



Temporary Logo

Governance for Youth football in Northern Ireland

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Season 2023/24

Brendan Keogh Youth League	www.bkyl.co.uk
Derry & District Youth Football Association	www.derrydistrictyfa.co.uk
Downpatrick Youth Football League	www.dyfl.co.uk
Harry Gregg Foundation Youth Football League	www.harrygreggleague.co.uk
Lisburn Castlereagh Junior Invitation League	www.lcjil.co.uk
Mid Ulster Youth League	www.midulsteryouthleague.co.uk
North Down & Ards Football and Futsal League	www.ndaffl.co.uk
NI National Youth League	www.nibfanational.co.uk
South Belfast Youth Football League	www.sbyfl.co.uk

Formerly NIBFA Est. 1976

Note for season 2023/24 all references to NIBFA/NIYFA will be given equal status.

SECTION 1 - LEAGUE RULES

1. REGISTRATION OF CLUBS

All Clubs/Teams must record details of their management teams in full including up-to-date photographs on the IFA Comet registration system, any changes to the original details recorded must be updated within two working days of such change.

2. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION/DEPOSIT/PAYMENTS (Note individual leagues may adopt their own process for Annual Subscriptions/Deposits and Payments except for Disciplinary fines)

- a) The annual subscription of each club shall be determined by The League committee.
- b) In addition, each club shall deposit a sum of money, the amount to be set by The League committee, which will be liable to forfeiture at the end of the season if a Club has failed to complete its League Fixtures or wish to leave the league, in season, without good reason or has debts outstanding to the league.
- c) The deposit is recoverable by Clubs who wish to leave the league and who have fulfilled all their league fixtures and have no outstanding debts to the league.
- d) The annual subscription and the deposit (where not already held by The League) must be paid on request. No refund will be paid to any team who subsequently withdraw team/s from the league after accepting place/s offered.
- e) Any club in default of their obligations for pitch costs for more than 30 days having been issued with a league invoice for same may be suspended from playing further games in all leagues and NIYFA competitions until that account is settled. The club may also forfeit any fixtures scheduled between Day 30 and settlement of the account. The club may also be responsible for all costs associated with suspended/forfeited games.
- f) Any club in default of their financial obligations to any league or NIYFA will not be permitted by NIBFA to join another league, until all its debts have been paid to NIYFA or The League to which the debt is outstanding.
- g) All clubs must pay their standard disciplinary monetary sanctions via the IFA Comet System on issue.

3. LEAGUE FORMAT

- a) The League committee will determine the format of the league on an annual basis.

Promotion and Relegation (if applicable) shall apply between the divisions of the League. As a minimum the team that finishes bottom of a Division of any League shall be relegated and the relegated number replaced by club/s from the Division to which they were relegated.

The outcome of any other scenario within divisions will be determined by the league committee whose decision will be final. Depending on the numbers of applicants in any season teams in selected leagues may not have their place in the league renewed but may face exclusion or a play-off against a new applicant.

This process will apply throughout the divisions where leagues have more than two divisions in any age group with the bottom tier facing the play off scenario as outlined for B leagues previously. The league will always hold the right to appoint the venue for all fixtures and clubs.

- b) The team listed first will be designated the home team.

- c) Three points will be awarded for a win and one for a draw.
- d) In the case of an equal number of points being accrued the head-to-head results between the teams will be a deciding factor in all league competitions. Where more than two teams are involved in a points tie, the points accrued from the collective results of the teams involved will prevail. If still tied a play-off system of games will be arranged.
- e) Goal difference will not apply to league positions.
- f) Play-offs will only take place, where necessary, to determine league winners, runners-up, divisional split, or relegation.
- g) Failure to participate in a play-off will incur forfeiture of the match, loss of deposit and a possible points penalty for the next season.
- h) Teams failing to complete a league season will have all previous and remaining results recorded as a 3-0 win to their opposition.

4. **AGE QUALIFICATION OF PLAYERS**

- a) All competitions will be open to players who meet the qualifying dates as stated on the league application form. Teams wishing to play female players (will be granted a concession of playing a female player in an age group 1 year below her date of birth across all age groups). The league concerned will then issue an ID Card as players with a one-year concession cannot be selected via Comet on match day.

Also, and in exceptional circumstances **consideration** will be given to applications from young players with physical, sensory, or learning disabilities to gain concession to participate in an age group of one year below their current age band. The procedure is as follows.

- b) The player assisted by his/her parent/guardian seeks membership of an NIYFA affiliated member club.
- c) The parent or guardian, with support from the club should then apply to NIYFA c/o National Football Stadium, Windsor Park, Belfast BT12 6LU, for a dispensation for the player to participate at a younger age group. This application must be supported with a letter from a relevant professional confirming clear and concise medical details and why they cannot play at their own age group e.g., Physiotherapist, School Teacher, Doctor etc.
- d) The matter will then be considered by a panel consisting of members from Disability Sport NI, The IFA Disability Manager and a member of NIYFA. On reaching a decision the applicant, their club and league will receive a copy of the decision from NIYFA which will be final and binding on all parties.
- e) If permission is granted, the club should then register the player on Comet. The League concerned will then issue an ID Card as players with a one-year concession cannot be selected via Comet on match day.
- f) If the player moves to another league a copy of the letter of permission must be sent to the secretary of that league.
- g) If the player moves clubs in season a new application must be submitted following the process outlined in Rules 5 (a) and 5 (b).
- h) Any dispensation will be monitored throughout the season and may be rescinded. Any dispensation granted must be renewed annually.

Please note that any player needing to wear glasses will be required to use the appropriate prescription approved safety glasses.

5. PLAYERS, SQUADS AND ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

- a) All players must be registered in accordance with the IFA Amateur Game Player Registration Regulations and the NIYFA Player Registration Regulations. Please click on the following link to view the Regulations: <https://www.irishfa.com/irish-football-association/rules-and-regulations> also refer to Section 3 of this document.
- b) Teams will be limited to a maximum of twenty (20) players to any age group in any season but in addition may call on players at any time from an age group below for purposes of player development. To facilitate this development opportunity any such player should be restricted to playing for those age groups either immediately 1 year or 2 years above the age group for which he or she qualifies. For the sake of clarity under 12 players will also be permitted to play at U13 & U14, an U13 player will also be permitted to play at U14 & U15 etc. In all cases it is the responsibility of coaches and parents to assess the player is physically capable of meeting the demands of an older age group. (Teams entering (NIBFA 23/24) Competitions should note the rules and exclusion conditions that apply to playing 9-a-side and 11-a-side football in those competitions there are variations to league rules).
- (i) In 11-a-side football, Any member/player of a specific club (subject to standard age criteria being met) may only play in the Cup Competitions of one league and must not play for any other team within the club in the same age group who are entered in League Cup, League Knock out Cup or plate competitions of another league association.

For League matches, there shall be free movement of members/players within teams from the same age group, however no Club shall be allowed to play:

(a) More than three (3) recognised National League/NIFL Youth League Grade Players in any one match of another league association. A recognised National League/NIFL Youth League Grade Player is one who has taken part in more than eight (8) National League/NIFL Youth League matches during the current season.

(b) And or name more than three (3) recognised National League/NIFL Youth League Grade players in any one match. A recognised National League//NIFL Youth League Grade Player is one who has taken part in more than eight (8) National League/NIFL Youth League matches during the current season.

(c) In both of the above (point a & b) instances, each individual National League/NIFL Youth League Grade Player should not play and/or be named in more than eight (8) league games of any other league association.

(ii) *In 9 a side development football the restriction on the movement of players will apply to league cup, league knock out cup or plate competition only.*

(iii) *Players who are aged one or two years below the age group of a competition may move freely between leagues but must observe the conditions of Cup Competition eligibility.*

- c) Match day team sheets generated by Comet MUST include the club officials (exemptions may apply) and player's photographs (**Updated every two years as a minimum**) or in exceptional circumstances a laminated ID card for each player as per Rule 4a and 4e. Teams who fail to have all their clubs' players photographs visible on matchday will forfeit the result of the relevant match with all resultant expenses charged. The League reserves the right to make the necessary checks and where a team or teams are in default of their obligations The League will apply this sanction even if the match has been played.
- d) (i) Teams can request to transfer the registration of a maximum of TWO players from any other team in any league in any season. However, teams also have the right to losing a maximum of two players via transfer in

any season and block any further request for the transfer of their registered players. This is to retain stability within team/s during a season.

(ii) If a Team seeks to obtain the transfer of a registration of a player from another Team, they shall first contact the Team holding the player's registration (the transferring club) and request the consent of the transferring club to the transfer. If a transfer on COMET is not confirmed by the releasing club within seven days, The League can action the transfer for the player to move after the 7th day has passed, subject to the two-player rule as per Rule 5 e (i).

If a player has not been released, they cannot take part in any club activities for another member club. This includes training or friendly matches until the player registration is cancelled. That will be set aside for the period Second Monday in May to 30th June in any season where players are free to attend trials at any club or outside those dates where a written agreement is in place between the clubs concerned (see Player Training/Trials Agreement – Appendix 3).

The league may permit a registered goalkeeper to be replaced up to 31st March (5pm) in any season on production of certified medical evidence that the original registered goalkeeper is incapable of further participation for a prolonged period or the entire season. The replacement goalkeeper must not play in Cup/Plate/Shield or other named knock out competitions if they have already played for another club in that same competition.

(iii) The consent referred to in clause (5.e.ii) shall not be unreasonably withheld. Subject to the two-player clause.

(iv) In the event of the transferring club consenting to the transfer of the registration of the player the process must be completed on Comet.

(v) If a club voluntarily chooses to release a player who is deemed surplus to requirements during the playing season, the club must terminate the registration on Comet. The player shall then become a released player. Such actions will be limited to The League's registration dates up to and including 31st March in any season.

(vi) In addition to the registration of a player by way of a transfer as outlined in clause (5.e.i), a club shall be free to sign a "released player" subject to the conditions laid out in paragraph (5.b. and 5.c).

(e) Players in any League will be permitted to register for their club if applicable to attain eligibility to play in the Northern Ireland Football League (NIFL) Academy League (subject to the conditions as noted in paragraphs 5c(i) and 5c(ii)). Such players are insured by the NIYFA insurance scheme if the team for which they are playing is affiliated and insured in the NIYFA Scheme. NIFL teams are subject to the rules pertaining to cup competitions of the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association.

(f) Club managers must submit their team line-up on COMET this can be done either the day prior to or up to 15 minutes before a match-on-match day (please refer to Rule 5.d). This is the starting eleven players along with a maximum of five substitutes for an 11 a-side match and nine plus 5 substitutes for 9 a-side games. The Head Coach must have their selection made so the referee can identify players accordingly with regards to cautions and dismissals that may occur during a game. Player shirt numbers MUST match the COMET team selection. (Any difficulty in completing this task should be referred to your league administrator).

(g) Any Team fielding an ineligible player will forfeit the match and be deducted a further three points and a monetary fine for each offence. Team officials will also be subject to relevant disciplinary procedures.

(h) Clubs infringing registration rules may be reported to the Irish Football Association.

(i) In all cases relating to the registration of players, clubs are obliged to make initial personal contact with the Club of the player they wish to sign and not unsettle any player by use of peer pressure or any social

media, including but not exclusive to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, text, or email. Failure to comply with the conditions laid out in this rule will result in disciplinary action.

(j) Clubs must respect the position of all teams and refrain from disrupting their season by unsettling players (this includes contacting a player directly via face-to-face meetings, phone calls, text messages and email/social networking websites) to sign players.

Any reported and subsequently proven instances that breach this process may result in the club's ability to sign players being suspended and/or a league points deduction up to a maximum of six points.

(k) No club shall induce or attempt to induce a player to become registered as a player by that club by offering him, or person connected with him, either directly or indirectly, a benefit or payment of any description whether in cash or kind. No player shall, either directly or indirectly, accept any such inducement, the burden of proof will lie with the complaining club.

OPEN TRIALS

Many clubs now use social media to advertise and bring players to their clubs, many of these highlight that players need to get permission from their current club. That is not the case, the rule states quite clearly that it must be a club-to-club agreement. The rule is to standardise open trials and or training and avoid conflict and animosity between teams.

As of the Second Monday in May annually, clubs will be free to arrange and players free to attend open trials and training without first seeking permission from their current club. Players will not be permitted to sign for any new club before 1st July but clubs wishing to reregister their existing players may do so before 30th June. Advertising of same must not commence before May Day Monday Bank Holiday in any season.

Note this does not apply to players who are registered to play in a summer league, in those cases the form at Annex 3 must be agreed and completed prior to any trial. Players registered in summer leagues will be free to attend open trials in January in any season.

*Clubs who make trial arrangements before the above dates must submit a signed agreement approving participation for any player registered to another club in any league and submit copies of that agreement to the league/leagues of the clubs concerned. See **Template agreement (Appendix 3)***

6. MONITORS

The League may appoint monitors to attend games who will have authority to check the registrations of players and officials. The monitors may prepare reports on the conduct and behaviour of players, officials and supporters at any match that may be used as evidence in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings.

7. FIXTURES

a) All matches shall be played according to the Laws of the Game as adopted by the Irish Football Association and updated 1st June 2023 but with the following qualifications.

- i. Clubs will play two equal periods of not less than:
- ii. 25 minutes duration for all 7/9 a-side games
- iii. 30 minutes duration for U13s
- iv. 35 minutes duration for U14s, U15s U16s & 17s
- v. 35 minutes duration for U18
- vi. Match Ball - Up to and including U13 – Size 4
- vii. Under 14 to Under 18 inclusive – Size 5

A roped barrier must be erected for at least 25 metres each side of the halfway line at every match, the exception will be venues that are already fenced off. Only coaching staff with the approved ID visible on Comet or league approved ID badges displayed will be authorised to be pitch side of the roped barrier. (Please refer to Rule 5.d).

A technical area marked by cones should be set out no more than 5 Metres each side of the halfway line and a minimum of 1 meter back from the touchline. All coaching staff MUST remain within that area, except for player injuries or other unlikely events. Walking the touchline or encroaching onto the field of play will not be permitted. In instances where management are on the same side of the pitch that area should be a 10-metre space set out centrally in their half of the pitch.

b) All league fixtures will be available on the relevant League website (see cover page for details).

These games shall be played on the date stipulated unless changed by prior agreement.

Changes (not cancellations) by a club to a fixture will require a minimum of 96 hours' notice and must be notified to and approved by the league in that time frame. Any change to the match arrangements to be notified by the league will be done no later than 24 hours before the scheduled kick off time subject to the condition that Leagues are liable to changes after this 24-hour period by facility providers. In such instances these changes will be notified to clubs at the earliest opportunity.

c) If a club wishes to be excused from playing a game on any date throughout the season, the requesting club must notify the league by phone/text and confirm in writing/email not less than 14 days before the date of the fixture for consideration and decision. No team shall be allowed more than two reliefs of fixtures in a season.

d) In extraordinary circumstances, relief of fixture may be granted not less than five days before the date stipulated on application to the League. Any Club seeking relief of fixture less than five days before the date stipulated shall be responsible for any relevant match fees incurred by their opponents for the listed fixture on receipt of proof of such fees.

e) Any Club that cancels a fixture within 24 hours of Kick-off time will forfeit the match and all associated fees unless such a cancellation is in relation to a death of a club official, player, or immediate family member of such official or player. All other forfeitures or non-fulfilment of fixtures will incur loss of deposit, and a possible additional points deduction in the current and/or following season.

f) Forfeiting a game as per League Rule 7(e) will incur a fine of £200. A second forfeited game for any team in same season will incur another fine of £200 and expulsion from the league for a minimum of two years. The club's participation in the league with other teams over this period will be at the discretion of the league committee.

g) All Teams will be expected to arrive for their match at least 30 minutes prior to kick-off to allow for proper match preparation. Kick-off must take place no later than 20 minutes after the appointed time. However, if the Teams agree to play the match, outside of these time limits the result of the match will stand as a valid result and the defaulting team will incur no penalty. Such situations must be verified by the match referee on the official match card or on the Comet report.

h) In matches organised by the League, rolling substitutions will be permitted, in the following manner:

For all Teams participating in competitions of The League, any player who has been substituted, himself becomes a substitute and may replace another player at any time subject to the substitution being carried out in accordance with Law 3 of the Laws of Association Football.

