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Communications Policy

Foreword

This Policy constitutes a set of guidelines to Inclusive Skating (henceforth referred to as 'we', 'us', 'ours') staff/volunteers and Board Members on various aspects of internal and external communications. In particular:

- [our values when communicating with members and partners;](#)
- [communicating with our key partners;](#)
- [expected practices and procedures](#) – including timeframes, general day-to-day communications and consultations;
- [communicating with visually impaired members;](#)
- [communicating with hearing impaired members.](#)

The objective of the Communications policy is to help us communicate effectively and transparently by:

- achieving a better understanding of what Inclusive Skating offers to its members, its values and identity;
- providing clear and well-judged information appropriate for the needs of the user.

Considering that Inclusive Skating is a charity, very much dependant on donations, and our members face various challenges - communication plays a pivotal role for us on many levels. It constitutes a foundation for building and maintaining a positive image of our organisation, retaining good relations with our donors, ensuring our members are well informed and are given convenient mechanisms to provide their feedback.

Inclusive Skating recognises that consistent, effective and appropriate communication - external and internal - is important in achieving our aims, objectives and policies and in maintaining our credibility as a publicly accountable organisation. This document outlines the principles for managing communications, including a summary of key strands of communications, and the responsibilities of staff/volunteers in relation to communications. The aim of the policy is to reduce the risk of damage to Inclusive Skating due to ineffective communication, and to ensure that staff/volunteers and Board members are aware of how communication is best conveyed externally and internally, and who has responsibility for which aspects.

1. Definitions

External communications include all the messages and information that we present to different audiences, whether directly (through the website, telephone calls, letters, e-mails, newsletters, marketing materials, social media and press releases) or indirectly through the press and word of mouth.

Internal Communications include all the messages and information (whether verbal or written) passed within Inclusive Skating, between members of staff and volunteers.

2. Our Values

Below are the organisation's core values, which should be at the heart of all communications, ensuring strong relationships with our members, donors, partners and key stake-holders:

- **Inclusion** - we aim to include everyone in all our activities
- **Facilitation** - we make adjustment to all systems and procedures to achieve inclusion

3. General Principles

- All communication is important and needs to be considered carefully;
- External and internal communications form part of strategic and business planning as well as project and team appraisal (including working with other organisations);
- Good communications play a very positive role in the day-to-day operations, through the consideration of the content and the audience for any particular message or information to be disseminated;
- Communications play a pivotal role in informing members and the wider skating community of our work and in encouraging new participants;
- Managers and staff/volunteers at all levels will have a responsibility to foster good communications internally and externally.

4. Key Partners

Staff/volunteer and Board members should make themselves aware of the organisations/partners relevant to their remit in order to target communications effectively and to the right individuals.

Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR)

Inclusive Skating is a charity and our regulator is the Office of Scottish Charity Regulator. OSCR vet our charity accounts and Annual Report on an annual basis. As a charity we follow our legally registered charitable purposes and objects. Our charity number is SC042584.

Scottish Sports Association

We hold an SSA associate membership, which provides access to the SSA's work including advocacy and representation. Apart from the above in 2019 we've joined the SSA Shared Administration Service scheme, which allows us to make use of a wide range of administrative and marketing/graphical design support.

Welsh Sports Association

We hold an SSA associate membership, which provides access to the WSA's work including advocacy and representation. Apart from the above in 2019 we've joined the WSA Vibrant nation scheme, which allows us to make use of a wide range of disclosure and safeguarding checks for our volunteers. This also provides our coaches with insurance services for ice skating, in-line skating and roller skating.

Sport and Recreation Alliance

We hold an SRA associate membership, which provides access to the SRA's work including advocacy and representation across the UK. Apart from the above we are also working on several committees at the SRA including the Development Directors Committee.

International Skating Union (ISU)

Our format is recognised by the International Skating Union, the World Governing Body for the sport of ice skating. This enables our events to appear on the World Calendar of Skating Events. British Ice

Skating (BIS), the UK governing body for ice skating is a member of the ISU and we became an Affiliated Association of the BIS in 2011.

World Figure Sport

We work closely with World Figure Sport and our format is recognised by the WFSA. Inclusive Skating has participated in the World Figure Sport Championships in Toronto and Vail since 2016. Several of our skaters have held World Figure Sport Championship titles.

