

Kent AC WhatsApp Policy – March 2023

Kent AC's main official source of formal sharing of information is via its website and via its newsletters sent by email, which all members receive.

We recognise that coaches and others may wish to use the instant messaging app WhatsApp as an informal means of communication in addition to official club channels. There will though be members and parents who do not wish to join the WhatsApp groups, or to use the app at all. These should not be disadvantaged.

In using WhatsApp the following concerns need to be taken into account:

- General WhatsApp groups can add participants without their prior consent
- Participants telephone numbers are visible on the group as is their profile picture. This is a GDPR and potentially safeguarding concern
- Unsuitable material may be posted to a WhatsApp group and can be difficult to remove
- Photographs and Videos shared on the group remain in the camera roll on all participants phones
- The Administrator does not have the ability to audit the groups content
- Without effective controls and if abused by users there may be risks of cyber bullying, grooming young people, and exposure to inappropriate content.

To address these concerns Kent AC has agreed the following standards which should be followed by any Kent AC member establishing WhatsApp groups in relation to club activities or business:

- Each WhatsApp group should have an Administrator who will name the group and control who is invited to join and where necessary is responsible for removing people.
- The Admin is responsible for the members content and therefore should outline what the group will be used for from the outset, including ensuring that members have a mechanism to report inappropriate content
- Consent should be sought to participate through a formal request to join and an option to decline. Participants should never be automatically added.
- Inactive participants may be removed from WhatsApp groups but should first be given notice and have the opportunity to state that they wish to continue.
- All participants must abide by the UK Athletics Codes of Conduct, which have been adopted as club policy by Kent AC. These include acting with dignity and displaying good manners towards others; not undermining, putting down or belittling others; avoiding swearing and abusive language; challenging inappropriate behaviour and language by others and reporting any suspected misconduct.

Additionally for any WhatsApp group relating to athletes under 18 the following standards apply:

- To ensure transparency and protection for all involved, the Juniors Sub Committee will appoint an Administrator for WhatsApp groups.
- WhatsApp groups must include a Club Official who has been DBS-checked and completed EA Safeguarding training (e.g. Coach, Team Manager).
- Children (U18) should not be included in WhatsApp groups and adults must not send personal messages to under 18s using WhatsApp.