



SOUTH WEST ACADEMY OF SPORT (SWAS)

Media Relations Policies and Procedures Manual

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Version Control

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Table of Contents

1. Policy Statement.....	4
2. Purpose	4
3. Corporate Requirements	6
4. Application of Policy	6
5. Responsibilities.....	7
6. Processes.....	8
7. Breaches.....	12
8. Further Information	12

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Local, state and social media platforms are vital partners in achieving the goals of South West Academy of Sport. In order to maximise the advantages of media presentation and minimise the risks of media misrepresentation, both in the online space and face-to-face, it is necessary to establish guidelines for how media contacts will be conducted.

It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, the intention is to establish a framework for achieving an effective working relationship with the media and the general community. Social media such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Google+, YouTube and blogging represent a growing form of communication for sports-based organisations, allowing them to engage their members and the wider public more easily than ever before. However, it is also an area in which rules and boundaries are constantly being tested.

SWAS welcomes the opportunity to talk to the media and wider community and, through them, to debate issues in the public arena.

In dealing with the media and any posts or comments on social media, Board members, staff and other volunteers should be conscious that they may be seen as representatives of the organisation and should therefore avoid making comments or participating in photo opportunities that may damage the long-term reputation of South West Academy of Sport.

2. Purpose

South West Academy of Sport utilises various forms of media and social media in order to:

- Advocate for the goals of the organisation
- Promote the work of the organisation
- Inform the public of the details of the organisation and its activities
- Assist in fundraising for the organisation

For the sake of clarity social media includes but is not limited to:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Google+
- WordPress/Blogger
- YouTube/Vimeo
- iTunes/Podcasting
- Any other form of media that utilises the internet

In order to ensure that these purposes can be fulfilled, this policy regulates the choice of people entitled to speak for South West Academy of Sport.

The media themselves have a vital role to play on behalf of the community in holding South West Academy of Sport to account for its policies and actions. It is important that they have access to officers and members and to background information to assist them in this role.

To balance this, South West Academy of Sport must have the capacity to defend itself from any unfounded criticism, improper representation and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts (if necessary using other channels of communication).

South West Academy of Sport seeks to encourage information and linking amongst its membership, directors and volunteers, and seeks to utilise the expertise of its directors, staff and volunteers in generating appropriate social media content.

At the same time, social media posts should be in keeping with the image that South West Academy of Sport wishes to present to the public, and posts made through its social media channels should not damage the organisation's reputation in any way.

Due to the fast-moving nature of social media and the constant development of new social media programs, it is important that this policy and its procedures be reviewed at regular intervals.

It is the responsibility of all staff, board members and volunteers to ensure that effective relations are maintained with the media and general public in order to achieve the aims of South West Academy of Sport. Naturally, in doing this, certain legal constraints might apply (e.g. not making comment on current court cases, especially those before a jury).

3. Corporate Requirements

3.1 This Manual is to be read and implemented in conjunction with SWAS's other relevant policies, strategies and documents, including:

3.1.1 Constitution

3.1.2 Board Charter

3.1.3 Strategic Plan

3.2 This Policy applies to all parties including Directors, managers, staff, coaches, contractors, consultants and volunteers.

4. Application of Policy

South West Academy of Sport's Media Relations Policy operates on the values of:

- **Honesty:** The organisation will never knowingly mislead the public, media or volunteers on an issue or news story.
- **Integrity:** South West Academy of Sport will not knowingly post incorrect, defamatory or misleading information about its own work, the work of other organisations, or individuals. In addition, it will post in accordance with the organisation's Privacy policy.
- **Transparency:** The organisation will promote openness and accessibility in our dealings with the media and the public, whilst complying with the law and maintaining confidentiality when appropriate.
- **Clarity:** All communications with the media and the public will be written in plain English
- **Balance:** Information provided to the media and the public by South West Academy of Sport will as far as humanly possible be objective, balanced, accurate, informative and timely.
- **Professionalism:** South West Academy of Sport's social media represents the organisation as a whole and should seek to maintain a professional and uniform tone. Directors, managers, coaches, staff and volunteers may, from time to time and as appropriate, post on behalf of South West Academy of Sport using its online profiles, but the impression should remain one of a singular organisation rather than a group of individuals.
- **Information Sharing:** South West Academy of Sport encourages the sharing and reposting of online information that is relevant, appropriate to its aims, and of interest to its members.

