



Naas LTC – Child Safeguarding Policy

Communications Policy

The aim of the Communications Policy is to give guidance on conveying messages and information safely and securely to intended recipients without exposing children to risk of harm at time or in the future (by allowing access to their personal details by unauthorised persons). It is also the Tennis Ireland policy to ensure that children have the means to communicate with adults without the need to utilise technology or to seek help from others in doing so.

General Policy Considerations

Communication is a valuable tool and the types of communication available today are wide and varied, with technology allowing us to send easy, cost effective mass communications. Adults must, however, understand the possible effect and the power of communication between children and adults.

Communication with children must be in an open environment, and any one to one adult/child conversations should take place in public surroundings. Group meetings may take place in a separate room; such meetings should be arranged in advance with the parents/guardians and children should feel comfortable with the environment.

Communication tools can be valuable in helping keep children safe, this is often the reason quoted for a child to have a mobile phone.

Clubs should consider the most effective means of communication between members ensuring that everyone has access to the chosen method; it may be that the use of several methods is the most effective. Any communication occurring between two individuals is open to exploitation and misinterpretation which can cross the personal boundary between an adult and a child and may cause harm to young people.

Children should be able and encouraged to tell a parent/guardian or Club Children's Officer if any communication makes them feel uncomfortable –the Club Children's Officers should ensure this is highlighted in communication with junior members.

Children should be aware of being careful who they give their phone number and/or e-mail too



Parents should be aware of the communications taking place and have given permission for the storage their child's mobile number, email and other contact information.

A phone number or e-mail should be changed if child is receiving bullying communications or harassment. Remember that expressions used in verbal communication do not always translate well into the written word, either in an e-mail or in a text message. Also 'texting' language can be very different from usual words. Adults should take care with their expressions and the nature of the language used to avoid any misinterpretation.

Communication with people under 18

Adults should take care with communications with young people and any such contact should be direct, open and honest. The voice and written word can be interpreted in a variety of ways by different people and therefore any individual communication should be at the request of or in response to a child.

General information can be sent as a mass communication to groups of children. Where more specific individual information is required this should be copied openly to another responsible person, usually a parent/guardian.

For professional individuals (doctors, psychologists etc.) such communication will be in accordance with their professional codes of conduct consistent with their qualifications. For example, a doctor may see/communicate with a 16/17 year old individually within their professional code of ethics, whereas this is not permitted in a Tennis Club environment.

It is important to remember that any individual communication should be instigated by the child and/or in response to their needs.

Types of Communication with members

- Noticeboards
- Email
- Phone/Mobile phone including the use of Text, Internet, Websites.

Notice boards

The Club has a noticeboard in both the Senior and Junior Club House. These notice boards are accessible to all members and to members of the public and visitors. A child can access the information on a noticeboard without the need to ask or use some form of technology.

Information on the noticeboard will include:

- Name and contact details of the Club Children's Officers and Designated Person
- Supervision rota for all sessions with parent name clearly indicated (if required)
- League & Tournament Information as available
- Names of Junior Committee members detailing their name and role
- Latest news



E-mail

E-mails are another individual method of communication with a person and can be used for very personal communication especially if access to the email account is password protected.

E-mails tend to be a cheap form of disseminating information to a large number of people.

Any e-mails sent to children should be done as part of a group or in response to a direct communication received by a child.

As a rule, all email communication with a child Under 18 should be made via their parent or guardian's email address. Where it may be necessary to e-mail an individual child the-mail must be copied to another responsible person, thus creating a safe communication for a child.

Phone/ mobile phones

The use of a phone or mobile phone to communicate is very much a personal interaction.

Phone calls with children should be at the instigation of the child and preferably with a parent/guardian present. It is not possible unless on a conference type call or on speaker phone to have a third person present to monitor the conversation between an adult and a child.

Mobile phones can also be used to text individuals and groups with short written messages. The use of group text reduces the risk of an individual message causing upset and misinterpretation.

Mobile phones are often given to children for security, enabling parents to keep in touch and to make sure their children are safe. Young people value their phones highly as it offers them a sense of independence. In addition, mobile phones allow quick and easy contact, which can make a safe and efficient way to carry out club business. However mobile phones are individual, and therefore can be used for very personal communications

Mobile phones should not be used at unsuitable times or in certain locations, e.g. changing rooms or where camera (if fitted) use is unauthorised.

Safe sending and replying of text and e-mail

To reduce the risk to everyone using either text messaging on mobile phones or e-mails for contact, these guidelines should be followed by any adult.

Sending messages

Obtain the agreement of the parent/guardian and young person – this can be included in Club information, handbook or agreement at registration



Word/phrase messages using appropriate language without use of endearments. Send messages by group communication method

Copy any individual message to either a parent/guardian and/or coach (as applicable)

Replying to messages

Reply to a text message in response to one sent by an individual child; e.g. a child sends a text to a coach to say they will be late for a training session; coach should reply acknowledging the message, this is in response to the child.

Use appropriate language without the use of endearments in the reply

Copy e-mail replies to the parent/guardian, coach or other responsible adult.

Issues or difficulties should be dealt with verbally with the child (the parent/guardian should always be included).

Web/Internet based social media communications

See Appendix 20 Social Media

Who to turn to:

Children should always know who to talk to, if any communication is a concern or makes them feel uncomfortable. Children should firstly be fully aware of the types of communications the Club uses and how they may be contacted. They should also know who to talk to – their parents, the Club Children's Officer, their coach, their Team Captain or another trusted adult. Any information received from a child regarding inappropriate communication must be treated seriously. In many instances the matter can be dealt with informally by the Club Children's Officer.

However, if the matter is more serious or intentional concerning a Tennis Ireland member this can be dealt with as a breach of the code of conduct.

All Club Children's Officers have copies of safe use of the internet publications from the Office of Internet Safety. Further information on the safe use of the internet, email and social media sites can be found on their website.