

Online Safety and Communication Policy

Date: July 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

Avon Tennis 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 Avon Tennis 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 Avon Tennis.

2. 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 Avon Tennis 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.

3. We will seek to keep children and young people 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 or video conferencing platforms (including live streaming), ensure that we adhere to relevant legislation and good practice
- ensuring the person managing our organisation's online presence is suitably trained and experienced
- providing staff with policy and procedure information regarding online safety and inform them of how to respond to incidents.

4. 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 Avon Tennis will have access to each account and password
- social media presence and content will be open to scrutiny by the Avon Tennis Executive 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, 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 prevent exposure to inappropriate or harmful content by third parties.

5. What we expect of Avon Tennis staff, coaches and volunteers

- they should be aware of this policy and behave in accordance with the content
- they should seek the advice from the 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 and young people must be sent through the designated person responsible for the organisation's online presence
- they must not 'friend' or 'follow' children or young people from personal or their business accounts on social media
- they must make sure any content posted is accurate and appropriate they must not communicate with young people 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 they send any communication to children
- they should avoid communication with children outside of normal office hours, unless it is necessary for professional purposes (i.e. emergencies, whilst on a trip, etc.); they must sign off any communication in a professional manner, avoiding the use of emojis or symbols such as kisses ("Xs")
- 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.

6. What we expect of children, i.e. those aged under 18

- they should be aware of this policy, either directly or via their parents/carers
- they should follow the guidelines set out in our acceptable use statement on all devices.

7. What we expect of parents/carers

- they should be aware of this policy and behave in accordance of its content
- they should seek the advice from one of the Avon Tennis Safeguarding Officers 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.

8. 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 or guardians 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 or guardians into the message, we will seek consent to do this
- messages will be used for professional communication, such as reminders about coaching sessions, meeting points, etc.
- if a child tries to engage with 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 County Safeguarding Officers 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.

9. Using mobile phones/smart phones/devices during activities

So that all children can enjoy and actively take part in tennis activities, we discourage the use of mobile phones/smart phones/devices on court or during County coaching sessions. 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 and guardians of appropriate times that they can contact children who are away on trips as they will often be involved with activities without immediate access to their mobile/smart phones
- 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.

10. Contact Us

Our contact details are as follows:

Post: Coombe Dingle Sports Complex, Coombe Lane, Bristol BS9 2BJ

Email: tennis@avontennis.org.uk

11. Policy Review

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

Chair	Carol Weeks		Date: 03/09/2026
Safeguarding Officer	Emily Churchill		Date: 03/09/2026
Next review due by September 2029			