

Girls' Brigade Scotland and Social Media

Policy Statement

Social media and information technology have an increasing significance in all aspects of life in Girls' Brigade Scotland. In order to ensure the safety of girls and adults leaders as well as the integrity of GBS we are committed to ensuring that volunteers are advised about the safe use of IT and social media. GBS acknowledges the popularity, opportunities and hazards of the internet and social networking sites as a common form of communication, information gathering and sharing in the world today. Those who volunteer in GBS have a legal and moral responsibility to look after the girls in their care on a company evening, a residential activity or even in the wider community. As leaders you hold a position of trust and respect in church and community and it is important that you act as role models, practising positive relationships and communications that value, nurture and protect young people through open, accountable and safe practices in a way that reflects the Christian ethos of the organisation.

General information

Social networking via sites such as Facebook and Twitter can offer great possibilities to Girls' Brigade in Scotland at local, divisional and national level. Already many of our girls and leaders in GBS are using such sites on a personal level and some companies have set up Facebook pages. This is good news! However, it is essential to ensure that you keep both yourself and young people safe online and, as an adult leader in GBS, you have a key role to play in actively promoting the safe use of such sites by following the advice shown below for leaders and young people.

A common-sense approach

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 any digital communication might appear to a third party. This includes e-mails, texts, Facebook postings and tweeting on Twitter. Compared with a conversation in the real world, technology increases the potential for messages to be seen out of context, misinterpreted or forwarded to others. The use of sarcasm and innuendo are not appropriate and it is essential to remember that you are in a position of trust. If you have a website or have set up a social networking site for your GB company or division, bear in mind that once you place something there, it is in the public domain, which means people can access it, change it and share it with others.

Guidance for adults

- Remember you are in a position of trust as a volunteer.
- Remember that some sites have an age restriction (i.e. Facebook has a minimum age of 13 years)
- Conduct yourself in an appropriate way as you would face to face - be aware of what you say and how you say it.
- Don't engage in one-to-one conversations with young people via chat facilities or instant messaging - this is the same as going into a private room with a young person and closing the door.

- Do not provide personal details about young people on your website or social networking group (this includes school name, email address, ID, etc).
- Always ensure you have parental permission to use any photos of young people and only use their first names on any caption.
- Only use appropriate photos on your site, the sort that you would be happy putting on a public notice board - remember that everyone can view them.
- If you are concerned about the way a young person is attempting to contact you, report it immediately to your Captain, Chaplain or Commissioner.
- If you need to email or text young people, we recommend that the company or division purchases a phone for GB use only as it is not good practice to text members directly. If, for some reason, you do have to use your own phone you should always copy the message to another adult leader from the company to protect yourself.
- If sending e-mails to groups of people, e.g. parents, use the 'BC' facility to avoid sharing e-mail addresses.
- You should never use your personal social networking account to communicate with young people.
- Monitor places where interaction occurs including walls, discussions boards, comments on photos, tagging of pictures and 'Group' or 'Fan Pages'.
- Only set up pages for events, activities or groups for which you are responsible.
- Remember, it is not appropriate for young people to be friends with a GB leader via Facebook or other social media sites. This is a child protection 'rule' that is there to protect you as the leader as well as the young person.
- Use separate profiles and communication routes for email or social networking to keep contact with any young people in GB and your private life separate.
- ALL communications with Explorers and Juniors should be done through their parents or carers, not directly.
- Remember at all times the GBS Child Protection Policy and the Protecting Young People in Our Care cards issued to every leader.

Safety for young people

Most children and young people assume they are safe when using the internet because they are in their own home. They will usually assume that the person they are chatting with is who they say they are and most of the time this is true. However, the only way to protect young people is to teach them to understand the online environment – including the risks it poses – so that they can learn to stay safe themselves. This is even more important now that the internet is available on many mobile phones. We also have to remember that some Explorers now have access to mobile phones so it is important to share good practice with all ages in an appropriate format.

Some basic ideas to share with young people of all ages:

- Never give out personal information to online friends. This includes an instant messaging ID, email address, mobile number, school name and any pictures of you, your family and friends.
- If something is published online, anyone can access it, change it or share it with others. Keep social network profiles private.
- Use webcams with caution and only with family and friends who are already known in the real world, as images can be copied, changed and shared.
- Do not post inappropriate images of yourself online which send out the wrong impression and make you vulnerable.
- Remember that online friends are just that and if they are not known to you in the real world, they may not be telling the truth about who they are.
- Children and young people should never meet up with a person they have met online unless they take a trusted adult with them.
- Think before opening e-mails, attached files or text messages from people you do not know in the real world. They may contain anything from a virus to an inappropriate image or film and should be deleted.
- Explain that it is not appropriate for young people to be friends with a GB leader via Facebook or other social media sites. The same applies to e-mails and text messages and it should be explained that if this does happen they should tell their parents and the company Captain or other responsible adult at GB.
- Know how to block someone online and report them to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) if you feel uncomfortable. Save the www.clickceop.net website to your favourites so that you can report any suspicious behaviour straight away.

Training and advice

Would you like to know how to set up a Facebook page for your company or Division? If so, the GB Facebook Fact Sheet is available in the Leaders Section of the GBS website:

www.girls-brigade-scotland.org.uk

Looking for more information about how to deal with problems on Facebook? Follow this link

<http://www.wikihow.com/Keep-Safe-on-Facebook>

Want to know more about how to keep safe on Facebook?

<https://www.facebook.com/help/safety>

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) has developed an excellent education programme for all ages called Thinkuknow', which includes a section for parents/carers and teachers/leaders. This material can be used as part of a GBS programme and can be accessed via

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>