



# ***Bearsted & Thurnham LTC***

## **Online Safety and Communication Policy**

Social media (including personal and professional websites, blogs, chat rooms and bulletin boards; social networks, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram; video-sharing sites such as YouTube) are a common means of communication and self-expression.

It is essential that members, coaches, volunteers, players and parents/carers make informed decisions about how they use the internet, mobile phone and email communications to protect our club and our people.

Everyone involved in our club has the responsibility to safeguard both on and off the court, including communications.

### **It is the responsibility of all members, coaches, volunteers, players and parents/carers to:-**

1. Refrain from publishing comments about other clubs, players or referees and any controversial or potentially inflammatory subjects.
2. Avoid hostile or harassing communications in any posts or other online communications. Harassment is any offensive conduct based on a person's race, sex, gender identity, national origin, colour, disability, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, marital status, religion or any other status protected by law.
3. Identify all copyrighted or borrowed material with citations and links. When publishing direct paraphrased quotes, thoughts, ideas, photos or videos, give credit to the original publisher or author.
4. Be responsible for reviewing responses to online posts and resolving any concerns before they are posted.
5. If any online participant posts an inaccurate, accessory or negative comment about the club or anyone associated with the club, do not reply but seek advice from the Management Committee.
6. Ensure that all children (anyone under 18) and adults at risk are safeguarded from abuse and have an enjoyable tennis experience.

This document sets out how the Bearsted & Thurnham Lawn Tennis Club uses the internet and social media, and the procedures for doing so. It also outlines how we expect members, coaches, volunteers, players and parents/carers, to behave online and communicate with each other.

### **We recognise that**

- the online world provides everyone with many opportunities; however it can also present risks and challenges
- we have a duty to ensure that all children and adults involved in our club are protected from potential harm online
- we have a responsibility to help keep children safe online
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- working in partnership with children, their parents, carers and other organisations is essential in helping them to be responsible in their approach to online safety

## **Managing our online presence**

Our online presence through our website or social media platforms will adhere to the following guidelines:

- all social media accounts will be password-protected, and at least two members of the club and/or volunteers will have access to each account and password
- the account will be monitored by a designated person, who will have been appointed by the club committee
- social media accounts will be monitored by a designated person, who will have been appointed by the committee
- the designated person managing our online presence will seek advice from our Welfare Officer to advise on safeguarding requirements as required
- the designated person will remove any inappropriate posts, explaining why, and informing anyone who may be affected (as well as the parents of any children involved)
- identifying details such as a child's home address, school details, telephone number or email will not be posted on social media platforms
- we'll make sure children are aware of who manages our social media accounts and who to contact if they have any concerns about the running of the account
- parents will be asked to give their consent for us to communicate with their children through social media, or by any other means of communication
- parents will need to give consent for photographs or videos of their child to be posted on social media
- Members are able to upload their own personal photographs onto the club's social media pages. If they do so, it is assumed that they have asked the permission of the people in the photograph.
- all of our accounts and email addresses will be appropriate, fit for purpose and only used for club/county specific activities

## **What we expect of members, coaches, volunteers and players**

- they should be aware of this policy and behave in accordance with it
- they should seek the advice from our Welfare Officer / County Safeguarding Officer if they have any concerns about the use of the internet or social media
- any messages they wish to send out to children must be sent through the designated person(s) responsible for the organisation's online presence
- they must not 'friend' or 'follow' children from personal accounts on social media
- they must make sure any content posted is accurate and appropriate
- they must not communicate with children via personal accounts or private messages
- they must communicate with parents through email or in writing, or use an organisational account, profile or website rather than via personal social media accounts
- they must copy in parents or at least one other member, coach or volunteer when communicating with children
- they must sign off any communication in a professional manner, avoiding the use of emojis or symbols such as kisses ("X's")
- they must respond to any disclosure of abuse in line with the safeguarding policy
- they must not engage in sexting, or send pictures or messages that are abusive, obscene, inappropriate, indecent or menacing to anyone

## **What we expect of children**

- they should be aware of this policy
- they should follow the guidelines set out in our acceptable use statement on all devices

## **What we expect of parents/carers**

- they should be aware of this policy and behave in accordance with it
- they should seek the advice from our Welfare Officer / County Safeguarding Officer and the LTA if they have any concerns about the use of the internet or social media
- they should communicate with members, coaches and volunteers in a professional and appropriate manner
- they must not engage in sexting, or send pictures or messages that are abusive, obscene, inappropriate, indecent or menacing to anyone

## **Using mobile phones or other devices to communicate**

When using mobile phone or other devices to communicate, we will take the following precautions to help keep children safe:

- members, coaches and volunteers will communicate through parents directly or copy them into all messages to children
- where it is necessary to contact children directly, and it is not possible to copy the parents into the message, we will seek parental consent to do this

- messages will be used for professional communication, such as reminders about matches, coaching times, meeting points etc.
- if a child tries to engage a member, coach or volunteer in a conversation which is not of a professional manner (for example, their personal life), the member, coach or volunteer will:
  - end the conversation or not reply
  - inform the Welfare Officer / County Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible and arrange to address the matter with the child and their parents appropriately
  - if the conversation raises safeguarding concerns, notify the LTA as soon as possible

**Using mobile phones/devices during activities**

So that all children can enjoy and actively take part in tennis activities, we discourage the use of mobile phones/devices. As part of this policy we will:

- make children aware of how and who to contact if there is an emergency or a change to previously agreed arrangements
- advise parents that it may not be possible to contact children during activities and provide a contact within the club or organisation who will be reachable should there be an emergency

**Related policies and procedures**

This policy should be read alongside our club’s policies and procedures, including:

- safeguarding policy
- diversity and inclusion policy

This policy is reviewed every two years (or earlier if there is a change in national legislation).

Chairperson: David Burton  
 Welfare Officer: Carole Bacon  
 Social Media Officer: Paul Duckworth

Date:  
 Date:  
 Date: