INTRODUCTION

Social Networking sites have become increasingly popular as a means of contacting people, discussing issues or to advertise upcoming events. These sites offer a world of possibilities for all, including Scouts.

Whilst we are aware that many of the Movement's members are already avid users of sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as an adult in scouting it is essential to ensure that you and young people are kept safe online. The Scout Association of Malta has developed guidelines to assist you in the use of social media channels.

As a Leader you have a key role to play in actively promoting these safety messages.

Although not a Scouting activity, the Association recognises that these sites can be useful for specific Scouting projects - their use to connect with others interested in Scouting can be a very positive experience. However *anyone* with an internet connection can create and be part of online communities where people discuss matters, share stories, photos, videos, and other types of media. For this reason, the creation and maintenance of these channels requires planning, care, and responsibility. Leaders must be very conscious of the context in which these sites are used whilst at the same time ensuring that the public cannot view any personal information about our Members.

As with any scouting activity, safety and youth protection should be a key focus. In the case of social media use, advocating youth and keeping children and their privacy safe (both online and off), should be at the forefront of any considerations. Leaders need to be especially careful about whom they accept as "friends" on sites such as Facebook since these sites are designed for peer-to-peer contact – content of messages and photographs available for public viewing should be suitable for the young members and parents belonging to your Scout Group.

The Common Sense Approach

Recommendations

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.

- It is essential to remember that you are in a position of trust
- Once you place something online, it becomes public - people can access it, change it and share it with others.
- To ensure that all communication on social media channels remains positive and safe, these channels must be **public** and all communication on or through them must be public. This enables administrators to monitor all communication and help ensure no inappropriate communication between adult leaders and Scouts or between Scouts themselves. Therefore, no private channels (e.g. private Facebook groups or invite-only YouTube channels) are acceptable in helping to administer the Scouting programme. Private channels and private communication put both the youth and the leader at risk.
- We are all familiar with the Buddy System. This can be applied when using social media too by ensuring that all communication between adults and youth takes place in a public forum (e.g. the Facebook wall) and all electronic communication between an adult and youth always includes one or more authorised adults openly "copied" in the message or message thread. All communication should be public and leaders are advised to follow the buddy system.
- When online you must conduct yourself in an appropriate manner just 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 similar to entering a private room with a young person and closing the door.
- Always ensure that you have parental permission to use any photos of young people and never use more than their first name on any caption.
- Only use appropriate photos on your site, the sort that you would be happy placing 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 Section Leader/Group Scout Leader/District Commissioner (as the case may be).
- If you need to email or text young people, always copy the message to another adult from your Group or Unit and if sending e-mails to groups of people use the 'bcc' facility to avoid sharing e-mail addresses.
- Don't use your personal social network account to communicate with young people.
- Monitor places where interaction occurs - 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.
- If you sign up to a social network site you need to be aware that content is speedily updated. Photos can be tagged and posted on your account.
- ALL communication with Beavers or Cub Scouts should be through their parents or carers, never directly with the young people.
- Keep your private life separate from your Scouting life.
- It is recommended that as you and members of your group create personal social media profiles, the personal information should be kept private (e.g., do not display your phone number, address, or personal email address in these profiles).
- It is recommended that any Scouts who already publicise their personal profiles change these profiles to private so that the Scout's personal information is not accessible by the general public.
- All should familiarise themselves and abide by the terms of service of the sites where they create and maintain personal profiles.

If you feel the information you seek to share via social media channels should not be shared in public, you should not share that information via social media.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USE

The Scout Association of Malta expects adults intending to use social media for scouting purposes to follow the following basic rules:

- Social media must be monitored. A qualified staff member or volunteer should have the responsibility of monitoring social media channels daily and backup administrators/monitors should be designated so there is no gap in the monitoring.
- Integrate your communications. Create a strategy to communicate with your intended audience passing on your key message(s) through print, the Web, email, radio, TV, word of mouth, and social media.
- Talk to your audiences and let them talk to and about you. By posting content on a consistent schedule, you can tell your story and encourage conversations in the community.
- Social media takes a thick skin. Negative conversations are happening already, but now you have a voice in the conversation. Don't delete negative comments unless they violate the person or situation.
- Be prepared to respond to negative or inaccurate posts if response is warranted. Some negative comments do not require a response, while others should be taken seriously and addressed. Factors such as the number of followers and the severity of the conversations should help you decide if and how to respond.
- Direct media enquiries to the appropriate person.
- Media enquiries coming through social media should be referred to the Scouter in Charge or a designate for an official response.
- Be Scout-like when disagreeing with another's' opinion, remain appropriate and polite. If you find yourself in a situation online that might become antagonistic, do not get overly defensive and do not disengage from the conversation abruptly.
- Build trust by being open and transparent.
- Share information and what the challenges and opportunities are for Scouting in your community.

Internet Safety Guidelines:

Any Scout Group that plans to use social media should share the following Internet Safety Guidelines with Scouts, parents, and leaders, and all Scouts should abide by them:

- Keep online conversations with everyone in public places, not on email.
- Do not give anyone online your real last name, phone numbers at home or school, your parents' workplaces, or the name or location of your school or home address unless you have your parents' permission first.
- Never give your password to anyone but a parent or other adult in your family.
- If someone sends or shows you an email or any type of direct message/wall post with sayings that make you feel uncomfortable, trust your instincts. You are probably right to be wary. Do not respond. Tell a parent or trusted adult what happened.
- If somebody tells you to keep what's going on between the two of you secret, tell a parent or guardian.
- Be careful to whom you talk. Anyone who starts talking about subjects that make you feel uncomfortable is probably an adult posing as a kid.
- Pay attention if someone tells you things that don't fit together. If one time an online "friend" says he or she is 12, and another time says he or she is 14. That is a warning that this person is lying and may be an adult posing as a kid.
- Unless you talk to a parent about it first, never talk to anybody by phone if you know that person only online. If someone asks you to call—that's a warning. That person can get your phone number this way, either from a phone bill or from caller ID.
- Never agree to meet someone you have met only online at any place off-line, in the real world.
- Watch out if someone online starts talking about hacking, or breaking into other people's or companies' computer systems; phreaking (the "ph" sounds like an "f"), the illegal use of long-distance services or cellular phones; or viruses (online programs that destroy or damage data when other people download these onto their computers).
- Promise your parent or an adult family member and yourself that you will honour any rules about how much time you are allowed to spend online and what you do and where you go while you are online.

Emails, Phones and Text Messaging Guidelines:

The internet and mobile phones are changing the way that we live as they offer the opportunity to socialise, to communicate and to learn.

Young people have adapted very quickly to these technological advances and at times much faster than their older counterparts. This situation sometimes leaves parents and carers lagging behind and unable to monitor young peoples' activities on the Internet and through their mobile phones. Adults' helplessness to keep an eye on these communications leaves young people increasingly susceptible to being exposed to inappropriate contact and in some instances, child abuse.

As adults in The Scout Association of Malta we have a duty to safeguard the welfare of all young people in our care. The guidelines set out in this document are meant as an aid for Leaders and other adults to ensure that we make the best use of new technologies, while protecting both the young people in our care and preventing placing ourselves in a vulnerable position.

- All communication should be in a Scouting context.
- Decide on the most appropriate method of communication depending on the message/ information being transmitted
- Gain permission from Parents/Carers to contact the young person and ask what the preferred method of contact would be
- Before sending a communication, ask yourself "would you be happy to copy in the young person's parents/carers?" If the answer is 'no' then do not send it
- Arrangements about activities or events for Beaver Scouts and Cub Scouts should always be addressed to the young person's parent or carer. Information for those in the Troop and Unit may be sent to the young people themselves if necessary, but copied to their parents or carers. Information for Rovers can be sent directly to them since they are adults.

Emails:

Many young people have email addresses and this can be a cheap and effective way of communicating with our youth. To help ensure that our communications with young people are appropriate, the following are some points for best practice when sending emails to young people.

- Ensure you use appropriate language; try not to include any words or phrases that could be misinterpreted.
- Try to have a separate email account for your Scouting communications, this is better than using your personal one as then all e-mails are contained within the same box and can then be accessed by other adults in Scouting as required.
- If you are sending images, make sure they are appropriate.
- Do not forward chain emails to young people.
- Make sure that any hyperlinks you include do not lead to inappropriate content.
- Always copy another adult into your emails.
- Always save a copy of all the e-mails you send.
- Blind copy e-mail addresses to ensure you are not broadcasting peoples contact details.
- If you receive an email from a young person which causes you concern, you should immediately seek advice from your Section Leader/Group Scout Leader/District Commissioner as appropriate
- If you receive unsolicited messages from people you do not know that contain obscene or racist images, these should be reported to Crime Unit on www.crime.com.mt

Phones and Text Messages:

Most young people have a mobile phone and most of them will say they can't do without it. With mobile phones come text messages. Leaders may prefer using messaging as a quick way of distributing notices, like asking Members to remember to bring summer camp fees with them or to remind them of the meeting venue and time. When sending a text message or phoning a young person, you should try to ensure that the content of the message or call could not be misinterpreted.

