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	Scouting Ireland – Social Networking Guidelines			

INTRODUCTION

This document is aimed at clarifying some of the issues surrounding the use of social networking websites within Scouting.

While this document will not reference specific issues on individual social networking sites it will give an overview and best practice approach on how they should be used.

Social networking offers a world of possibilities to Scouting. Many young people in Scouting are already users of sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and as such, it can be a great avenue to encourage Scouting outside of the meeting nights and activities.

However, it is essential to ensure that you keep both yourself and the youth members safe online and, as an adult in Scouting, you have a key role to play in actively promoting these safety guidelines.

A COMMON SENSE APPROACH

A common sense approach will be the basis of Scouting Ireland's Social Networking Guidelines.

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. Compared with a conversation in the real world, technology increases the potential for messages to be taken out of context, misinterpreted and/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 Scout Group, bare 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.

MANAGING CONTENT

When setting up a Section or Group social networking account, we recommend that you:

- Monitor the site consistently (on a daily basis)
- Have at least two administrators, but preferably more.
- Provide an email address for users to contact the administrator(s)

Having multiple trusted Administrators means that inappropriate posts (see below) are far more likely to be identified and removed quickly, and providing a contact email address means that other users can let you know if they come across any inappropriate material.

It is also beneficial to post some information regarding your expectations of users, both adult and youth (for example, in Facebook you could post this as a 'Note').

When choosing a name for your social media account, please observe the following:

- Social media accounts, pages or events should not be prefixed with "Scouting Ireland" or "National" unless approved by The Communications Commissioner.
- Social media accounts can use "Scouting Ireland" at the end of the account name.

GUIDANCE FOR SCOUTERS

Scouters should take on board the following guidelines while using social networking sites:

- Remember you are in a position of trust as a Scouter.
- Remember that some sites have an age restriction for example; Facebook has a minimum age of 13 so be aware some members in your section may not be able to join.
- 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 social networking sites (this includes full name, school name, email address, date of birth etc).
- Always ensure you have parental permission to use any photos of young people and only use their first names on any caption. This can be obtained from the Scouting Ireland Activities Consent Form which is available online at http://my.scouts.ie (All groups should have a copy of this for each Scout and have it updated annually)

- Only use appropriate photos, 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 Group Leader (or appropriate member of Scouting Ireland).
- If you sign yourself up to social networking sites you need to be aware that content is regularly updated.
- Don't use your personal social networking account to communicate with young people.
- Youth members should not be friends with your personal profile, however, while this statement makes sense it is not very practical in some cases and a common sense approach should be used:
    1. Only have youth members on your personal profile that you would socialize with outside of Scouting.
    2. You should not add new youth members that come into your section to your personal profile, only to the 'Group' or 'Like Page'.
- Monitor places where interaction occurs including walls, discussion 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.
- ALL communications with Beaver Scouts or Cub Scouts should be done through their parents or guardians, not directly.
- Other advice on best practices for code of behavior for Scouters can be found in the Code of Good Practice document.

WHAT ARE INAPPROPRIATE POSTS?

If a post (content) contains any of the following, the post(s) should be removed from the site immediately and the user should be blocked (if possible):

- Pornography or nudity
- Inappropriate language
- Graphic or gratuitous violence
- Sensitive or personal information
- Bullying, intimidation or harassment
- Hate speech, threats or attempts to incite violence
- Unlawful, misleading, malicious or discriminatory content
- SPAM or advertising for a product or service that is not directly related to Scouting

Also remember that posts must comply with the terms of use of whatever social networking website you are using.

Occasionally a young user may unthinkingly post something inappropriate (such as mild profanity or mildly inappropriate images). In cases such as these it is fair to give the user a warning, or simply remove the offending post. There would be no need to block or report the user unless the problem persists.

If you find a post that presents you with serious cause for concern, take further action appropriate to the circumstances.

WHAT IF THE POST CONTAINS CRITICISM OF SCOUTING IRELAND?

Scouting Ireland encourages and supports constructive criticism and debate amongst its members in online social networking websites.

Discussions of this nature can help resolve issues for individuals, and can also provide excellent feedback to Scouting Ireland's management on areas where we need to improve.

However, we do ask that our members be mindful when posting criticism, and to be aware that online posts can be seen by any number of other users.

If a user has a genuine complaint, please advise them to follow correct procedures as per Scouting Ireland's Code of Good Practice.

You should email communications@scouts.ie if you have discovered content, either positive or negative, that you think Scouting Ireland should know about.

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.

It's a good idea to share this basic advice with young people:

- 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 or friends.
- If something is published online, anyone can access it, change it or share it with others.
- Keep personal social network profiles private so only your approved friends can see your information. Only approve friends that you actually know.
- Use webcams with caution and only with family and friends who are already known in the real world, as images can be recorded, 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 be lying about who they are, their age, gender etc…
- Children and young people should never meet up with a person they have met online unless they take a parent or trusted adult with them.
- Think before opening files from people you do not know in the real world. They may contain anything from a virus to an inappropriate image or video and should be deleted.
- Know how to block someone online and report them to owners / abuse department of the website if you feel uncomfortable. You should tell a parent or trusted adult about this as well.

SCOUTING IRELAND SUPPORT

This policy is a self-enforcing policy. If you use social networking sites on behalf of Scouting Ireland without following these guidelines then Scouting Ireland may not be in a position to support you should a problem arise.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

http://www.webwise.ie/

A safety site used in Schools that has lots of information about how to use websites, the Internet and technology safely. This site is geared towards young people who are starting to experience these areas.

http://www.facebook.com/safety

Facebook's Safety Center. This area has lots of information about how to use Facebook safely and the tools they have to protect yourself online.

http://www.bebo.com/Safety.jsp

This is Bebo's safety area, it has a nice video that introduces some safety ideas and policies that make it easier for young people to get information rather than reading.

http://twitter.com/about/security

Twitters security page with information on how to report problems or abuse on twitter.

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

If you have a concern about the health safety and well-being of a youth member please contact the Child Protection Officer in Scouting Ireland National Office on 01 4956300 or email cpo@scouts.ie