



WhatsApp guidelines

WhatsApp is an instant messaging app. The proprietary, cross-platform app uses the Internet to send text messages, images, video, user location and audio media messages. It has become very popular in clubs and events who use it to communicate to groups.

If a WhatsApp group is set up in the name of a club, then the club should have administrator rights to the group. WhatsApp group administrators may be responsible for members' content. An admin is automatically the person who creates the group. Additional admins can be added, without necessarily agreeing to be one. Group admins then can control who is invited to, or removed from, the group chat. Children (u18) should not be part of a WhatsApp group. The safeguarding concern is that users can see personal phone numbers of users. The group should not be used for private conversations with anyone else using the group.

Do...

- ...Have an adult (Sports Leader/Coach or Manager) set the group up (allowing admin rights)
- ...Tell participants what the app is/isn't to be used for
- ...Inform parents of its intended use
- ...Get the participants to agree how the app is to be used i.e. only sailing orientated content
- ...Keep language appropriate and discuss relevant topics only
- ...Ensure members have a mechanism to report inappropriate content

Don't...

- ...Allow children under 18yrs of age to use WhatsApp
- ...Use the app for private messaging
- ...Use the app to replace formal feedback
- ...Use the app for non-club messaging
- ...Share grievances on WhatsApp

From a **GDPR concern**, WhatsApp is not compliant when used for official communications. This is due to a number of reasons. Firstly, if a WhatsApp group is set up in a sailing club every parent in that group has their phone number, and possibly profile photograph if they have one, shared with every other parent in the group without giving their consent for their personal data to be shared in this manner.

The lack of auditing ability as outlined above for the Club Administrator has over a WhatsApp group is an issue.



The lack of auditing ability also makes it difficult to comply with a Subject Access Request or request for deletion if one were received.

Along with the above, there is an issue presently with Whatsapp as to the location of the storage of information within it. If personal data is transferred outside the EEA, the entity transferring it in the Club will have to ensure additional safeguards are in place which is not possible when using Whatsapp.

Therefore due to these reasons, the use of WhatsApp in an official capacity is not advisable, by Irish Sailing and recommend the use of group emails, group text messaging services or group social media platforms that adhere to Irish Sailing's Social Media Policy.

For further details on this matter please contact:

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