



Communication with Young People Policy

Wicklow Swimming Club recognises that communication involving young people should be safe and secure without exposing young people to risk of harm by allowing third party or unauthorised access to their personal details. Young people should also be able and know how to communicate with adults. There is mandatory and recommended information that WSC will make available to young people.

General considerations

Communication between adults and young people is open to exploitation and misinterpretation and therefore any communication with young people must be open and transparent without crossing personal boundaries between an adult and child.

Where direct face to face communication takes place, at WSC we want all young person to feel comfortable in their surroundings. One to one adult/child conversations should be in an open environment whereas group meetings, depending on the need, can be in a separate room. This should be arranged in advance with the parents/carers.

Young people should be able to tell someone, a trusted adult e.g. their coach, parent or Children's Officer if any communication makes them feel uncomfortable. WSC Committee members and Volunteers should ensure that common sense principles apply e.g. encouraging young people to not give their phone numbers or email to people they don't know and ensuring the parents' permission has been sought when storing young people's details.

Verbal expressions do not always translate well into the written word, i.e. as sent in an e-mail or in a text message. Language used for texting can be very different from usual words. WSC Committee members and Volunteers should be careful with written messages and the language used to avoid any misinterpretation.

Effective methods of communication ensure everyone has access to information with a way to feedback or respond when necessary. Any chosen method of communication should be stated in the club or regional information.

Communication with young people

Coaches, swim teachers and/or WSC Committee members and Volunteers need to communicate with young people either individually or as a group as part of their development in the sport. Any communication with young people and any contact should be direct, open and honest. Adults should be aware of the language and tone of voice used as these can be interpreted in a variety of ways by different people. Any request by a young person to talk should be responded to appropriately.

Information can be sent as a mass communication to young people as a group. However, where a young person under 18 years of age needs specific individual information this should be copied openly to another responsible person, usually their parent. Where members reach the age of 18, they should receive direct communications. However, WSC Committee members and Volunteers should ensure this is appropriate as an imbalance of power still exists and, despite their age, the young person may still be vulnerable.

Displayed information

Certain information must be displayed and available to all members, including young people, as required legally and by Swim Ireland.

Mandatory information to display

- Child Safeguarding Statement including contact details for the Relevant Person Name and contact details of the Children's Officers will be available on the club website
- Duty rota for all pool and dry land training sessions with parent name clearly indicated Contact details for the club, by the Pool Committee

Information contained on the Club Website

- Anti-bullying Promise
- Club Constitution
- Members Handbook
- All Code of Conduct policies to ensure the safe running of the Club
- Swim season dates and events

Methods of communicating

There are various methods of communications, however WSC Committee members and Volunteers should note that often the method chosen only permits one way communication. The CCO will always be available to all members including young people via any chosen communication method.

Website - Notice board

WSC will use the club website and email communications to provide club updates.

E-mail

WSC will use E-mails as a form of communicating with members. Email addresses are stored in the clubs online membership portal.

Phone/mobile phones

Mobile phones can be a safe and efficient way to communicate, however they can be used for very personal communications. Phone calls with any young person should be at the instigation of the child and preferably with a parent present. It is not possible unless on a conference type call or on speaker phone to have a third party present to monitor the conversation between an adult and a child. Mobile phones can also be used to text individuals and groups with short written messages. The use of group text reduces the risk of an individual message causing upset and misinterpretation.

Mobile phones are often given to children for security; they allow parents to keep in touch and to make sure their children are safe. Mobile phones should not be used at unsuitable times or in certain locations, e.g. changing rooms or where the use of a camera is not allowed. The allowed use of a mobile phone during Swim Ireland, regional and club activities must be specified to the young person and to their parents, including any possible sanction arising out of misuse; e.g. it may be required that mobile phones are switched off at night to avoid disturbance; and if not adhered to permission may be sought to remove the mobile device.

Mobile phones with a camera function are not allowed to be used in changing room areas due to the possible inappropriate use.

Safe sending and replying of text and e-mail

Safe sending

- Obtain the permission of the parent and young person. This should be included in any membership information at registration
- Use appropriate words or phrases in messages without endearments Send messages to a group
- Where an individual message is required copy the communication to another responsible person usually a parent

Safe replying

- Use appropriate language without the use of endearments
- Only reply to an individual young person in response to their message; e.g. a child sends a text to a coach to say they will be late for a training session; coach should reply acknowledging the message, Copy e-mail replies to a responsible person, usually a parent, unless to do so would cause the child distress, in which case consult with a CCO
- Deal with issues or problems verbally with a young person including the parent in any discussion

Web/Internet based social media communications

WSC has a dedicated Facebook page in which to communicate key information to all members. This is a private page to members only.

WSC endeavours to use the Facebook page safely, and any information posted will not contain any personal facts or details and should be positive in nature. WSC encourages all its young members to be careful with the type of information they share online and actively discourage from private exchanges with unknown individuals. WSC Committee members and Volunteers should not interact with an young person in an inappropriate manner. Online content is available and can be easily accessed by unauthorised persons and content is moderated by a responsible person appointed by the Committee.

Who to turn to?

Young people of the Club should be encouraged to know who to speak to if any communication makes them feel uncomfortable, i.e. a trusted person who may be their coach, parent, club or squad captain or even a friend. These trusted people must know how to contact the Children's Officer to help deal with any inappropriate communication. Any information regarding inappropriate communication must be treated seriously. In many instances the matter can be dealt with informally, however if the matter is more serious or there is any intention to cause harm this should be dealt with as a breach of the code of conduct or by the statutory authorities, depending on the severity of the risk.