SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

South Durham Gymnastics Club
Spennymoor Leisure Centre
High Street
Spennymoor
Co.Durham
DL16 6DB

Tel: 01388 811877
Email: gym@southdurhamgym.co.uk

REVIEW PERIOD	REVIEW DATE	SIGNED
Issue Date	April 2023	Management
Review Date	October 2024	Management
Review Date	September 2025	Management
Review Date	September 2026	Management

Purpose of this Policy
South Durham Gymnastics (SDG) & South Durham Gymnastics Club (SDGC) is committed to making the best use of all available technology and innovation to improve the way the Club operates. This includes using all reasonable and cost-effective means to improve the way we communicate, reach out and interact with the different communities we serve.

'Social media' is the term commonly given to web-based tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online. As the name implies, social media involves building online communities or networks to encourage participation and engagement. These platforms open up many new and exciting opportunities. However, the practical application of such technology by SDG & SDGC is continually developing and there are many potential issues to consider.

To avoid major mistakes which could result in reputational, legal and ethical issues, and misuse/abuse of a well- functioning social media relationship, it is important that we manage any potential risks through a common-sense approach, as well as proactively monitoring the development of such applications.

The policy also recognises the importance of protecting the privacy, dignity and wellbeing of children and young people when using or appearing in online content.

Aims
These guidelines aim to provide our members with information concerning the use/development of any social media application and help them get the best out of the tools available whilst maintaining a safe environment and protecting themselves, as well as SDG & SDGC.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies including:
- SDG & SDGC's **Safeguarding Policy**
- SDG & SDGC's **Anti-Bullying Policy**

Definition of Social Media
For the purposes of these guidelines, social media refers to websites, applications and online services which enable individuals or organisations to create, share, view or interact with content or communicate with others.

This includes, but is not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, WhatsApp, Messenger, online forums, blogs, video and image-sharing platforms, group messaging services and any similar or future digital platforms.

Email and other forms of electronic communication are not necessarily social media but are covered by this policy where they relate to communication between SDG & SDGC staff, volunteers, gymnasts, parents/carers or other members.

Parent/Carer Consent for Gymnasts
- SDG & SDGC actively uses the media, social media and the internet to publicise its work, celebrate the success of its gymnasts and engage with the wider public. This often requires the use of videos, images and written comments, which name and identify gymnasts;
- All media consent is carried out in line with the SDG & SDGC Privacy Policy;
- At SDG & SDGC, we hold all information relating to our members on a central database. As members of SDG & SDGC, parents/carers are required to either give/not give consent for their child to be involved in photography/filming for South Durham Gymnastics/South Durham Gymnastics Club/Pink Leisurewear - to be used in advertising, social media or for training purposes;
    - A copy of this consent form can be requested via the Office.

SDG & SDGC will maintain an appropriate record of photography and media permissions. Before publishing an identifiable photograph or video of a child through an official SDG & SDGC social-media channel, reasonable steps will be taken to check the applicable consent/permission arrangements.

Parents/carers should contact the Office if they wish to change or withdraw their previously provided consent, it is also possible to amend your consent via your member account. Where consent is withdrawn, SDG & SDGC will take reasonable steps to prevent future use and, where reasonably practicable, remove relevant content from SDG & SDGC-controlled platforms.

SDG & SDGC will take particular care not to publish unnecessary personal information alongside images or videos of children, including home addresses, personal contact details, school information, medical information or information which could unnecessarily identify a child's location.

SDG & SDGC's Expectations regarding Social Media Use

- SDG & SDGC uses an open Facebook page, Instagram page and TikTok to appropriately to share information and videos of gymnasts in training/competition, as well as Club updates. Parents/carers/gymnasts should not make any negative or derogatory comments regarding SDG & SDGC or any of the coaches on any of these platforms;
- Parents/carers/gymnasts/coaches are required to maintain a positive image of the Club and should strive to be a positive influence and representative for SDG & SDGC online;
- Parents/carers should contact the **Welfare Team** if they have any concerns regarding the social media and/or online content that SDG & SDGC uses in relation to their child.

SDG & SDGC recognises that social media is an important way for parents/carers, gymnasts, staff and volunteers to communicate and share positive experiences relating to the Club.

Where communication relates to SDG & SDGC, its coaches, volunteers, gymnasts or activities, everyone is expected to communicate respectfully and responsibly and to consider the potential impact of comments, photographs and videos on other members of the Club.

Where an issue requires discussion or clarification, the appropriate Club procedure should be used where possible, so that matters can be addressed appropriately and confidentially where necessary.

