WHATSAPP
UPDATED MARCH 2022

Good Practice for Using the App

What is Whatsapp?

WhatsApp is a popular instant messaging app, which lets you send messages, images and videos to friends. You can have 1-1 conversations as well as group chats.

The app is being increasingly used within hockey as a useful communication tool. This guidance recognises good practice for using the app and highlights some risks when using it with u18's.

Dos And Don'ts Of Using Whatsapp

Dos

- Have a coach set the group up (allowing admin rights)
- Ensure the group has at least 2 adults
- Tell athletes what the app is/isn't to be used for
- Inform parents of its intended use
- Get the team to agree how the app is to be

used i.e. only hockey orientated content
- Keep language appropriate
- Ensure members have a mechanism to report inappropriate content

Don'ts

- Assume everyone is on WhatsApp
- Use the app for private messaging
- Use the app to replace formal feedback

Concerns For Using Whatsapp

Individuals having access to everyone's number. In some environments this may allow individuals to contact each other in a negative way e.g. bullying in a performance environment.

Individuals not using WhatsApp. If a member of the team doesn't use the app, will they miss out on important information?

This guidance should be applied to all equivalent social media/group communication apps.

Things to be aware of.

It is important to acknowledge technology and the speed at which it moves - many young people may not use or have access to an email account, or age limits for apps such as WhatsApp may restrict the ways in which you can contact young people – ensure you find a method that works for your club and you agree it with parents/guardians.

Bullying does not only occur verbally, 'cyber-bullying' can occur online from devices such as phones or tablets. Bullying generally occurs between peers. For more information of bullying, see EH's antibullying guidance.

Technology - There are several apps that can be used as communication tools. Some of these, such as WhatsApp, have legal restrictions and minimum age limits. Therefore, it is essential to check the method of communication before using it with young people.

Systems – Club membership systems such as Pitchero, ClubBuzz etc. are widely used in hockey. They provide tools for easy administration, communication, websites etc. When using systems such as these in clubs, make sure you inform parents and young people what you intend to use the information for and how it will be stored (see Data storage & retention). If you are using these systems for the purpose of communication, ensure you follow the guidance outlined in this document.

1-on-1 communication - there may be times when you need to communicate with an individual away from their peers or team-mates. In this situation, make sure they are supported by another individual such as a peer, parent or guardian and you have another adult present. If you need to communicate with a young person individually via text, email etc. make sure a parent/guardian is included in the conversation.

Grooming – 1-on-1 communication can be used to groom young people for sexual abuse or radicalisation. If you are concerned that a young person is being groomed or radicalised and is at risk of immediate harm you must call the police. If it isn't an emergency, consult your welfare officer or England Hockey's Ethics & Welfare Team in the first instance.

Social network – Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat etc. are widely used by young people. It is essential that individuals such as coaches who are in a position of trust over an U18 are not linked with young people on social media. Individuals in a position of trust are advised to set their privacy settings so that young people cannot access their information.

Livestreaming and video conferencing – The use of platforms such as Zoom, Skype, Teams etc for coaching or communicative purposes has rapidly increased over time. Guidance on the use of video conferencing or livestreaming can be found here.