



Safeguarding Policy for Junior Players involved in adult mix-ins or matches

Introduction

Due to the success of our coaching sessions, an increasing number of juniors are of such a standard that they may wish to attend adult mix-ins and adult practice sessions. Such a transition is only possible in the first place if juniors are club members. The club welcomes this as a route through to the adult tennis sessions for aspiring juniors. Hopefully this could eventually lead to the juniors taking part in adult match practices and/or matches. Without this progression there is a danger that juniors lose interest in tennis without a defined progression route available.

However, this process does raise potential safeguarding issues and the purpose of this club policy document is to set out procedures and responsibilities. The aim of these is to minimise potential dangers as far as is possible. The club is responsible for ensuring safeguarding standards to all those aged under 18 and to vulnerable adults of any age. The club's overall safeguarding policy can be found on the ATC website. In this policy the description "junior" refers to players under the age of 18 in accordance with the LTA definition of a child being under the age of 18.

First steps – Communication

When the coach thinks that a junior is ready to move into adult tennis, they will contact the match secretary who will then liaise with the junior player and his / her parents / carers. At this stage the match secretary will make the junior and their parents / carers aware of the safeguarding issues described in this policy and their parental responsibilities. The match secretary will seek various parental permissions at this stage via a written and signed form (see "associated documents").

Joining in an adult mix-in or match practice group

The match secretary will introduce the junior player to the players within the adult mix-ins. This will also apply to match practice groups if the junior player goes on to join a match team squad. At this stage team captains should be made aware of potential safeguarding issues contained in this document and then team captains should make sure that the relevant adult players are aware of these issues.

Once in a mix-in and/or match practice group then the adults should make sure they are not left on their own with the junior player at the end of a session. This is a fundamental safeguarding principle in all sports designed to protect juniors' interests whilst also protecting adults from the possibility of untrue allegations.

Part of the match secretary's discussion with parents/carers and the junior player should be to make sure that both the player and their parents/carers are aware of the role of the club welfare officer. Should the junior player and/or parents/carers have any concerns, they should contact the welfare officer (alternative emergency contacts are specified in the ATC safeguarding policy).

Parental responsibility

It is the parents'/carers' responsibility to drop off and pick up their children at the club. Collection times may be difficult to predict, but the junior player should be encouraged to ring home in time for their lift home to co-incide with the end of the session or match. The team captain should be aware of the importance of this and make it possible for the junior to ring home for a lift in a timely manner at a suitable break in play.

If parents are late in picking up their son or daughter, this would require two adult players (if possible) to wait behind from a safeguarding standpoint, which would obviously be an unnecessary inconvenience for the adult players concerned.

Junior players will not be left to lock up the clubhouse and gates on their own. Should parents / carers agree that their sons / daughters are safe to make their own way home from the club, then this permission needs to be recorded in writing at the initial stage of communication between match secretary and parents / carers.

Transport to and from matches

It will not always be possible or convenient for parents / carers to take their children to away matches. Parental consent will be sought at the initial meeting by the match secretary for the transport of juniors to away matches by car. Ideally this lift would involve two adults with the junior player. However, in practice with teams of four players travelling from different directions, this would not always be practicable, so permission needs to be given for their son or daughter to travel with one adult member that is known to both the junior player and the parents (in effect a “friend” of the family). The team captain should check with the parents/carers beforehand that they are happy with this arrangement and both the adult (driver) and the team captain should have emergency contact details.

During away matches the team captain needs to ensure that the parent / carer is aware of the travelling arrangements by whatever means of contact is most suitable (see also “Digital Communication” below). Assuming the team drive back to ATC, the same points apply regarding lifts home from parents as above under “Parental Responsibility”. The junior player should make sure they contact home in time for a lift to be arranged from ATC so that adult players are not having to wait behind with them for a lift to arrive.

Digital communication between the club and juniors

For the purposes of digital communication between the junior player and the club, information of a general nature can be sent through the ClubSpark system on the ATC website. Communications sent specifically to the junior player will be by email or text from the match secretary or team captain (see below) and copied to the junior player’s parent / carer for one or more of the following purposes:

- Communicate start times of sessions or matches
- Communicate on the state of the courts (i.e. if weather causes cancellation or a delayed start)
- Communicate team selections in advance or changes needed at short notice.
- Communicate arrangements for lifts to away matches.

Once a junior is a member of a match team and travelling to away matches, it would normally be more practical for the team captain (rather than the match secretary) to communicate with the parents/carers. Junior players will not be part of any club or team social media groups (such as Whatsapp) in which their contact details would be available to group members. Again, this is a fundamental principle of safeguarding juniors’ interests across all sports.

Parental permission will be sought from the parent / carer for communications to be sent by text and/or email from specified adults at the initial meeting (see “First steps – communication”). These permissions will be recorded and signed on the form referenced in “associated documents” below.

Associated documents

- ATC Safeguarding Policy
- Online Safety and Communication Policy
- Form for Permissions and Information for Junior Player Participation in Adult Tennis Groups

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Club Chair:- Ailsa Jacob

Welfare Officer:- Andrew Grice

Policy due for review in Feb 2025