



Worthing Excelsior Cycling Club: Social Media & Digital Communications Policy

Introduction and Purpose

Worthing Excelsior Cycling Club embraces social media and digital communication as valuable tools for promoting our activities, sharing achievements, and fostering a strong community among our members. While these platforms offer significant benefits, their use also comes with important responsibilities. This policy has been established to protect all our members, provide a safe online environment for members and young people, and uphold the positive reputation of our club. It serves as a clear framework for responsible and respectful online engagement for everyone associated with Worthing Excelsior.

Policy Aims

The core purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide clear guidelines for the responsible and appropriate use of all social media and digital communication platforms associated with the club.
- Ensure a safe, inclusive, and positive online environment for every member.
- Protect the club, its officials, and its members from potential legal, reputational, and safeguarding risks.
- Define the standards of online behaviour expected from everyone representing or associated with Worthing Excelsior Cycling Club.

This policy applies to all forms of social media and digital communication, both current and future, including but not limited to platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Strava, X/Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, blogs, and other online forums.

The guidelines outlined within this document apply to all individuals associated with the club, including:

- Club Officials
- Coaches
- Volunteers
- Athletes and Members (including Under-18s)
- Parents/Carers

This policy sets out the fundamental principles of online conduct that all members are expected to understand and follow.

Core Principles of Online Conduct

Every member of Worthing Excelsior Cycling Club is an ambassador for our community. Your online conduct, whether on official club channels or personal accounts, reflects on the entire club. It is therefore essential that all members adhere to a consistent standard of behaviour that is respectful, responsible, and protects the integrity and reputation of the club and its members.

Our Online Code of Conduct

1. **Be Respectful and Positive:** All communications should be courteous, supportive, and kind. You will not post any material that is unlawful, harmful, threatening, abusive, discriminatory, harassing, defamatory, vulgar, obscene, libellous, or otherwise objectionable. We aim to build a positive and inclusive online community.
2. **Think Before You Post:** Consider the potential impact of your words, images, and videos before sharing. If a post could be misinterpreted, cause offence, or exclude someone, do not share it. Remember that online content is public, can be shared instantly, and may be permanent.
3. **Protect Privacy:** Do not share personal information about yourself or others, such as contact details or locations, without obtaining explicit permission first. Respect the privacy of fellow members at all times.
4. **Maintain Confidentiality:** Confidential club matters, internal discussions, and personal grievances should not be posted on social media. Please use official channels to address any concerns directly with a committee member.
5. **Uphold the Club's Reputation:** Ensure that all content you post is accurate and does not bring the club, its members, its partners, or the sport of cycling into disrepute. Your online behaviour should align with the club's values of respect, inclusivity, and community.

Adherence to these individual responsibilities is the foundation for the successful management of the club's official online presence.

Management of Official Club Channels

To ensure clarity, consistency, and safety, Worthing Excelsior Cycling Club manages its official online platforms through a structured and monitored approach. This system is essential for effective communication, maintaining our club's identity, and fulfilling our safeguarding duties.

The following table outlines the operational rules for all official club accounts:

Guideline	Action/Responsibility
Account Access	All official social media accounts will be password-protected. At least two designated committee members will have access to each account and password.
Designated Oversight	A designated person or sub-committee, appointed by the club committee, is responsible for actively monitoring all official club channels. This person will seek advice from the club's Wellbeing & Protection Officer (WPO) on safeguarding requirements as required.
Content Moderation	The designated monitor will promptly remove any posts, comments, or content that violate this policy. Where appropriate, they will provide a brief explanation for the removal to the original poster.
Privacy Settings	Group-based platforms (e.g., Facebook Groups, WhatsApp chats) intended for member-only communication must have their privacy settings configured to 'private' or 'closed' to ensure content is only visible to invited members.

It is important to distinguish between the club's different types of online channels. **Public Pages** (e.g., a main Facebook page) are used to promote our activities to the wider community and attract potential new members. In contrast, **Closed Groups/Chats** (e.g., a members-only WhatsApp group) are used as a forum for communicating specific information with current club members.

The management of these channels provides the framework for applying the critical safeguarding guidelines that protect our younger members.

Safeguarding Children and Young People (Under-18s)

The safeguarding of children and young people is Worthing Excelsior Cycling Club's highest priority. This duty of care extends robustly into the digital world. The following rules are non-negotiable and are designed to create a safe online environment that protects both our young members and the adults in positions of trust who work with them.