The National Lottery Community Fund

We were awarded a major grant with the National Lottery to implement our Skate for All Project in 2019 following our success in the Peoples Project. This has provided the funding for our safety course, the training of our new volunteer workforce and the implementation of the Inclusive Skating learning platform.

Special Olympics

Inclusive Skating regularly host the Special Olympics GB National Competitions and are active in supporting athletes being selected to the World Winter Games and other major Special Olympics events.

Other Partners

Staff/volunteer and Board members should also be aware that, in addition to the organisations listed above, we communicate with a range of other funders and sporting facilities. These include: British Blind Sport, British Ice Skating, National Deaf Children's Society, Morrisons Media (who are our marketing consultant), Solo (who are our video production company), Everyone Active (who host our IS for Genes Events in Lammas), The Time Capsule (who host the Iskate club), Planet Ice (who host events, clubs and activities across England).

5. Expected Practices and Procedures

The final part of these guidelines will outline some basic expectations for staff/volunteers in putting into practice the communications tools listed in the above tables.

1. Messages to the membership or donors

It is expected that the most commonly used means of contacting our members or donors will be done via email. The following protocols should be followed as best practice when communicating with groups of people:

- whenever emailing members please ensure that the information is provided in plain English and easy to understand. For more details please refer to 'CPSU, Learning Disability Factsheet' available from our website at Legal > Safeguarding section;
- when emailing more than one organisation (e.g. people that are not part of the same organisation) contacts should be Blind Carbon Copied (BCC). This is to ensure that recipients will not gain access to co-recipients addresses in the process;
- the Subject should be explicitly clear and represent the content of the email;
- emails from members or donors should be responded to asap or at least within 48 working hours. Use a holding folder where possible to ensure queries are well managed. Staff/volunteers should respond to emails by priority;
- where possible, staff/volunteers should target communications rather than 'send to all' - please use common sense when allocating recipients and seek advice from colleagues if you are unsure;

- whenever communication is being initiated - you need to ensure that we have previously received recipient's consent to receive that type of communication. We need to ensure the following:

Asking for consent

- We have checked that consent is the most appropriate lawful basis for processing.
- We have made the request for consent prominent and separate from our terms and conditions.
- We ask people to positively opt in.
- We don't use pre-ticked boxes or any other type of default consent.
- We use clear, plain language that is easy to understand.
- We specify why we want the data and what we're going to do with it.
- We give separate distinct ('granular') options to consent separately to different purposes and types of processing.
- We name our organisation and any third party controllers who will be relying on the consent.
- We tell individuals they can withdraw their consent.
- We ensure that individuals can refuse to consent without detriment.
- We avoid making consent a precondition of a service.
- If we offer online services directly to children, we only seek consent if we have age-verification measures (and parental-consent measures for younger children) in place.

Recording consent

- We keep a record of when and how we got consent from the individual.
- We keep a record of exactly what they were told at the time.

Managing consent

- We regularly review consents to check that the relationship, the processing and the purposes have not changed.
- We have processes in place to refresh consent at appropriate intervals, including any parental consents.
- We consider using privacy dashboards or other preference-management tools as a matter of good practice.
- We make it easy for individuals to withdraw their consent at any time, and publicise how to do so.
- We act on withdrawals of consent as soon as we can.
- We don't penalise individuals who wish to withdraw consent.

To learn more about the communication consent please visit the [Information Commissioner's Office website](#).

- Staff/volunteers receiving emails from membership or donors shall activate their out-of-office response if out of the office on business or on annual leave;
- Emails of former staff/volunteers should either be automatically forwarded to the relevant successor or have autoresponders set up informing that this person is no longer with the organisation and providing alternative email address of a relevant staff/volunteer to contact.

2. Telephone

Our office phone number is 07813993237.

Whenever communicating on the telephone with members please ensure that the time is convenient and that they have accepted phone communication.

3. Website

Our website address is: inclusiveskating.org and provides a platform for sharing key sport's news, planned events and competitions, policy updates and other general information for members and

parents/guardians. It will also be a first point of contact for those seeking generic information about IS and our sport.

Administration of web content is the responsibility of the Chair and the social media team, who should ensure content is up-to-date, relevant and engaging.

