



Guidance for clubs, County Unions & Associations on suspensions of members in child protection cases - ENGLAND

England Golf has disciplinary powers to suspend and exclude members and staff and/or prohibit them from working with children where that work is part of employment with or volunteering for England Golf. However, clubs and County Unions or Associations should also consider their own position and determine whether they should apply the same or similar disciplinary actions to activities within their club or county. If a club suspends a member, England Golf will also apply this suspension, provided the club has applied sound procedures. The following information shows how England Golf would approach the issue of suspending an individual and it is therefore advised that clubs follow the same processes for their own purposes.

Several factors are considered when determining whether a suspension is necessary, including the following:

- are children at risk?
- does the accused need protection?
- do the allegations amount to gross misconduct?
- would the reputation of England Golf be harmed?
- would the continued presence of the accused impede any enquiries/investigation?

England Golf will suspend those who are under investigation by Police or Child Social Care for any offence against a child covered by the Children in Golf (CiG) Child Protection Policy. Suspensions may also be necessary where a member is being investigated for other serious crimes or breaches of rules.

When a decision to suspend is enforced, it is important that this is not misinterpreted as a disciplinary action, as this type of suspension does not imply any guilt. Suspensions pending the outcome of any investigation and disciplinary processes should not be publicly disclosed and any disclosure should only be made in accordance with England Golf protocols.

It is essential that the club or County Union/Association has transparent, objective and formal disciplinary procedures which enable decisions to be made fairly and justifiably in order to protect children and members alike. There are several elements, which should be in place to achieve this:

- documented disciplinary procedures that are available to all and followed in all cases to ensure consistency and fairness
- an appeals process
- the involvement of external agencies (such as England Golf, the Police or Child Social Care), as appropriate, to obtain proper advice and support
- clearly laid out standards of communication with people against whom allegations have been made to ensure that they are aware at every stage of the progress being made in their case
- the application of confidentiality protocols, so that only those who need to know about cases are involved to protect both the children and the person the against whom the allegation is made until such time as it is appropriate to release information
- clear communication of the activities that the person against whom the allegation is made may participate in and those they must not engage in.

England Golf and the Children in Golf Case Management Group are able to offer support in cases where suspension is being considered by County Unions and Associations and clubs. The club or County Union or Association insurance policy may also offer financial support to provide for legal advice.