



GUIDANCE FOR THE USE OF “WHATSAPP”

Background

1. WhatsApp groups are intended as a convenient way to distribute important team and club information to members (and parents) quickly and efficiently, and for members (and parents) to communicate easily with each other regarding team and club related matters, e.g. training/match times, lifts to matches, meeting times, umpiring appointments, weather cancellations etc.
2. It is important that WhatsApp groups are managed and used appropriately.

Club Policy

3. Team and club ‘WhatsApp’ groups are set up by the Club Secretary/Team Captains, and the Club Secretary will appoint group administrators for each group (normally the Team Captain).
4. Junior members should not be permitted to join team or club WhatsApp groups. However, where a junior is part of a senior team, the junior may be included on the appropriate WhatsApp group only with their parent’s written permission and only then if aged 16 years or older. Should someone under the age of 16 years play for a senior team, then their parent must be included on the WhatsApp group. Team captains and group administrators shall validate all phone numbers prior to issuing a request to join a group.

Use of WhatsApp Group

5. By accepting a request to join team or club ‘WhatsApp’ groups, participants agree to these protocols.
 - a. Members (and parents) should note that by accepting the request to join, they are sharing their phone number with other members (and parents) within the group.
6. Under no circumstances are individuals to be pressured into joining a particular group.
7. A member (or parent) has the option to leave the group at any time.
8. The group should not be used to post private or confidential messages, or express personal opinions or gossip (Any opinions expressed are the opinions of individual members and may not be representative of the whole group).
 - a. WhatsApp must not be used to replace formal feedback.
9. Group members must consider GDPR and Safeguarding guidelines when posting personal data, and photographs/videos, on their groups.

10. Members (and parents) should not make inappropriate posts including, but not limited to:

- a. Discussing the performance – positive or negative – of players, umpires or coaches.
- b. Criticising coaches, captains, match officials, club officers, opposition teams, individual members of the group or other players.
- c. Voicing grievances.
- d. Using inappropriate language.
- e. Personal attacks, insulting messages or intimidation.
- f. Posting inappropriate photographs/video.
- g. Posting promotions.

Discipline

11. The Club and individual group administrators are not responsible for any comments posted by individual members of the group.

12. Concerns about mis-use of a group should be raised directly with the member (or parent) concerned, team captain/group administrator or the Club Chair/Secretary.

13. The group administrator, has the right to restrict admission, remove or ban anyone from the group.

14. **Safeguarding.** Where necessary the Club Welfare officer should be informed should any posts break Safeguarding policies.

15. **Disciplinary Action.** Disregard of this guidance, policy and protocols may result in the Club taking disciplinary action in-line with the Club Constitution.

Protocols

16. It is not necessary to respond to every post unless it is requested e.g. availability for matches, training etc.

- a. Be specific in wording your messages and replies so that it is clear what the message is about and to whom it addressed for example:
 - i. *“Who is available to play on 24th October at home push back 1 o’clock, let me know by Tuesday, John, M4s captain.”*
 - ii. *“John, I’m OK for match on Saturday 24th at 1 pm, Dave”*
 - iii. *“John, can’t play on 24th as I’m injured, Pete”*

17. If a message is not relevant to majority of group members, consider if it is more appropriate to reply by way of a personal message.

a. In the event of too many messages being posted that are only relevant to a minority of group members the group administrator should request the conversation be continued outside the group.

18. Avoid making posts early in the morning, and late at night posts are to be discouraged wherever possible. Repeat offenders may be removed from groups.

19. Do not use the group to discuss non-team or non-club related matters.

20. Do not presume that everyone in the team/squad is on WhatsApp or in the group, and may miss out on receiving important information: If this is the case the information must be communicated by another means.

Registering of WhatsApp Groups

21. The Club Secretary shall keep a register of Club WhatsApp groups, the name of the group, its purpose and the group administrator.

a. All groups should be titled "YSHC", for example:

i. "YSHC Ladies 1st Team".

ii. "YSHC Umpires".

iii. "YSHC Committee".

iv. "YSHC Weather Watch".