BUCS SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

September 2024

1. **Introduction**

1.1 **What is social media?**
Social media is the term given to web-based tools and applications which enable users to create and share content (words, images and video content), and network with each other through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. Examples of social media used by BUCS include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok.

1.2 **Why do we use social media**
Research shows that among 16-to-25-year-olds in the UK, as many as 99% use social media every day. Children aged 12 and under are below the age limit for opening a social media account, but despite this research has found that 75% of them have one.

BUCS is highly active on social media, with a combined following of more than 200,000 across its owned channels. Social media has enormous positive benefits for BUCS, allowing us to communicate with students, member institutions and fans, as well as to deliver live streams for a range of our sports.

Our member institutions, individual teams and athletes use social media to engage with their own audience, as well as with BUCS, during events and throughout the season.

1.3 **Why do we need a social media policy?**
While we encourage the use of social media, we have certain standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe. Publication and commentary on social media, carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain. It is well documented that the advance of social media has had negative side effects among young people and adults.

These can include stress and addiction, increased levels of sedentary behaviour and opportunities for bullying and harassment. Used in the wrong way, information inappropriately shared on social media can pose a threat to young people and adults' safety.

It is, therefore, vital that organisations like BUCS take a proactive approach to ensure that our use of social media does not put young people and adults at risk of harm.

2. **Purpose**

This policy is intended for all employees, workers, volunteers, ambassadors, trustees and contractors (collectively, our "staff") who work for or with BUCS. It applies to content posted on social media about BUCS' work and sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of BUCS, and the use of social media by staff, whether on one of BUCS' corporate accounts or through an individual's personal account(s).

The policy outlines what staff need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to protect BUCS and its reputation and prevent any legal issues. It promotes the positive use of social media and other forms of electronic communication, including precautions to ensure that safety or wellbeing are not inadvertently put at risk.

This document sits alongside the wider BUCS Safeguarding policy, which is required reading for all employees.

Before engaging in any work-related social media activity, all staff must read this policy. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action if you are an employee of BUCS or jeopardise your future involvement with BUCS if you are a volunteer, ambassador, trustee or contractor.

3. Principles

3.1 Across our social media channels we commit to ensuring that we

- Project a positive and fun tone of voice
- Take an inclusive approach which celebrates the diversity of our athletes and sports
- Protect the safety of young people and adults at risk
- Adhere to BUCS' other policies and codes of conduct
- Adhere to GDPR legislation
- Reflect BUCS' strategy mission and objectives

3.2 Access to BUCS Accounts

BUCS takes care to ensure that only members of the Engagement team, as well as selected office staff have access to its social media channels. Nobody should be granted access to these accounts without the express permission of the Head of Digital and Engagement.

Staff should not set up new social media accounts on behalf of BUCS without the expressed permission of the Head of Digital and Engagement or create accounts that could be construed as being official accounts. Maintaining brand consistency is paramount to building a strong and engaged following.

3.3 Individual Accounts

The use of personal accounts to promote the work of individual members of staff and their work at BUCS is to be encouraged. However, all BUCS staff are expected to behave appropriately, in line with BUCS' values and policies, on their personal channels.

When using social media, in a professional or personal capacity (or in a combination of both) all BUCS staff must not post anything which could bring BUCS into disrepute or break the law – for example by breaching copyright or data protection regulations or publishing anything discriminatory.

Be aware that anything shared could affect how the public perceives BUCS.

Ensure that prior permission is granted by the Head of Digital and Engagement or a member of SLT before appearing in a personal capacity discussing BUCS or any of its work on social media or other media channels such as podcasts.

Those in senior management, and specialist roles, where they are well known in their field of expertise, must take particular care as personal views published may be misunderstood as expressing BUCS' view.

Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with BUCS and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the public, colleagues, partners and funders.

If a staff member is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to BUCS, they should talk to the Comms team immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.

BUCS is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. When representing BUCS, staff are expected to hold BUCS' position of neutrality. Staff who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from BUCS and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest

Never use BUCS' logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the Engagement team.

Always protect yourself and BUCS. Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information.

Think about your reputation as well as BUCS'. Express your opinions and deal with differences of opinion respectfully. Don't insult people or treat them badly. Passionate discussions and debates are fine, but you should always be respectful of others and their opinions. Be polite and the first to correct your own mistakes.

4. Engaging online

4.1.1 General

Engaging with people online must adhere to the BUCS safeguarding policy, as well as the principles set out in this document. Any engagement with individual young people through social media or other forms of electronic communication should be in a public forum and reactive. If this related to a young person under the age of 18 then this must be initiated by the young person.

4.1.2 Tagging in posts

You should not tag young people's social media handles in anything you post proactively. Young people who have a locked account should never be tagged. Where possible, it is better to tag social media handles from school social media accounts.

4.1.3 Private conversations

Many social media platforms include the functionality for private messaging – posts which can only be viewed by the selected individual(s) they are sent to. As a representative of BUCS you should not be involved in any private conversations with any of the young people you come into contact with through your work with BUCS.

This includes through other forms of electronic media. If you do receive any private correspondence from young people, these must be shared in full, with the BUCS safeguarding lead. This is both for your safety and the safety of the young people BUCS supports.

4.2 Monitoring social media

The Digital and Engagement team has responsibility for monitoring our corporate social media accounts, including any mentions of BUCS and its work on wider social media, and escalating any concerns and issues, including those related to safeguarding. It is the responsibility of staff to monitor responses and interactions with anything they post in relation to their work with BUCS. If a post attracts any negative comments, staff should immediately report this to the Digital and Engagement team.