The following are some points for best practice when sending texts to young people.

- Ensure you use appropriate language, try not to include any words or phrases that could be misinterpreted i.e.
- Having things in capital letters translates into being shouted at.
- "LOL" can be translated into "Laugh Out Loud" or "Lots of Love".
- Using a kiss at the end of a text or within a signature may be taken out of context by some recipients and is likely to be seen as inappropriate in virtually every instance.
- Always copy another adult into your text messages.
- Be conscious of the time when sending messages or making calls - avoid late at night or the early hours of the morning.

If you receive a text message from a young person that causes concern you should immediately seek advice from your Section Leader/Group Scout Leader/District Commissioner as appropriate

Guidelines for Photographing/Video Recording Scout Events:

In most cases following a few simple guidelines will make taking photographing and publishing photos a straightforward matter. When a new member joins the Scout Group, it can be very helpful if the Personal Details Form given to parents could also include a section for consent or otherwise for photographs/videos to be taken of their child.

The form could usefully say:
"On occasion, photographs and videos of Scouts taking part in activities are taken for a variety of use – these may be submitted to the local newspapers, the Group/ District or IHQ newsletters and websites or generally put on display.

If you have any objections please indicate you are not willing for your child's image to be used in this way by ticking the box ………"

Safeguarding young people

There have been concerns about the risks to children and young people when their photographs are published on websites (including social networking sites, YouTube etc.) and in publications. Following a few simple guidelines will reduce the potential for misuse:
- Seek parental permission (see above)
- Only allow photographs to be taken of suitably dressed subjects and in appropriate situations
- Avoid using both the full name and the photograph of a young person in a publication or on a website.

Advertising or Promotional Photographs

When photographs featuring young people are being taken specifically for use in advertising and/or promotional material, it is recommended that parental consent is obtained. A specific form is not a legal requirement (the copyright of an image belongs to the photographer and not the subject), nevertheless it is good practice and good manners to seek specific parental approval.

Press Photographers

Promoting Scouting through the use of appropriate and positive images is important. Scouting needs publicity and a picture is worth a thousand words.

Where a newspaper photographer is attending a Scout event it is important that parental consent is obtained in advance in order to avoid any confusion or disappointment. Remember that whilst newspapers will be keen to use the names of the people they photograph, it is safer for the young people if only their first name is used. Alternatively you can ask the photographer to use a collective term such as "Cub Scouts from the Filfla Scout Group",

It can be appropriate to give the location of a Group meeting place (street name etc), however if you give a telephone number make sure the person whose number you are giving out is happy for the number to be published.

Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act is unlikely to apply in the majority of situations in Scouting and fear of breaching the Act should not be used as a means to discourage people from taking videos or photographs.

- Photographs taken for personal use, e.g. photographs taken by parents of their child and friends while being invested would be for "personal use" - the Data Protection Act would not apply.
- Photographs taken and kept for official use, e.g. an identity card scheme at a camp and stored (electronically or in hard copy) with other personal data, are likely to fall under the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

In most cases, asking for permission to take the photograph and storing that photograph (along with associated data) securely and appropriately would be enough to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act.

Final Thoughts

It is important to remember that all social media channels are, by nature, designed to be social, that is, shared with members of the public. As such, whatever social media activities you engage in should be completed with the understanding that the public will see them and may engage in an online dialogue with you as a result.

Do nothing that may reflect badly on you, other individuals in your Group, the Scout Association of Malta, or anyone else. Before posting any content on any social media channel, first ask yourself if that content is in keeping with the precepts of the Scout Promise and Law.

Once created, social media channels and the content on them "live forever" on the Internet, sometimes even if the accounts have been deleted. That means social media channels created today may still exist five, ten, or fifteen years from now, in some cases long after those who would have started the sites and are no longer involved directly with Scouting.

As such, consideration should be made regarding the transitioning of administration rights and duties if and when the initial administrators end their direct involvement in Scouting.

Social media is a new and evolving form of communication that requires flexibility, patience, and commitment, but the rewards of increased connection with, and understanding of your target audience can be great. It can be a powerful tool for sharing the joys and triumphs of Scouting, but if not executed properly, it can be detrimental to everything Scouting represents.

Engage in social media activities wisely!