

The guide has been designed for the use of The British Horse Society; elements will be useful for BHS Approved Centres, BRC Affiliated Riding Clubs, Accredited Professional Coaches, volunteers and committees.

More advice is available www.bhs.org.uk/safeguardingchildren

Introduction

Social media and apps such as Facebook and Twitter are an increasingly popular medium to communicate with a whole network of people. This good practice guide aims to show the opportunities these sites can offer, the potential risks and some good practice guidelines for the safe use of social media.

Opportunities and risks

Organisations have an opportunity to use this media to communicate with their users, clients and volunteers on an instant and low cost basis. Many of the sites allow the user to set up a bespoke profile where they can actively interact with others in their network.

Care must be taken to make sure users are protected from harm while on social media sites and it is the organisation that has created their own page/profiles responsibility to make sure appropriate safeguards are in place when users are linked to their network.

There are various risks for young people who are using social media sites and the internet in general: cyber bullying, grooming and potential abuse, identity theft and exposure to inappropriate content. Most young people use the internet in a positive manner but they may sometimes behave in a way that puts them at risk.

Understand the safety aspects of the social networking site

Familiarise yourself with the social networking site that you would like to use. Look at how the privacy tools work and if there is a code of behaviour for the site. The site will also have a reporting function for concerns or complaints. Net Aware is a great website to find out more.

Legislation

Make sure you operate within the law when using social networking sites. Do not target your profile to children under the age of 13. You may also need to consider the data protection act with regards to the retention of personal information.

Online safety and social media policy

Consider having an online safety and social media policy. This could be a separate policy document, part of your safeguarding policy or an online statement. Include:

- Aims of the policy
- Understanding the online world – the risks and benefits
- How your social media and online presence will be managed
- What you expect from your staff and volunteers
- What you expect from clients e.g. young people

Online guidance good practice

Update this regularly, when required.

Managing the site

A moderator should be assigned to check and maintain content. This person should be trained to recognise bullying or grooming behaviour (see end of this document) and may also require a criminal record check. The Communications Department at the BHS is responsible for monitoring BHS social media sites.

Reporting procedures

Users should be made aware of how they can report an incident or concern that they may have online. Most social media sites have a reporting function but this should also be via the BHS online reporting procedure (available at www.bhs.org.uk) or directly to the appropriate government agency e.g. www.ceop.police.uk

Security and Privacy

An organisation's email address should be used as the contact for the site instead of a personal email account. Log in details for the social media site need to be kept confidential and only those with training and adequate checks should have access to them.

Carefully consider what privacy setting is appropriate. For sites where young people may interact, care must be taken to ensure they are protected from those who may wish them harm.

Monitor and control comments and photo uploads and remove any that have adult content or may cause distress or offence to other users. If your social networking site allows it, make sure no material can be published without the moderator checking it first.

Do not ask for personal contact details from users especially young people, this also includes their location and school or other information that may put them at risk.

Raise awareness

Make sure users including employees, volunteers and members especially young people, know how to protect their privacy online. Guidance documents for these groups are available from www.bhs.org.uk/safeguardingchildren

Promote links to safety websites such as www.ceop.police.uk

Potential indicators of online grooming and sexual exploitation of children and young people

The use of social media may increase the potential for online grooming and exploitation of children. Exploitation of children can include exposure to harmful content, including adult pornography, and illegal child abuse images.

There have been a number of cases of online grooming through social media sites, techniques include:

- Gathering personal details e.g. name, age, school, photographs
- Promising meetings with celebrities or tickets to events
- Offering material gifts e.g. mobile phone, computer
- Paying young people to appear naked and perform sexual acts
- Bulling or intimidating behaviour such as threatening to tell a child's parents
- Asking to meet young people offline

Online guidance good practice

- Using a fake identity to appear as a peer or similar age
- Using sites to gather information about likes and dislikes

Useful Information

Available from www.bhs.org.uk:

- Online guidance for children and young people
- Online guidance for employees' volunteers and coaches
- Online guidance for clubs, centres and coaches
- Guidelines on use of photography and video
- Reporting an online incident – online, text messages or photographic images
- Online learning guidance

Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre – www.ceop.police.uk

Think u Know – www.thinkuknow.co.uk – advice site for young people and parents

NSPCC – Childline 0800 1111 – www.nspcc.org.uk

Child Protection in Sport Unit - http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/cpsu/cpsu_wda57648.html

Childnet international – www.childnet.int.org – a charity that is helping make the internet a safer place for children

Data Protection and Information Commission Office – www.ico.gov.uk

Internet Watch Foundation – www.iwf.org.uk – website to report illegal content

Net Aware – www.net-aware.org.uk – a guide to social media, apps and games

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