

# Social Media Policy & Guidelines



**GAA**



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# Introduction

Social media plays an ever increasing and important role in the organisation and promotion of our Games. It provides an engaging forum through which the GAA community can connect.

The GAA Social Media Policy and Guidelines have been developed to inform our community about using social media so people feel enabled to participate, while being mindful of the standards expected by the GAA and other entities such as the Data Protection Commissioner. The contents provide practical guidance to allow all parties to benefit from the use of social media and to have fun online, while minimising potential risks and protecting everyone involved. It also gives practical guidelines and advice for Clubs and Counties on social media channels, illustrating many specific related risks and provides solutions.

It is important to recognise that each person is individually responsible for what they post online. The information that follows is designed to provide guidance to GAA Units and members on how to communicate appropriately and lawfully online. The GAA does not accept responsibility for the online activities of individual members or GAA Units.



# What do we mean by “Social Media”

**Social media refers to a broad range of online tools or functions that allow people to communicate and/or share content via the internet.**

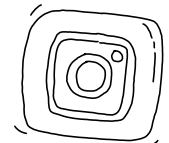
This social media policy applies to platforms including, but not limited to:

- Club and County websites
- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc)
- Video and photo sharing websites or apps (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, Flickr, Vine, etc)
- Blogs and micro-blogging platforms (e.g. Tumblr, Wordpress, etc)
- Image sharing platforms (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat etc)
- Live broadcasting apps (e.g. Periscope, Meerkat, Facebook Live, etc)
- Podcasting (e.g. iTunes, Stitcher, Sound cloud, etc)
- Instant messaging (e.g. SMS, Skype, WhatsApp, Viber, etc)
- Any other online technologies that allow individual users to upload and share content.

## Who This Policy Applies To:

This policy applies to:

- i. “GAA Units” – meaning Clubs, County boards, Provincial boards or any other committee or body which has a role in organising GAA activities;
- ii. “officials” – meaning any person acting in an official capacity for the GAA Units (including coaches, referees, PROs and any other members of the board of a GAA Unit); and
- iii. “members” – meaning individual members where they are using social media in such a way that it impacts on the reputation and values of the GAA.



# The values and principles of the GAA -

**all members and officials should keep in mind the overall values and principles of the GAA when using social media. These are:**

- RESPECT
- PLAYER WELFARE
- COMMUNITY IDENTITY
- AMATEUR STATUS
- TEAMWORK
- INCLUSIVENESS

We should be careful to ensure that our online actions reflect these values and are not contrary to what the GAA represents.



# Guidelines for GAA Units

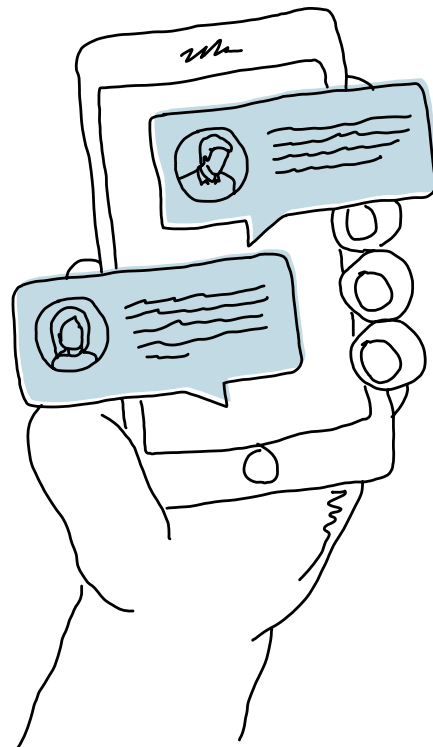
## Appropriate Uses of Social Media

Whether through Facebook pages, Instagram accounts, Twitter feeds or messaging groups, social media can be employed in a variety of ways to organise events and to connect with members. For example social media can be an indispensable tool to assist with:

- Organising training, \* matches\* or club events,
- Providing information to members
- Creating a forum for members to share their views or give feedback
- Providing live updates and commentary during games.

\*Group communications should always be done through the messaging facility on the GAA App. See page 20 for greater detail.

We encourage all GAA Units to make full use of the various platforms which allow you to interact with members, provided you always use your acumen, respect these guidelines and work within the remit of this policy.



WE ENCOURAGE ALL GAA UNITS TO MAKE FULL USE OF THE VARIOUS PLATFORMS WHICH ALLOW YOU TO INTERACT WITH MEMBERS, PROVIDED YOU ALWAYS USE YOUR ACUMEN, RESPECT THESE GUIDELINES AND WORK WITHIN THE REMIT OF THIS POLICY.

# Practical Steps When Setting Up a Social Media Account

Ultimate responsibility for social media accounts in Clubs, Counties and Provinces lies with the PRO. This remit includes reviewing the overall maintenance, upkeep of the channels and removing any material which is in conflict with any aspect of this policy.

In some instances more than one social media administrators from within the Unit may be given access to accounts. The PRO must be sure that the admin is trustworthy and fully understands their remit and the guidelines and policies within this document. Social media and technology is rapidly changing, so make sure those appointed in this area who actively use social media and are across the trends.

The PRO is responsible for ensuring access is kept up to date and that passwords are changed regularly (we recommend at least every three months). In the event that an admin steps away from their role, the account password should be changed immediately.