(i) Law 3—the Number of Players.

(ii) A match is played by two Teams, each consisting of not more than 11 players, one of whom is the goalkeeper. A match may not start if either Team consists of fewer than seven players. The rules of the competition must state how many substitutes may be nominated; for all matches organised under the jurisdiction of The League five (5) substitutes may be used. Players not properly registered on Comet and listed as a substitute will be deemed ineligible players if they take the field of play.

(iii) All matches - in all matches, the names of the substitutes must be given to the referee prior to the start of the match. Substitutes not so named may not take part in the match.

i) Substitution Procedure — to replace a player by substitution, the following conditions must be observed:

(i) The referee is informed before any proposed substitution is made.

(ii) A substitute only enters the field of play after the player being replaced has left and after receiving a signal from the referee.

(iii) A substitute only enters the field of play at the halfway line and during a stoppage in the match.

(iv) A substitution is completed when a substitute enters the field of play. From that moment, the substitute becomes a player and the player he has replaced is now a substitute.

(v) All substitutes are subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the referee, whether called upon to play or not.

(vi) A substitute that does not take to the field of play in a cup competition of any league will not be cup tied the onus will be on the club to prove the player did not play.

Changing the Goalkeeper — any of the other players may change places with the goalkeeper, provided that:

- The referee is informed before the change is made.
- The change is made during a stoppage in the match.

Infringements/Sanctions — if a substitute enters the field of play without the referee's permission:

- Play is stopped.
- The substitute is cautioned, shown the yellow card, and required to leave the field of play.
- Play is restarted with an indirect free kick at the place the ball was located when play was stopped.

If a player changes places with the goalkeeper without the referee's permission before the change is made:

- Play continues.
- The players concerned are cautioned and shown the yellow card when the ball is next out of play.

For any other infringements of this Law:

- The players concerned are cautioned and shown the yellow card.

Restart of Play — if play is stopped by the referee to administer a caution:

- The match is restarted by an indirect free kick, to be taken by a player of the opposing team from the place where the ball was located when play was stopped.

Players and Substitutes Sent Off — A player who has been sent off before the kick-off may be replaced only by one of the named substitutes. A named substitute, who has been sent off, either before the kick-off or after play has started, may not be replaced.

In all matches clubs may play five (5) substitutes from five (5) named substitutes.

j) The Home or First Named Team Club must telephone The League/Fixtures Secretary the result of all League Matches scheduled immediately after the match or notify of any postponement immediately the information is known on any match day. Clubs failing to comply with this rule will be fined £5 per offence. All managers will be expected to text or use the SMS results service.

No club, player or registered club representative shall be permitted to take part or be involved in any other match or competition which is not authorised by the Northern Ireland Boys' FA.

(k) Clubs who wish to video games for their own performance analysis purposes should also request permission to do so from their opposition at least 24 hours before the game concerned. This is in relation to good safeguarding practice. In any event agreement must be sought prior to kick-off. Any such video content must be released to the Disciplinary Committee should they request same.

8. **VENUE & NOTIFICATION**

In the event of The League appointing a match venue the notification of the venue will appear on the website fixture list. If a club makes a venue booking, then The League and travelling club MUST be notified as soon as possible before the scheduled date for the fixture to enable the website notices to be verified or updated.

Clubs who are not familiar with the location of any venue should contact the home or first named Team for directions and any other relevant details. The League will have the power to decide whether facilities are suitable for matches in the competition and to order the Club concerned to play its fixtures on another ground. The League reserves the right to move any game to a neutral venue. Match kick-off times shall be determined by the league.

In all matches league and cup played under the jurisdiction of the league the accommodating authority or home team will try to ensure that suitable changing accommodation facilities are available for all teams. The home or first named Team will be responsible for the provision of at least two quality match footballs of appropriate size as described in Rule 7(a).

9. **REFEREES**

Appointed referees will be advised by the Referees' Co-ordinator of the necessary match details, location, and kick-off time either directly or via Comet. Where referees are appointed by the league no club may object to any referee so appointed. Where a referee fails to attend the Teams will toss a coin for the appointment of an official. This applies to all League and cup competitions.

Referee's Fee:

- a) the referee's fee shall be decided by the League Committee and shall be shared equally by both clubs in all competitions played under the jurisdiction of The League. The fee shall be paid prior to kick-off, and it is the responsibility of each team to approach the referee. Failure to pay before kick-off will result in a fine of £15.
- b) In the case of non-fulfilment of any fixture, except under (c) below, the Home or First named Team shall pay the referee's fee, which shall be recoverable from the defaulting club should that not be the home or first named Team.
- c) Should a ground be considered unplayable, the referee shall after confirmation of the same with the local authority representative, grounds man or other club appointee responsible for grounds maintenance, receive half fee which shall be shared equally by each club.

10. **COLOURS**

- (a) Each Team in The League shall register its colours on a kit approval form as provided by the league. Clubs must not use kit branded with any form of alcohol, tobacco, or gambling promotion logo.
- (b) In the event of a clash of colours the visiting Team shall play in their registered colours and The Home or first named Team shall change unless mutually agreed.

11. **UNFINISHED GAMES**

- a) Results for matches that are abandoned because of inclement weather having played a minimum of 80% of the scheduled time of the match will stand.
- b) The status of matches that are abandoned because of inclement weather having played less than 80% of the scheduled time will be decided by The League referring to Law 5 of Laws of the Game as a guide.
- c) The status of all other matches that are abandoned or unfinished shall be determined as part of any disciplinary process with reference to Disciplinary Code **Rule 23**.

12. **MATCH POSTPONEMENTS**

- a) Where venues have been appointed by the League in conjunction with a local authority it will be the final decision of the local authority as to the fitness of the ground for play.
- b) In cases where the Home Team has a registered venue not owned or controlled by local authority it will be the decision of the Home Team grounds man or another club appointee responsible for grounds maintenance in the first instance to decide on the fitness of the ground for play or failing such then the decision of the referee will be final. The league will have the right to appoint a venue in the event of a "Home" venue not being available up to 24 hours ahead of the scheduled match time.
- c) The home club must immediately inform The League, referee and visiting club if a postponement is necessary, in default of which the home club if an alternative venue cannot be arranged may at the discretion of the league be required to pay half of the referee's match fee and the travelling expenses, in whole or part of the visiting club.
- d) The reason for the non-fulfilment of any fixture shall be investigated by the League and if the reasons are deemed to be unsatisfactory, the defaulting club may forfeit the points and pay the referee's fee, in addition, a fine not exceeding £50 may be imposed, the whole or part of which may be awarded to the aggrieved club. All fines imposed under this rule must be paid as notified within 14 days from receipt of defaulting letter.

13. **MATCH PRIORITY**

Competitions of the NIBFA/NIYFA shall have precedence over all other League competitions and any postponed fixtures are to be rearranged subject to the 14-day notification rule of NIBFA/NIYFA to The League.

14. **REPRESENTATIVE GAMES**

- a) The League shall have the power to select player/s from any Team, to represent The League. Such representation shall be on a voluntary basis and no penalty for non-participation shall ensue.
- b) A team may apply for a postponement of a league fixture should two or more players including (a goalkeeper) be selected to play in a League, NIBFA/NIYFA or IFA representative game.

15. **LEAGUE TROPHIES**

Trophies for the League Championship shall be presented to the respective winners. In The League the maximum number of medals that will be issued to any team will be limited to 20 unless the actual number of players registered is less than 20. In competitions other than the league championship a trophy and 20 medals will be awarded to the winners unless the actual number of players registered is less than 20 and 20 medals will be awarded to the runners-up unless the actual number of players registered is less than 20.

16. **CUP, PLATE & SUPPLEMENTARY COMPETITIONS**

- a) The League rules shall apply with the following additions and amendments.
- b) Competitions will be played on the "Cup-tie", Home and Away, sectional, or other principle as may be determined by the committee the League will always hold priority on the selection of venues for all ties including finals. In the event of the score being level in any cup-tie after the stipulated playing time has been completed, extra time will be played. Should the score remain level after the stipulated period of extra time is completed then the result of the tie will be decided by the taking of kicks from the penalty mark in accordance with the "Laws of the Game".
Note: Based on match schedules and availability of facilities individual Leagues may opt out of offering extra time in their domestic competitions.
- c) Any club refusing or failing to play the club against which it is drawn within the time notified to it, and without enough reason for doing so, shall be liable for disqualification.
- d) Any club intending to forfeit a game must give notice to the Secretary of the opposing club and the Fixtures Secretary at least three days before the date of the tie. The defaulting club may be liable for the expenses of the tie and be subject to further sanctions including expulsion from The League.
- e) The League Committee shall fix the venue for the final tie and shall have direct control of all arrangements, receipts and donations made from funds raised in connection therewith.
- f) No player shall play for two teams in the same age group or more than one club in a cup or plate competition during any one season and this rule shall also apply to any supplementary competition irrespective of any transfer made in season.
- g) In all cup-tie matches the duration of play is as defined in Rule 7 (a) for the age group concerned. In 9- a-side competition no extra time will be played except for semi-final and final ties which will have five minutes way extra time in all other cases the duration of extra time shall be two periods of not less than 10 minutes.
Note: Based on match schedules and availability of facilities individual Leagues may opt out of offering extra time in their domestic competitions.
- h) In the event of a tie in a league format cup competition then the outcome will be determined by head to head results and if still equal a play-off will be arranged. In all League Cup, Plate/Shield or Supplementary competitions where a postponement occurs, the Team drawn at home initially will have the opportunity to arrange the game on one further occasion thereafter the away team will, in conjunction with the league, facilitate the tie. Each switch of responsibility will permit Teams two opportunities to host the game.

All cup-ties will be played to a finish at the first time of asking.

17. **BREACH OF LEAGUE RULES**

Any breach of League rules may render the player, official or club liable to censure, fine or suspension or a combination of such penalties as the league deem fit to impose.

18. **SAFEGUARDING**

NIYFA and the league recommend that all clubs act to cease repetitive training techniques for heading a football for players aged 11 years and younger.

It is accepted that in a training/match situation heading a football is a potential consequence of any passage of play. This recommendation seeks to address concerns that repetitive heading practice may potentially have a long-term adverse effect on the brain.

20. **INTERPRETATION**

The League Committee shall be the final authority of the interpretation of the Rules, decisions upon questions of interpretation and on matters affecting the league not provided for by the Rules shall be final and binding on all members.

SECTION 2 – PLAYER REGISTRATION REGULATIONS

1. **Restrictions on all except bona-fide players**

- a) A bona-fide player of a club is one who has registered via the IFA Comet Football Management System (FMS). No player may play in any competition under the auspices of the NIYFA unless and until he/she has been so registered, and it shall be the responsibility of all clubs playing in any match organised by the NIBFA to ensure that its players are eligible to play in any such match.
- b) Failure to do so constitutes misconduct and the defaulting club(s) shall be liable to such penalties as indicated in the respective league rules.

2. **Registration of Players**

- a) For Winter Leagues, players may only be registered during the official registration period for purely amateur competitions which shall open on 26 June 2023 and close at 5.00pm on 31 March 2023.
- b) For Summer Leagues, players may only be registered from 1 March 2023 until 5.00pm on 15th December 2023 there will be an in-season transfer window from 1st June 2023 to 30th June 2023.
- c) It is the sole responsibility for each team/club to ensure that players are free to register. Letters from Parent/Guardians regarding a player's status will not be accepted.
- d) It is the responsibility of clubs to ensure that they have received the necessary parent/guardian approval before registering a player.
- e) Players may be registered with a maximum of three clubs during one season (the period from 1st August to 31st May, and in the case of NI Premiership and NIWFA from 1st March to 31st October). During this period, the player is only eligible to play in official matches for two clubs. As an exception to this rule, a player moving between two clubs belonging to associations with overlapping seasons (i.e., start of the season in summer/autumn as opposed to winter/spring) may be eligible to play in official matches for a third club during the relevant season, provided they have fully complied with their contractual obligations towards their previous clubs.

3. **Registration Procedure**

- a) All amateur registrations must be submitted via the IFA Comet FMS by Club Registrars.
- b) Such registrations must be input and confirmed not later than 12 noon on the day preceding any match.
- c) It is recommended that clubs upload a signed copy of the player's registration form, in the event of a dispute between the club and the player, as conclusive proof of the registration.
- d) The club must also upload a headshot photograph of the player to accompany their registration on COMET taken after 31st May in the current season (good quality). Player photographs should be updated every two years as a minimum.
- e) Any player who is under the age of 18 on the date of registration must have written consent from a parent or guardian agreeing to the registration.
- f) The length of an amateur registration shall be from its effective date until the end of June 2023.
- g) Priority of registration shall determine the eligibility of a player to play for the club with which he was first registered.

4. Transfers

- a) Players moving clubs will be required to complete a transfer (please refer to the conditions as set in Section 2 Rule 5). The transfer instruction must be submitted via the IFA Comet FMS in accordance with the Comet User Guide and approved by both clubs involved in the transfer.
- b) Such transfers must be input and confirmed not later than 12 noon on the day preceding any match.
- c) Approval will not be given to any transfer which stipulates when or against whom the player may or may not play.

5. Protection of Minors (Article 19 – FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players – RSTP)

1. International transfers of players are only permitted if the player is over the age of 18.

The following five exceptions to this rule apply:

a) The player's parents move to the country in which the new club is located for reasons not linked to football.

b) The player is aged between 16 and 18 and:

i. the transfer takes place within the territory of the European Union (EU) or European Economic Area (EEA); or

ii. the transfer takes place between two associations within the same country.

The new club must fulfil the following minimum obligations:

iii. It shall provide the player with an adequate football education and/or training in line with the highest national standards (cf. Annexe 4, article 4 – FIFA RSTP).

iv. It shall guarantee the player an academic and/or school and/or vocational education and/or training, in addition to his football education and/ or training, which will allow the player to pursue a career other than football should he cease to play professional football.

v. It shall make all necessary arrangements to ensure that the player is looked after in the best possible way (optimum living standards with a host family or in club accommodation, appointment of a mentor at the club, etc.).

vi. It shall, on registration of such a player, provide the relevant association with proof that it is complying with the obligations.

c) The player lives no further than 50km from a national border and the club with which the player wishes to be registered in the neighbouring association is also within 50km of that border. The maximum distance between the player's domicile and the club's headquarters shall be 100km. In such cases, the player must continue to live at home and the two associations concerned must give their explicit consent.

d) The player is at least temporarily permitted to reside in the country of arrival and/or is recognised by the competent state authorities as vulnerable and requiring state protection by the country of arrival after fleeing their country of origin (or previous country of domicile) for humanitarian reasons, without their parents, due to either of the following:

i. their life or freedom being threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, belonging to a particular social group, or political opinion; or

- ii. any other circumstances where their survival is seriously threatened.