South West Academy of Sport seeks to establish and maintain a good and open relationship with the media and the public. It is important that the organisation works with the media to communicate important public information messages about its work and its goals. South West Academy of Sport should also seek to grow its social media base and use this to engage with existing and potential members, donors and stakeholders.

At the same time, a professional balance must be struck which avoids placing the organisation's reputation at risk.

Statements concerning any significant matter or issue in the name of or on behalf of South West Academy of Sport should only be made by the Chairperson or CEO upon discussion between those two parties.

5. Responsibilities

The Board shall nominate the CEO to coordinate South West Academy of Sport's relationships with the media, as well as oversee expansion of the organisation's online presence and help to develop the presence of South West Academy of Sport on Social Media.

The CEO and the Board Chair are all authorised to speak on behalf of South West Academy of Sport.

Other Board members, managers, staff, coaches and volunteers are advised to ensure they are properly briefed and guided by the CEO or Board Chair before talking to the media or posting on any social media in regards to any issue related to South West Academy of Sport.

Director, managers, staff, coaches and volunteers may, from time to time and where appropriate, post on behalf of South West Academy of Sport using the organisation's online social media profiles. This is to be done only with the express knowledge and authorisation of the CEO.

Where information or public comment is requested or required, the CEO and Chairperson shall determine the most appropriate person to respond.

Board members, managers, staff, and coaches, are encouraged to deliver public presentations that discuss South West Academy of Sport's work and its goals, provided that they make it clear where such

presentations are or are not authorised by the organisation.

All Board members and other volunteers must observe South West Academy of Sport's Privacy Policy in relation to client records and not disclose any confidential information.

6. Processes

Significant statements (defined as any that may bring the reputation of SWAS into question) on behalf of South West Academy of Sport shall be made as authorised by the CEO or Chairperson as detailed above.

It should always be made absolutely clear whether the views put forward regarding any issue relating to South West Academy of Sport are those of the organisation or of an individual.

At all times consideration should be given as to how the correspondence may affect the reputation of South West Academy of Sport and where an individual is representing or having the perception of representing SWAS (rather than in their normal day to day existence) they must seek approval of the CEO prior to making any public comment.

The CEO and staff are responsible for:

- Producing and updating a list of key contacts for distribution to local press and radio and TV stations. They can also be contacted for preliminary discussions on any story or if a journalist or researcher is unsure who to approach for a comment.
- Producing the organisation's annual public relations plan, which shall be consistent with the organisation's business plan and marketing plan.
- Coordinating all media conferences for South West Academy of Sport. All such conferences shall be video recorded by the organisation.
- Authorising all media releases from South West Academy of Sport, and for mounting them on the organisation's website. All media releases must also be checked and approved by staff in charge of the relevant area before distribution.
- Being involved in any approaches to the media to feature South West Academy of Sport's work.
- Receiving and coordinating a response to all approaches from all press, radio or TV stations or specialist press.

- Ensuring that all posts on social media are in keeping with South West Academy of Sport's core Media Relations Policy.
- Ensuring appropriate and timely action is taken to correct or remove inappropriate posts (including defamatory and/or illegal content) and in minimising the risk of a repeat incident.
- Ensuring that appropriate and timely action is taken in repairing relations with any persons or organisations offended by an inappropriate post.
- Moderating and monitoring public response to social media, such as blog comments and Facebook replies, to ensure that trolling and spamming does not occur, to remove offensive or inappropriate replies, or caution offensive posters, and to reply to any further requests for information generated by the post topic.

All Board members, managers, staff, coaches and volunteers are responsible for:

- Providing advice (preferably before the issue becomes public knowledge) to the CEO on any issues that are likely to be complex or contentious or to be sustained for any length of time. In such a situation the CEO will work with the relevant staff and Board members to produce a communications plan which will ensure that balanced, timely information is provided to keep all parties informed.
- Ensuring that no photos of clients, volunteers or students shall be released to the public via advertising, news media, or internet, or by any other means, without the approval of the CEO, who shall satisfy themselves that the organisation's Privacy Policy has been observed.
- Notifying the CEO of any contact made in the name of South West Academy of Sport to the media and providing the name of the reporter or writer and the media outlet they represent.

