**Guidance to BG members under the age of 18**

1. Do not ask your coach, judge, helper/volunteer or club official to be your social networking site friend – they will refuse as that would breach good practice and the BG Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy.
2. Use the internet positively and do not place yourself at risk. Have a look at www.ceop.gov.uk for some useful tips.
3. Consider who you are inviting to be your friend and follow the good advice of the social networking sites to ensure you are talking to the person you believe you are talking to.
4. Always remember that anything you say including photos, pictures and video clips posted on your site may be shared with people other than those for whom it was intended.
5. Never post or send any photographs, videos or make comments that may be:

Hurtful, untrue and upsetting and you may regret sharing later on; or used by other people in a way you did not intend or want.

1. Do not put pictures of other club members on the site within the club setting as you may breach the BG Photography Policy. If you do wish to upload such a picture you must get advice and consent of your parent, the other young person and their parent and a club officer before even considering uploading such a photo. This will not prevent you having pictures of your gymnastics friends on your site taken outside of the sporting arena but it is good advice to always ensure they and their parents are happy with any picture you have of them on your site.
2. Always be aware that social networking sites are a method of communication like letter writing and the spoken word. They are bound by the same laws and rules. Such technology is instant and this allows you as the user to react in the ‘heat of the moment’, where in the past you would have been required to write a letter which would have taken time and allowed for you to think again before sending. So never place a comment on the internet that you would not put in writing or say to the individual concerned as to do so may not only breach BG Policy but also the law.

**Guidance to parents of BG members under the age of 18**

As children grow up, parents and carers have to teach them a variety of things to ensure that they are equipped to face the challenges of the modern world.

We have to teach them how to cross the road safely, how to deal with strangers and how to engage with other children and adults appropriately in a variety of different settings, including the home, school and in the world at large.

When our children go out to play we want to know where they are going. We satisfy ourselves that they know how to get there without any mishaps or being exposed to any real dangers en route, that they will be safe when they get there and that they will be with responsible people throughout. Typically, when our children come home we ask them if everything was OK. We take a very close interest.

Using the internet safely requires similar skills, which is why it is important that parents and carers find out more about the internet for themselves.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, the benefits of the internet easily outweigh any drawbacks. To keep it that way, parents and children need to know that there are places on the internet which promote racial hatred, contain violent images or pornographic material all of which adults, as well as children, may find distressing. Regrettably it is also true that certain sites will attract a number of adults with a highly inappropriate interest in children.

Beyond these dangers, other websites have the potential to harm impressionable young people through the presentation of extremist views. Sites may be very disrespectful of other people’s religious beliefs or cultural backgrounds or seek to distort history. Sites may also promote anorexia or self-harming, for example, in ways which might attract the attention of a particular child who could, at that moment, be going through a vulnerable or difficult phase in their life. There are other more insidious threats around too. Without the experience to distinguish between genuine and misleading messages, children may be fooled by scams of various kinds.

There are however, a few simple steps which parents can take to help their children use the internet safely.

**Some simple ways to keep children safe online**

* Get to know your child’s online habits. Children are inquisitive. They will look to explore the internet as much as they do the real world. Knowing the sites they go to, the people they meet there and what they do will help to keep children safe.
* Stay alert to any sudden changes in mood or appearance, or to any major change in habits or to increased secretiveness. These are often tell-tale signs that something is not right.
* Keep lines of communication open - tell your child they can always talk to you or another trusted adult, such as a teacher, if they do end up in some sort of trouble on the internet. Make children aware that there are things on the internet which may distress them.
* Spend some time surfing the internet yourself. The more that you know about the internet, the better able you are, in turn, to help your child navigate around it without coming to any harm.
* Install internet filtering software showing a Child Safety Online Kitemark on your computer. Filtering products with a Kitemark have been independently tested to provide a simple and effective means of support to parents, helping to ensure that a child’s online experience is a safe one. The Kitemark scheme is sponsored by the Home Office and Ofcom.

There have also been occasions where parents of BG members have used social networking sites to criticise or verbally abuse gymnastics clubs, its officers, officials, coaches, judges, and gymnasts in an inappropriate and unacceptable manner. This has in some cases led the person who is the subject of the verbal abuse to take action through statutory agencies or statutory legislation to address the comments made. BG members found to be abusing or working outside of these good practice guidelines, may be subject to disciplinary action or investigation by BG as outlined in the BG Complaints & Disciplinary Procedures.

**Social networking services, social media and sport: Guidelines for safeguarding children and young people**

The CPSU Briefing Document ‚Social networking services, social media and sport: Guidelines for safeguarding children and young people‛ gives more in depth guidance on social networking sites. It can be accessed via the Child Protection in Sport Unit website at: [www.cpsu.org.uk](http://www.cpsu.org.uk)

**What to do if you have concerns**

As a user of a social networking site, whether you are a child or an adult, you may at some time have a concern about what you are seeing or being told about by another user. Concerns may range from negative or abusive comments, and cyber bullying to suspected grooming for sexual abuse.

BG has drawn up a list below of agencies that you can contact, anonymously if you wish, where you can raise such concerns.

www.thinkuknow.co.uk: the main UK Government website with advice for parents on how to keep children safe online

www.ceop.police.uk: the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) is the Government body dedicated to eradicating abuse of children. Concerns about inappropriate contacts between a child and an adult, including online, can be reported directly to CEOP. Reporting can be accessed by pressing the CEOP button on the BG website’s CEOP page.

www.iwf.org.uk: the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) works to remove illegal material from the