If the minor has been formally recognised as a refugee or a protected person, they may be registered with a professional club or purely amateur club. There are no restrictions on any subsequent national transfer of the minor prior to their turning 18.

If the minor has been formally recognised as asylum seeker or has been recognised by the competent state authorities as vulnerable in accordance with article 19 paragraph d) above, they may only be registered with a purely amateur club. They may be the subject of a subsequent national transfer but are not permitted to register with a professional club until they turn 18.

e) The player is a student and moves without his parents to another country temporarily for academic reasons to undertake an exchange programme. The duration of the player's registration for the new club until he turns 18 or until the end of the academic or school programme cannot exceed one year. The player's new club may only be a purely amateur club without a professional team or without a legal, financial, or de facto link to a professional club.

3. The provisions of this article shall also apply to any player who has never previously been registered with a club, is not a national of the country in which he wishes to be registered for the first time and has not lived continuously for at least the last five years in said country.

4. Where a minor player is at least ten years old, the Players' Status Chamber of the Football Tribunal must approve:

- a) their international transfer according to paragraph 2;
- b) their first registration according to paragraph 3; or
- c) their first registration, where the minor player is not a national of the country where the association at which they wish to be registered is domiciled and has lived continuously for at least the last five years in that country.

5. Approval pursuant to paragraph 4 is required prior to any request for an ITC and/or a first registration by an association.

6. Where a minor player is under the age of ten, it is the responsibility of the association that intends to register the player – as per the request of its affiliated club – to verify and ensure that the circumstances of the player fall, beyond all doubt, under one of the exceptions provided for in paragraph 2, 3, or 4 c). Such verification shall be made prior to any registration.

7. When Article 19 of the FIFA RSTP is applicable, the club should determine which exception applies to the player based on the information above and then provide the Irish FA with the documentation required by FIFA. Further information on the documents required can be requested by emailing registrations@irishfa.com

- a) If a player has been registered before with another National Association, then an International Transfer FIFA Minors application is required.
- b) If a player has never been registered before and is not a national of the country in which they wish to be registered for the first time, then a First Registration FIFA Minors application is required.

First Registration and International Transfer FIFA Minors applications can only be submitted to FIFA if The League's registration window is open.

8. Noncompliance with the FIFA Regulations and or falsification of birth records is a serious offence and will incur a penalty fine of up to £500 with an additional potentially unlimited fine from FIFA.

SECTION 3 - DISCIPLINARY CODE

Note and on instruction from the Irish Football Association the following will apply.

- From season 2020/21 all youth discipline, including the various component leagues of the NIYFA, must be administered by NIYFA staff

RULE 1: ADOPTION & ENFORCEMENT

- 1.1. The Irish Football Association (IFA) Disciplinary Committee (the Committee) approved this adaptation of the IFA Disciplinary Code, adjusted to recognise the role and governance of Youth Football. The approved adaptation was incorporated into the constitution and rules of the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association (NIYFA) and its member leagues.
- 1.2. This code is effective from ** August 2023 and applies to all football under the jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association
- 1.3. Save where expressly set out to the contrary, words and phrases as defined in the Rules of the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association and the IFA Articles of Association shall have the same meaning in this code.
- 1.4. The following are subject to this code:
 1. Northern Ireland Youth Football Association, its member leagues and clubs
 2. Officials
 3. Players
 4. Match officials – disciplinary matters will be referred to the IFA Disciplinary Committee
 5. Anyone with an authorisation from the NIYFA and its member leagues, about a match, competition or other event organised by the NIYFA and its member leagues.
- 1.5. Each person or entity who is or is deemed subject to this code is required to cooperate with a League, NIYFA and or IFA investigation or disciplinary proceedings.
 - 1.5.1. Each club is further required to identify to the Association a Club Disciplinary Officer (who may hold another office within the Club, such as Club Secretary) responsible for investigating and taking appropriate action in relation to disciplinary matters and the conduct of its members.
 - 1.5.2. The Club Disciplinary Officer will be the principal point of contact between the Disciplinary Panel and the Club in respect of all disciplinary matters.
 - 1.5.3. The Club must inform the NIYFA upon affiliation of the name, telephone number and email address of the Club Disciplinary Officer at the commencement of the season. If NIYFA is not notified of a Disciplinary Officer, any communications will be sent via the Club Secretary.
 - 1.5.4. Notifications via the Comet system will be sent to the appointed Club Manager. It is the responsibility of the Club Manager to ensure that the Club Disciplinary Officer is made aware of any matters relating to discipline.
- 1.6. The overriding objective of the Code is to maintain and promote fair play, protect the health and welfare of Players (and others involved in the Game), ensure that acts of indiscipline (on and off the field of play) or breaches of this code are dealt with expeditiously and fairly and that the image and reputation of association football and the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association are not adversely affected.
- 1.7. Disciplinary hearings shall be conducted in a fair and just manner and in accordance with the fundamental principles of natural justice. Procedural and technical considerations shall take second place to the overriding objective of being just and fair to the parties.
- 1.71. Proceedings, findings, or decisions of the Disciplinary Panel shall not be invalidated by reason of any procedural defect, irregularity, omission, or technicality unless such defect, irregularity, omission, or

technicality raises a material doubt as to the reliability of the proceedings, findings, or decisions.

- 1.8 In the event that a particular incident takes place for which there is no provision in this Code including (but not limited to) procedure, jurisdiction, or sanction then the Disciplinary Panel may take such action that it considers appropriate in the circumstances in accordance with general principles of natural justice and fairness.
- 1.9 Without prejudice to the overriding objective set out in clause 1.6, the Disciplinary Panel shall have the power: -
1. to sanction serious disciplinary infringements which have escaped a match official's attention.
 2. to extend the duration of a match suspension or any other penalty incurred automatically by an expulsion.
 3. to impose sanctions including.
 - a) A fine
 - b) A suspension
 - c) An interim suspension
 - d) A transfer ban
 - e) Playing a match without spectators
 - f) Playing a match on neutral territory
 - g) Ban on playing in a particular stadium
 - h) Ban from dressing room and/or substitutes' bench.
 - i) Ban on taking part in any football related activity.
 - j) Annulment of the result of a match.
 - k) Expulsion from a competition.
 - l) Defeat by forfeit.
 - m) Deduction of points.
 - n) Demotion to a lower division where member leagues can facilitate this.
 - o) Ban on spectators attending a match.
 - p) Ban prohibiting someone from entering the confines of one or several stadiums ("Stadium Ban");
 - q) Replay of a match.
 - r) A reprimand being an official written pronouncement of disapproval sent to the perpetrator of an infringement of the Code.
- 1.10 NIYFA may recognise the disciplinary sanctions of any other sporting body. Any person suspended or banned by any other sporting body may be suspended or banned concurrently by the Disciplinary Panel.
- 1.11 The NIYFA Disciplinary Panel shall always strive to act consistently; however, they shall not have a doctrine of binding precedent, it is not formally bound by prior decisions of the Panel. Each case will be looked at and determined on its own merits.
- 1.12 If several offences are carried out by an individual simultaneously, the Panel shall base the fine on what it considers to be the most serious offence committed and depending on the circumstances, may increase the sanction by up to fifty per cent of the maximum sanction specified for that offence.
- 1.12.1 The same applies if a person incurs several time sanctions of a similar nature (two or more match suspensions, two or more stadium bans etc) as the result of one or several offences.
- 1.13 Where a Notice of Complaint has been issued and challenged and the Disciplinary Panel find that the breach

alleged in the Notice of Complaint has not been proved, the Disciplinary Panel shall be entitled to find that a lesser breach of the Code has been proved and sanction the person for that lesser breach without the issuing of a Notice of Complaint. The Disciplinary Panel shall have sole discretion to determine the appropriate lesser offence provided always that the sanction for the lesser offence shall be no more than that applied for the breach alleged in the Notice of Complaint.

- 1.14 Any clerical mistakes or accidental omissions in any written decision or correspondence on behalf of the Panel may be corrected by the Panel at any time.

RULE 2: DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. **IFA:** The Irish Football Association
NIYFA: Northern Ireland Youth Football Association
- 2.2 **Player:** A person whose name appears on the match card for the relevant match. This includes a Player/Manager and any player who is also an official.
- 2.3 **Official:** A person, with the exception of Players (See Rule 2.2 of the Code) aged **16** years or over who, whether registered with a member Club or not, acts on behalf of a member Club or is in the dressing room or enters the field of play on behalf of a member Club or in the absence of an official referee acts as a match official or assistant or is in a member Club's technical area or assists in the running of the member Club.
- 2.4 **Match Official:** The referee, assistant referees, 4th Official or any other person appointed by NIYFA or a member League in connection the administration of a match.
- 2.5 **Match Official's Report:** A report made individually or collectively by match officials and agreed by them, supplied where practicable, to the Committee and through the referee.
- 2.6 **Designated Holiday:** A public holiday or bank holiday in Northern Ireland.
- 2.7 **Disciplinary Officer:** A person appointed by a club who shall be responsible for investigating and taking appropriate action in relation to disciplinary matters and the conduct of its members. It is the responsibility of the Club to ensure disciplinary matters are maintained in the event of the Club Disciplinary Officer's absence by ensuring another individual or individuals deal with any such matters during that period of absence.
- 2.8 **Disciplinary Panel:** The panel convened to deal with all football related disciplinary matters.
- 2.9 **Disciplinary Panel Secretary:** The official appointed by the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association to service the Disciplinary Panel.
- 2.10 **Disciplinary Department:** the members of the NIYFA authorised to deal with certain routine disciplinary matters.
- 2.11 **Appeals Panel:** The panel appointed to deal with all appeals.
- 2.12 **Associate Members;** Refers to associate members of the Irish Football Association including Northern Ireland Youth Football Association their affiliated leagues and clubs.
- 2.13 **Members:** Members and Associate Members of the Irish Football Association.
- 2.14 **Comet System:** means the football management system adopted by the IFA for the administration of football in Northern Ireland.
- 2.15 **Disciplinary Challenge:** means a Mistaken Identity Challenge or a General Disciplinary Challenge.

RULE 3: GENDER & NUMBER

- 3.1. Terms within this Disciplinary Code referring to the players, officials or match officials are applicable to both genders. Any term in the singular applies to the plural and vice-versa.

RULE 4: CULPABILITY

- 4.1. Unless otherwise specified, infringements are punishable regardless of whether they have been committed deliberately or negligently.

RULE 5: ACTS AMOUNTING TO ATTEMPT

- 5.1 Attempts: If, with intent to do an act in breach of this Code, a person or entity who is subject to the provisions of the code, does an act which is more than just preparing to commit a breach, he shall be found to have breached the relevant section of the Code.
- 5.2 A person or entity who is subject to the provisions of the code, may be in breach of the Code by attempting to commit a breach of the Code (as described at **Rule 5.1**) even if it would have been impossible to complete the act in breach of the Code.
- 5.3 A person or entity who is subject to the provisions of the code, found to have attempted to breach the code pursuant to **Rule 5.1** will be liable to the same sanction as where the breach of the Code is completed. The Disciplinary Panel may, but is not bound to, reduce the sanction where an attempt is proved. It will determine the extent of the mitigation as it sees fit.

RULE 6: INVOLVEMENT

- 6.1 Anyone who intentionally takes part in committing an infringement, either as an instigator or accomplice, is also subject to the provisions of this Code.
- 6.2 The Disciplinary Panel will take account of the degree of guilt of the party involved when deciding upon the sanction.

RULE 7: FAILURE TO REPLY TO CORRESPONDENCE

- 7.1 Any failure to reply, within the specified timescale, (without just or reasonable cause) to correspondence sent by the Disciplinary Panel, either by letter, email or via the Comet system in pursuance of its obligations under this Code, will render the person to whom such correspondence is sent to be in breach of this code and render such person liable to such penalties as the Panel shall deem fit to impose.

RULE 8: FINES

- 8.1 Clubs are liable for fines imposed on their players or officials. Subject to the Disciplinary Panel's discretion pursuant to the overriding objective, the fact that a person has left a club does not cancel out liability and therefore does not negate the responsibility of the club to pay a fine.
- 8.2 All fines, unless challenged or appealed against, must be paid within **14 days** from the date of the letter or email imposing the fine unless a payment plan has been agreed with the club. Failure by a club to pay a fine within the specified timeframe may result in the club being fined an additional **£25** and **suspended from all affiliated football** with immediate effect from the point of notification in the case of a Designated Holiday, the time limit for paying the fine will expire the following day.
- 8.3 Should a suspension be imposed on a club due to failure by that club to pay a fine, the suspension will remain in effect until the Monday following receipt of payment.

- 8.4 Disciplinary Reports must be submitted by Match Officials via the Comet System within 24 hours of the commencement of the match taking place. Where an appointed official fails to turn up disciplinary reports should be submitted **by the agreed official in charge within 24 hours of the match taking place by email to discipline@niyfa.co.uk**

RULE 9: CAUTION & DISMISSAL FINES

- 9.1 Where a disciplinary report has been issued and the person or entity who is subject to the provisions of this Code is found to be at fault, the person or entity shall in addition to any punishment or recommendation made in that report incur a fine as set out below:

PLAYERS

- (a) Junior matches (cautions and dismissals): £4

OFFICIALS

- (b) Junior matches (cautions): £10
(c) Junior matches (dismissals): £25

- 9.2 Clubs will be charged periodically throughout the playing season for their accrued cautions and dismissals. Notification will be sent to clubs no later than 31 January and 31 May (men's season) and 31 October (women's season). Payment of caution and dismissal fines will be pursuant to **Rule 8.2**.

- 9.3 No refunds of cautions and dismissal fines or part thereof shall be made except where a caution or dismissal has been proven to be wrongfully applied.

RULE 10: WARNING

- 10.1 A warning is a reminder of the substance of a disciplinary rule allied with the threat of a sanction in the event of a further infringement.

RULE 11: REPRIMAND

- 11.1 A reprimand is a pronouncement of disapproval by the Disciplinary Panel. Where the Panel determines to issue a reprimand, it shall be communicated to the person or entity who has breached the Code in writing or, at the option of the Panel, by email.

RULE 12: RETURN OF AWARDS

- 12.1 When a person is required to return an award, the person shall return the benefits which that person has received as part of winning that award.

RULE 13: CAUTIONS FOR PLAYERS AND OFFICIALS

- 13.1 A caution is a warning from the referee to a player or official during a match to sanction minor infringements (See **Law 12** of the Laws of the Game).

- 13.2 A player or official who receives **2 cautions** during the same match will incur a dismissal and, consequently, an **automatic suspension** from the next match. The **2 cautions** that incurred the dismissal will not be included in any total as outlined in clauses **13.3, 13.4, 13.5 or 13.6** of this Code.

13.3 PLAYERS – LEAGUE COMPETITIONS

- 13.3.1 A player who accumulates 5 cautions in the same League Competition at any time during the same playing season will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same League Competition only, until such time as the player has missed his next 1 match in the same League Competition, subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.

