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Managing Challenging Behaviour Policy

Maldon & Tiptree Football Club

Policy owner	Club Chairman / Club Welfare Officer
Chairman	Jamil Trofder
Club Secretary & Welfare Officer	Garry Neave-Houghting
Safeguarding contact	garry.mtfc@gmail.com | 07538 973069

Status: Approved | Issue: November 2026 | Review: November 2027 or sooner following a significant incident or guidance change

1. Purpose and commitment

Maldon & Tiptree FC is committed to a safe, inclusive and respectful football environment. Challenging behaviour must be addressed promptly, proportionately and consistently, without humiliation, discrimination or unnecessary escalation. Safety, welfare and dignity take priority over performance or match results.

This policy is intended to support the club's safeguarding, anti-bullying, equality, code of conduct and disciplinary arrangements. It is informed by The FA's Respect and safeguarding principles; it is not an FA-issued or FA-approved policy.

2. Scope and responsibilities

This policy applies to players (including under-18s playing open-age football), managers, coaches, matchday personnel, staff, volunteers, parents/carers, visitors and spectators at matches, training, club premises, travel and club-related online spaces.

- The Chairman is accountable for governance, resources, serious misconduct decisions and oversight of implementation.
- The Club Welfare Officer (CWO) advises on safeguarding, supports referrals and ensures concerns are recorded and shared appropriately.
- Managers, coaches and event leads must set expectations, intervene safely, document incidents and report concerns promptly.
- All participants must comply with club codes of conduct, follow reasonable safety instructions and report unsafe or abusive behaviour.

3. What constitutes challenging behaviour

Challenging behaviour may include persistent disruption, intimidation, threatening language, verbal abuse, bullying, harassment, discriminatory comments, unsafe physical contact, aggression, refusal to follow safety instructions, damage to property or abusive online conduct. Behaviour can arise from distress, disability, unmet communication needs, trauma, environmental triggers or other circumstances; staff must not assume intent or label a person solely by their behaviour.

4. Prevention and positive behaviour support

- Explain expectations and consequences clearly at induction and before activities; model calm and respectful communication.
- Use age-appropriate instructions, predictable routines, reasonable adjustments and accessible communication.
- Identify known triggers and agree individual support or safety plans where appropriate, involving the participant and, for children, parents/carers where safe and appropriate.
- Avoid public confrontation, sarcasm, threats, collective punishment and discriminatory assumptions.

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- Make reporting routes visible and check that children and adults at risk know whom to approach.

5. Responding to an incident: de-escalation

The first responder should assess immediate safety, stay calm, maintain a safe distance and use brief, clear, non-confrontational language. Give time and space, offer practical choices and move bystanders away if needed. Seek a second appropriate adult or matchday lead where safe; do not leave a child alone with an adult in an isolated setting.

Where behaviour presents immediate danger, stop the activity, summon appropriate assistance and contact emergency services on 999. Do not attempt to physically restrain someone merely for non-compliance, disruption or verbal aggression. Any physical intervention must be lawful, necessary, proportionate and limited to preventing immediate harm; it must be recorded and reported immediately. Staff should not use restraint without appropriate training and authority.

6. Children and young people

The welfare of every under-18 is paramount. Use developmentally appropriate responses, hear the child's account and avoid shaming or punitive exercise. Involve a parent/carer as appropriate unless doing so could increase safeguarding risk. Do not promise secrecy. Concerns involving abuse, exploitation, grooming, peer-on-peer harm or an adult's conduct must be referred promptly to the CWO and, where necessary, statutory services or The FA/County FA safeguarding team.

7. Adults at risk and additional needs

Adults must be treated with dignity, choice and respect. Consider communication needs, disability, mental capacity and reasonable adjustments. Do not assume an adult lacks capacity because of disability or behaviour. Follow the Mental Capacity Act 2005 where relevant, and make safeguarding decisions in line with applicable law and the adult's wishes wherever possible. Escalate suspected abuse or neglect to the CWO and appropriate local adult safeguarding services.

8. Spectator and matchday behaviour

- Display and communicate standards for spectators, parents/carers and visiting teams.
- Stewards or authorised matchday officials should address unacceptable behaviour early and calmly.
- For threats, discriminatory abuse, persistent harassment or violence, follow venue safety arrangements and applicable competition rules; removal or exclusion must be managed by authorised personnel.
- Report alleged discrimination, threats or misconduct through relevant club, league, County FA or FA procedures as appropriate.

9. Reporting, recording and safeguarding escalation

All serious, repeated or safeguarding-related incidents must be reported to the CWO as soon as practicable, preferably the same day. Record date, time, place, people involved, observed facts, exact words where material, witnesses, immediate actions, injuries and onward referrals. Separate fact from opinion; store records securely and share only on a need-to-know basis.

If a person is in immediate danger, call 999. Where a child may be at risk of significant harm, contact children's social care or police without waiting for an internal investigation. For an adult at risk, seek advice or refer to the relevant local authority adult safeguarding service. Allegations about a person working with children must be referred through appropriate statutory/FA processes, including the local authority designated officer (LADO) where applicable. The club must not conduct its own investigation in a way that compromises statutory inquiries.

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10. Fair response, consequences and appeals

Responses should be proportionate, evidence-based and consistent with club rules, safeguarding duties and relevant league/FA disciplinary processes. Options include an informal conversation, written behaviour agreement, mediation where safe and voluntary, additional supervision, temporary restriction or formal disciplinary referral. Serious violence, discrimination, threats or abuse may justify immediate protective measures pending review.

The person concerned should normally be told the allegation, given a fair opportunity to respond and informed of the decision and appeal route, subject to safeguarding and legal constraints. Protective action is not a finding of guilt. Any suspension or exclusion must be authorised by the appropriate club decision-maker and documented.

11. Support, confidentiality and anti-retaliation

Offer appropriate support to anyone affected, including witnesses and the person whose behaviour raised concern. Consider welfare checks, reasonable adjustments and referral to specialist support. Retaliation against someone raising a genuine concern is prohibited. Personal data must be handled in line with UK data protection law and the club's privacy arrangements; confidentiality cannot override a duty to protect someone from harm.

12. Training, monitoring and review

Relevant staff and volunteers will receive induction on behaviour expectations, safe de-escalation, safeguarding reporting and role-specific training. The CWO and Chairman will review trends, repeat incidents and the effectiveness of controls, with anonymised reporting to the committee where appropriate. This policy will be reviewed annually and following significant incidents, legal changes or updated FA guidance.

13. Key contacts and urgent action

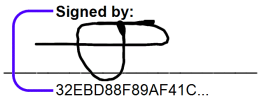
Club Welfare Officer: Garry Neave-Houghting | garry.mtfc@gmail.com | 07538 973069

Emergency: 999 (police/ambulance). Non-emergency police: 101. NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000. Childline: 0800 1111. For safeguarding referrals, use current Essex local authority children's or adults' safeguarding contact routes, or relevant FA/Essex FA safeguarding channels; verify details before publication.

Club approval and sign-off

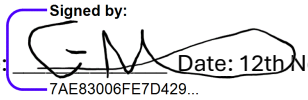
This policy takes effect only once approved by the club. Signature and approval dates must be completed by the authorised individuals.

Chairman: Jamil Trofder

Signature: 

Date: 12th November 2026

Club Secretary & Welfare Officer: Garry Neave-Houghting

Signature: 

Date: 12th November 2026

Date approved by club committee: 12th November 2026 Next review due: 12th November 2027

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Implementation note: Confirm referral pathways, competition-specific disciplinary rules and any individual behaviour plans before adoption.