



WhatsApp and Digital Messaging Policy

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Organisation	Cambridge Sword Ltd
Policy title	WhatsApp and Digital Messaging Policy
Policy number	11
Version	V3
Policy owner	Club Manager, with Welfare Officer oversight
Created	Drawn from existing Cambridge Sword policies and procedures
Updated draft	July 2026
Next review	July 2027, or sooner if guidance, law, club practice or safeguarding requirements change

At a glance

- WhatsApp is used for quick practical updates and reminders. Key information should also be available through the website, newsletters, booking information or direct contact where reasonably possible.
- Official WhatsApp groups must have a clear purpose and be created or authorised by an appropriate Cambridge Sword adult.
- Phone numbers, profile pictures and names may be visible to other group members. Members are responsible for reviewing their own privacy settings.
- Under-18s must not be added to a club WhatsApp group without parent/carer permission. Under-16s should not normally be included. Under-13s must not be included.
- Coaches, officials, volunteers and adult members must not send personal one-to-one WhatsApp messages to under-18s.
- Photos, videos and screenshots must not be forwarded, reposted or used outside the group without permission.
- Concerns about inappropriate content, bullying, harassment, safeguarding or welfare must be reported promptly to the Welfare Officer or Club Director.

Purpose

Cambridge Sword uses WhatsApp to share short, practical information with parents/carers, adult members and, where appropriate, older fencers.

This policy explains how WhatsApp should be used safely, respectfully and consistently for Cambridge Sword activities, sessions, competitions, camps and events.

Communication channels

WhatsApp is used for quick updates, reminders and practical coordination. It should not be treated as the only official source of club information.

Key club information should also be available through the Portal, website, Pembee, newsletters or emails, booking information, direct contact with the Club Manager or relevant coach, or information displayed at club sessions where appropriate.

Parents/carers or members who do not use WhatsApp should contact the Club Manager so that essential information can be shared through another reasonable route where possible.

Scope

This policy applies to the Cambridge Sword WhatsApp Community, official session groups, competition/camp/event groups, small coordination groups involving a coach and one or more families, and any WhatsApp communication carried out in connection with club activities or business.

Key risks

WhatsApp may reveal phone numbers, display names and profile pictures to other group members.

Messages, images, videos and screenshots can be saved or forwarded by participants outside the club's control.

Unsupervised communication can create safeguarding risks including inappropriate contact, grooming, bullying, peer-on-peer abuse or exposure to inappropriate material.

Messages written quickly can be misunderstood or may escalate concerns that would be better handled directly.

Personal, medical, safeguarding or sensitive information may be shared too widely if WhatsApp is used inappropriately.

Official groups and administrator responsibilities

Official Cambridge Sword WhatsApp groups should be created or authorised by a coach, club official, official volunteer or club administrator.

Where possible, each official group should have at least two administrators.

Administrators should set a clear purpose, use an appropriate group name, control who is invited, remove people where necessary, remind members of conduct expectations, remove inappropriate content where possible, close or archive temporary groups when no longer needed, and escalate safeguarding, welfare or conduct concerns.

Joining, leaving and membership of groups

Cambridge Sword will normally share WhatsApp group links with parents/carers through booking information or other club communication. Participants should not usually be added automatically without being given a choice.

Parents/carers are responsible for joining relevant group links where they need quick updates, including short-notice changes or cancellations.

Parents/carers and adult members should only join groups relevant to their session, event, role or activity.

Inactive participants may be removed where appropriate, ideally after notice.

Event, competition and small coordination groups

Temporary groups may be used for practical coordination around competitions, camps, events or specific arrangements.

Temporary groups should have a clear and limited purpose, be used only for activity-related communication, include parents/carers where under-18s are involved, avoid sharing sensitive information, and be closed, archived or left inactive when the purpose has finished.

Small coordination groups involving a coach and one or two families may be used where this is more appropriate than posting in a wider club group. The same safeguarding, privacy and conduct standards apply.

Acceptable use and conduct

All WhatsApp communication connected to Cambridge Sword should reflect the club's values and the relevant conduct policies.

Group members should use respectful and appropriate language, keep messages relevant, avoid unnecessary late-night or excessive messaging, respect others, raise concerns through the appropriate process and avoid posting anything they would not be comfortable being seen by the club, parents/carers or safeguarding leads.

WhatsApp groups must not be used for bullying, harassment, intimidation, discrimination, peer-on-peer abuse, abusive or sexualised language, criticism of individuals, gossip, arguments, complaints that should be handled through a proper process, sensitive information, unrelated fundraising/advertising/spam/political content, or sharing images without permission.

Under-18s and safeguarding

Cambridge Sword does not give WhatsApp group links directly to children or young people. Links are shared with parents/carers, who decide whether an older fencer should access a group.

No child under the minimum age for WhatsApp may be included in a Cambridge Sword WhatsApp group.

Cambridge Sword recommends that children under 16 are not included in club WhatsApp groups.

Where an under-18 is included, this must be with parent/carer permission and the parent/carer must also remain in the group.

Adults must not send personal one-to-one WhatsApp messages to under-18s or use WhatsApp voice/video calls with under-18s unless part of an agreed safeguarding-compliant arrangement involving a parent/carer.

Urgent safeguarding concerns should not be managed only through WhatsApp.

Privacy, data protection and settings

Members should be aware that joining a WhatsApp group may reveal their phone number, display name and profile picture to other group members.

Members are encouraged to review privacy settings including profile photo, last seen, online status, read receipts, group permissions, live location and media auto-download.

Home addresses, unnecessary school details, medical details, safeguarding information, financial information, passwords/login details and live location should not be shared in official groups unless there is a clear, necessary and time-limited reason.

Photos, videos, screenshots and media

Photos or videos of children must not be shared in WhatsApp groups unless this is in line with Cambridge Sword's Mobile Phones, Photography and Filming Policy and relevant permissions.

Images, videos, screenshots and other media shared in a group must not be downloaded for other use, forwarded, reposted, published on social media or used outside the group without permission.

Screenshots of group conversations should not be shared outside the group unless there is a safeguarding, welfare, conduct, complaint or evidence-related reason to do so.

Reporting concerns and inappropriate content

Inappropriate content, language, behaviour or communication should be reported promptly to the Club Manager or Welfare Officer.

Where appropriate, screenshots may be retained as evidence before content is removed. Screenshots should be shared only with those who need to see them as part of managing the concern.

Serious or urgent safeguarding concerns should be escalated using the Safeguarding and Welfare Policy and should not be managed only through WhatsApp.

Removal from groups

Cambridge Sword may remove a person from a WhatsApp group if they are no longer connected with the relevant activity, the group is no longer needed, they repeatedly post irrelevant or inappropriate content, they breach this policy or a conduct policy, or their presence creates a safeguarding, welfare, privacy or conduct concern.

Appendix - suggested message for new WhatsApp groups

Welcome to this Cambridge Sword WhatsApp group. This group is for practical information and updates about [session/event/activity]. Please keep messages relevant, respectful and appropriate. Phone numbers and profile pictures may be visible to other group members, so please review your privacy settings if needed. Please do not share private, medical or safeguarding information in this group. Photos or videos should only be shared in line with club permissions and must not be forwarded or reposted without permission. Adults must not send personal one-to-one WhatsApp messages to under-18s. Any welfare or safeguarding concern should be reported to Sarah Paveley or Hannah Jones. Thank you for helping us keep communication clear, safe and positive.

Related policies and guidance

This document should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Welfare Policy
- Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Fencer Code of Conduct
- Parent/Carer Code of Conduct
- Coach/Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Mobile Phones, Photography and Filming Policy
- Privacy Notice
- Complaints and Concerns Procedure
- British Fencing Codes of Conduct and welfare guidance

Review

This document will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there is a safeguarding concern, complaint, incident, near miss, change in club practice, change in guidance, or change in relevant law or governing body requirements.

Approval and review record

Prepared by	Emily Lucas, Operations Manager	Date	July 2026
Reviewed by	Sarah Paveley, Club Director / Head Coach	Date	
Reviewed by	Hannah Jones, Welfare Officer	Date	
Next review due	July 2027, or sooner if required	Date	