The PRO is responsible for all content posted on social media, including that posted by appointed admins. In the case that inappropriate content is posted, the PRO must ensure it is removed. It is advisable that the PRO should notify its Club Executive/Board and, if deemed necessary, escalate to a higher level (eg. County PRO, GAA Communications Dept.) for advice.

### Each GAA Unit should:

- Select the social media platforms that they wish to use on an official basis and appoint at least two administrators to monitor and manage those official accounts or sites. We encourage all Units to use their website as their primary channel.
- Decide at the outset what purpose the site or social media page is to serve and set this out in a content policy posted on the site or page.
- Agree a procedure for dealing with any complaints or concerns that may be raised about the content of the site or social network page and ensure all administrators are fully briefed on escalation policy for dealing with same.

- Review the maintenance and upkeep of the site and social media accounts at regular intervals.
- Make all reasonable efforts to insure that the content is in keeping with GAA values and does not contain any links to inappropriate material. Links to external websites are meant for convenience purposes only. [No endorsement of any third party products or services should be expressed or implied by any information, material or content referred to or included on, or linked from a GAA Unit websites or social media pages (except in cases where an official sponsorship arrangement is in place)].

## Privacy

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules must be followed in respect of how a GAA Unit uses any personal data it collects. "Personal data" includes names, contact details, photographs of people or players or any information that can be used to identify a person.

### When a GAA Unit collects an individual's personal data, it should:

- Only ever use that information for the purpose for which it was collected. This purpose should be communicated clearly to the individuals involved at the time it is collected.
- Take appropriate measures to ensure the information is stored in a secure way.
- Request permission before using any photographs of members on their websites or social media pages (this can be done by including a consent form in the annual registration form).
- Respond appropriately if members and other individuals object to any use of their personal information or request that such information be deleted. If such a request is received, officials should consult the GAA's *GDPR - What Your Club Needs to Know and Do*.

[GDPR - What Your Club Needs to Know and Do provides greater detail on how GAA Units should treat personal information.](#)



# Policies applicable to officials' use of social media

**As an administrator of a social media account for a Club, County, Province or other GAA Unit, you are acting as an official voice. In this position there are a number of considerations that must be made before posting content. This section illustrates GAA policy along with guidelines on how page administrators should use social media.**

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## Be Respectful, Transparent and Honest

When acting in an official capacity for a GAA Unit, it is important that officials convey the same positive, volunteer-led spirit that the GAA instils in all of its communications.

**Accordingly the GAA expects its officials to:**

- Be respectful of all individuals, races, religions and cultures.
  - Not post material which is likely to cause offence or bring the GAA into disrepute.
  - Only post text, images, video, or other presentations suitable for people of all ages.
  - Not use accounts to support or oppose any politically or socially controversial subjects, issues, or candidates.
- Not use the account to post personal opinion on any page using the official account, not post comments on any external platform that may imply they are speaking on behalf of the GAA. Officials are of course free to express their opinions but should avoid using official GAA channels to do so.
  - Not say anything dishonest, untrue or misleading. The GAA recommends erring on the side of caution – if in doubt, do not post or upload.
  - Further information on the types of content which breach the standards the GAA expects from all members is listed in the following section.

ONLY POST TEXT, IMAGES, VIDEO, OR OTHER CONTENT SUITABLE FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES.



## Always Respect the Law

**While engaging with social media can be fun and helpful, certain activity on social media may have legal implications. Every effort should be made to avoid the following:**

- Never post defamatory content i.e. material that may damage a person's reputation. Such material can be very damaging for the people involved and can form the basis for expensive legal claims.
- Do not use the copyrights, trademarks, publicity rights, or other rights of others without the necessary permissions of the rights-holders. This includes the GAA's own copyrights, trademarks and brands. Special attention should be made when using photos taken by agencies such as Sportsfile. Always ensure you have the correct permission for use of any imagery you use.
- Respect everyone's right to privacy when posting content online. Never post material in a public forum which you know to be of a private nature. Where you collect people's personal information for a specific purpose, it should only be used for that purpose. For further information about privacy requirements see earlier section pertaining to GDPR.
- Extra care should be taken when posting any personal information or images relating to children and underage members. For further information in respect of requirements in respect of Children and Young People see page 13.
- Never use a GAA account to promote any illegal activity of any kind.



## Confidential Information

Never disclose information that is confidential or proprietary to the GAA/GAA Unit, or confidential to any third party that has disclosed information to the GAA/GAA Unit. Confidential information includes things such as details about litigation, unreleased product information and unpublished financial information or private matters relating to members which your position in the GAA may have allowed you to learn.

## Privacy

The GAA expects its officials to, at all times, respect the privacy of its members and of private individuals generally.

- Always be aware when posting content online that there is potential for that content to become publicly available.
- Refrain from posting any content online that you would not be happy for anyone to see.
- Extra care should be taken when posting photographs or imagery relating to underage members. For further information see the [Children and Young People section on page 13](#).

## Posting Relevant Information

When posting on social platforms in an official capacity, what you post needs to be carefully considered. An official GAA page belonging to a Club, County or any other GAA Unit should only post content related to its activity and relevant to its members, i.e. score updates, registration reminders, fundraising/event details. Administrators should not use their access to official pages to post or promote personal interests or opinions, other entities (eg. local businesses but excluding Sponsors) regardless of their nature.

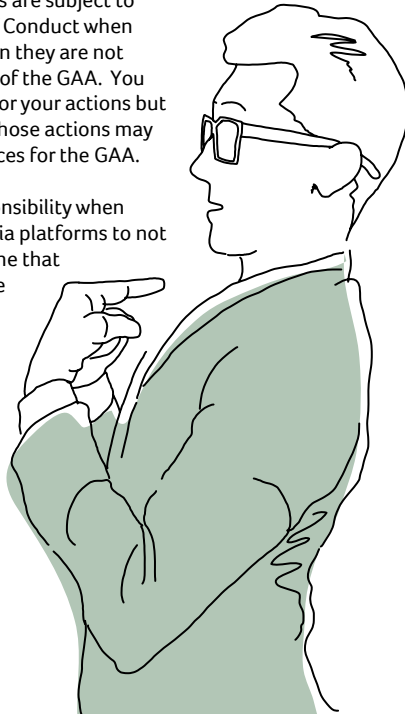
# Polcies applicable to members' use of social media

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**The GAA respects the freedom of its members' right to use social media platforms in their personal capacity as they please and to express their opinions online. Lively and passionate discussions are an important part of enjoying our Games and engaging with our community. However, we would ask that you remember the implications of referring to the GAA when you post or share material online.**

All GAA members are subject to the GAA Code of Conduct when online, even when they are not acting on behalf of the GAA. You are responsible for your actions but remember that those actions may have consequences for the GAA.

You have a responsibility when using social media platforms to not do anything online that might tarnish the GAA's image and reputation or bring the GAA into disrepute.



**The GAA expects the following standards to be adhered to by its members when posting material online:**

- Do not post or share material which is violent, sexually explicit, obscene, hateful, or defamatory.
- Do not post or share inappropriate behaviour relating to underage players.
- Do not suggest or encourage illegal activity.
- Do not engage in trolling, bullying, or abusive activity.
- Do not falsely claim the GAA endorses or is associated with any product or promotion.
- Do not disclose confidential information in respect of the GAA.
- Do not engage in the disparagement of any race, ethnicity or religion.
- Always respect the GAA's values.
- Always use your common sense.

# Monitoring

**Social media accounts for Units come under the responsibility of the PRO, even when social media management is shared among a team of administrators. While posting content is important, monitoring comments and mentions also requires attention. Appoint a member to monitor the social media sites your club is responsible for and ensure people know who your designated contact person is for members who have a concern.**

## Moderation

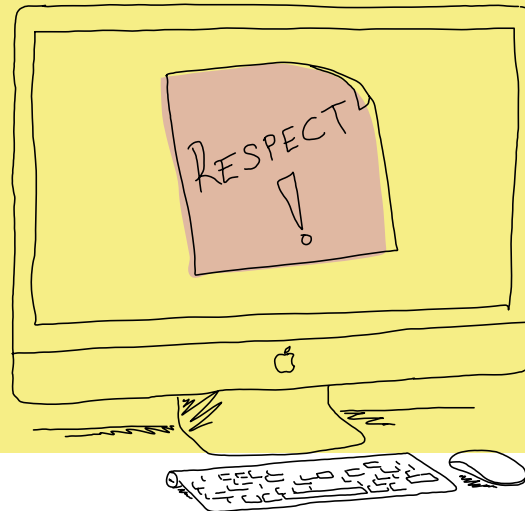
### What is moderation?

When someone posts a comment on a social media channel, the account administrator can 'moderate' that comment. In other words, they review the content and can choose to remove it after it is published. Different moderators operate different policies, but all are responsible for the material that appears on their pages. In addition to comments, this can also apply to video, audio and other content that a user posts on a site or page.

### What to and how to moderate

Interaction and engagement among followers is one of the best things about social media and should be encouraged. Sometimes criticism of GAA Units will be made by social media page followers. If someone has something negative to say but does it in a civil manner, and in the context of an online conversation, admins should consider the facilitation of such opinion; it is at the discretion of the page administrator as to whether this should remain or be removed. However, it is the responsibility of admins to uphold certain standards to keep channels safe for everyone. Libelous, defamatory, offensive or violent content should never be tolerated. Once any such commentary has been brought to the attention of the admin immediate action should be taken to remove that post.

If you are ever in doubt as to how to act with regard to comments or if conflict has arisen as a result of same, you should immediately escalate your concern (County, Province or GAA Communications Dept).



## Dealing with feedback

When we use social media platforms, we open the conversation to anyone, so we can potentially invite negative feedback. We should be prepared to respond appropriately, quickly and effectively. Here are some ways to do this;

### STRAIGHT PROBLEMS

If someone on a forum has a legitimate issue and has expressed it clearly, you should respond, taking steps to fix the problem. Whether you respond privately to the poster, or in a message viewable by the public, depends on the nature of the problem. If you respond privately, it is good to also leave a message on the forum saying that the problem is being dealt with, and by whom.

### CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

This also requires a response. If someone makes a suggestion, you can acknowledge the suggestion with a positive message, even if it is not appropriate to act on it. This builds trust with the audience.

### NEGATIVE CRITICISM

If someone has a real issue and is annoyed or angry, do not dismiss it out of hand because of the tone. Firstly, check whether there is a genuine problem, thank the person for bringing it to your attention, and take steps to address it. Reassure the person that their issue is now being addressed.

### TROLLING AND SPAM

A 'troll' is someone who, without a valid reason, adds disruptive or offensive posts or content to a forum. 'Spammers' are people who illegally post commercial or inappropriate content. Watch out for these and delete their posts. Never engage with online trolls. If a 'troll' or 'spammer' repeatedly comments on posts on a page, they can be blocked.

## How to report inappropriate activity

If you become aware of any member or official breaching any of the above social media guidelines, please contact your Club or County PRO. Alternatively concerns can be reported to [communications@gaa.ie](mailto:communications@gaa.ie).



## Children and young people

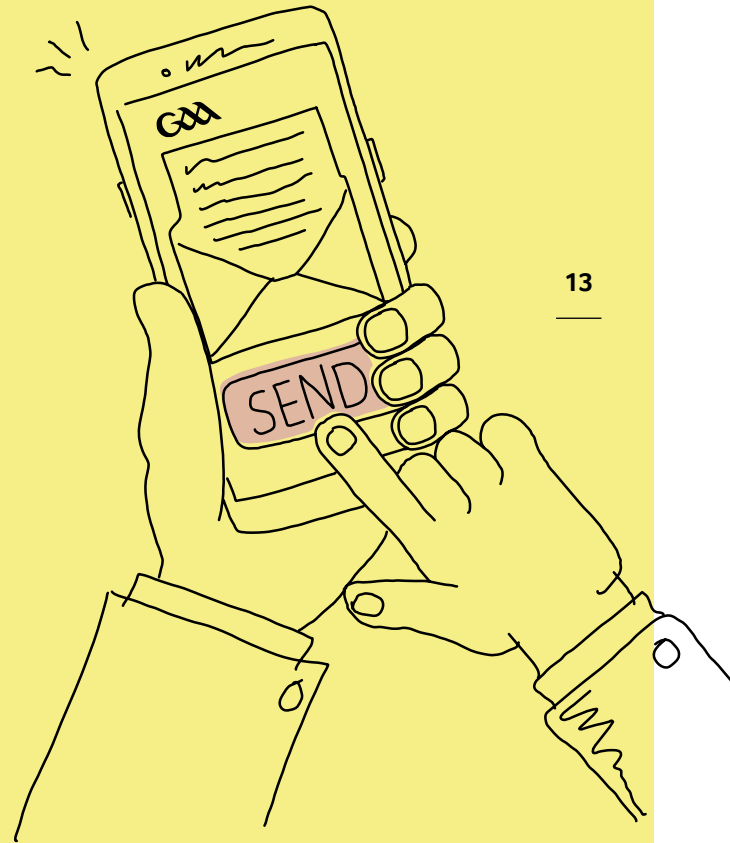
Sharing photographs of players, using web sites to publicise activities, contacting parents and guardians about training and games for underage teams the use of social media networks in addition to the videoing of events, games, training and coaching sessions are normal activities within most clubs. The GAA does not wish to eliminate or curtail these activities but proposes certain safeguards so as to ensure that we minimise the risk or threats that inappropriate images or other personal information may pose, particularly for underage members. (The term “underage” in the GAA is used to describe children and young people who are under 18 years of age).

### Communicating with underage players and teams

Coaches, mentors and other officials should never place themselves in a compromising position by texting or communicating via social media sites with underage players. All such communications regarding GAA activities should be sent via the parents or guardians of the underage player, unless otherwise agreed with the parents/guardians.

### In general, the following should apply when communicating with underage players:

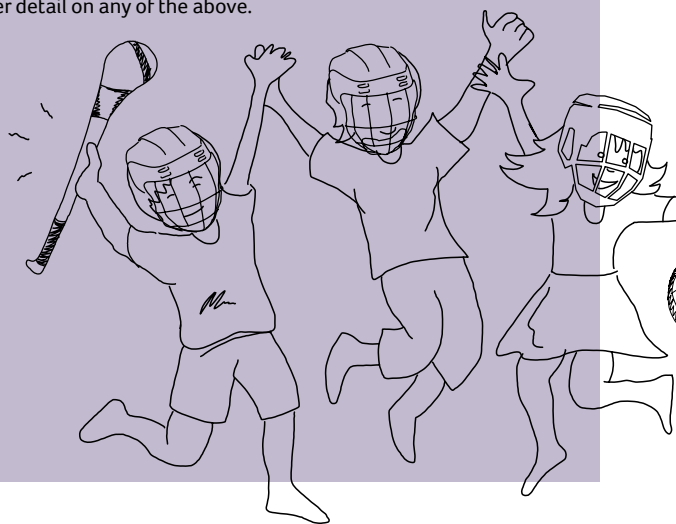
- Use mobile phones, if deemed appropriate, only via an email system or the GAA app for communicating with the parents/guardians of players. Any exception to this form of group texting can only be preceded with following express permission from parents/guardians.
- Do not communicate individually by text/email sites with underage players.
- Do not communicate with underage players via social network sites.



## Guidelines for posting images or personal information relating to underage members

The following represents the best practice when posting images or personal information relating to underage members:

- GAA Units should determine which, if any, social media accounts will be used to communicate personal information relating to underage members. The Unit may decide their websites will have a specific youth section and if so they should also agree the extent and the limitations on its content etc.
- Ask for the player's parent's permission to use their image. This consent could be included in the annual registration form.
- All children/young people featured in recordings posted online must be appropriately dressed.
- The photograph or recording posted online should focus on the activity rather than a particular young person.
- In general, no personal details relating to the young person should be revealed as accompanying materials to the photograph or recorded image, with the exception being where they are being publicly acknowledged (e.g. an award or personal achievement), for which consent has been given.
- Group and team photographs may be taken but it is not necessary to match a player's name with the position in which they may be standing or seated in the team photograph.
- Any instances of the use of inappropriate images should be reported to the GAA Unit's Children's Officer and/or appropriate person within the GAA Unit and also to the relevant statutory authorities if deemed necessary.
- Where underage members are invited to engage with a GAA Unit's social media accounts, parental knowledge and permission prior to the young person engaging in such communication must be sought.
- Ask parents not to post pictures of other children on their own social media accounts
- Such interaction with GAA Unit websites or accounts should also be carefully monitored to ensure underage members are not abused or trolled on line and that they themselves do not intentionally or otherwise post inappropriate comments or materials. The GAA has an [\[Anti-Bullying Policy\]](#) which should be adhered to at all times.
- The GAA has set out in detail its policies and standards for officials engaging with underage members in the "Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport when working with underage players" and the "Guide to Maintaining appropriate levels of behaviour in our work with children and young people". Please refer to them for further detail on any of the above.



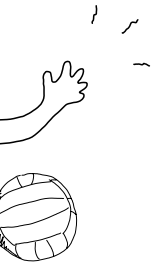
# Implications of improper usage of Social Media

The inappropriate use of social media by either an official or a member will be treated with the utmost gravity by the GAA and may result in disciplinary actions.

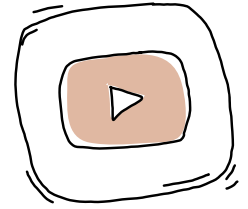
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**A breach of any part of this Social Media Policy shall be regarded not only as a breach of the GAA Code of Conduct but, if carried out against an underage person, is also a breach of our Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport when working with underage players.**

If a member is found to have breached this Social Media Policy in any way, disciplinary action may be taken in line with the GAA's Disciplinary Process.



# The Channels



**The number of social media channels is vast; do you need a presence on all of them? The answer to this is no. The channels explained in this section are established channels, deemed to be the most appropriate and effective for the GAA and its Counties and Clubs. A presence on many channels stretches resources and increases the risk of improper use.**

While the GAA does not enforce strict rules around using other social media platforms, we would strongly advise our community to take the approach of replicating the presence the GAA has on social media platforms. OfficialGAA accounts exist on:

- FACEBOOK
- TWITTER
- INSTAGRAM
- YOUTUBE

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## Facebook

Facebook is a social networking website and service where users can post comments, share photographs and links to news or other interesting content on the Web, play games, chat live, and stream live video. Shared content can be made publicly accessible, or it can be shared only among a select group of friends or family, or with a single person.

Clubs and Counties can use Facebook to promote upcoming games and other events, post videos, share content from other accounts and create positive interaction with the community of followers. When setting up a Facebook page for a GAA Unit it should be set up as a 'Like' page and not as a personal 'Friend' page. If your page is not currently set up as a 'Like' page there are simple steps you can take to migrate to this page format. More information on this can be found via Facebook.



### Moderation on Facebook

Full pre-moderation is not available on Facebook, meaning that users' comments will appear on your posts without your approval. However, if you're an admin of a Page, you can block certain words from appearing on your Page and turn on the profanity filter.

### Blocking Words

When people include a word you've blocked in a post or comment on your Page, it won't appear on your Page. To block words:

- Click Settings at the top of your Page.
- From General, click Page Moderation.
- Type the words you want to block, separated by commas. You'll need to add both the singular and plural forms of the word you want to block.
- Click Save Changes.

You can unhide comments that contain blocked words by going to the comment and clicking Unhide.

### Profanity Filter

You can block different degrees of profanity from appearing on your Page. We determine what to block by using the most commonly reported words and phrases marked offensive by the community. To turn on the profanity filter:

- Click Settings at the top of your Page.
- From General, click Profanity Filter.
- Select Medium or Strong.
- Click Save Changes.

Users who persistently break the rules of the site can be blocked.

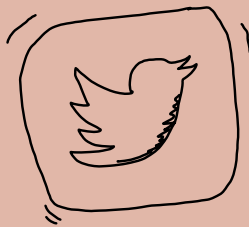


## Twitter

**Twitter is an online news and social networking site where people communicate in short messages called tweets. Tweeting is sending short messages to anyone who follows you on Twitter, with the hope that your messages are useful and interesting to someone in your audience.**

Twitter is the perfect channel for Clubs and Counties to post live match updates and other timely news. Photos and video can be uploaded directly to Twitter. Links to external content such as news and match reports from a website is also a useful feature.

Twitter is often the platform on which inappropriate comments are made due to the 'in-the-moment' nature of the platform and so admins should be highly aware when posting or moderating comments on this platform. As with all online channels, a Club or County account should never enter into public argument with negative posters.



## Instagram

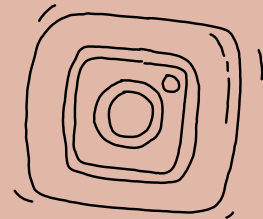
**Instagram is a social networking app made for sharing photos and videos from a smartphone. Similar to Facebook or Twitter, everyone who creates an Instagram account has a profile and a news feed.**

When you post a photo or video on Instagram, it will be displayed on your profile. Other users who follow you will see your posts in their own feed. Likewise, you'll see posts from other users whom you choose to follow.

