



Online Safety and Communication Policy

Purpose and Scope

Montrose Tennis Club strives to ensure that all users, but particularly children (anyone under 18) and adults at risk, are safeguarded from abuse and have an enjoyable tennis experience.

This document sets out how Montrose Tennis Club uses the internet and social media, and the procedures for doing so. It also outlines expectations for online behaviour and communication with children.

The principles in this policy apply no matter which current or future technology is used.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect children involved with our organisation and who make use of technology (such as mobile phones, tablets, games consoles and the internet)
- Provide staff, coaches and volunteers with policy and procedure information regarding online safety and inform them how to respond to incidents
- Ensure our organisation operates within the law regarding how we behave online.

This policy applies to all staff, coaches, volunteers, players, parents/carers and any other individuals associated with Montrose Tennis Club.

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 organisation 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

We will seek to keep children safe by:

- understanding the safety aspects, including what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for staff, coaches, volunteers and children when using websites, social media, apps and other forms of digital communications
- being aware that it doesn't matter what device is being used for digital interaction but that the same safety aspects apply whether it is a computer, mobile phone or game console
- ensuring we adhere to relevant legislation and good practice when using social media or video conference platforms (including live streaming)

- ensuring the person(s) managing our online presence is suitably trained and/or experienced
- providing staff with policy and procedure information regarding online safety and inform them of how to respond to incidents

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 staff and/or volunteers will have access to each account and password
- 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 and the LTA 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)
- Social media pages/groups (e.g. Facebook pages/groups) used to communicate with children must be an organisation, community or sports group and not personal
- Identifying details such as a child's home address, school details, telephone number or email will not be posted on social media platforms
- Any posts or correspondence will be of a professional purpose
- We will 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 an account
- If the need arose, parents/carers will be asked to give their consent for us to communicate with their children through social media, via video conferencing platforms 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
- All of our accounts and email addresses will be appropriate, fit for purpose and only used for venue/county specific activities
- Video conferencing sessions will be password protected to maintain children's privacy and to prevent exposure to inappropriate or harmful content by third parties

What we expect of staff, coaches and volunteers

- They should be aware of this policy and behave in accordance with it
- They should seek advice from our Welfare Officer and the LTA if they have any concerns about the use of the internet or social media
- They must not "friend" or "follow" children from personal accounts on social media and must maintain the same professional boundaries online as they would in person when using organisation accounts
- They must make sure any content posted is accurate and appropriate
- 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 staff member, coach or volunteer in any communications sent to children

- They must avoid communication with children beyond dedicated event or activity timings, unless it is necessary for professional purposes (i.e. emergencies whilst on a trip, etc) and contacting the parents is not possible
- They must sign off any communication in a professional manner, avoiding the use of emojis or symbols such as kisses (“x’s”)
- They will respond to any concerns reported through social media in the same way as a face-to-face disclosure, in accordance with our 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 will behave responsibly online and refrain from any bullying or abusive behaviour

What we expect of parents/carers

- They should be aware of this policy and behave in accordance with it
- They should seek advice from our Welfare Officer and the LTA if they have any concerns about the use of the internet or social media
- They should communicate with staff, coaches or 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 phones or other devices to communicate, we will take the following precautions to help keep children safe:

- Staff, 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 **or include a second practitioner**
- In some circumstances it may be necessary for staff, coaches and volunteers to message children directly for logistical reasons and it is impractical to text the parents e.g. cancelling or rescheduling a lesson
- Where this type of one-to-one communication by text message is needed, the message will not be deleted from the device to ensure an audit trail exists
- Messages will be used for professional communication such as reminders about lesson times, meeting points, etc
- If staff, coaches and volunteers only have one mobile phone, and it is not possible to have a second business phone, they will ensure the parents and child understand this and agree and adhere to clear boundaries
- If a child tries to engage a member of staff, coach or volunteer in a conversation which is not of a professional manner (e.g. their personal life), the member of staff, coach or volunteer will:
 1. end the conversation or not reply
 2. inform the Welfare Officer as soon as possible and arrange to address the matter with the child and their parents appropriately
 3. 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
- inform parents of appropriate times they can contact children who are away on trips
- advise parents that it may not be possible to contact children during activities and provide a contact within the venue or organisation who will be reachable should there be an emergency
- explain to children how using mobile phones during activities has an impact on their safe awareness of their environment and their level of participation and achievement

Situations requiring One-to-One Communication

These situations should be limited to logistical or pastoral reasons. For example, to let the child know they are running late, to cancel or reschedule a session, or whilst on a trip it is necessary to call the player directly.

For all practitioners, where one-to-one communication takes place, an audit trail should be retained. For example, ensuring written communication (e.g. email, text messages, etc) are not deleted and that logs are kept of any telephone/video call.

Related Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read alongside our policies and procedures including:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Photography and Filming Policy
- Changing Room Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Safeguarding at Events, Activities and Competitions
- Safe Recruitment Policy

Further information for parents about keeping children safe online

- [Keeping children safe online | NSPCC](#)
- [CEOP Education \(thinkuknow.co.uk\)](http://thinkuknow.co.uk)
- [Parents and Carers - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

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

Club President: Maggie Hodges

Date: July 2023

Welfare Officer: Rhona Alston

Date: July 2023