- 13.3.2 A player who accumulates **10 cautions** in the same League Competition at any time during the same playing season will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same League Competition only, until such time as the player has missed his next **2 matches** in the same League Competition, subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.
- 13.3.3 A player who accumulates **15 cautions** in the same League Competition at any time during the same playing season will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same League Competition only, until such time as the player has missed his next **3 matches** in the same League Competition, subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.
- 13.3.4 For every **further 5 cautions** a player accumulates in the same League Competition at any time during the same playing season, the player will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same League Competition only for an additional **1 match on a continuing escalating scale** in line with **rules 13.3.1, 13.3.2 and 13.3.3** above i.e. 20 cautions incurs a 4 match automatic suspension, 25 cautions incurs a 5 match suspension etc., subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.
- 13.3.5 The terms of a player suspension resulting from the accumulation of cautions in the same League Competition will be as set out under the category of a **Standard Suspension** as detailed under **Rule 15.9**.

13.3 PLAYERS – CUP COMPETITIONS

- 13.4.1 A player who accumulates **2 cautions** in the same Cup Competition at any time during the same playing season will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same Cup Competition only, until such time as the player has missed his next **1 match** in the same Cup Competition, subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.
- 13.4.2 A player who accumulates **4 cautions** in the same Cup Competition at any time during the same playing season will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same Cup Competition only, until such time as the player has missed his next **1 match** in the same Cup Competition, subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.
- 13.4.3 A player who accumulates **6 cautions** in the same Cup Competition at any time during the same playing season will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same Cup Competition only, until such time as the player has missed his next 1 match in the same Cup Competition, subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.
- 13.4.4 The same procedure will apply for every **further 2 cautions** accumulated by a player in the same Cup Competition at any time during the same playing season.
- 13.4.5 After the completion of the Quarter Final Round in all Cup Competitions, the caution count will be reset with all players being regarded as having **zero** cautions attributed to them. For the avoidance of doubt, the following will still apply:
- Any player who receives a suspension resulting from an accumulation of cautions in the Quarter Final match **will** be suspended for the Semi-Final of the same Cup Competition.
- 13.4.6 The terms of a player suspension resulting from the accumulation of cautions in the same Cup Competition will be as set out under the category of a **Standard Suspension** as detailed under **Rule 15.9**.

13.5 OFFICIALS – LEAGUE COMPETITIONS

- 13.5.1 An official who accumulates **3 cautions** in the same League Competition at any time during the same playing season will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same League Competition only, until such time as the official has missed his next **1 match** in the same League Competition, subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.

- 13.5.2 An official who accumulates **6 cautions** in the same League Competition at any time during the same playing season will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same League Competition only, until such time as the official has missed his next **2 matches** in the same League Competition, subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.
- 13.5.3 An official who accumulates **9 cautions** in the same League Competition at any time during the same playing season will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same League Competition only, until such time as the official has missed his next **3 matches** in the same League Competition, subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.
- 13.5.4 For every **further 3 cautions** an official accumulates in the same League Competition at any time during the same playing season, the official will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same League Competition only for an additional **1 match on a continuing escalating scale** in line with **Rules 13.5.1, 13.5.2 and 13.5.3** above i.e. 12 cautions incurs a 4 match automatic suspension, 15 cautions incurs a 5 match suspension etc., subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.
- 13.5.5 The terms of an official suspension resulting from the accumulation of cautions in the same League Competition will be as set out under the category of a **Touchline Suspension** as detailed under **Rule 15.10**.

13.6 OFFICIALS – CUP COMPETITIONS

- 13.6.1 An official who accumulates **2 cautions** in the same Cup Competition at any time during the same playing season will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same Cup Competition only, until such time as the player has missed his next **1 match** in the same Cup Competition, subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.
- 13.6.2 An official who accumulates **4 cautions** in the same Cup Competition at any time during the same playing season will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same Cup Competition only, until such time as the player has missed his next **1 match** in the same Cup Competition, subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.
- 13.6.3 An official who accumulates **6 cautions** in the same Cup Competition at any time during the same playing season will be suspended automatically with immediate effect from the same Cup Competition only, until such time as the player has missed his next **1 match** in the same Cup Competition, subject to **Rules 15.1 and 15.13**.
- 13.6.4 The same procedure will apply for every **further 2 cautions** accumulated by an official in the same Cup Competition at any time during the same playing season.
- 13.6.5 After the completion of the Quarter Final Round in all Cup Competitions, the caution count will be reset with all officials being regarded as having **zero** cautions attributed to them. For the avoidance of doubt, the following will still apply:
- Any official who receives a suspension resulting from an accumulation of cautions in the Quarter Final match **will** be suspended for the Semi-Final of the same Cup Competition.
- 13.6.6 The terms of an official suspension resulting from the accumulation of cautions in the same Cup Competition will be as set out under the category of a **Touchline Suspension** as detailed under **Rule 15.10**.
- 13.7 A player who is cautioned after the final whistle and before he leaves the field of play will be dealt with as a field offence. (See **Rule 13.1** of this Code)
- 13.8 An official who is cautioned after the final whistle and before he leaves the technical area, and its immediate surrounds will be dealt with as a field offence. (See **Rule 13.1** of this Code)

- 13.9 In respect of an official, if an offence has occurred and the offender cannot be identified, the senior coach who is present in the technical area at the time will receive the caution as the person responsible for the other team officials.
- 13.10 Cautions received during one season are cancelled at the conclusion of that season and are not carried over to the next season.
- 13.11 If an abandoned match is to be replayed, any caution issued during that match shall be annulled. If the match is not to be replayed, the cautions received during the match shall stand.
- 13.12 Cautions issued in a match that is subsequently forfeited shall not be annulled.

RULE 14: DISMISSALS FOR PLAYERS AND OFFICIALS

- 14.1 A dismissal is the order given by the referee to someone to leave, at any time before, during or after the game, the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitute's bench as outlined in **Law 5** of the Laws of the Game.
- 14.2 Dismissal takes the form of a red card for players and officials. The red card is regarded as direct if it sanctions serious unsporting behaviour as defined by **Law 12** of the Laws of the Game. It is regarded as indirect if it is the result of an accumulation of two yellow cards.
- 14.3 An official who has been sent off may give instructions to the person replacing him on the substitutes' bench. The official shall, however, ensure that he does not disturb the spectators or disrupt the flow of play.
- 14.4 A player or official who is dismissed from the field of play will be **suspended automatically with immediate effect from the subsequent match**. The Disciplinary Panel may extend the duration of the suspension. The automatic match suspension and any additional match suspension must be served, even if the sending-off is imposed in a match that is later abandoned, annulled, forfeited and/or replayed.
- 14.4.1 An official who has been sent off cannot communicate with or contact any person involved in the match - in particular, players or technical staff - by any means whatsoever.
- 14.4.2 A player or official who has been sent off is not entitled to attend the post-match interview or any other media activity held at that venue.
- 14.5 ADDITIONAL PLAYER SANCTIONS – ALL COMPETITIONS**
- 14.5.1 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for any offence (other than for receiving a 2nd caution) having previously received a caution in the same match will have the caution upheld.
- 14.5.2 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for using offensive, insulting, or abusive language and/or gestures will be suspended for an **additional 1 match**.
- 14.5.3 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for serious foul play or for violent conduct will be suspended for an **additional 2 matches**.
- 14.5.4 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for biting, or spitting at an opponent or any other person other than a match official will be suspended for an **additional 6 matches**.
- 14.5.5 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for using threatening or intimidating behaviour towards a match official will be suspended for at least an **additional 10 matches**.
- 14.5.6 Threatening or intimidating behaviour in accordance with this category is defined as:

- (i) Words or actions that cause the match official to believe that they are being threatened, intimidated or fearful of the use of violence. Examples include but are not limited to the use of words that imply (directly or indirectly) that the match official may be subjected to any form of physical abuse either immediately or later, whether realistic or not; the raising of hands to intimidate the match official; pretending to throw or kick an object at the match official.
- (ii) Actions that are reasonably likely to threaten and/or intimidate the official will also include reckless actions which will include, but are not limited to, the throwing or kicking of objects or substances or spitting towards the match official but where no contact is made with the said official.

14.5.7 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for committing an assault on a match official (whether causing bodily harm) will be suspended for **at least an additional 15 matches up to a maximum suspension of 2 years.**

14.5.8 Assault (whether causing bodily harm) in accordance with this category is defined as:

- (i) Conduct which causes a match official to apprehend immediate and unlawful personal violence whether that conduct causes bodily harm. Examples include but are not limited to pushing, barging, or pulling the match official (or their clothing or equipment), the throwing or kicking of objects or substances or spitting towards the match official where the said object or substance or spit contacts the match official.

14.5.9 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for committing an assault on a match official (causing serious bodily harm) will be subject to **an additional Sine Die suspension from ALL FOOTBALL RELATED ACTIVITY with no review to be considered by the Committee under a period of 5 years.**

14.5.10 Assault (causing serious bodily harm) in accordance with this category is defined as:

- (i) An assault shall be regarded as causing serious bodily harm if the match official suffers any serious injury, including but not limited to limbs, bones or senses, cuts bruises or concussion.

14.5.11 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings after the final whistle and before he leaves the field of play will be dealt with as a field offence. (See **Rule 14.1** of this Code).

14.6 ADDITIONAL OFFICIAL SANCTIONS – ALL COMPETITIONS

14.6.1 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for any offence (other than for receiving a 2nd caution) having previously received a caution in the same match will have the caution upheld

14.6.2 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for use of offensive, insulting, or abusive language and/ or gestures will be suspended for an additional **1 match.**

14.6.3 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for violent conduct will be suspended for an **additional 2 matches.**

14.6.4 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for biting or spitting at an opposing player or any other person other than a match official will be suspended for an **additional 6 matches.**

14.6.5 An official who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for using threatening or intimidating behaviour towards a match official will be suspended for at least an **additional 10 matches.**

14.6.6 Threatening or intimidating behaviour in accordance with this category is defined as:

- (i) Words or actions that cause the match official to believe that they are being threatened, intimidated or fearful of the use of violence. Examples include but are not limited to the use of words that imply (directly or indirectly) that the match official may be subjected to any form of physical abuse either immediately or

later, whether realistic or not; the raising of hands to intimidate the match official; pretending to throw or kick an object at the match official.

- (ii) Actions that are reasonably likely to threaten and/or intimidate the official will also include reckless actions which will include, but are not limited to, the throwing or kicking of objects or substances or spitting towards the match official but where no contact is made with the said official.

14.6.7 An official who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for committing an assault on a match official (whether or not causing bodily harm) will be suspended for **at least an additional 15 matches up to a maximum suspension of 2 years**.

14.6.8 Assault (whether causing bodily harm) in accordance with this category is defined as:

- (i) Conduct which causes a match official to apprehend immediate and unlawful personal violence whether or not that conduct causes bodily harm. Examples include but are not limited to pushing, barging, or pulling the match official (or their clothing or equipment), the throwing or kicking of objects or substances or spitting towards the match official where the said object or substance or spit makes contact with the match official.

14.6.9 An official who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for committing an assault on a match official (causing serious bodily harm) will be subject to **an additional Sine Die suspension from ALL FOOTBALL RELATED ACTIVITY with no review to be considered by the Committee under a period of 5 years**.

14.6.10 Assault (causing serious bodily harm) in accordance with this category is defined as:

- (i) An assault shall be regarded as causing serious bodily harm if the match official suffers any serious injury, including but not limited to limbs, bones or senses, cuts bruises or concussion.

14.6.11 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for delaying the restart of play by the opposing team (e.g., holding onto the ball, kicking the ball away, obstructing the movement of a player etc.) will be suspended for an **additional 1 match**.

14.6.12 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for deliberately leaving the technical area to show a) dissent towards or remonstrate with a match official, b) act in a provocative or inflammatory manner or c) enter the opposing technical area in an aggressive or confrontational manner will be suspended for an **additional 1 match**.

14.6.13 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for entering the field of play to a) confront a match official (including at half time and full time), b) interfere with play, an opposing player or match official will be suspended for an **additional 2 matches**.

14.6.14 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for deliberately throwing/ kicking an object onto the field of play will be suspended for an **additional 2 matches**.

14.6.15 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for using unauthorised electronic or communication equipment and/or behaving in an inappropriate manner as the result of using electronic or communication equipment will be suspended for an **additional 1 match**.

14.6.16 An official who is dismissed after the final whistle and before he leaves the technical area, and its immediate surrounds will be dealt with as a field offence. (See **Rule 14.1** of this Code).

RULE 15: SUSPENSION

15.1 All suspensions must be served with the team at which the player or official received the suspension and must be served consecutively with any other suspensions that may have been issued. Any automatic suspension pursuant to **Rule 14** must be served prior to any other notified suspension.

- 15.1.1 On request, special dispensation may be given to a player or official if the club (of which his team forms a part) folds during the serving of his suspension or if the team he received his suspension with does not commence their competitive season until after the last day of August in any season.
- 15.1.2 Special dispensation may also be applied in the case of an official who is involved in a coaching capacity in both a men's and women's club and who concludes the season with an outstanding suspension.
- 15.1.3 Special dispensation may also be given in exceptional circumstances which shall be at the sole discretion of the Committee.
- 15.1.4 Should the Disciplinary Panel consider any application for dispensation to be of a frivolous nature and/or abuse of process merely to release a player or official from suspension to enable them to participate in a match, they shall have power to deal with the player and official and or club as it deems appropriate.
- 15.2 An automatic suspension resulting from an accumulation of cautions will apply only to league or cup matches in the **specific competition** in which the cautions were accumulated.
- 15.3 Suspensions resulting from dismissals will cover all domestic league and cup matches until such time as the team at which the player or official received the suspension has completed the required number of matches to enable the suspension to be served.
- 15.3.1 If a match is abandoned, cancelled, or forfeited (except for a violation of **Rule 15.3.2**), a suspension (or part thereof) is only considered to have been served if the team to which the suspended player belongs is not responsible for the circumstances that led to the abandonment, cancellation or forfeit of the match and this has been determined prior to the player or official's next match.
- 15.3.2 A match suspension is regarded as no longer pending if a match is retroactively forfeited because a player took part in a match despite being **ineligible**. This also applies to the match suspension imposed on the player who took part in the match despite being ineligible.
- 15.4 If a suspension is combined with a fine, the suspension may, at the discretion of the Disciplinary Panel, be prolonged until the fine has been paid in full.
- 15.5 Clubs are entirely and solely responsible for ensuring the eligibility of their players for any match in accordance with the applicable competition regulations. Clubs must keep themselves informed of any outstanding suspensions at the commencement of the season, of any new suspensions applicable during the season and are wholly responsible for ensuring that suspensions are properly served. Clubs must therefore maintain their own records. A club who fails to do so will not be able to argue in subsequent proceedings that it was unaware of the terms of a suspension.
- 15.6 Any period of suspension arising from the accumulation of cautions or additional suspensions in respect of a dismissal will commence from the date of communication from the Disciplinary Department/ Comet System.
- 15.7 Any period of suspension arising from the acceptance of a sanction offer made via **Rule 17** Notice of Complaint to a player, official, match official, club or league will commence on the Monday following the date of the Notice of Complaint letter (such date will be confirmed in said letter) sent to the player, official, match official, club or league concerned in writing, by email or via the Comet system. If a Notice of Complaint sanction offer is not accepted, a Notice of Complaint Challenge may be submitted as outlined in **Rule 34.3**
- 15.8 Suspensions imposed by the Disciplinary Panel following a Disciplinary Hearing will be imposed from the Monday after the date of the Disciplinary Hearing.

