



Irish Pony Club

SOCIAL MEDIA AND VIRTUAL ACTIVITIES POLICY

Updated 15th March 2021

I. Our Mission Statement

The Irish Pony Club is committed to providing a safe and fair environment for all Members. Our first priority is the welfare of our Members and we are committed to providing an environment which will allow participants to perform to their best ability free from bullying and intimidation. The Irish Pony Club also has a duty of care to our volunteers working with young people on behalf of the organisation.

II. Code of Conduct for Online Activities

Social media refers to a broad range of online tools or functions that allow people to communicate and/or share content via the internet: from social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, etc, to image-sharing platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, etc, to instant messaging applications like WhatsApp, SMS/iMessage, Viber, etc.

All social media pages and online/virtual training activities associated with the Irish Pony Club are to be conducted in line with the Irish Pony Club's Child Protection and Welfare Policies and Procedures. This includes any online activities/information sharing or use of social media via any virtual platform, including – but not limited to –:

- Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp and Instagram (or any service operated by Facebook, Inc.);
- Twitter
- Snapchat
- TikTok
- YouTube
- Email services (e.g. Gmail)
- Viber / iMessage / SMS services
- Zoom
- Microsoft Teams

Users of any of these platforms or similar must be respectful at all times, and understand that comments, images, videos and other material posted to social media pages operated under the auspices of the Irish Pony Club may be removed in the event that such material is

inappropriate or offensive. More detailed guidance on the use of these platforms is provided below.

Please note the Irish Pony Club will not tolerate any of the following on its social media pages:

- Any defamatory material;
- Material infringing copyright or intellectual property rights;
- Material in breach of privacy or confidentiality obligations, i.e. no full names or contact details (especially where a child is concerned);
- Offensive, obscene or sexually violative material; and/or
- Threatening, abusive or insulting statements likely to stir up hatred.

If you experience an issue or problem while using the Irish Pony Club Facebook page, please contact the Irish Pony Club National Children's Officer or the National Designated Liaison Person:

- National Children's Officer (NCO): Rory O'Sullivan-Hennessy
nco@irishponyclub.ie
- National Designated Liaison Person (DLP): Marisa Breen Bourke
marisa@irishponyclub.ie

Your feedback and ideas are welcome.

III. Safety Guidance for Officials, Staff and All Sports Leaders

Many Members, Volunteers, and Irish Pony Club Instructors already use sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. It is essential that you keep both yourself and young people safe online and, as an adult, you have a key role to play in actively promoting these safety measures.

While social network profiles are easy to set up and use, it is important that you keep a professional distance online, just as you would in the 'offline' world. Think carefully about how digital communication (e.g. comments, photos etc.) may appear to a third party, compared with a conversation in the real world, as there is increased potential for messages to be misinterpreted and forwarded to others.

If you have a website or have set up a social networking site for your Branch, bear in mind that once you place something there, it is in the public domain, which means people can access it, potentially change it and share it with others.

While posting content is important, **content moderation** – i.e. monitoring comments and mentions by others – is of equal if not more concern. Branches should consider appointing a responsible adult who will control and monitor the social media sites your Branch is responsible for, and ensure people know who the designated contact persons are for Members who may have a concern.

The Irish Pony Club considers it **best practice** that adults involved in any capacity with the Pony Club **must not** accept Members as contacts/friends on their **personal** Facebook or Twitter (etc.) pages. We set out some other guidance for Officials, Sports Leaders and Staff below:

- Remember you are in a position of trust as a volunteer;
- Remember some sites have an age restriction (i.e. Facebook has a minimum age of 13 years);
- Parents must provide you with their permission to upload photos of their children if they are below the digital age of consent (16);
- Only set up pages for events, activities or groups for which you are responsible;
- Do not use your personal social networking account to communicate with young people;
- Conduct yourself in an appropriate way as you would face to face. Be aware of what you say and how you say it – the use of sarcasm and innuendo are not appropriate;
- Don't engage in on-to-one conversation with young people via chat facilities – this is the same as going into a private room and closing the door;
- Do not provide personal details, such as email addresses, school name etc. for young people on your website or social networking channel;
- Always ensure you have parental permission to use any appropriate photos of young people (ensure all Members sign either a new Member's application form or a membership renewal form annually which includes permission for use of photos), and do not name Members in captions;
- When emailing parents/guardians in relation to Branch activities, use the 'BCC' (blind copy) facility to avoid sharing email addresses;
- Appoint a responsible adult (preferably someone familiar with Facebook, etc.) to manage the page. They must monitor interaction between users (Members and the public) – comments on photos and activities posted;
- If you are concerned about the way a young person is attempting to contact you, tell your Branch Children's Officer and/or the Branch Designated Liaison Person (i.e. DC);
- Know how to block someone online and report them to Facebook if you feel uncomfortable.

IV. Irish Pony Club Guidance for Online / Virtual Training Activities (via "Zoom")

The Irish Pony Club is committed to ensuring that a safe learning environment is provided to its Members at all times, whether on- or off-line. Recent changes brought about as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has seen an upsurge in the use of platforms such as "Zoom" or "Microsoft Teams" as virtual learning spaces for children. It is essential that all volunteers, officials, staff and sport leaders remember that – irrespective of whether a child is engaging in a learning activity in-person or online via distance learning – the same statutory rules, policies and procedures apply.

The protection of all Members, staff and volunteers/officials, their personal data and their physical and emotional well-being is of paramount importance and will serve as the basis for all distance learning activities.

The Irish Pony Club recognises the use of **Zoom** as an acceptable platform of digital communication which may be used for online/virtual training activities for Members. In order to create a safe environment for Members and volunteers/officials, online/virtual training activities conducted via Zoom should operate under certain guidelines.

- The digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be in order to consent to the processing of their personal data online. As many Irish Pony Club Members will be below the age of consent in Ireland (**16**), parents must login in from their own Zoom account.
- Meetings should be password protected, and meeting IDs and login/joining information should remain confidential and not be shared with any unauthorised persons.
- The District Commissioner (DC), or their nominee, and Branch Children’s Officer must be present at all times during Branch distance learning activities. Nominees should be ‘impartial’, i.e. not the parent/guardian of a child attending the activity.
- Parents/Guardians have a duty to appropriately supervise children while they are engaging in online activities. **Any Member below the digital age of consent (16) should have a parent/guardian present during all online training/distance learning activities.** Parental permission is implied when parents connect to an online platform such as Zoom on behalf of their children.
- Instructors providing online training to Members should have their details inputted on the Irish Pony Club’s Instructor’s Register in that given year.
- Meeting rules should be set out at the start of each meeting. It should be made clear to participants that any recordings, photos or screenshots of the Zoom meeting are not allowed. If meetings are recorded by hosts, recordings should be kept securely as they will contain confidential information, and should not be shared to any unauthorised persons.
- If your child is participating in a distance learning session which requires their camera to be on, it is best practice to consider what background is visible while they are using Zoom so as the privacy of other family members and the security of the home environment is protected, as well as minimising distraction to other participants. A quiet, communal family space in front of a blank wall is often best.
- All meetings should open with reference to the Irish Pony Club’s Mission Statement, Code of Ethics and Child Protection and Welfare/Safeguarding Policies. Parents/guardians have a duty to ensure that their children behave in a manner appropriate for distance learning, and all participants shall adhere to the Irish Pony Club’s Code of Ethics.
- General notes of meetings should be made and kept securely for the purposes of records. Scribes should avoid inputting personal data where possible, unless necessary for future records.
- If you are in any way concerned about the way in which a young person is treated or directed via a distance a learning activity, this should be brought to the attention of your **Branch Children’s Officer** and/or the **Branch Designated Liaison Person** (i.e. DC).
- One-on-one meetings with Members under 18 years of age are not permitted.
- Meeting hosts should use and familiarise themselves with appropriate meeting controls, e.g. disabling private chat functions, muting participants to avoid background disturbances, etc. The Irish Pony Club considers it best practice to “lock” meetings when all participants are present, to prevent any unauthorised persons from joining.
- At all times, all hosts and participants must behave in an appropriate, safe, respectful and kind manner. For any disruptive participants, it is best practice to mute their microphones and camera sharing, unless removal from the meeting is required where repeat disturbances occur. If participant removal is necessary, the reason(s) why

should be explained clearly to that participant and their parent/guardian, and they should be afforded an opportunity to amend their behaviour.

- Any personal information gathered from participants must be processed in a manner compliant with the Irish Pony Club's Data Protection Policy and Handbook.
- Further support for the use of Zoom can be found by contacting support@zoom.us.

V. Using 'Facebook'

Facebook is a valuable social media platform, which allows individuals or organisations to connect easily and directly with friends (in the case of individuals) and with fans (in the case of organisations or companies). The Irish Pony Club's Facebook page is a public 'fan' or 'like' page, which means that anyone with a Facebook account can visit the Irish Pony Club's page and view material published on the page. If you wish to comment on a post that the Irish Pony Club has made on the page, you must click 'like' to become registered and to have the access to leave a comment. Posting information on Facebook makes it easier to share news, photos and videos, and to hear what one's fans have to say.

a. Setting Up and Using Branch Facebook Pages

If your Branch wants to use Facebook, they should set up a public 'Page' and not a 'Group'. Facebook pages are designed to be set up by genuine organisations, whereas a Group can be set up by anyone on a fun basis. Using a Page means that the Irish Pony Club brand is represented properly and the Irish Pony Club can quickly use Facebook to remove any Pages that are not official.

Your Facebook page should be named correctly, as per your Pony Club Branch – i.e. "X' Pony Club". This enables the Irish Pony Club to see that the Pages on Facebook are being run by their respective Branches and not by someone else. It also helps to ensure the Irish Pony Club is represented correctly.

Do not allow your Facebook page to be littered with advertising and/or spam. You may allow posts from acceptable businesses that support your Branch and associated organisations, but you must ensure that posts from any products or organisations you do not know are removed.

Advertising from alcohol, tobacco and other inappropriate industries are prohibited. This means the messages you are delivering to your Members are not diluted and it keeps your page looking tidy and official.

Facebook also provides certain content/page moderation and profanity filtering options (via Settings > General > Page Moderation/Profanity Filter) which allows you to select words for filtering or blocking, which may help to quickly remove certain inappropriate or offensive posts or comments.

VI. Using 'Twitter'

Sports Leaders and Officials are advised to use 'protected' (i.e. private) Tweets, meaning only certain people, such as those from your Branch who are using Twitter, will see your Tweets as 'followers'. This means that when people want to follow you, they have to request

permission from you and you have to allow them to follow. Once allowed, they will be able to see your Tweets. Choose a username which represents your Branch properly, but which is not too long.

VII. Using ‘WhatsApp’ Messaging Service (and ‘Groups’)

Many (if not most) Branches may use WhatsApp ‘Groups’ to communicate information about Branch Activities between parents/volunteers/staff, etc. ‘WhatsApp’ is a messaging platform operated and provided by Facebook, Inc. which provides an end-to-end encrypted messaging service to users.

All users of these groups and anyone using WhatsApp to communicate information regarding Branch or Irish Pony Club activities must at all times be mindful of private and sensitive personal information of Members and volunteers, and should refrain from discussing any private matters using WhatsApp.

Before a WhatsApp Group is set up, Branches must seek consent from Parents/Guardians individually before they are added to these groups for the purposes of Branch activity information sharing.

VIII. Using Other Social Media Platforms, e.g. Instagram

The Irish Pony Club considers it **best practice** for Branches to limit their online representation to public Facebook or Twitter pages. The key point to note here is that operating multiple social media platforms can lead to moderation or audit fatigue and may result in content dilution, thus aggravating certain safety and privacy risks faced by users.

IX. Safety Guidance for Young People

The internet and mobile phones make it easy to talk and communicate with your friends quickly and cheaply. The following points are intended to keep you safe online:

- **Do not** give out personal details such as your address, mobile number or location on any website, or on the phone.
- **Do not** communicate with people on social networking sites if you do not know them.
- **Do not** meet up with anyone who you have only met and spoken to online.
- Make sure your social networking profile is set to private or for friends only.
- Only accept ‘friend requests’ or ‘follows’ from someone you actually know.
- Remember that any photos, video clips and comments uploaded to the internet via Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, etc, may be there forever – even if you delete them. They may also be viewed by people that you may not think will see them.
- When uploading photos of yourself and friends, make sure your friends are happy for you to do so. **Never** upload a photo of someone who would rather that photo to not be posted.
- **Never** upload photos or send comments that may be hurtful to others; this is against the Irish Pony Club Code of Conduct (to access the Code of Conduct, click here:

<https://www.irishponyclub.ie/images/pdf/2018/administrationrules/ipc-codesofconduct-27.11.2018.pdf>).

- Make sure you know how to block someone on a social networking site, and if necessary, report them.
- If you are worried and would like help, tell your parents or a responsible adult including your Branch DC and/or Branch Children's Officer.

X. Data Protection

It is vital to remember that the use of social media and/or virtual training platforms will ordinarily necessitate the processing of an individual or group's personal information.

Any processing of Members' or volunteers' personal data must be carried out safely and securely, in accordance with the Irish Pony Club's Data Protection Policy. See the IPC Data Protection Handbook which provides a guide to the compliant management of personal data under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 (accessible via the 'Downloads' section of the Irish Pony Club website – see here: <https://irishponyclub.ie/index.php/downloads>).