Social Networking and Online Safety Policy

1. Policy Statement

This Social Networking and Online Safety Policy sets out how **Elite SF** manages the use of social networking, social media, and online platforms to safeguard children, coaches, volunteers, and the organisation. The policy is written in line with safeguarding and welfare expectations consistent with Ofsted requirements, online safety guidance, and recognised best practice.

Elite SF recognises that social networking and online communication are widely used; however, clear boundaries and professional conduct must be maintained at all times when working with children and young people.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All coaches, assistants, volunteers, apprentices, and young workers
- Contractors or agency coaches working on behalf of the business
- All online activity that may impact on the business or its reputation

The policy applies during and outside of working hours where conduct may affect safeguarding or professional boundaries.

3. Definitions

Social networking includes, but is not limited to:

- Social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, X)
- Messaging apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Messenger)
- Online forums, blogs, and gaming platforms
- Any digital platform that allows communication, sharing, or interaction

4. Key Principles

- The safety and welfare of children is paramount
- Professional boundaries must be maintained online as well as offline
- Coaches and volunteers are role models at all times

- Online activity must not compromise safeguarding or the reputation of the business

5. Professional Boundaries and Conduct

All Coaches and volunteers must:

- Maintain professional boundaries with children and families online
- Use appropriate privacy settings on personal accounts
- Conduct themselves responsibly and respectfully at all times
- Understand that online behaviour may be subject to scrutiny

6. Contact with Children and Families Online

- Coaches and volunteers must not accept or initiate friend requests with children on personal social media accounts
- Direct online communication with children is not permitted unless authorised and via approved platforms
- Communication with parents/carers should be professional and work-related only
- Personal contact details must not be shared with children or families

7. Use of Business Social Media Accounts

- Only authorised Coaches may post on official business accounts
- Content must be appropriate, accurate, and professional
- Parental consent must be in place before posting images or videos of children
- Comments and messages will be monitored and managed appropriately

8. Photography, Video, and Online Sharing

- Images or videos of children must only be shared using authorised business accounts
- Personal devices must not be used to upload or share images of children
- All online content must comply with data protection and safeguarding policies

9. Use of Personal Social Media

Coaches and volunteers must not:

- Share confidential information about children, families, or the business

- Post images, videos, or information relating to children they work with
- Engage in online behaviour that could bring the business into disrepute

10. Online Safety and Safeguarding

- Online behaviour may present safeguarding risks
- Any concerns regarding online conduct, grooming, or inappropriate contact must be reported immediately
- Coaches must follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

11. Use of Messaging Apps

- Group chats involving parents/carers must be professional and moderated
- Children must not be included in messaging groups unless authorised
- Messaging must be transparent and work-related

12. Monitoring and Compliance

- The business reserves the right to monitor online activity relating to its services
- Breaches of this policy may result in following the 'Breach of Policy' policy.
- Serious concerns may be referred to external agencies

13. Allegations and Complaints

- Any allegation relating to online conduct will be taken seriously
- Investigations will follow safeguarding and 'Breach of Policy' procedures
- Confidentiality will be maintained where appropriate

14. Training and Awareness

- Coaches and volunteers will receive guidance on online safety and professional boundaries
- New Coaches will be made aware of this policy during induction
- Regular reminders will be provided

15. Data Protection and Confidentiality

- Online activity must comply with the Data Protection Act and UK GDPR
- Personal data must not be shared without authorisation
- Any data breach must be reported immediately

16. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Ofsted guidance or legislation changes
- An incident highlights the need for review
- Operational changes occur

17. Declaration

All coaches, volunteers, and contractors must read, understand, and agree to comply with this Social Networking and Online Safety Policy.

18. Acknowledgement and Acceptance (BrightHR)

All self-employed coaches and contractors engaged by Elite SF are required to read and acknowledge this Policy Breach Procedure, along with all associated policies, via the BrightHR system (or equivalent compliance platform used by the business).

Acknowledgement via BrightHR constitutes confirmation that the individual:

- Has read and understood the contents of this procedure
- Agrees to adhere to all company policies and standards
- Understands the consequences of policy breaches as outlined

Failure to complete policy acknowledgement may result in:

- Suspension of work allocation
- Removal from scheduled sessions until compliance is confirmed

The business reserves the right to rely on digital acknowledgement records as evidence of acceptance of terms and expectations.

Adopted on: 29th December 2025
Signed on behalf of Elite SF: J. Bartram
Date for review: 29th December 2026