**13. MOBILE AND ON-LINE COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN POLICY**

Technology is moving very fast in this area. There are now many different ways for people to communicate. On-line communication can be by email, instant messaging or social networking sites.

The risks posed by such methods of communication arise from a variety of issues: the privacy provided, the wide range of content that can be transmitted, including content of a violent, sexual or hateful nature, the ease with which images can be forwarded onto others and the difficulty in knowing truly who you are communicating with.

In sport, there are additional risks: inappropriate pressure can be exerted by adults, particularly coaches, on children or inappropriate criticism of a child’s performance. An official position or role within a club, such as coach, can carry with it a level of authority, and engender a level of trust, that facilitates the control of a child.

Against this background, a club needs to establish rules covering how adults connected with that club communicate with children connected with that club.

It is therefore recommended that:

* When communicating by phone, where possible Club Officials and coaches should speak to the parent of a child
* Club Officials and coaches should not communicate with individual children by text or on-line at any time, on any matter, unless there is an immediate risk to the welfare of that child which can be lessened by such contact
* If a club needs to communicate club-related information to children by email (such as training or match details), it should use email groups comprising email addresses given by parents. It is inadvisable for a coach to communicate by email on a one-to-one basis with a child; if replying to an email from a child the parent should be copied in to the response

**Coaches and Club Officials should not communicate directly with children through social networking sites such as Facebook.**

**Coaches should not be “friends” with the children they coach.**

It is impossible to address every issue or cover every scenario a club or coach might encounter when communicating with children and it is appreciated that different ages will need to be treated differently. However, in all cases the above guidelines should be considered when determining the most appropriate method of communication in any given circumstances.

For further guidance and advice contact a member of Ilkeston Rugby Club’s Safeguarding Team

Safeguarding Officer: Nicky Bailey 07809 680034 or nicky.bailey@real-education.org

Safeguarding Assistant: Andy Evans 07770 303167 or minichairman@ilkestonrugby.com

Safeguarding Assistant: Mark Binch 07773 013839 mbinch@tuthill.com