



Leixlip Tennis Club

Communications Policy for Adult & Junior Members

(Approved by Club Committee – Combined Governance Document)

1. Introduction

Leixlip Tennis Club is proud to be a welcoming club, committed to maintaining a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for all members. The purpose of this Policy is to provide a framework for respectful, safe and appropriate communication between all members that will protect the wellbeing of senior and junior members, support a positive club culture, and address concerns where communication falls below appropriate standards.

The Policy sets out the standards for appropriate communication between all users of the Club, including members and guests.

It aims to ensure that all methods of communication reflects the Club's values of respect, equality, safeguarding, boundaries and good sportsmanship.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all communication that takes place in connection with club activities or where communication has an impact on the safety, wellbeing or operation of the Club. It covers the following communication channels:

- In person
- By phone, verbal, text or messaging apps
- Through club-approved WhatsApp groups
- Via email or social media
- During coaching, matches, tournaments and club events

It covers communication between all users of the Club, including members and guests.

3. Core Communication Principles

In order to ensure that the Club maintains a culture of safe communication, the following key principles should be observed:

- All users of the Club must communicate respectfully at all times through the communication channels set out above.
- Communication must be free from discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, culture, age, ability or background.
- All communication should primarily relate to club activities and remain respectful and appropriate.
- Members must maintain appropriate boundaries and avoid over-familiar, personal or inappropriate comments.





- Communications between adults and juniors should only relate to club activities and, in respect of younger juniors (Under 14s), should only be carried out by adults who are Garda Vetted or by adults under supervised conditions, where other Garda Vetted adults are present.
- Adult members are reminded that junior members aged 14 and over can avail of organised adult practice sessions and WhatsApp groups. As such, they are subject to all communications relating to these activities. Therefore all communications must be age appropriate.
- Privacy and personal time must be respected.
- Members should respect the privacy of other members and use personal contact details only for legitimate Club purposes.
- Contact information obtained through the club should not be used for marketing, campaigning or unrelated personal purposes without consent.
- Members are encouraged to resolve minor misunderstandings respectfully, where appropriate. However, concerns involving harassment, discrimination, safeguarding or repeated inappropriate communication should be reported promptly through the procedures set out in this policy.

NB: For the purposes of this Policy, “over-familiar” refers to communication that becomes unnecessarily personal, emotionally dependent, flirtatious or otherwise exceeds the normal boundaries expected between Club members.

4. Communication Between Adult Members

4.1 Organising Matches

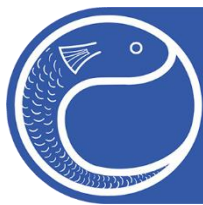
The Club recognises and supports the common practice of the use of text messaging and WhatsApp for organising matches for ladders, competitions and private play. While such engagement involves private messaging between the playing parties and is not monitored by the Club, the following practices should be observed in the interest of respectful communication:

- Provide clear details regarding arrangements: date, time and court booking details.
- Avoid last-minute changes unless unavoidable – please refer to Rules 8-11 of the Box Ladder.
- Respect that members may decline invitations for friendly matches without explanation.
- Do not pressure or repeatedly message someone to play friendly matches.
- For ladders and club competitions, agree a position in relation to walkovers or nil scores and ensure all parties have been informed. There are measures in place with club ladders and competitions for inactivity and these are managed by the Tournament Committee.

4.2 Communication with Doubles Partners

- Members should communicate respectfully when arranging doubles partnerships. Members are free to accept or decline any invitation without pressure or criticism.
- Communicate in a supportive, inclusive and respectful manner at all times.
- Avoid comments about gender or personal ability that are disrespectful, demeaning or likely to cause embarrassment.
- Discussions about tactics or performance should always be constructive, respectful and collaborative, with any suggestions offered in a positive and supportive manner.
- Avoid criticism, sarcasm or comments that undermine confidence.





4.3 Boundaries and Over-familiarity

- Avoid communication that becomes overly personal, intrusive or inappropriate.
- Avoid jokes or comments that could be interpreted as suggestive, overly familiar or inappropriate.
- Avoid sending repeated or intrusive messages, particularly outside of reasonable hours, unless urgent.
- Do not share screenshots, conversations or photos without consent. To do so is in breach of Data Protection legislation.