Suspensions imposed by the Disciplinary Panel in circumstances when no Disciplinary Hearing has taken place will be imposed from the Monday after the date on which the decision was made by the Committee.

Details of the suspension will be communicated in writing, by email or via the Comet system.

15.9 STANDARD SUSPENSION A standard suspension is a ban on taking part in a match with a player or official not permitted to enter the dressing room area, the player's tunnel, the technical area, the substitute's bench, the area immediately surrounding the field of play or the playing surface at any match played under the jurisdiction of the Association during the period stipulated in **Rule 15.9.1**. The Disciplinary Panel will have the power to determine where those areas are.

The player or official under a standard suspension is prohibited from contact with players and coaching/technical staff (including via radio or other electronic communication) during the period stipulated in **Rule 15.9.1**.

15.9.1 The terms of the suspension (exclusion) detailed in **Rule 15.9** above will apply from **75 minutes** prior to the scheduled time of kick-off of a match and until **15 minutes** following the referee having signalled the end of the match. For the avoidance of doubt, the suspension continues to apply during extra time and/or kicks from the penalty mark when required in any match.

15.9.2 The player or official under a standard suspension is prohibited from contact with match officials before, during and post-match.

The player or official under a standard suspension is prohibited from giving any media interviews before, during and post-match.

15.9.3 Where a stand exists within the ground and his security can be safeguarded, the suspended player or official is required to sit in the stand away from the field of play and technical area.

Due to the nature of some grounds, the player or official under suspension may be able to sit in a stand or stand behind the pitch perimeter barrier but remain sufficiently close enough to the field of play and/or technical area to allow them to continue coaching, issue instructions to the coaching/technical staff or communicate/engage with match officials. This will be considered a breach of the suspension and will result in a charge under **Rule 22** being brought against the player or official who is under suspension.

15.10 TOUCHLINE SUSPENSION During a touchline suspension, an official is not permitted to enter the technical area, the substitute's bench, the area immediately surrounding the field of play or the playing surface at any match under the jurisdiction of the Association during the period stipulated in **Rule 15.10.3**. The Disciplinary Panel will have the power to determine where those areas are. A touchline suspension may only be imposed on individuals deemed as officials by the Disciplinary Panel.

15.10.1 The official under a touchline suspension is permitted to attend the team dressing room area pre-match, at half-time and post-match.

15.10.2 For the duration of the match, the official under suspension is prohibited from coaching or issuing instructions and is not permitted to communicate with the coaching/technical staff (including via radio or other electronic communication).

15.10.3 The terms of the suspension (exclusion) detailed in **Rule 15.10** above will apply from **75 minutes** prior to the scheduled time of kick-off of a match and until **15 minutes** following the referee having signalled the end of the match.

15.10.4 The official under a touchline suspension is prohibited from contact with match officials before, during and post-match.

The official under a touchline suspension is prohibited from giving any media interviews before, during and post-match.

15.10.5 Where a stand exists within the ground and his security can be safeguarded, the suspended official is required to sit in the stand away from the field of play and technical area.

Due to the nature of some grounds, the official under suspension may be able to sit in a stand or stand behind the pitch perimeter barrier but remain sufficiently close enough to the field of play and/or technical area to allow them to continue coaching, issue instructions to the coaching/technical staff or communicate/engage with match officials. This will be considered a breach of the suspension as per **Rule 15.10.2** and will result in a charge under **Rule 22** being brought against the official who is under suspension.

15.11 On request, an official who is suspended for a cup final in which his club are involved following his 1st or 2nd sanction in the current playing season may be permitted to lead his club onto the pitch prior to the match and to return to the pitch for the post-match presentation.

15.12 A player who is not eligible to participate in a particular match due to the competition rules may not use that match to serve the suspension or part thereof.

15.13 Any period of suspension or part thereof which remains outstanding at the end of the playing season must be served at the commencement of the next playing season.

15.14 A player, official, match official, club or league serving a suspension (other than a suspension imposed because of an accumulation of cautions) is suspended from all affiliated football including **NIYFA**.

15.15 In the event of the IFA Committee determining that a Match Official be suspended, the Match Official shall be suspended from refereeing or officiating at any domestic league or cup match for a period to be expressed in terms of weeks, months, or an indefinite period. All matters of alleged misconduct by Referees shall be referred to the Irish Football Association.

15.16 No sanction prescribed in this Code shall prevent the Disciplinary Panel from determining that a person may be banned from taking part in any kind of affiliated football-related activity, as determined by the Panel where it is deemed reasonable and proportionate to do so.

RULE 16: INTERIM SUSPENSION & PARTIAL SUSPENSION

Interim Suspension

16.1 The Disciplinary Panel shall have the power by way of unanimous vote, to issue an Interim Suspension against any person against whom an allegation of misconduct has been made and is being investigated or against someone who has been convicted of a criminal offence. The imposition of an interim suspension order shall be notified to any such person in writing, signed by the Disciplinary Panel Chairman, Vice-Chairman or Disciplinary Department. Details of the suspension will be communicated in writing, by email or via the Comet system.

16.2 Following the imposition of a suspension, the person suspended shall have the right of appeal within **14 days** of notification of the decision to the Panel at a hearing to be convened as soon as is reasonably practicable. The procedure for the disciplinary hearing shall be determined by the Chairman of the Panel.

16.3 The interim suspension shall automatically cease:

16.4 When the matter has been dealt with at a disciplinary hearing; or

16.5 When the allegation is withdrawn, and no further disciplinary action is taken; or

16.6 After 120 days from its issue, unless the Panel determines that it is in the interests of the NIYFA or the IFA that it should be extended for a further period or periods of not more than 120 days.

Partial Suspension

- 16.7** The Panel in imposing a match suspension, a ban on access to dressing rooms and/or the substitutes bench, a ban on taking part in any affiliated football-related activity, the obligation to play a match without spectators, the obligation to play a match on neutral ground, or a ban on playing in a certain stadium, may examine whether it is possible to suspend the implementation of the sanction partially.
- 16.7.1** The imposition of a partial suspension order shall be notified to any such person in writing, signed by the Disciplinary Panel Chairman, Vice- Chairman or Disciplinary Department. Details of the suspension will be communicated in writing, by email or via Comet system.
- 16.8** Partial suspension is permissible only if the duration of the sanction does not exceed six matches or six months and if the relevant circumstances allow it, the previous record of the person sanctioned.
- 16.9** The Disciplinary Panel shall decide which part of the sanction may be suspended. In any case, half of the sanction is definite.
- 16.10** By suspending implementation of the sanction, the Panel, at their own discretion, subjects the person sanctioned to a probationary period of anything from **six months to two years**.
- 16.11** If the person benefiting from a suspended sanction commits another infringement during the probationary period, the suspension is automatically revoked, and the sanction applied; it is added to the sanction pronounced for the new infringement.
- 16.12** Special provisions may apply in certain circumstances. In the case of anti-doping rule violations, this article is not applicable.

RULE 17: NOTICE OF COMPLAINT

- 17.1** The Disciplinary Panel may issue a Notice of Complaint to a player, official, match official, club, league or any other recognised football body or person under the jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association in respect of an alleged breach(es) of this Code. The Disciplinary Panel may also issue a Notice of Complaint to a player, official, match official, club, league or any other recognised football body or person under the jurisdiction of NIYFA pursuant to **Rule 17** of the Association or with any matter deemed to potentially be in breach of the spirit of this Code.
- 17.2** A Notice of Complaint may be accompanied by a sanction offer that would apply to the offence which is detailed in each Article. Any sanction offer will be determined by the Disciplinary Panel based on the facts and circumstances of the alleged breach(es) of this Code. Where the Disciplinary Panel is satisfied that the particular facts and circumstances of the alleged breach(es) of this Code necessitate a hearing, no sanction offer will be made in the Notice of Complaint letter.
- 17.3** A Notice of Complaint under this Article should be issued within **21 days** (or in the case of Divisional Associations within **28 days**) from the time the incident is reported to the Secretary of the Disciplinary Panel or as may be extended by the Disciplinary Panel in its absolute discretion. The Notice of Complaint will be accompanied by all relevant evidence, documents, and written submissions (including where appropriate the match official's report) that are available to the Association at the time that the Notice of Complaint is issued.

In any event the player, official, match official, club and/ or league should be notified within 21 days (or in the case of Divisional Associations within 28 days) of the incident being reported to the Secretary of the Disciplinary Panel of the nature of any incident under investigation.

- 17.4** Where a Notice of Complaint is issued, the player, official, match official, club, league or any other recognised football body or person under the jurisdiction of NIYFA may accept or deny the alleged breach(es) of this Code set out within the Notice of Complaint.
- 17.5** Where a player, official, match official, club, league or any other recognised football body or person under the jurisdiction of NIYFA accepts the alleged breach(es) of this Code set out within the Notice of Complaint and a sanction has been offered, the relevant party may accept the sanction. In those circumstances a hearing will not be required.
- Where the player, official, match official, club, league or any other recognised football body or person under the jurisdiction of NIYFA rejects the sanction, they are required to make representations as to the sanction in writing or at an oral hearing at the discretion of the Disciplinary Panel if it is deemed that written submissions would not suffice.
- 17.6** Where a player, official, match official, club, league or any other recognised football body or person under the jurisdiction of NIYFA notifies the Disciplinary Panel that they deny the alleged breach(es) of this Code set out within Notice of Complaint, the relevant party is required to submit a Disciplinary Challenge as directed in Rule 32 of this Code.
- 17.7** In any circumstances where a sanction has been proposed by the Disciplinary Panel within the Notice of Complaint and within the relevant period the player, official, match official, club, league or any other recognised football body or person under the jurisdiction of NIYFA notifies the Committee that they do not accept the sanction offer, the Disciplinary Panel shall not be bound by the proposed sanction.
- However, at the time the Notice of Complaint is issued, the Disciplinary Panel must have advised parties of all alleged breaches of this Code being brought against them, subject always to the discretionary powers of the Disciplinary Panel as outlined under **Rule 1.13**
- 17.8** At all times the Disciplinary Panel shall have the discretion to require the player, official, match official, club, league or any other recognised football body or person under the jurisdiction of NIYFA who the subject of a Notice of Complaint is to attend a hearing.
- 17.9** In determining the appropriate sanction in any case, including at a hearing, the Disciplinary Panel will consider the circumstances of the infringement, the conduct of the player, official, match official and/or club within the previous 3 seasons and any other matter which appears to the Disciplinary Panel to be relevant pursuant to the overriding objective.
- 17.10** For the purpose of determining the appropriate charge and sanction at the point of charge the facts contained in the Match Official's reports will be presumed to be accurate.
- 17.11** Infringements may no longer be prosecuted in accordance with the following periods:
- (i) Two years for infringements committed during a match.
 - (ii) Ten years for anti-doping rule violations (as defined in the FIFA Anti-Doping Regulations), infringements relating to international transfers involving minors, and match manipulations.
 - (iii) Five years for all other offences.

RULE 18: MISCONDUCT BY PLAYERS or OFFICIALS
(Outside Law 12 of the Laws of the Game)

- 18.1** Any player or official who is dismissed will automatically incur a suspension from the subsequent match even if imposed in a match that is later abandoned, annulled and/or forfeited. Any automatic suspension will be in addition to suspensions imposed under **Rule 18**.

- 18.2** Where a player or official is found to be guilty of any of the charges specified in **Rules 18.3 to 18.9** (inclusive) it is recommended that such player or official will be sanctioned in the terms set out in **Rule 18.3 to Rule 18.9** (inclusive) and where a player or official is found to be guilty of any of the charges specified in **Rules 18.10 to 18.19** (inclusive) such player or official will be sanctioned in the terms set out in **Rules 18.10 to 18.19** (inclusive).
- 18.3** A player who is reported for the 1st occasion for misconduct will be sanctioned with a **minimum 1 match standard suspension** and a £25 fine imposed on the player's club.
- 18.4** A player who is reported for the 2nd occasion in the playing season for misconduct will be sanctioned with a **minimum 2 match standard suspension** and a £50 fine imposed on the player's club.
- 18.5** A player who is reported for a 3rd or subsequent occasion in the playing season for misconduct will be sanctioned with a **minimum 4 match standard suspension** and a £100 fine imposed on the player's club.
- 18.6** If part of the report relates to cautions or dismissals of players or officials, that part will be dealt with in accordance with **Rules 13 and 14** of this Disciplinary Code.
- 18.7** An official who is reported for the 1st occasion in the playing season for misconduct will be sanctioned with a **minimum 1 match touchline suspension** and a £25 fine imposed on the official's club.
- 18.8** An official who is reported for the 2nd occasion in the playing season for misconduct will be sanctioned with a **minimum 2 match touchline suspension** and a £50 fine imposed on the official's club.
- 18.9** An official who is reported for a 3rd or subsequent occasion in the playing season for misconduct will be sanctioned with a minimum 4 match standard suspension and a £100 fine imposed on the official's club. Permission to coach at NIYFA affiliated club level may also be revoked for the remainder of the current playing season.
- 18.10** A player or official who is reported for unsporting conduct towards an opponent or any other person other than a match official will be sanctioned with a **minimum 1 match standard suspension** and a £25 fine imposed on their club.
- 18.11** A player or official who is reported for deliberately receiving a yellow or red card (to be suspended for an upcoming match and to ultimately have a clean record) will be sanctioned with a **minimum 1 match standard suspension** and £25 imposed on their club.
- 18.12** A player or official who acts with obvious intent to cause a match official to make an incorrect decision or supporting his error of judgement and thereby causing him to make an incorrect decision will be sanctioned with a **minimum 2 match standard suspension** and £25 imposed on their club.
- 18.13** A player or official who is reported for assault (elbowing, punching, and kicking etc) or battery of an opponent or any other person other than a match official will be sanctioned with a **minimum 3 match standard suspension** and a £100 fine imposed on their club.
- 18.14** A player or official who is reported for biting, head-butting, or spitting at an opponent or any other person other than a match official will be sanctioned with a **minimum 6 match standard suspension** and a £100 fine imposed on their club.
- 18.15** A player or official who is reported for unsporting conduct towards a match official will be sanctioned with a minimum 5 match standard suspension and a £50 fine imposed on their club.

- 18.16** A player or official who is reported for using **threatening or intimidating behaviour** towards a match official as defined in **Rules 14.5.6 and/or 14.6.6** will be sanctioned with a **minimum 10 match standard suspension** and a **£100 fine** imposed on their club. Misconduct under **Rule 18.16** is also subject to the same sanction where the offence has been committed off the field of play, including via social media.
- 18.17** A player or official who is reported for **committing an assault** on a match official (whether or not causing bodily harm) as defined in **Rules 14.5.8 and/or 14.6.8** will be sanctioned with a **minimum 15 match standard suspension up to a maximum suspension of 2 years**. A £250 fine will be imposed on their club.
- 18.18** A player or official who is reported for committing an **assault** on a match official (causing serious bodily harm) as defined in **Rules 14.5.10 and/or 14.6.10** will be sanctioned with a **Sine Die suspension from ALL FOOTBALL RELATED ACTIVITY with no review to be considered by the Committee under a period of 5 years and a £500 fine** imposed on their club.
- 18.19** The sanctions described in **Rules 18.13, 18.14 and 18.15** may also apply in cases of misconduct against officials of NIYFA affiliated clubs, leagues, or the IFA.
- 18.20** A match official who is reported for misconduct or reported for unsporting conduct towards a player, official or any other person shall have the matter referred to and dealt with by an IFA Disciplinary Committee.

RULE 19: MEDIA & SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS/CONTENT

- 19.1** A reprimand, suspension or fine may be issued to players, officials, clubs, leagues or any other recognised football body or person under the jurisdiction of NIYFA in the case of inappropriate comments or content in the media or social media.
- 19.1.1** Players, officials, clubs, leagues, or any other recognised football body or person under the jurisdiction of the NIYFA are deemed responsible at all times for any postings on their social media account(s). The fact that a posting may have been made by a third party will not necessarily prevent disciplinary action from being taken.
- 19.1.2** In addition, re-tweeting/ re-posting/ re-sharing another person’s posting may lead to disciplinary action if the original comment or content was improper.
- 19.2** A player, official, club, league or any other recognised football body or person under the jurisdiction of NIYFA must not make comments or post content in the media or social media which:
- (i) Imply bias, incompetence, or question integrity and/or bring the game into disrepute or which are abusive, offensive and/or insulting and such comments are considered to be football related; or
 - (ii) Criticise the decision(s) and or performance(s) of any or all match officials in such a way as to imply bias, incompetence, or question integrity on the part of such match official(s); or
 - (iii) Make remarks about such match official(s) which impinge on his/their character.
- 19.2.1** A player, official or club must not make public comments relating to a match official who has been appointed to a match involving the player, official or club at any time prior to the relevant match.

Breaches of Rule 19.2 (including 19.2.1) will be sanctioned as stipulated below:

Leagues, recognised football bodies or other persons under the jurisdiction of NIYFA	Minimum 1 match standard suspension	Minimum £100
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- 19.3** Breaches of this code by Match Officials will be dealt with by the Irish Football Association.
- 19.4** The Committee may issue a sanction in the case of repeat offences by players or officials.

RULE 20: INCITING HATRED AND VIOLENCE

- 20.1** A player or official who publicly incites others to hatred or violence will be sanctioned with a suspension for a **minimum six months** and with a minimum fine of £100 Player & £200 Official which will be imposed on their club.
- 20.2** In serious cases, when the infringement is committed using the mass media (such as the press, radio, or television) or if it takes place on a match day in or around a stadium, the minimum fine will be £250 which will be imposed on their club. A **minimum 6-month** standard suspension will also be imposed.

RULE 21: PROVOKING THE GENERAL PUBLIC

- 21.1** A player or official who provokes the public during a match will be sanctioned with a **minimum two match standard suspension** and with a minimum fine of £100 Player & £200 Official which will be imposed on their club.

RULE 22: INELIGIBILITY THROUGH SUSPENSION

- 22.1** If any player participates in a match whilst being suspended or if any player breaches the terms of his suspension his club will be sanctioned with a minimum fine of **£250** (imposed on NIYFA Affiliated Youth teams). Additionally, the Club will forfeit the match by the score 3-0. If the goal difference at the end of the match is greater than three in favour of the club who is not to forfeit the match, the result on the pitch is upheld.
- 22.2** If any official who participates in a match whilst being suspended or if the official breaches the terms of his suspension his club will be sanctioned with a minimum fine of **£350** (imposed on NIYFA Affiliated Youth teams) and/ or a further period of suspension.
- 22.3** The timeframe for payment of a fine may be extended if a club can produce to the Disciplinary Panel evidence of severe financial hardship. A payment plan may be agreed with the Disciplinary Panel pursuant to **Rule 8.2**.

RULE 23 ABANDONMENT

- 23.1** If a club is found to have caused the abandonment of a match it will be sanctioned with a minimum fine of £200. The competition organiser will decide on the outcome of the match following the outcome of any disciplinary inquiry into the abandonment.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, if a match is abandoned by the referee because of racist and/or discriminatory conduct in line with the UEFA three-step procedure, the match shall be declared forfeited. Such abandonments shall be referred to the IFA Committee and shall not be dealt with by the Divisional Associations.

RULE 24: BRAWL

- 24.1** A brawl is defined as three or more people who participate in serious Violent Conduct. Anyone who participates in a brawl will be sanctioned with a **minimum 6 match suspension** and a **£100** fine imposed on their club.
- 24.2** Anyone who tried merely to prevent a fight, shield others, or separate those involved in a brawl is not subject to punishment.

RULE 25: UNIDENTIFIED AGRESSORS

- 25.1** If, in the case of violence by players, officials or supporters it is not possible to identify the perpetrator(s), The Panel may penalise the Club to which the aggressors are deemed to belong.

RULE 26: TEAM MISCONDUCT

26.1 Disciplinary measures may be imposed on clubs where a team fails to conduct itself properly (for example, if individual disciplinary sanctions are imposed by the referee on **five or more** players during a match). Further sanctions may be imposed in the case of serious offences.

RULE 27: DISCRIMINATION

- 27.1** Anyone who offends the dignity of a person or group of persons through contemptuous, discriminatory or denigratory words or actions concerning race, colour, language, religion, or origin shall be suspended for a **minimum of 10 matches**. Furthermore, a fine shall be imposed. Where the perpetrator is a player a **minimum fine of £100** will be imposed on their club. If the perpetrator is an official, the fine imposed shall be a **minimum of £250**. If the perpetrator(s) cannot be identified, the Disciplinary Panel may sanction the club to which they are deemed to belong. Clubs may also be required to engage with appropriate training to address the matter at hand.
- 27.2** Anyone who offends the dignity of a person or group of persons through contemptuous, discriminatory or denigratory words or actions concerning disability, gender or sexual orientation shall be suspended for a **minimum of 10 matches**. Furthermore, a fine shall be imposed. Where the perpetrator is a player a minimum fine of £100 will be imposed on their club. If the perpetrator is an official, the fine imposed shall be a minimum of £250. If the perpetrator(s) cannot be identified, the Disciplinary Panel may sanction the club to which they are deemed to belong. Clubs may also be required to engage with appropriate training to address the matter at hand.
- 27.3** In determining whether the dignity of a person or group of persons has been offended, the Panel will be entitled to draw reasonable inferences there is no requirement to identify an individual who was offended at the time the comment was made or published. In finding a matter to be proved, it will open to the Panel to conclude that by their very nature, the comments made offend the dignity of a person or group of persons. If an individual is identified as a direct addressee of potential discriminatory behaviour, he or she may be invited by the panel to make an oral or written victim impact statement.
- 27.4** Where several persons (officials and/ or player) from the same Club or association simultaneously breach **Rules 27.1 or 27.2** or there are other aggravating circumstances, the team concerned may be deducted three points for a first offence and six points for a second offence; a further offence may result in relegation to a lower division where a member league can accommodate this. In the case of matches in which no points are awarded, the team may be disqualified from the competition.
- 27.5** Where supporters of a team breach **Rule 27.1 or Rule 27.2** at a match, a **minimum fine of £200** shall be imposed on their club, regardless of the question of culpable conduct or culpable oversight unless the club proves to the Panel that exceptional circumstances exist in which case the fine may be reduced. In determining the appropriate sanction, the Panel will be entitled to consider actions taken by the club to prevent such behaviour occurring in addition to previous occurrences of such behaviour which have at any time come to the attention of the Panel. Nothing contained in this paragraph shall interfere with the Disciplinary Panel's power to impose any of the sanctions outlined in paragraph 1.9 of this Code.
- 27.6** The Panel will be guided by the terms of **Rule 31** of this Code in determining whether supporters have acted in a manner in contravention of this Rule.
- 27.7** The offences and fines referred to in these clauses are not exhaustive and the Panel is empowered to levy additional sanctions after considering the seriousness of the offences. Without prejudice to the generality of this, these additional sanctions could include an order to play a match behind closed doors, playing a match with a limited number of spectators, the forfeit of a match, a point's deduction, or disqualification from the competition.

- 27.8** Spectators who breach **Rule 27.1 or Rule 27.2** shall receive a ban of a minimum of 2 years, such a ban will deem the club to which the persons are held to be associated responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the ban.
- 27.9** Unless there are exceptional circumstances, if a match is abandoned by the referee because of racist and/or discriminatory conduct in line with UEFA's three step procedure, the match shall be declared forfeited.

RULE 28: COERCION or UNDUE INFLUENCE

- 28.1** A player or official who uses violence or threats to pressurise a match official into taking certain action or to hinder him in any other way from acting freely will be sanctioned with a **minimum 4 match standard suspension** and with a minimum fine of £100 for a player or £150 for an official which will be imposed on their club.
- 28.2** A player or official who unduly seeks to influence or pressurise a match official to review match footage before submitting a Disciplinary Challenge pursuant to **Rule 34** will be sanctioned with a **minimum 4 match standard suspension** and a minimum fine of £100 for a player or £150 for an official which will be imposed on their club.

RULE 29: FORGERY and FALSIFICATION

- 29.1** Anyone who, in football-related activities, forges a document, falsifies an authentic document, or uses a forged or falsified document may be sanctioned with a fine as determined by the Disciplinary Panel.
- 29.2** If the perpetrator is a player, that player in addition to any other sanction imposed by the Panel, may be suspended for a **minimum of 6 matches**.
- 29.3** If the perpetrator is an official, a player's agent or an intermediary, that official, player's agent or intermediary may in addition to any other sanction imposed by the panel be subject to a ban on taking part in any football-related activity for a **minimum period of 12 months**.
- 29.4** If the perpetrator is an association or a club, that association or club may in addition to any other sanction imposed by the Panel, be subject to an expulsion from a competition or a fine
- 29.5** A club may be held liable for an infringement as defined in **Rule 29.1** committed by one of its officials and/or players. In such a case, an expulsion from a competition and/or a transfer ban may be pronounced in addition to a fine for the club concerned.

Note: IFA Article 30 Corruption and Article 31 Unlawfully Influencing Match Results are exempted from the NIYFA version of the disciplinary code as they are deemed to be associated to Senior Football

RULE 32: LIABILITY FOR SPECTATOR CONDUCT

- 32.1** The home club is liable for any improper conduct among spectators, regardless of the question of culpable conduct or culpable oversight and depending on the circumstances, may be fined. Further sanctions outlined in **Rule 1.9** of this code may be imposed in the case of serious disturbances.
- 32.2** The visiting club is liable for improper conduct among its own group of spectators, regardless of the question of culpable conduct or culpable oversight and depending on the circumstances, may be fined. Further sanctions outlined in **Rule 1.9** of this Code may be imposed. Spectators occupying the away sector of a ground are regarded as the visiting club's supporters, unless proven by the club to the contrary.
- 32.3** Improper conduct includes, but is not limited to, violence towards persons or objects, letting off incendiary devices or causing explosions, throwing missiles, the use of laser pens, displaying insulting slogans in any form, uttering insulting word(s) or sound(s), using offensive gestures, or invading the pitch.

- 32.4** The liability described in **Rules 32.1 and 32.2** also includes matches played on neutral grounds, especially during the semi-final or final of a competition. Should a semi-final or final of a competition be played at the stadium of one of the competing clubs, the club playing at their own stadium will be considered the home club.
- 32.5** The Disciplinary Panel may determine that repeated infringements of **Rules 32.1 and 32.2** will attract further sanctions.

Note: IFA Article 33 Anti-Doping is exempted from the NIYFA version of the disciplinary code as it is deemed to be associated to Senior Football

RULE 34: DISCIPLINARY CHALLENGES

34.1 Mistaken Identity Challenge (Cautionable or Sending-Off Offences)

34.1.1 In the case of a player or official who has been cautioned or dismissed from the field of play in a match but claim that they were the victim of mistaken identity in relation to the imposition of such sanction, a player, official, or their club may submit a Mistaken Identity Challenge in accordance with the procedure set out below in paragraphs **Rules 34.1.2** and **34.1.3**.

34.1.2 Where a player, official or their club wishes to make a Mistaken Identity Challenge, they must notify NIYFA that they intend to make such a Challenge. **Notification** must be provided to the Disciplinary Panel via email to discipline@niyfa.co.uk by **1pm of the next business day** after the date on which the error allegedly occurred.

34.1.3 The Mistaken Identity Challenge (which must be in the prescribed form **DCC2**) along with written submission(s) and supporting evidence must then be submitted via the Comet system by **1pm on the second business day** after the date on which the error allegedly occurred, together with the relevant fee as set out in **Rule 34.1.6**.

The time limits for notification of Mistaken Identity Challenge (**Rule 34.1.2**), Mistaken Identity Challenge along with written submission(s) and supporting evidence (**Rule 34.1.3**) and all other requirements are to be strictly applied. Only complete notifications/ written submissions and supporting evidence submitted before the relevant deadlines will be considered.

34.1.4 Where there are no or insufficient Business Days between two matches in the relevant competition(s) and it would not be possible for a Mistaken Identity Challenge to be determined before the suspension is to be served, the following will apply:

(i) Where there are no Business Days before the next match, notification must be provided to the Disciplinary Panel via email to discipline@niyfa.co.uk at the latest by **1pm on** the day of the next match.

(ii) Where there is just one Business Day before the next match, notification as set out in **Rule 34.1.2** must be complied with.

In respect of the circumstances detailed in **Rules 34.1.4 (i)** and **34.1.4 (ii)**, a player or team official will be permitted to play and/or participate in the next match only if notification as set out in **Rules 34.1.4 (i)** or **34.1.4 (ii)** has been adhered to.

The procedure detailed in **Rule 34.1.3** must then be complied with on the second Business Day after the date on which the error allegedly occurred.

34.1.5 The player, official, or their club, must submit with their claim, the written particulars and evidence upon which their claim is founded. This evidence must include:

- (i) a signed statement from the player or official originally reported by the Referee that they were not responsible for the offence reported and identifying specifically the name of the person

responsible; and

- (ii) a written statement from the player or official who is responsible for the offence.

Wherever possible, video footage of the incident should also be provided.

The Disciplinary Panel will determine the matter on written evidence and video footage if provided. Parties will not be present or represented in person. For the avoidance of doubt, none of the match officials nor the club or player are entitled to be present or represented in person.

In cases of Mistaken Identity pursuant to **Rule 34.1**, whilst the burden of proof is on the Association, the Disciplinary Panel will be entitled to assume that the relevant match official's identification was correct and best placed to act as they did until such time as evidence is produced by the person or club challenging the decision to displace that assumption.

If the Disciplinary Panel is satisfied that the Mistaken Identity Challenge has been proven, the record of the offence will be transferred to the appropriate offender who will be subject to the applicable disciplinary consequences.

- 34.1.6 Where a player, official, or their club wish to submit a Mistaken Identity Challenge a deposit of **£100** must be lodged with NIYFA with the **DCC2** form by **1pm on the second business day** after the date of the match on which the error allegedly occurred.

This sum will be returnable only where a Mistaken Identity Challenge is either successful or not heard. If a Mistaken Identity Challenge is accepted by the Disciplinary Panel and subsequently withdrawn, the deposit will not be returned.

- 34.1.7 The Disciplinary Panel reserves the right to retain the deposit where the club is found to have caused the mistaken identity.

- 34.1.8 The decision of the Disciplinary Panel is final and binding and there will be no right to an appeal in respect of a decision of the Disciplinary Panel to reject a Mistaken Identity Challenge.

- 34.1.9 Where a Mistaken Identity Challenge is rejected, the applicable disciplinary sanction is applied with immediate effect.

