

## **SG 5.3 Instant messaging–Safeguarding Guidelines**

The purpose of this document is to guide British Cycling clubs, members, coaches and riders on the use of modern communication technology to promote cycling activity. This should be embraced however caution should be exercised to safeguard users in line with the following guidance.

Text messaging and emails can help improve the success of cycling clubs, affiliated organisations and riders. This may be by helping to inform people about the sport and activity sessions that they have signed up to, and by promoting additional activities.

The significant benefit of text messaging and emails are that they are not only cheap, but they are one of the most direct forms of communication as most people have mobile phones with them at all times and are competent at using computers.

However, for children and vulnerable adults there are safeguarding risks associated with texting and emails including:

- inappropriate access to, use or sharing of personal details (e.g. names, mobile phone numbers, email addresses)
- unwanted contact with children/young people by adults with poor intent; text bullying by peers
- being sent offensive or otherwise inappropriate materials
- grooming for sexual abuse
- direct contact and actual abuse.

For adults involved risks include:

- misinterpretation of their communication with riders
- potential investigation (internal or by statutory agencies)
- potential disciplinary action.

The Child Protection in Sport Unit's briefing document 'Text and email messaging-safeguarding guidelines' will help to ensure that effective safeguarding measures are put in place to protect vulnerable groups and to minimise risk. This document is available at [http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/cpsu/resources/briefings/text\\_and\\_email\\_messaging\\_wdf66628.pdf](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/cpsu/resources/briefings/text_and_email_messaging_wdf66628.pdf)