



Social Media Policy

Context

Many of you are members of WhatsApp or other social media groups that connect managers and parents. Ideally the chats are useful places to share information. Most of the time these groups can be a great additional resource. But, on occasions, with social media there are times when it may be used inappropriately.

This is a guideline to remind you of your responsibility when using social media that involves Raheny United Football Club.

Guidelines

Any form of defamation or intentional harm practiced through social media forums such as Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, etc... will not be tolerated by the club.

Administrators of groups are accountable and must monitor what everyone is posting, and, as soon as something false or scurrilous is identified, make it clear that it is wrong and remove the person from the group.

Posting messages with half-truths or rumours can be defamatory and potentially libellous.

Anything you can commit to writing can be forwarded to others and may result in the club contacting legal advisors on how to proceed.

It is inappropriate to post potentially untrue and defamatory comments about club members / managers / coaches / players. Inaccurate posts can have a harmful impact on individuals and the club.

This simple rule applies: Can you defend your comments in a court of law? Think carefully about what you write.

The Law

- An **action in defamation** can be taken in respect of comments, inaccurate statements or false reporting that are capable of harming a person's reputation.
- A '**defamatory statement**' is defined as one '**that tends to injure a person's reputation in the eyes of reasonable members of society**'. In order to be successful in a defamation action, the plaintiff must show the publication, by any means, of a defamatory statement concerning a person to one or more than one person'. Publication, in this context, essentially means communication to a Third Person, by any means.
- A defamation action has a one year limitation period, which can be extended to two years in exceptional circumstances. For defamatory statements published on line, the cause of action accrues on the date that the statement is 'first capable of being reviewed or listened to through that medium'. All defamatory statements are now actionable per se, meaning that they do not require proof of actual damage having been suffered by the defamed party.
- In recent years there has been a sharp increase in the number of defamation cases taken in the courts, which is being linked to the growth in social media use.
- The Gardaí have the power to require social media firms to hand over data which may be relevant to a criminal enquiry.

What to do if you're in a WhatsApp Group

When facing any ethical dilemma involving the use of social media, consider the three-way test **Stop, Think and Act**.

1. Stop

- Am I feeling comfortable with the situation?
- Are my actions legal?
- Am I doing the right thing?

2. Think

- How would others judge my actions?
- How could my actions impact on others?
- Would my action stand up to scrutiny by the public?
- Should I discuss with someone else?

3. Act

- All things considered, what am I going to do?