

WhatsApp Usage Policy

1. Introduction

WhatsApp is a popular instant messaging app, which lets you send messages, images, and videos to friends. You can have 1-1 conversations as well as group chats.

Epsom Hockey Club (EHC) recognises that WhatsApp is widely used by teams, other groups, and individuals to communicate with EHC members. Whilst these technologies provide positive and effective opportunities, they are accompanied by risks if abused by users; these include cyber bullying, grooming young people, and exposure to inappropriate content. In particular, WhatsApp gives every group member access to the telephone number of every other group member. In some environments this may allow individuals to contact each other in a negative way e.g. bullying in a performance environment. This is a particular concern when considering the policy with respect to Under-18 players participating in EHC WhatsApp groups but can also be relevant to senior players.

EHC supports the use of WhatsApp in EHC activities provided the guidance contained within this document, based upon England Hockey good practice guidance, is followed.

2. Guidance for the use of WhatsApp in Epsom HC Activities as per England Hockey-

This guidance is aimed at all Club Members, paid coaches, volunteers and parents/guardians.

Do's-

- WhatsApp group is only set up and administered by the Team Captain, Coach, Team Manager or other Club Official who has been DBS-checked and completed EH Safeguarding training.
- All group members are over the age of sixteen. For General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance, WhatsApp's Terms & Conditions prohibit anyone under the age of sixteen from opening an account.
- The parent/guardian of Under-18s in the group can only add their child with the EHC permission and provided they are also on the group.
- Parents/guardians who agree to their child being included in the group, understand that they should ensure that their child knows what they need to do if they are contacted privately by an adult member (over the age of 18) i.e. notify their parent/guardian and report the incident to the club Welfare Officer.
- Only hockey-oriented content should be communicated and using appropriate language.
- Each team will have only 1 group.

DO think before you post – is content appropriate?

Don'ts-

- Assume everyone is on WhatsApp – ensure those team/group members who do not use the App are kept informed. There is no obligation to join and this will be respected by EHC as communication will come out via TEAMO.
- Private messaging is not allowed.
- Use the app to replace formal feedback- on player or team performance.
- Electronic communications cannot be set up unless you have completed EH Safeguarding training.

Inappropriate use of WhatsApp may result in club disciplinary proceedings.

3. Specific Guidance for Parents/Guardians

- While EHC will strictly enforce this policy as far as is reasonably possible, the club cannot police every action of its members. Once a child's contact details have been shared (with permission as above) EHC cannot track subsequent use of those details. WhatsApp gives every group member access to the telephone number of every other group member and, for this reason, Parents/Guardians should think very carefully before agreeing to their child's details being shared on WhatsApp.
- We strongly recommend that Parents/Guardians check their child's phone regularly for inappropriate use.
- Parents/guardians who agree to their child being included in the group should ensure that their child knows what they need to do if they are contacted privately by an adult member (over the age of 18) i.e. notify their parent/guardian and report the incident to the Club Welfare Officer.

4. Reporting Concerns

Any concerns arising as a result of posts on WhatsApp should be reported in line with England Hockey procedures, available from the England Hockey website (www.englishockey.co.uk/safe). As a first step, contact the EHC Club Welfare Officer at welfare@epsomhc.co.uk

Where a child or young person may be in immediate danger, always dial 999 for police assistance.

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