- 34.1.10 If the Disciplinary Panel's decision is to reject the Mistaken Identity Challenge, it will, in every case go on to consider whether the player's punishment should be increased.

- 34.1.11 Should the Disciplinary Panel consider any Mistaken Identity Notification/ Challenge to be of a frivolous nature and/or an abuse of process merely to release a player or official from suspension to enable them to participate in a match they shall have power to deal with the player and official and or club as it deems appropriate.

- 34.1.12 In addition, if a Mistaken Identity Challenge is unsuccessful, the player and his club may be held liable for all or part of the expenses of the procedure.

- 34.1.13 A record of the decision will be made and provided to the club of the relevant player or official as well as the match Referee.

Note: IFA Article 34.2 Obvious Error Challenge is exempted from the NIYFA version of the disciplinary code as it is deemed to be associated to Senior Football

34.3 Notice of Complaint Challenge

- 34.3.1 A player, official, match official or club may submit a Notice of Complaint Challenge on form **DCC1** in the case of any Notice of Complaint having been issued against him or it by the Committee pursuant to **Rule 17** of this Code.

- 34.3.2 The Notice of Complaint Challenge must be made in the prescribed form **DCC1** and submitted via the Comet system by **1pm** on the **fourth day** after the date the Notice of Complaint has been issued by the NIYFA Disciplinary Department/ Comet System to the person or club concerned together with the relevant fee as set out in **Rule 34.3.4**.
- 34.3.3 In the case where the deadline for submission of the Notice of Complaint Challenge expires on a Designated Holiday the time period specified above will be extended to the day immediately following the said Designated Holiday.
- 34.3.4 A deposit of **£100** must be lodged with the NIYFA where the Notice of Complaint or sanction is challenged. This sum will be returnable only where the Notice of Complaint Challenge is either successful or not heard.
- 34.3.5 In lodging a Notice of Complaint Challenge, the player, official, match official or club must state fully in writing the grounds for the challenge and provide the Disciplinary Panel with copies of all evidence, documents, and written submissions which the player, official and or club intends to rely on along with the reply to the Notice of Complaint within the timeframe required. Additional evidence may also be considered by the Disciplinary Panel provided that such evidence is submitted as soon as reasonably-practicable.

34.4 Provisions in relation to all Disciplinary Challenges

- 34.4.1 On receipt of a Disciplinary Challenge and providing that the player, official or club have received written notification from the Disciplinary Panel that the Disciplinary Challenge is in order, any sanction (including for the avoidance of doubt any automatic suspension) offered or issued will be suspended pending the determination of the Disciplinary Challenge.
- 34.4.2 When a player, official or match official facing a suspension participates or officiates at a match without such written notification from the Disciplinary Panel, the Panel will issue the appropriate charge against the player, official or match official concerned for participating or officiating in a match whilst being ineligible.
- 34.4.3 Disciplinary Challenges must meet the requirements of this Article to be considered by the Disciplinary Panel. The time limits and other requirements are to be strictly applied, and only complete notifications/ claims submitted before the relevant deadline will be considered.
- 34.4.4 No Disciplinary Challenges will be heard against cautions or dismissals except in the case of a Mistaken Identity Challenge (cautions and dismissals).
- 34.4.5 If the Disciplinary Challenge is unsuccessful, the player, match official, official and or his club may be held liable in all, or in part of the expenses of the Disciplinary Challenge procedure.
- 34.4.6 In the case that a sanction has been issued, a Disciplinary Challenge may be withdrawn by a player, official, match official or club prior to any hearing provided the suspension timeframe (detailed in **Rule 15.7** of this Code) has not passed.

Should the Disciplinary Panel consider any Notification/ Disciplinary Challenge to be of a frivolous nature and/or an abuse of process merely to release a player or official or match official from suspension to enable them to participate or officiate in a match it shall have the power to deal with the player, the match official, the official and/or club as it deems appropriate.

Should a player, official or a club wish to withdraw a Disciplinary Challenge they must notify the Disciplinary Department of such withdrawal in writing.

Upon receipt of such notification, the Disciplinary Challenge will be deemed to be abandoned and the sanction against which the player, official, match official or club had challenged will be imposed with immediate effect in the case of (i) Mistaken Identity or Where a (ii) Notice of Complaint Challenge is abandoned, the sanction offer will be imposed from the following Monday, subject to the overriding objective.

The player or officials club may be held liable in all or in part for the expenses of the Disciplinary Challenge procedure.

- 34.4.7** All Disciplinary Challenges must be submitted with the relevant disciplinary authority of the Divisional Associations which issued the sanction or charge in question.
- 34.4.8** The Disciplinary Panel reserves the right to deal with any issues that arise outside of the referee's attention.

RULE 35: HEARINGS BEFORE AN NIYFA DISCIPLINARY PANEL

- 35.1** The NIYFA Disciplinary Panel shall have the power to conduct a hearing in the following circumstances:
- (i) When a player, official, match official or club lodges a Notice of Complaint Challenge.
 - (ii) When the Disciplinary Panel otherwise deems appropriate to do so pursuant to the over-riding objective
- 35.2** The NIYFA Disciplinary Panel will have the power to direct the attendance of any player, official, match official or representatives of any club to attend at a hearing convened pursuant to this Rule. NIYFA shall notify any person directed to attend of the date, time, and place of the hearing if their attendance is required. It will be the duty of the persons whose attendance is directed to inform NIYFA immediately of any difficulty in attending a hearing. The NIYFA Disciplinary Panel will be guided by the requirement to have the matters dealt with in accordance with the overriding objective.
- 35.2.1** In the event of a person or club whose attendance has been directed does not attend, the NIYFA Disciplinary Panel will be entitled to draw any inference it deems appropriate by their failure to attend when reasonable notice has been provided and/ or to issue a Notice of Complaint against that person or club pursuant to **Rule 36.11**.
- 35.3** Should a referee fail to attend a hearing without just or reasonable cause, the NIYFA Disciplinary Panel has the discretion to report the individual to the referee's committee to take whatever action they feel appropriate in the circumstances.
- 35.4** The NIYFA Disciplinary Panel shall have the power to direct that any person required to attend, produce documentation or items which in the opinion of the Disciplinary Panel would assist them in their determination of any issue at the hearing. In the case of a match official, it will be incumbent upon the match official to provide a full and comprehensive match report, in every case which requires a hearing, no later than seven days before the hearing.
- 35.4.1** The NIYFA Disciplinary Panel will be entitled to draw any inference it deems appropriate by the failure of any person or club to produce any such documentation or item, or if the documentation or item is materially incomplete, when reasonable notice to produce the same has been provided, or when in the opinion of the Disciplinary Panel it would have been obvious to the relevant party that such material should have been produced to assist the Disciplinary Panel with its deliberations. Furthermore, the Disciplinary Panel may issue a Notice of Complaint against that person or club arising from a player, official, match official or club's failure to produce any documentation or item when reasonable notice to do so has been provided.
- 35.5** It shall be the duty of anybody or anyone facing any complaint to notify the NIYFA Disciplinary Panel no less than **48 hours** before a hearing of the attendance of any person (including representatives) attending the hearing together with the details of any witness they may wish to call. A club is responsible for ensuring that its players or officials attend a hearing. Failure to notify the Disciplinary Panel will entitle the Disciplinary Panel to exclude any person from the hearing.
- 35.6** The NIYFA Disciplinary Panel shall be entitled to deal with any hearing if a person or club, including those who are the subject of any Notice of Complaint fails to attend the hearing, if satisfied that it is pursuant to the overriding objective to do so.
- 35.7** In advance of the hearing, any person or club appearing before the NIYFA Disciplinary Panel to answer any Notice of Complaint must be given copies of any documentation relevant to the facts of the Notice of Complaint which is already in the possession of the NIYFA Disciplinary Panel and upon which the Disciplinary

Panel may rely. Where documentation is received for the first time in the course of any hearing, the Disciplinary Panel will determine, following enquiry of any person or club answering a Notice of Complaint, whether in the interests of fairness time should be afforded to any party to consider such documentation.

- 35.8** If before a hearing it becomes apparent to the NIYFA Disciplinary Panel that the case will involve specialist (including medical) evidence, or has elements which are unusual or difficult, the Disciplinary Panel may direct that such evidence be served in such a manner that the hearing of the case may be properly and fairly conducted.
- 35.9** The NIYFA Disciplinary Panel shall be entitled to rely upon audio or video footage, including but not limited to television evidence when considering any case before it. The Disciplinary Panel should, where practicable, identify to any person or club charged of the existence of such footage it intends to rely upon and where the material is not publicly available invite the person or club charged to attend the offices of this Association in advance of any hearing to be afforded an opportunity to inspect this material. The existence of such material having been identified, it will be incumbent upon the person or club charged to make arrangements through the Secretary to the NIYFA Disciplinary Panel to inspect the material.
- 35.9.1** Where a person or club who is the subject of a charge intends to rely on such material, it will be the responsibility of that person or club to provide copies of the footage which the NIYFA Disciplinary Panel is capable of viewing no later than **48 hours** in advance of the hearing.
- 35.10** The NIYFA Disciplinary Panel shall be entitled to rely upon any evidence or material which it deems capable of being relevant to the issues before the Disciplinary Panel giving such weight as it deems fit to the evidence, dependent upon its source and its content. It will be for the Committee to determine what evidence it hears and considers.
- 35.11** Where it appears to the NIYFA Disciplinary Panel that a player, official, match official or club has acted in a manner intended to frustrate the process of conducting an effective hearing, the Committee shall have the power to charge that person or club pursuant to **Rule 36.12**.
- 35.12** If the circumstances so require, the NIYFA Disciplinary Panel may arrange for a hearing to be conducted by video conference or any other similar method.

RULE 36: PROCEDURES FOR THE CONDUCTING OF HEARINGS

Principles

- 36.1** Hearings before the NIYFA Disciplinary Panel are disciplinary proceedings; the Panel is not a court of law. The Panel shall endeavour, where possible, to abide by the provisions under this Rule; however, it shall retain an overriding discretion to act in accordance with the overriding objective.
- 36.2** The burden of proof regarding disciplinary infringements rests on the Association. It is for the Association through the process set out in this Code to present evidence to the Panel and establish a case against a person or club subject to disciplinary proceedings. Where it appears to the Panel that the Association has failed to discharge that burden, the Panel shall be entitled to discontinue charge proceedings.
- 36.3** The standard of proof in all disciplinary cases is on the balance of probabilities. For the avoidance of doubt, there is no sliding scale.
- 36.4** During the course of any hearing, all submissions and questioning must be directed through the appointed Chairman of the Panel. During the course of any hearing, the Chairman of the Panel shall, in his discretion, direct the parties on how proceedings are to be conducted.
- 36.5** Where a hearing is convened, all members of the Panel must avoid a situation in which they or any Club that they represent or are associated with has, or may have, a direct or indirect interest that conflicts, or possibly may conflict, with the interests of the Panel or the overriding objective. In particular, no member of the Panel shall be entitled to vote on any matter directly related to or involving the Club that they so represent or are associated with.

- 36.5.1 Members of the Panel must declare any such conflict of interest to the Panel as soon as they become aware of it. It will be incumbent upon any person or club appearing at a hearing before the Panel to identify at the outset of proceedings whether they believe any such conflict of interest arises. If required, the Chairman of the Panel will determine whether a conflict of interest has arisen and take what steps are necessary to ensure that a fair hearing results pursuant to the overriding objective.
- 36.6 Any person or club subject to a Notice of Complaint and appearing before the Panel who is of the opinion that they have not been given reasonable notice of the alleged breach(es) of the Disciplinary Code or the evidence to be relied upon during the course of any hearing will be entitled to invite the Panel to consider whether an adjournment should be granted. The Panel will determine whether any adjournment is required pursuant to the overriding objective.
- 36.7 Where notice has been given of a hearing to any person or club subject to a Notice of Complaint pursuant to **Rule 17** the Panel will have the power to proceed to a hearing in the absence of the person or club charged if they fail to attend at the date and time notified without providing a reasonable excuse. Where the Panel find that the attendance of any person or club subject to the Notice of Complaint or required to attend is necessary to properly determine any issue before them, the Panel will have the power to suspend any such person or club until such time as they appear before the Panel, in which event every reasonable attempt will be made to agree with the person the date for a further hearing.
- 36.8 Any player, official, match official club or league subject to a Notice of Complaint will be entitled to be represented at a hearing by a nominee or representative providing notice of the attendance of such persons (including the name, contact details and profession of such a person) has been given to the Panel no later than **48 hours** before the hearing. In the event that such notice has not been given, it will be at the discretion of the Panel to refuse such a person entry to the hearing.
- 36.9 The player, official, match official and/or representatives of the club or league subject to a Notice of Complaint will be admitted to the hearing, together with the relevant match official(s) or other such person who submitted a report or evidence in relation to the charge(s) before the Panel, including evidence relied upon by the person or club charged. It will be at the discretion of the Panel to refuse any such person entry to the hearing where there has been inadequate notice as directed in this Code.
- 36.10 The Panel will have the power to require the attendance at the hearing of any witness who is capable of giving relevant evidence on the issues before the Panel. In any case where a witness required by the Panel to attend the hearing refuses or fails to attend, the Panel will be entitled to take account of any written evidence available from that witness and determine what weight can be attributed to that evidence in the absence of their attendance.
- 36.11 Persons or clubs subject to a Notice of Complaint will be entitled at a hearing to call relevant evidence from any person. Clubs must give notice in writing or by email to the Panel of the name and contact details of any such witness together with details of the nature of any such evidence, including a written account of that person's evidence no later than **48 hours** before any hearing. The Panel shall determine whether such evidence is relevant for the purpose of any hearing and direct whether such evidence may be relied on pursuant to the overriding objective.

Contempt of the Disciplinary Code

- 36.12 Where it appears to the NIYFA Disciplinary Panel that, during any charge procedure, hearing, or in the aftermath of any such procedure or hearing, any party has sought to deliberately mislead the Panel or endeavoured by any means to frustrate the due process of proceedings pursuant to this Code, the Panel shall be entitled to charge any such persons with being in Contempt of the Disciplinary Code.
- 36.12.1 In such circumstances, the Panel will determine whether to deal with such matters summarily as they arise or whether to adjourn pursuant to the overriding objective. The Panel shall have the power to sanction any party found to have been in breach of these provisions by way of suspension or fine.

Proceedings at Hearings

- 36.13** At the commencement of a hearing, the Chairman shall confirm the identities of the persons admitted to the hearing and introduce the Panel members.
- 36.14** Before hearing evidence, the Panel shall satisfy itself that the player, official and/or club is aware of the reasons for their presence at the hearing and the nature of the allegations made against them.
- 36.15** The Panel (only) shall have the power to appoint a Case Presenter to assist the Panel at a hearing when it is deemed appropriate to do so. Such a person must be legally qualified and shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Panel. The case presenter shall have the role of outlining the case, presenting the evidence defined at paragraph **36.17** to the Panel and, at the discretion of the Chairman of the Panel, challenging, the evidence as defined at paragraph **36.18**. The Case Presenter will be excluded from any aspect of a hearing which does not involve the presentation of evidence, submissions on the facts or the Panel determination.

In cases where a Case Presenter is appointed, supplementary questions from the Panel shall only be asked by the Chairman of the Panel. As a person appointed by the Panel, the Case Presenter shall be treated by all parties involved in the hearing with the same degree of respect to be afforded any member of the Panel.