Instagram is like a simplified version of Facebook, with an emphasis on mobile use and visual sharing. Just like other social networks, you can interact with other users on Instagram by following them, being followed by them, commenting, liking, tagging and private messaging.

For Clubs and Counties, Instagram is the perfect platform for sharing the great photos that come from our Games. Instagram admins should be aware of legal restrictions around sharing photos and video taken OF and BY others on their account.

Instagram Stories offer users the ability to post more timely content that will appear for 24 hours. Stories also offers other features such as polls and the opportunity to link to external content. It is the perfect way to give a behind the scenes insight to games and events.



# Other Channels

## Snapchat

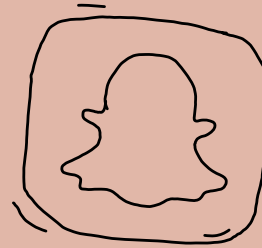
**Snapchat is a mobile-only messaging app. Users can “chat” with their friends by sending them photos, short videos up to 10 seconds long. Text chats and video calls are two other features that were added more recently to the app. Photos and videos essentially disappear a few seconds after they’ve been viewed by their recipients.**

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Snapchat is not an app on which the GAA has a presence (though it once did). We do not encourage Counties and Clubs to use Snapchat for both safety and data protection reasons.

The biggest issue from a GDPR perspective is the lack of auditing ability the Club/County will have over it. If messages are being sent through the App to members, due to the fact that that messages disappear there is no record of what was said/who it was sent to.

This also makes it very difficult for a County or Club to comply with a Subject Access Request if one was to be received from a member who had been in contact with the County or Club via Snapchat. If the account is set up so that it doesn't accept friend requests, in the same manner a 'like' page on Facebook is set up, the County or Club can control the messaging function and receive none (this is the advised setup should you use Snapchat). However, from a Child Safety perspective as well as a data protection perspective the lack of oversight we have over a Snapchat account isn't worth the return from using the App.



SNAPCHAT IS NOT AN APP ON WHICH THE GAA HAS A PRESENCE (THOUGH IT ONCE DID). WE DO NOT ENCOURAGE COUNTIES AND CLUBS TO USE SNAPCHAT FOR BOTH SAFETY AND DATA PROTECTION REASONS.

# Direct Messaging

Direct messaging functionality features across most social media channels and on stand-alone apps such as Whatsapp and Messenger.

## Direct messaging and underage players

For adult members, the use of social media as a messaging platform creates compliance issues from a data protection perspective. There is a lack of auditing ability for the Club/County over social media sites' messaging platforms which makes it difficult to comply with data subject requests.

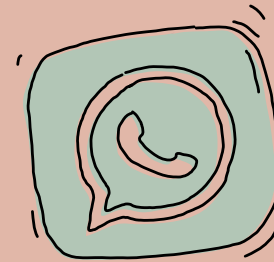
The lack of knowledge as to where the messages are stored is also an issue due to the requirement on Data Controllers (Clubs/County) to be aware as to where the information they process is stored.

Counties and Clubs should use this feature only when necessary to respond directly to genuine queries (ie ticketing or fixture queries). You should never instigate conversation with followers using this form of messaging except for when contacting a competition winner. All other correspondence should be directed to the one of the Club/County GAA email addresses.

**This does not impact on other policies relating to communicating with underage players.**

When dealing with underage players this is a child protection issue as well as a data protection issue. The Code of Behaviour for Underage Players states "Coaches are not permitted to communicate individually via social media with underage players. Our Association does not approve of Clubs or coaches engaging in or facilitating messaging apps in which players and coaches participate nor do we approve of the creation of messaging forums for underage players."

The GAA's [Data Protection Policy](#) for Clubs and [Code of Behaviour for Underage Players](#) can be found on [GAA.ie](#).



"COACHES ARE NOT PERMITTED TO COMMUNICATE INDIVIDUALLY VIA SOCIAL MEDIA WITH UNDERAGE PLAYERS. OUR ASSOCIATION DOES NOT APPROVE OF CLUBS OR COACHES ENGAGING IN OR FACILITATING MESSAGING APPS IN WHICH PLAYERS AND COACHES PARTICIPATE NOR DO WE APPROVE OF THE CREATION OF MESSAGING FORUMS FOR UNDERAGE PLAYERS."

## WhatsApp

**From a GDPR perspective, Whatsapp is not compliant when used for official communications.**

This is due to a number of reasons. Firstly, if a Whatsapp group is set up (U-12 hurling for example) every parent in that group has their phone number and possibly profile photograph if they have one, shared with every other parent in the group without giving their consent for their personal data to be shared in this manner. Also, the lack of auditing ability the Club/County has over a Whatsapp group is an issue. This is an issue for a number of reasons outside of GDPR and data protection also. For instance, if a parent in a Whatsapp group were to post unsuitable material to the Whatsapp group, and then leave the group, the administrators of the group cannot remove such material.

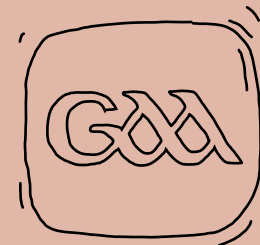
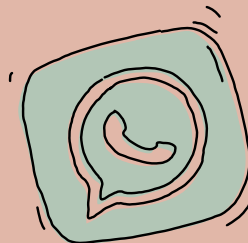
The lack of auditing ability also makes it difficult to comply with a Subject Access Request or request for deletion if one were received. Along with the above, there is an issue presently with Whatsapp as to the location of the storage of information within it. If personal data is transferred outside the EEA, the entity transferring it (the Club/County) will have to ensure additional safeguards are in place which is not possible when using Whatsapp. Therefore due to these reasons, the use of Whatsapp in an official capacity is not advisable.

## GAA App

**Enhancements have been made to GAA systems to facilitate compliance with GDPR using technology, including the GAA App.**

Following the issues outlined both in relation to Whatsapp and direct messaging on social media, the GAA App includes a messaging functionality enabling Clubs to communicate with their members through the App which is a GDPR compliant messaging service. This messaging functionality allows Clubs to have auditing ability over the information processed within it.

The GAA centrally has a contract in place with Servasport in relation to the App which ensures the location of information processed within the App is known. The messaging functionality within the App provides a free, controlled, auditable method of communication for Clubs and their members, which is being expanded to include the capability for coaches to utilise the App to communicate with their teams also.



# Minding yourself and others on Social Media

**Social media is a great platform through which to connect, cooperate, and keep informed, but it can have a dark side. Cyber bullying and abuse can have a devastating effect on the emotional and mental wellbeing of the recipient.**

Many of us love to discuss Gaelic Games on social media, particularly in the aftermath of a big match, but it's important to remember that our players, referees, and officers, are amateurs and volunteers. They give of their time freely for the betterment of their clubs and counties. They also lead busy lives outside the world of the GAA. We all have a responsibility to moderate our contributions on social media, and to moderate the contributions of others. This includes thinking carefully before we 'Like' or share a comment or post.

**If you are the victim of online abuse, cyberbullying, or 'trolling', here's some steps to consider:**

- Don't respond to the messages (no matter how much you may want to). You may feel the desire to right a wrong but research has shown that bullies enjoy further engagement and will act on evidence that they have worried or upset you, often by increasing the level of their abuse.
- If you are being targeted, go offline and reach out to a trusted friend or loved one and discuss the situation. Online can be a lonely place at such times. Go for a walk and try to think about something else.

- If you are concerned about content that has been uploaded relating to yourself or another person, contact the platform provider (Facebook/Twitter etc.) and ask them to have it removed. You may need to take a screenshot of the content as evidence.
- You can report any cases of abuse to the platform provider. You should also block the offender to avoid further engagement.
- In serious or persistent cases report the situation to the Gardaí.
- If you are concerned about the impact online abuse/ bullying, or 'trolling' is having on you then reach out to a loved one – a problem shared is a problem halved. If you are reluctant or embarrassed to do so, Samaritans is the GAA's official mental health partners. They take calls of this nature every day and provide a confidential, friendly, non-judgement ear, 24-hours a day. They can be reached on 116-123.
- When online be mindful to always treat others as you would like to be treated.

# Getting Advice

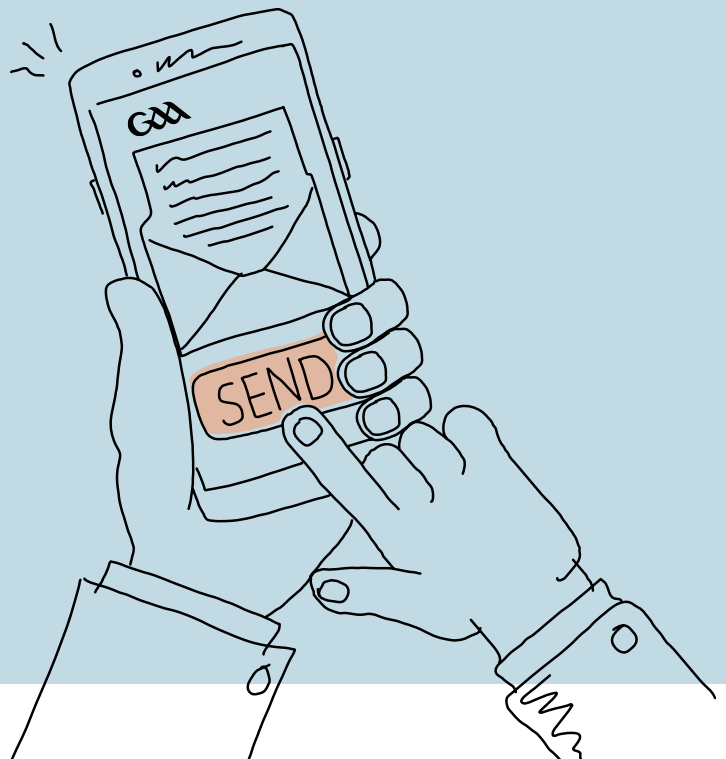
**If you have any queries or require guidance on any of the areas covered in these GAA Social Media Policy & Guidelines there are a number of routes you can take.**

