

# ONLINE SAFETY AND COMMUNICATION POLICY

Mercury Tennis Club strives to 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 Mercury Tennis Club uses the internet and social media, and the procedures for doing so. It also outlines how we expect staff, coaches, volunteers, players and parents/carers, to behave online and communicate with players.

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 in 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

## 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, whether or not they are using Mercury Tennis Club's network and devices
- 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 website, social media, apps and other forms of digital communication
- 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
- when using social media platforms, ensure that we adhere to relevant legislation and good practice
- ensuring the person managing our organisation's online presence is suitably trained and experienced

## 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 / County Safeguarding 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)
- account, page and event settings will be set to 'private' so that only those invited can see their content
- social media pages/groups (e.g. Facebook pages/groups) used to communicate with children must be an organization, 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'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
- 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 staff, coaches and volunteers**

- 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
- any messages they wish to send out to children must be sent through the designated person 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 of staff, coach or volunteer should to 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 must respond to any disclosure of abuse in line with the safeguarding policy

2 / 21/12/2022

- 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 staff, 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:

- 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 for the parents into the message, we will seek parental consent to do this
- messages will be used for professional communication, such as reminders about lesson times, meeting points etc.
- if a child tries to engage a member of staff, coach or volunteer in a conversation which is not of a professional manner (for example, their personal life), the member of staff, 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
- 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 club or organisation who will be reachable should there be an emergency

### **Related policies and procedures**

3 / 21/12/2022

This policy should be read alongside our [club/county] policies and procedures, including:

- safeguarding policy
- code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- photography and filming policy
- anti-bullying policy
- diversity and inclusion policy

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

Chairperson Ros Edwards:

Date: 10.12.2022

Welfare Officer / County Safeguarding Officer Kate O'Sullivan:

Date: 10.12.2022