Communication with Under-18s

To ensure transparency and protection for all, the following rules for digital communication with members under the age of 18 (U18s) are mandatory:

- **No One-to-One Contact:** Club officials, coaches, and volunteers **must not** engage in private or one-to-one digital communication (e.g., private messages, texts) with U18s. All digital communication must be conducted in a group setting that includes a parent/carer or at least one other club official/coach.
- **Use Official Accounts:** All communication must be conducted through official club channels and not from personal social media accounts.
- **No 'Friending' or 'Following':** Adults in a position of trust (coaches, volunteers, officials) **must not** 'friend' or 'follow' U18 members from their personal social media accounts. The relationship should be kept within the official, club-managed online spaces.
- **Appropriate Timing:** Communication with U18s should be restricted to reasonable hours and relate to club activities. Avoid communication outside of dedicated event or activity timings, except in the case of an emergency.
- **Parental Consent:**
 - For members **under 16**, all communication must be directed through a parent/carer.
 - For members **under 18**, dual consent from both the young person and their parent/carer is required for them to be added to communication groups. Parents/carers must be included in any group communication channels and should be copied into direct communications wherever feasible.

Photography and Filming

The sharing of images and videos is a great way to celebrate our members' achievements, but it requires careful management to ensure safety:

- **Written Consent:** Written consent from a parent/carer **must be obtained** before any photograph or video of a U18 member is published on the club's official channels.
- **No Tagging:** U18 members **must never be tagged by name** in photos or videos posted online.
- **Appropriate Content:** All images must show members in appropriate cycling attire. Photos and videos must be taken from angles that are not prone to misuse or misinterpretation.
- **Secure Storage:** All digital images and videos of U18s must be stored securely in a password-protected location with restricted access (e.g., a club-controlled cloud drive). Images of U18s must never be stored on unencrypted portable equipment such as laptops, memory sticks, and mobile phones.
- **Right to Withdraw Consent:** If a parent/carer withdraws their consent, the club will take all reasonable steps to remove the relevant photos or videos from public view.

Online Coaching and Livestreaming

For any virtual club activity, such as online coaching sessions or livestreamed events, the following safety protocols are mandatory:

1. Parental permission must be obtained for any U18 member to participate.
2. A minimum of two qualified adults (e.g., coaches, vetted volunteers) must be present for the duration of any online session involving U18s.
3. A clear safety briefing must be conducted at the start of each session, outlining expectations for behaviour and the virtual training environment.
4. Sessions must use a platform with appropriate privacy and security settings, such as password-protected meetings, to ensure only invited participants can join.

It is the responsibility of every member of our club community to uphold these vital safeguarding standards.

Reporting Breaches and Concerns

A clear and transparent process for addressing policy violations and online safety concerns is critical to maintaining a safe environment for all. Worthing Excelsior Cycling Club is committed to taking all reports seriously and handling them confidentially and appropriately.

How to Report an Issue

If you see any online content or behaviour that concerns you or that you believe breaches this policy, please report it immediately to the club's designated contact:

- **The Club Wellbeing & Protection Officer or The Club Secretary**
- **Email:** welfare@worthingexcelsior.co.uk, secretary@worthingexcelsior.co.uk

Response to Policy Breaches

The club will follow a structured process to address all reported concerns:

1. **Initial Report:** Members should report any concerning content or behaviour, with screenshots if possible, to the designated officer.
2. **Immediate Action:** The club reserves the right to immediately remove any offending content from its official channels pending a full review.
3. **Review:** The club committee will review the report in a timely and confidential manner, in line with the club's established disciplinary procedures.
4. **Consequences:** Breaches of this policy will be taken seriously. Depending on the severity of the breach, the committee may issue sanctions ranging from a formal warning, temporary or permanent removal from club social media groups, or, in serious cases, the termination of club membership.

In cases where an unofficial, member-run group is found to be causing issues that negatively impact the club or its members, the committee will contact the individuals involved and request that the group is shut down. If the group is not shut down, the management and moderation of the group remains the responsibility of its participants (and their parents/carers for U18s). Any continued issues impacting the club will be addressed through the club's disciplinary procedures.

This policy is in place to ensure Worthing Excelsior Cycling Club remains a safe, respectful, and positive community for all members, both on and off the bike.