Any significant media contacts with South West Academy of Sport's volunteers or members on any issue likely to prove contentious shall, where possible, be videorecorded.

Any filming or recording on South West Academy of Sport's property or of the organisation's proceedings by the media is subject to prior permission of the CEO or Board Chair.

Every effort should be made to assist the media in their inquiries. Where media queries involve requests for information that will require substantial work to produce, such work must be authorised by the CEO. It will usually be necessary to provide information in addition to that which is requested in order to set the facts and figures in context. Requests for detailed information of this nature, whether from the local or national media, should be referred to the CEO.

Posting to social media

Before social media posts are made, directors, staff, coaches and volunteers should ask themselves the following questions:

- Is the information I am posting, or reposting, likely to be of interest to South West Academy of Sport's members and stakeholders?
- Is the information in keeping with the interests of the organisation and its constituted values and aims?
- Could the post be construed as an attack on another individual, organisation or project?
- Would South West Academy of Sport's supporters and funders be happy to read the post?
- If there is a link attached to the post, does the link work, and have I read the information it links to and judged it to be an appropriate source?
- If reposting information, is the original poster an individual or organisation that South West Academy of Sport would be happy to associate itself with?
- Are the tone and the content of the post in keeping with other posts made by South West Academy of Sport? Does it maintain the organisation's overall tone?

If you are at all uncertain about whether the post is suitable, do not post it until you have discussed it with the CEO. A few moments spent checking can save the organisation big problems in the future.

Damage limitation

In the event of a damaging or misleading post being made, the CEO should be notified as soon as possible, and the following actions should occur:

- The offending post should be removed.
- Where necessary an apology should be issued, either publicly or to the individual or organisation involved.
- The origin of the offending post should be explored and steps taken to prevent a similar incident occurring in the future.

If the mistake seems set to grow, or to cause significant damage to the organisation's reputation, revert to the Board for advice and action.

Moderating social media

The reputation of South West Academy of Sport is first and foremost, and this involves maintaining a safe and friendly environment for its members.

From time-to-time social media forums may be hijacked by trolls or spammers, or attract people who attack other posters or the organisation aggressively. In order to maintain a pleasant environment for everybody, these posts need to be moderated.

Freedom of speech is to be encouraged, but if posts contain one or more of the following, it is time to act:

- Excessive or inappropriate use of swearing
- Defamatory, slanderous or aggressive attacks on South West Academy of Sport, other individuals, organisations, projects or public figures
- Breach of copyrighted material not within reasonable use, in the public domain, or available under Creative Commons license
- Breach of data protection or privacy laws
- Repetitive advertisements
- Topics which fall outside the realms of interest to members and stakeholders, and which do not appear to be within the context of a legitimate discussion or enquiry.

If a post appears only once:

- Remove the post as soon as possible
- If possible/appropriate, contact the poster privately to explain why you have removed the post and highlighting South West Academy of Sport's posting guidelines.

If a poster continues to post inappropriate content, or if the post can be considered spam:

- Remove the post as soon as possible
- Ban or block the poster to prevent them from posting again.

Banning and blocking should be used as a last resort only, and only when it is clear that the poster intends to continue to contribute inappropriate content. However, if that is the case, action must be taken swiftly to maintain the welfare of other social media users.

The decision to block, ban and remove posts ultimately lies with the CEO, but may, at their discretion, be delegated to responsible staff.

South West Academy of Sport reserves the right to withhold certain sensitive information concerning, say, commercial transactions or governmental negotiations. Any such information will be clearly labelled and clearly notified to relevant volunteers.

If any unauthorised releases of confidential information do occur, an investigation will take place to establish who was responsible and appropriate action will be taken.

7. Breaches

SWAS takes its reputation in the community seriously.

Any breach of this policy or associated procedures may result in disciplinary action, which may include counselling, dismissal, or cessation of the person's engagement with SWAS.

8. Further Information

For further information about the Media Relations Policy please contact the CEO.