SDG & SDGC will not tolerate social-media activity which amounts to bullying, harassment, threats, intimidation, discrimination, abuse, deliberate humiliation, publication of confidential information or other seriously inappropriate behaviour.

Nothing in this policy is intended to prevent anyone from expressing a lawful opinion or raising a matter through the appropriate channels.

How do we Maintain a Positive Image of SDG & SDGC Online?

In addition to protecting children in our Club, those connected to SDG & SDGC have a responsibility to maintain a positive image of SDG & SDGC and the sport of gymnastics. It is important to understand, that if used correctly, social networking can be a fun, safe and productive activity.

The following guidelines refer to any posts, photographs, video, status updates and any other item that can be published on social media, which mentions or directs attention towards SDG & SDGC:

- Coaches, gymnasts and parents/carers alike should avoid posting comments, remarks, photographs, and videos that could be perceived as disparaging about the Club, coaches, officials or other gymnasts. This applies to private text messaging as well as all social media and instant messaging services;

- Coaches, gymnasts and parents/carers should avoid posting any remarks, photographs or video that could be disparaging or embarrassing to another Gymnastics Club, it's members, coaches or officials;
- Gymnasts should avoid social chat with Club coaches or officials via any instant messaging or text service;
- Parents/carers should avoid interacting with gymnasts other than their own children via social media/text message;
- Coaches/parents/carers/gymnasts must not upload photographs/videos to any social media sites if they contain other gymnasts than their own child - without prior consent from their parent/carer;
- Coaches/parents/carers/gymnasts must not upload photographs/videos to any social media sites if they contain Club coaches/officials/volunteers - without their prior consent;
- Coaches/parents/carers/gymnasts must not copy and upload professional photographs/videos without the consent of the photographer;
- Parents/carers are encouraged to monitor their children's use of social media in order to protect them and guide them in its appropriate use.

Parents/carers and gymnasts should be mindful that photographs or videos taken at competitions or events may contain other children, coaches, officials or volunteers.

Before uploading such content to a public social-media account, individuals should consider whether other people are identifiable and, where appropriate, obtain their permission or the permission of their parent/carer.

SDG & SDGC may introduce additional restrictions on photography or filming at particular sessions or events where this is considered necessary for safeguarding, privacy or operational reasons.

Additionally, SDG & SDGC members and their parents/carers should remember that using social media channels to specifically communicate with coaches, especially in visible communications (e.g., via Facebook pages) is not generally appropriate. Any direct communications for coaches should utilise private channels such as e-mails or face to face conversations. This is particularly relevant when members and parents have concerns or complaints. Coaches, gymnasts and parents/carers should inform SDG & SDGC if at any point they notice a contravention to these guidelines.

Additional Guidelines for SDG & SDGC Staff, Coaches and Officials

- SDG & SDGC staff, coaches and officials should avoid chatting to gymnasts via any instant messaging service;
- If you receive any messages/requests from gymnasts by way of social networking/chat/text please do not respond to the child directly, please respond via their parents;
- Coaches and officials should not text gymnasts in their care for any reason, except for cases where the express permission has been sought and given by the parent. Please always communicate through the parent;
- Coaches and officials should maintain appropriate professional boundaries when using social media and should not use their personal social-media accounts to develop inappropriate private relationships with gymnasts.
- Coaches and officials should take care to ensure that material appearing on their personal social-media accounts is appropriate and does not expose young people in their care to inappropriate or harmful content.
- If a gymnast contacts a coach or official with a message which raises a safeguarding or welfare concern, the coach or official should not attempt to deal with the matter themselves and should report the concern to the SDG & SDGC Welfare Team in accordance with the SDG & SDGC Safeguarding Policy
- Coaches and officials could face serious consequences if it is found that young people in their care have been exposed to inappropriate material/content via their social media pages.

These guidelines are intended to protect gymnasts, coaches, officials and volunteers and to maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

By following the above we will ensure relationships between coaches and gymnasts remain professional whilst protecting gymnasts, coaches and parents/carers from allegations of inappropriate conduct. By setting clear guidelines for parents/carers, coaches and gymnasts concerning the use of social media/text messaging, we will preserve the reputation and positive image of the Club, coaches, volunteers and directors.

SDG & SDGC reserves the right to take appropriate action where a person breaches this policy.

The action taken will depend on the nature and seriousness of the matter and may include referral under the Club's safeguarding, anti-bullying, complaints or disciplinary procedures.

Where appropriate, concerns may also be referred to relevant organisations.

Nothing in this section prevents a member or parent/carer from raising a genuine concern, making a complaint or reporting a safeguarding matter through an appropriate route.