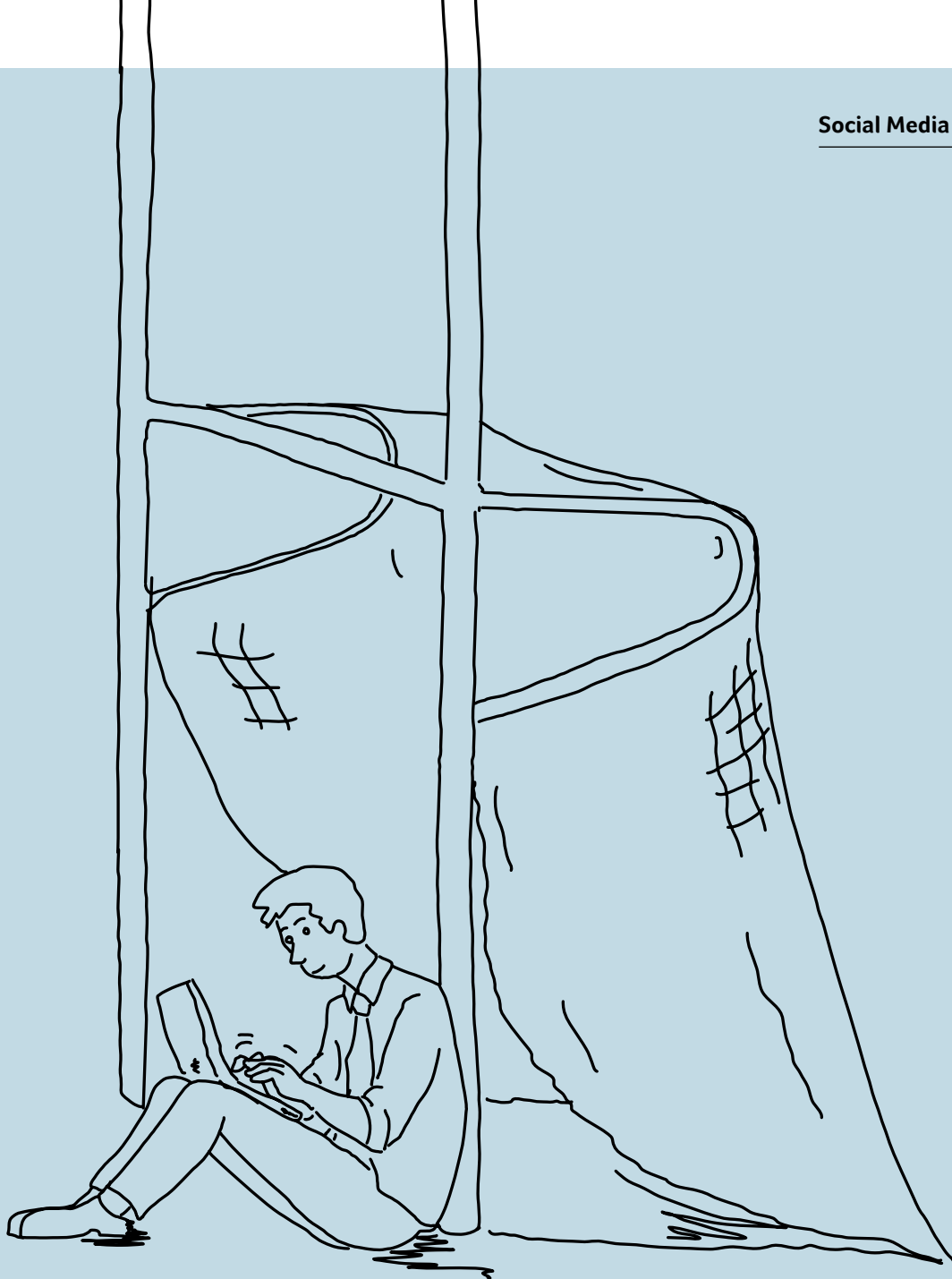
County and Provincial PROs have received digital and social media training and are armed with the knowledge to support Clubs with day-to-day queries. If a matter needs to be escalated, they will be familiar with the route to take. These officers should be your first point of call with concerns.

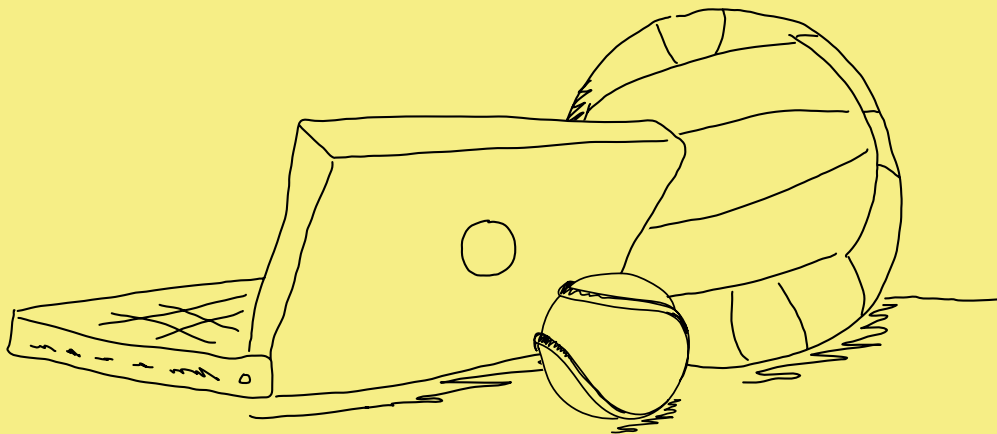
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If you would like to directly contact the Digital section of the GAA Communications Department in Croke Park, you can do so by mailing **[communications@gaa.ie](mailto:communications@gaa.ie)**.

If you have specific concerns over Data Protection, you can email **[dataprotection@gaa.ie](mailto:dataprotection@gaa.ie)**.







## Social Media Guidelines

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