

Safeguarding Scenario:

Coach's Social Media

The scenario:

A new assistant coach is great at working with children who attend the club. The lead coach is pleased they're helping young people be more engaged but has heard some of the children talk about pictures posted on her Instagram account

Guidance:

This could be a situation where someone new to a role is not aware of the club's Social Media Policy, or are unaware of their responsibilities that come with using it as a coach. An informal conversation can suitably redirect the new coach's thinking and behaviours.

1. British Weight Lifting's Social Media Policy (June 2025) states:

"You should avoid interacting on social media with children or other vulnerable people in your care or who you work with on a professional level. Particularly, you should not accept friend requests nor engage with private direct messages on social media. If there is a requirement to engage with young people on social media regarding camps etc. you should seek permission to do so from a parent/guardian and/or have the parent/guardian in on the same message. BWL recommends that business social media accounts are used for any professional contact rather than personal accounts".

2. Any concern about someone's behaviour with children and young people should be reported to the Club Welfare Officer. The person you report to will decide how best to respond.

In this example, the Club Welfare Officer checked the photos and saw holiday photos on the beach. They decided to have an informal conversation with the new Coach about the incident, to help her understand their club's Social Media Policy and how this impacts them as a coach.

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3. The conversation with the assistant coach includes:

- Describing what happened – a factual, non-judgemental account of what happened
- The purpose of the Social Media Policy – to protect staff and volunteers, as well as keeping children safe online.
- Clarity on what the policy says - whilst it's not required in British Weight Lifting's Social Media Policy for coaches to block athletes under the age of 18 from following them on Instagram, it's important for the assistant coach to be mindful that what they're posting is visible to the children they coach.
- The policy's recommendation that business and personal accounts are used separately.
- Clarity on the ways that sharing personal content with young athletes can blur professional boundaries – from providing an unwanted impression or talking point to potentially developing into a more serious issue, such as sharing inappropriate content, receiving comments on posts, and private messages from the young people they coach, and the implications of this.

4. The conversation with the assistant coach is concluded with how it can be resolved, for example:

- Being aware of the Social Media Policy
- Being aware of who their followers are
- Being mindful of what they're publishing
- Separating coaching and personal accounts

5. To help reduce the likelihood of issues with social media, it's recommended that the Club also reviews how it shares the Social Media Policy with all their members, staff and volunteers.

As a Welfare officer...



Share British Weight Lifting's Social Media Policy with members, coaches and volunteers



Have open and honest conversations where this isn't being followed or concerns are raised



Don't ignore the guidance available



Don't be critical or blameful



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As a coach..



Be mindful about what you publish, who can see it and how it may blur professional boundaries



Use separate business and personal accounts



Where there's a clear requirement to use social media, seek permission from a parent/guardian and/or include them in the messages



Self-refer if you're concerned about any contact from young people so that the Club Welfare Officer is aware



Avoid interacting on social media with children you coach



Do not accept friend requests or engage with private direct messages on social media with children you coach

Further support:

As a coach, Welfare Officer or Parent you are not alone. Seek advice from:

- [Your local Sport Welfare Officer](#) or national agency for sport
- [British Weight Lifting's Safeguarding Lead](#)
- [Resources provided by the Child Protection in Sport Unit](#)



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