Messaging Applications and Group Chats

SDG & SDGC recognises that WhatsApp, Messenger and other messaging applications may be used by parents, gymnasts and staff to communicate about Club activities.

Where SDG & SDGC-related group chats are established, they should be used appropriately and for legitimate Club purposes.

Group chats should not be used to:

- discuss confidential safeguarding matters;
- share inappropriate or intimate images;
- target or bully another member;
- publish confidential personal information; or
- conduct inappropriate private conversations between adults and children.

Safeguarding concerns should be reported through the appropriate SDG & SDGC safeguarding route rather than dealt with through social-media arguments or group discussions.

Cyberbullying and Online Abuse

Cyberbullying and online abuse may include repeated unwanted messages, threats, intimidation, deliberate exclusion, spreading rumours, sharing embarrassing images, impersonating another person, discriminatory comments or encouraging others to target an individual.

Any concern involving a child or young person should be reported to the SDG & SDGC Welfare Team and will be considered in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy and/or Anti-Bullying Policy.

Anyone who receives an online message or content which causes them concern should avoid engaging in an online argument and should seek advice from a parent/carer, trusted adult or member of the Welfare Team.

Artificial Intelligence and Altered Images

Members must not use artificial intelligence, image-editing software, deepfake technology or similar tools to create or distribute images, videos or other content involving another SDG & SDGC

member where the content is sexualised, humiliating, threatening, discriminatory, misleading in a harmful way or intended to bully or harass.

Any concern involving such content, particularly where a child or young person is involved, should be reported immediately to the SDG & SDGC Welfare Team in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy.

Reporting Online Concerns

Anyone who becomes concerned about social-media or online activity involving a child, young person, coach, volunteer or other SDG & SDGC member should report the concern to the SDG & SDGC Welfare Team.

This includes concerns about:

- inappropriate contact between an adult and a child;
- bullying or harassment;
- inappropriate photographs or videos;
- requests for intimate images;
- threats or intimidation;
- discriminatory or abusive content;
- grooming or suspected exploitation; or
- any online activity which causes concern for the safety or welfare of a child.

Safeguarding concerns should be dealt with in accordance with the SDG & SDGC Safeguarding Policy.

Where there is an immediate risk of harm, the appropriate emergency services should be contacted.

Members should not attempt to investigate safeguarding concerns themselves or engage in online arguments with the person involved.

Staying Safe Online
Helping to make the internet a great and safe place for children is a challenge. Below are some of SDG & SDGC's top tips for helping our members to stay safe online:

- Don't post any personal information online – like your address, email address or mobile number;
- Think carefully before posting pictures or videos of yourself. Once you've put a picture of yourself online most people can see it and may be able to download it, it's not just yours anymore;
- Keep your privacy settings as high as possible - ideally completely private;
- Never give out your passwords;
- Don't befriend people you don't know;
- Don't meet up with people you've met online. Speak to your parent or carer if people suggest you do;
- Remember that not everyone online is who they say they are;
- Think carefully about what you say before you post something online;
- Respect other people's views, even if you don't agree with someone else's views, it doesn't mean you need to be rude;
- Be careful about sharing your location or information about where you train, live, go to school or will be at a particular time.
- Check who can see your posts, photographs, videos and profile information.
- Never share or forward an intimate photograph or video of another person, particularly a child or young person.

- If someone asks you to keep an online conversation secret from your parent/carer or another trusted adult, tell someone you trust.
- If you see something online that makes you feel uncomfortable, unsafe or worried: leave the website, turn off your computer if you want to and tell a trusted adult immediately!

Below are links to safety-setting guides for some commonly used platforms. As social-media platforms regularly change their privacy and safety settings, parents/carers should also check the latest guidance provided directly by the platform.

- Facebook: https://www.southdurhamgym.co.uk/content/Facebook.pdf
- WhatsApp: https://www.southdurhamgym.co.uk/content/WhatsApp.pdf
- Snapchat: https://www.southdurhamgym.co.uk/content/Snapchat.pdf
- Instagram: https://www.southdurhamgym.co.uk/content/Instagram.pdf
- YouTube: https://www.southdurhamgym.co.uk/content/YouTube.pdf
- TikTok: https://www.southdurhamgym.co.uk/content/TikTok.pdf
- Twitch: https://www.southdurhamgym.co.uk/content/Twitch.pdf

Suggested Review Date: After significant changes, or biennially

Reviewed By:	Rebecca Armstrong
Date:	30/09/2026
Comments:	Policies combined following SDG and SGDC becoming independent; references to IGA removed. Social Media Policy reviewed and updated to reflect current safeguarding and online communication practices.
Next Suggested Review Date:	September 2028

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