ensure that the highest privacy and security settings remain activated at all times

• activate all swear filters in order to block any foul language from being disseminated to users

• where possible, monitor and view all written and visual content before accepting and posting it live

• delete and remove any inappropriate written content or images that would compromise the welfare of children and young people and / or the ethos of the Association

• be safety-conscious when adding content to an Association webpage / profile

• obtain written parental / guardian consent before posting pictures of children and young people who engage in Association activities

• communicate to third parties (i.e. spectators or venues) that it is their responsibility to obtain parental / guardian consent before passing on images of club activities to Association staff to be posted on social-networking sites. The Irish FA will not be held liable for third party actions.

• ensure, if using Facebook, that they only communicate with children over the age of 13 (in line with network provider’s guidelines), always through an official site, and that communication relates directly to Association activities (e.g. training / matches)

• not accept children or young people, who they are in a position of responsibility for during Irish FA programmes, as friends on their personal social-networking site

• respond to online bullying and report it to their line manager - what is said online should be treated as if said in real time

• never post any written or visual material that compromises the ethos and values of the Association

• post factual comments only. Do not enter into a debate regarding a match result etc.

• display details of their social-networking page on the Irish FA website so that children / young people and parents / guardians know that it is an authentic Association forum

• promote safe and responsible use of social media

• promote the safeguarding page and sign post users to this so that they can obtain links to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Agency (CEOP)

• maintain professionalism at all times

• adhere to all best practice guidelines, as outlined in this document

**Staff and volunteers must never:**

• become friends via their own social media account with young people for whom they are in a position of responsibility

• communicate or share images via their personal social-network account with children and young people involved in Association programmes

• post any written or visual material that compromises the ethos and values of the Association

• engage in inappropriate communication with children and young people

• engage in grooming behaviour or behaviour that could be misconstrued as grooming

• engage in bullying behaviour on social networking sites

• ridicule a child or young person by posting video images, whether intentionally or not. What may be funny to you may not be funny to others.

• use foul, abusive, sectarian, racist, discriminatory or sexualised language

• comment on individual players

**Remember:** Think before you post. If you wouldn’t say it in front of your mother or granny, then don’t post it!

All comments on Irish FA social-networking sites will be considered as public comment and will be treated as such. The Irish FA therefore reserves the right to take disciplinary action in cases involving social networking where the welfare of a child or young person is compromised or where the actions of a staff member / volunteer bring the Association into disrepute.