4. Facebook

Our Facebook address is: www.facebook.com/inclusiveskating

Staff/volunteers should use it to engage with the membership embrace inclusive skating community promoting and engaging in conversations of benefit and/or interest to impaired skating in Scotland. All posts should be on-topic and relevant to IS work and that of our members. If staff/volunteer/Board members have personal accounts it should clearly state that it is a personal account.

If you use your personal account you may wish to state that all views expressed are your own and not that of the organisation. In using personal account, staff/volunteer/Board members should post with their link to IS and its reputation in mind.

5. Twitter

Our Twitter address is: twitter.com/InclusiveSk8

6. Instagram

Our Instagram address is: www.instagram.com/inclusiveskating/

7. YouTube

Inclusive Skating has a YouTube channel: [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/)

8. Statements/Comments to Media/Press

Any statements to the media/press require to be approved by the Chairperson. Statements can only be issued in the name of the Chairperson and not individual groups. Staff/volunteer/Board/group/forum members should always consult with the Chairperson to get approval for any statements before they are released.

Inclusive Skating staff/volunteer/Board members should note that these communications guidelines are exactly that, only guidelines.

The nature of our work means that all situations cannot be covered and so staff/volunteer/Board members should be proactive and use their initiative in ensuring they use the right type of communication in the right way to achieve the best possible outcomes for members. If ever uncertain, please don't hesitate to enquire with colleagues/Chairperson.

6. Communicating with visually impaired members

1. **Font size:** The larger the font the easier it will be for visually impaired clients to read. A font size of 16 is recommended for large print documents. However, for practical purposes very large font sizes are not always possible. A font size of at least 14 points is the best compromise.
2. **Font type:** Avoid highly stylised typefaces, which use flamboyant or decorative handwriting styles. They may look attractive to you but to someone who is visually impaired they are completely illegible.
3. **Font styles:** People who are visually impaired prefer a font that is easy to distinguish and it is preferable to use bold or semi-bold. Light fonts are not recommended. Blocks of capital letters, underlined or italicised text are all harder to read. A couple of words in capitals is fine but try to avoid the use of capitals for continuous text. Underlining text or setting it in italics should also be avoided.

4. **Numbers:** When typing documents that contain numbers it's useful to remember that people with a visual impairment often have difficulty distinguishing between 3, 5, 8 and 0. Use a font type that is easy to read, and where practicable give or confirm the numbers in words.
5. **Word spacing and alignment:** Use left alignment on all documents, as this is easier to read because the spacings between words are more regular than justified text for example.
6. **Paragraph spacing:** The spacing between lines of text in a paragraph are also important. As with font, the bigger the better, so try to use at least 1.5 sized spacings between each line.
7. **Columns:** Some people with visual impairment prefer to read columns rather than long lines of text across a page. However, make sure that you leave enough space in between each column to differentiate them from one another and/or use a vertical line to distinguish the end and beginning of each column.
8. **Contrast:** The contrast of the type against the paper will have implications for its legibility. Avoid using coloured font or paper that may disguise the text. People with a visual impairment do not see shades of colour well. Black text on white or yellow paper is adequate for most visually impaired people.
9. **Setting text:** When setting text avoid using vertically placed words as these are difficult for visually impaired people to read. Also try not to place text directly over an image as this will usually camouflage the words against the image (see Contrast). Text wrapped around an image is also difficult to read.
10. **Page layout:** The layout of each page should be consistent so as not to confuse the reader. Page titles, headings, and numbers for example should be repeated in the same place and style on following pages.
11. **Forms:** People who are visually impaired often have writing that is bigger than the average. Therefore spaces for the client to complete or sign a document need to be bigger.

7. Communicating with hearing impaired members

When you're calling someone with hearing loss, ensure you are in a quiet surrounding - remove as much background noise as you can. Make sure you speak directly into the phone's mouthpiece (but don't hold it too close).

Make sure they know who they are speaking to and what the conversation is about. Speak as clearly as you can and be prepared to be patient and to repeat what you have said. Take your time to explain if they didn't understand your sentence at first. Repeat it again, louder and slower as opposed to saying: "Never mind".

We have volunteers who have agreed to provide support to our hearing impaired members so please consider this option too. Several of our members are fluent in BSL and Macaton.

Using the telephone can be very daunting for someone with a hearing impairment. Your support would be very appreciated!

For more guidance please visit:

<https://www.hearinglink.org/living/partners-children-family-hearing-people/how-to-communicate-with-a-hearing-impaired-person/>