5. Communication Involving Junior Members

5.1 Safeguarding Principles

Communication with juniors must always be:

- Age-appropriate
- Transparent
- Non-personal
- Club-related and tennis-related details

5.2 Messaging Rules

- Adults **must not** send private one-to-one messages to junior members except where this is strictly necessary to arrange a ladder match and the junior's parent or guardian has consented to the publication of the junior's contact details for that purpose. Messages must relate solely to the match arrangements.
- Group messages must include a parent/guardian or another adult coach/committee member – this includes when juniors are participating in league teams and added to relevant WhatsApp groups.
- No personal compliments, nicknames or messages that could be misunderstood.

5.3 In Person Communication

- Maintain professional boundaries at all times.
- Any physical contact should only occur where appropriate, necessary for coaching or safety, and consistent with Tennis Ireland safeguarding guidance.
- Avoid over-familiar jokes, teasing or personal comments.

5.4 Digital & Social Media

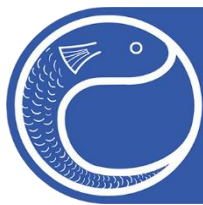
- Do not share photos or videos of juniors without parental consent.
- Avoid posting content that is offensive, harassing or inappropriate.
- Club WhatsApp groups must be used only for club-related communication.

6. Unacceptable Communication Between All Members

Examples:

- Harassment or bullying
- Gender-based comments or stereotypes





- Aggressive, intimidating or hostile messages
- Over-familiar or suggestive communication
- Persistent unwanted contact
- Public criticism of partners or opponents
- Sharing inappropriate images or jokes
- Private messaging with juniors outside of approved match arrangements
- Any communication that undermines dignity, wellbeing or club values

7. Reporting Concerns

Members may report any breach of communication guidelines to:

- The Designated Liaison Person (DLP)
- Chairperson
- Vice Chairperson
- Girls and Boys Child Protection Officers

Reports will be handled as confidentially as possible, consistent with safeguarding obligations, natural justice and applicable legal requirements.

8. Disciplinary Process

The examples below are illustrative only. The Committee may determine the appropriate response based on the seriousness and circumstances of each case. Any disciplinary action taken under this policy will be carried out in accordance with the principles of natural justice and the Club Constitution.

8.1 Minor Breach

Examples:

- Poor tone
- Mild disrespect
- Inappropriate jokes

Possible actions:

- Verbal reminder or warning

8.2 Moderate Breach

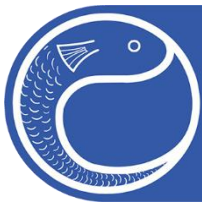
Examples:

- Repeated criticism
- Boundary issues
- Persistent unwanted messaging

Possible actions:

- Written warning
- Meeting with committee
- Temporary suspension from communication groups





8.3 Serious Breach (Adult or Junior Related)

Examples:

- Sexualised comments
- Discriminatory remarks
- Intimidation or aggressive behaviour
- Grooming or suspected grooming behaviour
- One-to-one messaging with juniors (not related to match arrangements)
- Sharing inappropriate images
- Repeated unwanted contact after being asked to stop

Possible actions:

- Immediate suspension pending investigation where considered necessary to protect members or the integrity of the investigation
- Formal safeguarding report (for junior related breaches)
- Referral to statutory authorities where required
- Removal from the Club in accordance with the Club Constitution and disciplinary procedures

NB: In the event of disciplinary procedures being established for a specific incident, it will be a matter for the Committee to establish a Disciplinary Sub-committee and provide Terms of Reference for that Sub-committee that will set out the process, possible sanctions and right of appeal.

9. Safeguarding Escalation for Junior Related Breaches

Any serious communication concern involving a junior will normally be referred to the Club's safeguarding procedures and may result in:

1. Immediate suspension where necessary and proportionate
2. Notification of DLP
3. Formal safeguarding report
4. Referral to statutory agencies (if required)
5. Committee review with the appropriate individuals in line with confidentiality and legal obligations
6. Decision on reinstatement or permanent removal in line with the Club's procedures

10. Policy Review

This policy will be:

- Reviewed annually, or sooner if safeguarding or legislation changes
- Updated in line with Tennis Ireland and Sport Ireland safeguarding guidance
- Approved by the Club Committee

11. Member Acknowledgement

Members are expected to familiarise themselves with and comply with this policy as a condition of membership. Failure to do so may result in action under the Club's disciplinary procedures.

