

8 October 2019

We all need to be careful in writing, sending and replying to emails

Emails are open to disclosure and therefore can be made public in certain circumstances. There have been cases in Scouting where what people have written in emails have led to legal action once disclosed.

Here are some useful guidelines agreed by the County Team and District Commissioners which we would recommend that all members of Scouting in the County adopt.

Please consider whether any difficult issues might be better dealt with in a face-to-face discussion or on the phone rather than by email. This may ensure that any mis-interpretation is avoided and the issue may be resolved before anything is committed in writing.

Compiling and responding to emails generally:

1. Start with a polite salutation (e.g. John, Hi John, Dear John) – don't just dive into a message
2. Be polite in your email
3. Be factual in your email
4. Proof checking - check grammar, spelling, and that your email makes sense – particularly necessary on phones and tablets
5. Consider carefully who you 'cc' your email to – is it necessary?
6. Be careful about using humour – there is nothing wrong with this, but there is a need to ensure it cannot be interpreted the wrong way
7. Finish with a polite sign off
8. If you are sending to a number of people, should you send them all as 'bcc' to avoid GDPR issues on circulating email addresses to them all?
9. Be careful about 'bcc' anyone (unless it is item 8 above) – they can still reply all to the 'to' and 'cc' people, and that may cause a problem for you - better to forward them the email separately

Responding to emails:

1. In responding to emails be careful about adding additional 'ccs' in as there may be comment in the email trail you may not wish them to see
2. In responding to emails consider if you really need to 'reply all' rather than just to the individual sender

DO NOT:

1. **Do not** use all capitals in your email – it is the equivalent of shouting!
2. **Do not** say anything in an email that, if the email became public, you might wish you had not said
3. **Do not** say anything in an email about an individual that is libellous, untrue, or just unpleasant
4. **Do not** send an email when you are annoyed – put it in your draft box and consider it next morning, or ask someone else to 'sense' check it (be careful in that your 'sense' check email could be subject to an SAR! – so delete where appropriate)
5. **Never** send a complaining or derogatory email if you have had a few alcoholic drinks!
6. **Do not** make derogatory comments about fellow Scouts in emails (A Scout is friendly and considerate!)

REMEMBER – PROTECT YOURSELF

Anyone can issue a Subject Access Request (SAR) to your Group/District/County and all emails that identify them must then by law be disclosed to them, so they will see what has been written about them. This could result in potential legal action if what has been written is untrue.

THE GENERAL PRICIPLES OF THIS ARE ALSO RELEVANT TO TEXT MESSAGES AND ALL OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA