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SOCIAL MEDIA USE 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 12th November 2026l | Version: 1.0 | Prepared: November 2026

1. Purpose and commitment

Maldon & Tiptree FC (the Club) is committed to safe, respectful and responsible use of social media and digital communications. The welfare of children (anyone under 18) and adults at risk takes priority over publicity, engagement or commercial objectives.

This policy applies to club officials, directors, employees, coaches, medical staff, volunteers, players, academy and youth personnel, and anyone operating a Club-controlled account. Parents, carers and supporters are expected to follow the standards applicable to their interaction with the Club.

It should be read alongside the Club's Safeguarding Children Policy, Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy, Codes of Conduct, Equality and Diversity Policy, Photography/Filming arrangements, Data Protection procedures and disciplinary rules.

2. Platforms and scope

This policy covers websites, Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, livestreams, messaging applications (including WhatsApp), forums, online gaming communications and any new or equivalent digital platform.

It covers official Club channels and personal accounts where the Club, its participants, its activities or its reputation may be affected. Personal opinions must not be presented as Club statements.

3. Governance and responsibilities

Chairman Jamil Trofder has overall board accountability for implementation and adequate resources. Day-to-day content may be delegated only to named, authorised account administrators.

Club Welfare Officer Garry Neave-Houghting is the first point of contact for safeguarding concerns and advises on safeguarding implications of posts, communications, images and complaints.

All account administrators must understand this policy, safeguarding escalation, privacy settings and how to preserve evidence. The Club should maintain an up-to-date register of accounts, authorised users and access recovery arrangements.

Everyone associated with the Club must promptly report harmful, abusive, discriminatory or inappropriate online conduct.

4. Standards of behaviour and publishing

- Be respectful, accurate, inclusive and professional. Do not publish threats, bullying, harassment, hate speech, discriminatory language, sexual content, humiliation, defamatory allegations or material that encourages unsafe behaviour.
- Do not disclose confidential club information, medical details, safeguarding records, private contact information, changing-room material or personal data without a lawful basis and appropriate authority.

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- Do not speculate publicly about allegations, incidents, disciplinary matters or individuals' welfare. Refer media enquiries to an authorised Club spokesperson.
- Obtain approval for official announcements, sponsorship content, commercial endorsements and crisis statements through the Club's designated communications lead.
- Never post while angry or engage in online arguments on behalf of the Club. Remove or moderate abusive comments and record significant incidents before removal where safe to do so.

5. Children and under-18 players: digital boundaries

Adults in positions of trust must not use private, disappearing or secret one-to-one messages with under-18 participants for routine club matters. Use approved, transparent club channels, normally involving a parent/carer or another authorised adult where appropriate.

Do not add an under-18 player to a personal social media account, seek personal photographs, initiate private friendships or communicate at inappropriate times. Any unavoidable safeguarding-related direct contact must be proportionate, recorded and promptly disclosed to the Club Welfare Officer.

Group chats involving under-18s must have a clear football purpose, appropriate adult oversight, agreed conduct rules and suitable parental/carer awareness. Do not use adult-player chat groups as an unmoderated route to contact under-18s.

Under-18 players should be reminded not to share location, addresses, personal contact details or images that expose them to risk. Children must be able to report concerns without fear of retaliation.

6. Photography, filming and livestreaming

Before photographing, filming, identifying or publishing images of under-18s, the Club must apply its photography and filming procedure, consider safeguarding risks, and obtain appropriate permissions from the child and parent/carer as applicable.

Respect objections or restrictions, including where publishing an image or location may place a child at risk. Avoid identifying children by full name alongside images, tagging personal accounts, geolocation, school details or other identifying information unless properly assessed and authorised.

No photography, recording or livestreaming is permitted in changing rooms, showers, toilets, treatment areas or other private settings. This applies to adults and children alike.

For adults at risk, respect their wishes, dignity, privacy and communication needs; seek valid consent and consider capacity and lawful decision-making arrangements where relevant. Do not assume a diagnosis means a person lacks capacity.

Ensure visiting photographers, media partners and third parties understand Club conditions. Report any unauthorised or concerning image immediately.

7. WhatsApp, messaging and digital team communications

Use official, role-appropriate channels for fixtures, logistics and announcements. Group administrators should be named and must intervene promptly when conversations become inappropriate.

Only share necessary participant information. Check recipient lists carefully and do not forward contact details, images or sensitive information without authorisation.

Parents/carers should receive clear information on how their child will be contacted, who administers groups, and how to opt out or raise a concern. Where possible use parent/carer channels for younger participants.

Delete or archive access for departing players, staff and volunteers promptly, and review membership periodically.

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8. Cyberbullying, discrimination and online harm

The Club does not tolerate cyberbullying, intimidation, sexual harassment, grooming, exploitation, discriminatory abuse, threats or the non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

Anyone receiving or witnessing harmful material should avoid escalating or reposting it; preserve relevant evidence (such as URLs, dates and screenshots) where safe; block/report the account where appropriate; and notify the Club Welfare Officer.

If a child or adult is in immediate danger, call 999. Suspected criminal offences, serious abuse or immediate safeguarding risks must be referred to the police and/or relevant statutory safeguarding services without waiting for an internal investigation.

9. Responding to safeguarding concerns and disclosures

Listen calmly, take the concern seriously, avoid promising secrecy, and do not investigate, challenge an alleged perpetrator or circulate evidence widely. Record the person's own words, relevant dates, platform details and immediate action taken.

Report promptly to Garry Neave-Houghting: garry.mtfc@gmail.com / 07538 973069. If the concern involves the Club Welfare Officer, or they are unavailable and delay would create risk, report to the Chairman and/or directly to Essex FA safeguarding, statutory services or police as appropriate.

For concerns about an adult at risk, consider the adult's wishes, consent, mental capacity and immediate safety, while recognising that serious risks or public-interest safeguarding duties may require information sharing without consent.

For concerns about a person working with children, seek appropriate advice from Essex FA safeguarding and relevant statutory authorities, including the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where applicable. Do not conduct a parallel club investigation that could compromise statutory enquiries.

10. Account security, records and data protection

Use strong unique passwords, multifactor authentication and role-based access. Do not share logins informally or allow former staff to retain access. Review administrator permissions regularly and secure Club devices.

Process personal data in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Collect only necessary information, use suitable privacy notices, restrict access, retain records according to an approved schedule and report suspected personal-data breaches through Club procedures.

Preserve safeguarding records securely and share them only with people who need to know. Do not use public comments or direct messages as a substitute for confidential safeguarding reporting.

11. Moderation, breaches and disciplinary action

Official Club accounts should be monitored proportionately. Harmful comments may be hidden, removed or reported to the platform, with relevant evidence retained where necessary.

Potential breaches will be assessed fairly and proportionately under the Club's disciplinary and safeguarding processes. Measures may include guidance, training, content removal, restricted account access, suspension, disciplinary action, and referral to The FA, Essex FA, police or statutory agencies.

No person should suffer retaliation for raising a concern in good faith. Safeguarding decisions take precedence over reputational considerations.

12. Training, communication and review

The Club will make this policy available to staff, volunteers, players and parents/carers, including at induction where relevant. Individuals with safeguarding or communications responsibilities must complete role-appropriate FA training and refresh it as required.

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This policy will be reviewed at least annually, and sooner following a serious incident, material legal or FA guidance change, or significant change in the Club's activities or platforms. The Club will check current FA and Essex FA requirements before adoption and at review.

13. Useful reporting contacts

- Club Welfare Officer: Garry Neave-Houghting | garry.mtfc@gmail.com | 07538 973069
- Emergency: 999 (immediate danger); Police non-emergency: 101
- NSPCC Helpline (concerns about children): 0808 800 5000
- Childline (for children and young people): 0800 1111
- The FA / Essex FA safeguarding: consult their current official safeguarding pages for the correct referral route
- Essex adult safeguarding: use Essex County Council's current adult safeguarding referral route (or relevant local authority if outside Essex)

Approval and sign-off

Role	Name	Signature / date
Chairman	Jamil Trofder	Signed by: 32FBD88F89AF44C... 12th November 2026
Club Secretary & Welfare Officer	Garry Neave-Houghting	Signed by: 12th November 2026
Next review date	12 months after approval	12th November 2027

This is a Club policy drafted in line with recognised safeguarding principles; it is not an FA-issued or FA-approved document. Approval confirms the Club's adoption of its contents.