



**BAFCA Safeguarding and Communication
Press Release 21st January 2020**

It has been brought to our attention that coaches are actively recruiting players under the age of 18 for University, Adult and Academy Programmes. To safeguard both the young person and you as a coach BAFCA would like to highlight the following appropriate methods of contact.

The British American Football Coaches Association and BAFA take our responsibilities towards the welfare of young people and vulnerable adults in American Football very seriously and require everyone in the sport who has significant contact with children and/or vulnerable adults to have a Disclosure and Barring Service – DBS check (which has replaced the CRB check).

Face to Face Meeting – Rules & Good Practice for Coaches

It is inappropriate for adult coaches (over 18 years of age) to communicate on a *one to one* basis with athletes under the age of 18 years. To ensure that appropriate safeguarding measures can be undertaken the following **MUST occur:**

- Contact should be made initially through the Coach of the Team the athlete is playing for.
- From this, arrangements can be made with either the individuals parents, the team coach or an appropriately DBS representative from the club / Safeguarding Officer to introduce and witness the meeting.
- NO personal information or contact information should be passed on unless explicit consent is obtained from the parents of the child. This contact information should follow the appropriate guidelines below;

Social media – Rules & Good Practice for Coaches

It is inappropriate for adult coaches (over 18 years of age) to communicate on a *one to one* basis with athletes under the age of 18 years by:

- text message
 - e-mail
 - instant messaging or through social networking sites
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- All electronic communication by the above methods should include a copy to a third party, e.g. copy to the parent or relevant welfare officer.
 - Coaches should also limit all electronic communication to American Football matters. It is advisable to always send group messages rather than single messages to an individual athlete.
 - For U16 athletes, parental consent is required for communication between the adult and the young person.
 - For U18 athletes, parents should be informed and aware of the communication between the coach and young person.

- All coaches, staff, volunteers, parents and members should always behave responsibly and respectfully when online or texting.

Text Messages

Text messages are **NOT** the preferred method of communication between adults and young people. **If they must be used, they should be group messages and should always be copied into the parent and/or relevant welfare officer.**

In the event of an emergency, individual texts may be used but must be copied into the parent and/or welfare officer.

Instant Messaging Services

Snapchat, Whats App and other instant messaging systems should not be used to communicate with young athletes under any circumstances.

Emails

Emails are a positive and simple method of communication between coaches and young athletes and distribution lists/groups are easy to set up.

Group emails are preferred, but in the case of an email to one person, **a copy must be sent to the relevant parent and/or welfare officer.**

Social Networking

Coaches should NOT have athletes under the age of 18 as their 'friends' on social networking sites when they have a position of trust as a coach. Should a young person request to become a named friend on a coaches social networking page or request that they become a named friend on their page the coach should decline if any of the below apply:

- You are in a position of responsibility in respect of that child
- You hold a position of trust and responsibility in respect of the child, the club or the association

Coaches are advised to consider carefully what they post on any social networking site – coaches act as role models and must behave accordingly.

The publishing of any image or video on a social networking site is governed by the same requirements as any other media see the O-Safe Images Policy.

Club/Association Facebook Group

Clubs using Facebook as a forum for members are advised to use a closed group. They should only accept members of the club as members of the group. This must be stated on the group and the group must be set up for that reason.

Coaches are reminded that ALL social networking websites are restricted to people aged 13 years and over, this restriction must be adhered to.

Club/Association Facebook Page

A Facebook Page can be set up for the club to promote its activities to the wider community, all members must be aware that this page is visible to all users and must not contain information about young people.

Guidance to coaches who have children that participate in the club where they coach

Many parents are becoming members of social networking sites that their children sign up to. This enables the parent to view their child's activity and help ensure the safety of their own child. It would not be appropriate to prevent a parent who is also a coach from using this form of protection

for their child's online activities. On sites such as Facebook, this will give the parent access, via their child's account, to all children listed as friends or followers of their child. Therefore, in such cases:

On Facebook:

- The coach concerned should not have direct contact or communication with athletes under the age of 18 who are friends with their child
- The coach should not accept such athletes as friends
- The coach should inform the welfare officer that they are friends with their child on Facebook

On Twitter/Instagram/etc set of rules and good practice:

- Coaches are advised not to follow athletes under the age of 18 on Twitter/Instagram/similar sites
- While it is not required for coaches to block athletes under the age of 18 from following them on Twitter/Instagram, they must be mindful that what they are posting is visible to those athletes, and to the wider world
- Coaches should not interact with athletes under the age of 18 on these sites on any topic other than American Football, and must ensure that the welfare officer and the child's parent are aware that communication is taking place via this medium
- Coaches should never use private messaging options on these sites to contact athletes under the age of 18

A note to young athletes

Young athletes must be reminded to set their privacy settings and not accept requests either from people unknown to them or to other adults involved in American Football.

Reporting concerns

In the event of an athlete showing a coach a text, instant message, image or email that is inappropriate for a child to have, the coach must inform the appropriate welfare officer, either at the club or association or to BAFA direct. If a young person is concerned with anything they have seen on the internet they are advised to speak to their welfare officer.

Whether you're a child, young person, parent or carer, familiarise yourself with our top tips for young people to stay safe online:

1. Stop & think before you post messages online. Cyber-bullying includes sending hurtful messages, name calling, making threats, using abusive language or targeting someone because they are different.
2. Never give out your personal details online (eg. phone number; address; bank details; your real name on sites where you are only known by a different username).
3. Remember - if you haven't met someone in person, they are a stranger; never arrange to meet people you don't know.
4. Don't go into adult chat rooms; how can you be sure who you are talking to?
5. If you see something on a website that upsets you, turn off the screen and tell an adult you trust; you can also call **ChildLine** on 0800 1111
6. Only use a webcam if you have told an adult you trust first
7. Don't engage in sexual talk online; you have no way of knowing who you are really talking to
8. Never post intimate photos or videos of yourself online; have you considered where it could end up?
9. If you think you are being cyber-bullied or blackmailed, tell an adult you trust or contact **ChildLine** on 0800 1111