The Chairman may disengage or direct the Case Presenter as appropriate pursuant to the overriding objective. Any person charged in relation to a case where a Case Presenter is to be used shall be notified of this no later than seven days before the Hearing.

Sanction Only Hearings

- 36.16** Where in advance of a hearing, the person or club subject to a Notice of Complaint has indicated that they accept the breaches of the Disciplinary Code alleged but wish to make representations in respect of the appropriate sanction, the person or club charged or the representative (but not both) may, at the discretion of the NIYFA Disciplinary Panel be invited to attend a hearing to make relevant representations to the Panel; the Panel shall be guided by **Rule 36.22** in terms of the receipt of such representations.

Where the person or club charged wishes to call evidence in these circumstances, the Panel will be guided by the principles set out at **Rules 36.17 - 36.22**. All deliberations and decisions of the panel shall be guided by **Rules 36.23 - 36.29** of this Code.

- 36.16.1** The Panel has the right to hold a hearing in any circumstance that it feels necessary, regardless of whether the person or club subject to a Notice of Complaint wishes to make representations in terms of sanction. Parties are encouraged to attend in order that the matter may be dealt with in accordance with the principles overriding objective set out in **Rule 1.6**.

Charge & Sanction Hearings

- 36.17** The NIYFA Disciplinary Panel will first hear and/or consider the evidence available to the Panel including (but not limited to) the evidence upon which a Notice of Complaint has been issued. The player, official, match official, club or league subject to a Notice of Complaint or their representative (but not both) shall be given the opportunity through the Chairman to challenge any such evidence. The Chairman of the Panel shall have discretion to restrict questioning pursuant to the overriding objective.
- 36.18** The Panel will then hear and/or consider any relevant evidence called on behalf of the player, official, match official club or league subject to a Notice of Complaint. The Panel and/or any person appointed by the Panel for the purpose of presenting a Notice of Complaint to the Panel will be entitled, through the Chairman of the Panel to challenge any such evidence.

- 36.19** The Panel may draw such inferences as it considers appropriate from the failure of any person concerned with any Notice of Complaint to give evidence in accordance with this Code or to answer a question put to them during the course of a hearing. Nothing in this article should be regarded as conflicting with the presumption of innocence in favour of the person or club subject to a Notice of Complaint and the burden of proof upon the Association to prove a charge is made out.
- 36.20** The Panel will be entitled to consider any relevant disciplinary record of any person or Club as part of the evidence in the case. However, the Panel must not come to any finding of fact which is founded singularly or significantly on any previous adverse disciplinary finding. Previous disciplinary findings must not be used to bolster the evidence against a person or club charged when the other evidence is weak or tenuous.
- 36.21** The Panel will be entitled to receive and consider all relevant evidence including (but not limited to) oral evidence, written statements, television and radio evidence, extracts from social media and other internet-based material. Where a witness purports to give relevant evidence, that person should attend to give live oral evidence. Any statement or letter submitted in the name of any person will be deemed to be from the purported author of such material unless proven to the contrary and can be used against that person by the Panel for any other relevant purpose including separate disciplinary proceedings. Where evidence is not first-hand, such evidence will be given such weight as the Panel deems fit.
- 36.22** At the discretion of the Chairman, following the conclusion of the evidence at a hearing, the player, official, match official, club or league and/or their representative(s) (but not both) will be given the opportunity to supplement any written submission to the Panel and make limited representations on the evidence before the Panel and in respect of the sanction which would be imposed were the alleged breach(es) set out within the Notice of Complaint to be proven. The Chairman of the Panel shall have a discretion to restrict any representations including placing a time limit upon them.

Deliberations

- 36.23** Having heard the evidence and any submissions, the Chairman shall invite all persons other than the members of the Panel to retire whilst the Panel considers its decision in private.
- 36.24** When coming to their determination, the Panel shall do so only on the evidence which has been called, referred to or presented before the Panel at the hearing. At the Chairman's discretion, following retirement the Panel may recall the parties to deal with any issue concerning their deliberations.
- 36.25** The Panel shall come to its determination in respect of a Notice of Complaint and any sanction based on a straightforward majority. Where required, the Chairman shall have a casting vote.

Decisions

- 36.26** Following their deliberations, the person or club charged and/or their representatives shall be invited to return before the Panel for the delivery of the Panel's determination. The NIYFA Disciplinary Panel pass their decisions entirely independently; in particular, they shall not receive instructions from any other body. The person or club charged shall be informed of the Panel determination, that is to say:
- (i) What alleged breach(es), if any, have been proven.
 - (ii) What alleged breach(es), if any, have not been proven.
 - (iii) If proven, what core findings of fact the Panel have reached in coming to their determination on the alleged breach(es) set out within the Notice of Complaint.
 - (iv) What sanction has been imposed in respect of any alleged breach(es) proven.
 - (v) What factors have been taken into account in determining any sanction imposed.
- 36.27** Any person or club against whom, following a hearing, an alleged breach has been proven, will be notified by the Panel that confirmation of the decision will be given in writing by email to the email address previously

provided during the Notice of Complaint procedure.

They will be reminded of their right of appeal pursuant to **Rule 14** of the **Rules of NIYFA** both at the conclusion of the hearing and subsequently in writing.

36.28 *IFA Article 36.28 is exempted from the NIYFA version of the disciplinary code as it is deemed to be associated to Senior Football*

36.29 The deliberations of the Panel are private and will not be divulged to any person who was not present during the course of the Panel's retirement. The deliberations of the Panel, including the opinions or votes of any of its members will not be disclosed. Nothing in this Article will prevent the Panel from making representations to the Appeals Board if called upon following the submission of an Appeal by any person or club found to have breached this Code setting out the factual findings of the Panel in respect of any case.

36.30 Where it is not proven to the satisfaction of the Panel that a person or club has breached this Code, the hearing will be declared closed, and the deposit paid by them shall be returned as soon as is reasonably practicable.

36.31 The members of the Panel will not be held liable for any deeds or omissions relating to any disciplinary procedure.

RULE 37: FAILURE TO RESPECT DECISIONS

37.1 Anyone who fails to pay another person (such as a player, a coach or a club) or FIFA a sum of money in full or part, even though instructed to do so by a body, a committee or an instance of FIFA or a subsequent CAS appeal decision (financial decision), or anyone who fails to comply with another decision (non-financial decision) passed by a body, a committee or an instance of FIFA, or by CAS (subsequent appeal decision):

- (i) will be fined for failing to comply with a decision.
- (ii) will be granted a final deadline by the judicial bodies of FIFA in which to pay the amount due or to comply with the (non-financial) decision;
- (iii) (only for clubs): will be warned and notified that, in the case of default or failure to comply with a decision within the period stipulated, points will be deducted or relegation to a lower division ordered (where a member league can facilitate this). A transfer ban may also be pronounced;
- (iv) (only for associations): will be warned and notified that, in the case of default or failure to comply with a decision within the period stipulated, further disciplinary measures will be imposed. An expulsion from a FIFA competition may also be pronounced.

37.2 If a club disregards the final time limit, the relevant association shall be requested to implement the sanctions threatened.

37.3 If points are deducted, they shall be proportionate to the amount owed.

37.4 A ban on any football-related activity may also be imposed against natural persons.

37.5 Any appeal against a decision passed in accordance with this article shall be lodged with CAS directly.

37.6 Any financial or non-financial decision that has been pronounced against a club by a court of arbitration within the relevant association or National Dispute Resolution Chamber (NDRC), both duly recognised by FIFA, shall be enforced by the association of the deciding body that has pronounced the decision in accordance with the principles established in this article and in compliance with the applicable disciplinary regulations.

37.7 Any financial or non-financial decision against a natural person by a court of arbitration within the relevant association or NDRC, both duly recognised by FIFA, shall be enforced by the association of the deciding body that has pronounced the decision or by the natural person's new association if the natural person has in the meantime registered (or otherwise signed a contract in the case of a coach) with a club affiliated to

another association, in accordance with the principles established in this article and in compliance with the applicable disciplinary regulations

RULE 38: MISCONDUCT WHICH HAS COME TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COMMITTEE OTHER THAN BY MEANS OF A MATCH OFFICIALS REPORT

- 38.1** A club submitting a complaint of misconduct about any player, official, match official or club must submit their complaint in writing dispatched by email on club headed paper to secretary of the league and discipline@niyfa.co.uk within **14 days** from the alleged misconduct coming to their attention. NIYFA will send a copy of the complaint to the club or person who is the subject of the complaint.
- 38.2** A deposit of **£100** shall be lodged with NIYFA in accordance with 38.1 of this code, which shall be returnable only where it is determined that there is a case to answer. The investigation of a complaint shall not commence until the NIYFA has received the deposit.
- 38.3** In lodging a complaint the club must state fully in writing outlining their complaint and include copies of all evidence, documents, and written submissions which the Club intends to rely on to substantiate their complaint within the specified timeframe.
- 38.4** An affiliated League, Committee, Committee member, match official or department within the NIYFA submitting a complaint of misconduct must submit their complaint in writing dispatched by email to discipline@niyfa.co.uk within **14 days** from the alleged misconduct coming to their attention. NIYFA will send a copy of the complaint to the club or person who is the subject of the complaint.
- 38.5** An affiliated League, Committee, Committee member, match official or department within the IFA will not be required to adhere to the procedure detailed in **Rule 38.2** of this Code.
- 38.6** In lodging a complaint, an affiliated League, Committee, Committee member, match official or department within the NIYFA must state fully in writing outlining their complaint and include copies of all evidence, documents, and written submissions which the relevant party intends to rely on to substantiate their complaint within the specified timeframe.
- 38.7** The NIYFA Disciplinary Panel reserves the right to deal with cases of serious misconduct that arise outside of the referee's attention.
- 38.8** All complaints of misconduct from a club will require full co-operation from the claimant.

RULE 39: MISCELLANEOUS OFFENCES

- 39.1** Where a match official's report indicates that an offence has occurred which is not specified in this Disciplinary Code the Disciplinary Panel reserves the right to impose sanctions within the IFA Disciplinary Code.

RULE 40: APPEALS COMMITTEE

- 40.1** Appeals against decisions of the Disciplinary Panel must be lodged as directed in **Article 14 of the IFA's Articles of Association**.

ARTICLE 14 of the IFA Articles of Association

Appeals Committee

1. The Appeals Committee shall, unless the Members in a general meeting determine otherwise, consist of a panel of twelve persons:
 - (a) Six members nominated by Council with at least one member from each of Senior, Intermediate and Junior Football.
 - (b) Six members nominated by the Board, who shall not be members of any Club and who shall serve for such time as the Board decides, from whom the Board shall appoint the Chairman who shall have a legal background, as determined by the Board from time to time. No member of the Board shall be a member of the Appeals Committee.
2. Other than an appeal by a member against its expulsion, a player, official, referee, Club, Associate Member, Organisational Member or League has the right to appeal to the Appeals Committee against any decision of a Club, committee, League or other such body within the Association which is imposed upon him or it, provided that the appellant has exhausted such appeals procedures as were available to the appellant consequent upon the decision in question, unless satisfactory grounds are given for not having done so. For the avoidance of doubt, an appeal by a player must be submitted either:
 - (a) By the player personally, setting out the grounds for the appeal in writing; or
 - (b) By the player's Club on the player's behalf, setting out the grounds for the appeal in writing, and countersigned by the player.
3. An appeal hearing shall not be conducted as a re-hearing and will not allow evidence which was not previously adduced to the body which heard the case in the first instance unless good reason can be shown as to why it was not made available in the first instance. In such a case the Appeal Board will refer the case back to the body whose decision is appealed in line with Article 14(6)(e).
4. An appeal must be despatched by special delivery letter to the Chief Executive within four days after the date of the meeting at which the decision appealed against was taken unless for any reason it was not made known to the appellant at that meeting, in which case it must be despatched by special delivery letter to the Chief Executive within four days after the date on which the decision was notified in writing to the person or body concerned. Such letter shall state the grounds of appeal. A deposit of £100 shall be lodged with each appeal which shall be returnable only where the appeal is upheld. A copy of the Appeal must be sent simultaneously by special delivery letter to the body or committee whose decision is appealed against.
5. The Chief Executive shall, upon receipt of an appeal, forward it to the chairman of the Appeals Committee. The chairman of the Appeals Committee shall appoint from its members an appeal board consisting of a minimum of three persons to hear and determine an appeal. No person shall sit on an appeal which involves himself or any Club in which he has an interest. All appeals should be heard, where possible, within fourteen days of receipt of appeal.
6. The appeal board shall have the power to:
 - (a) Affirm the decision of the body whose decision is appealed against
 - (b) Uphold the appeal by setting aside the decision appealed against and quashing any penalty imposed
 - (c) Uphold the appeal in part by setting aside part only of the decision appealed against
 - (d) Substitute for the decision appealed against a decision to find the appellant guilty of a lesser offence and/or to impose a lesser penalty or penalties in respect thereof

(e) Refer the case, or any part of it, back to the body whose decision is appealed against

(f) Take any step which, in the exercise of its discretion, the appeal Board considers appropriate to deal justly with the case in question, but only within the parameters laid down by the FIFA and IFA Disciplinary Codes and these Articles of Association.

If the appeal is unsuccessful, the appellant may be held liable for all or part of the expenses of the appeal procedure. Should the appeal board consider any appeal to be of a frivolous or vexatious nature or merely to release a player/official from suspension to enable him to participate in a match it shall have power to deal with the appellant as it shall deem appropriate.

An appeal may be withdrawn by an appellant prior to the hearing of the case by notifying the Chief Executive of withdrawal in writing. The appeal shall, upon receipt of such notification by the Chief Executive, be deemed to be abandoned and the original decision against which the appellant appealed shall be regarded as final and binding.

Upon withdrawal of an appeal, the appeal deposit shall be forfeited. The appellant may be held liable by the appeals board for all or part of the expenses of the appeal procedure.

8. Upon the conclusion of each appeal the appeal board shall submit a written report on the outcome of the appeal to the Appeals Committee and Football Committee.
9. Each member of the Appeals Committee shall hold in confidence all matters discussed at meetings of the Committee and of appeal boards.

RULE 41: NORTHERN IRELAND YOUTH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION DISCIPLINARY CODE

- 41.1** The procedures described within the code may be adapted to suit the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association noting that some powers can be administered by the Disciplinary Panel only. However, the fines & sanctions detailed in this code must be adopted for the purpose of harmonising disciplinary sanctions.
- 41.2** The Northern Ireland Youth FA shall be entitled to choose their means of communication when notifying suspensions or charges.
- 41.3** The Northern Ireland Youth FA shall carry out all of its football administration, including notifications of suspensions or charges, via the Comet system.


PLEASE NOTE THE SHORT AND FULL VERSIONS OF THE IFA SAFEGUARDING POLICIES ARE AVAILABLE TO
DOWNLOAD FROM YOUR LEAGUE WEBSITE.

Appendix 1 - Safeguarding

Irish Football Association



Safeguarding Children
and Young People
in Football Policy

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1. Our Club/League/Organisation acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of every child and young person and is committed to providing a safe environment for all. A child is any person under the age of 18. We adopt the Irish FA Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football Policy and Procedures and will apply this across our club/league/organisation.

Our Club/League/Organisation endorses and adopts the following key safeguarding principles:

- the welfare of the child is paramount;
 - all children and young people have a right to be treated equally regardless of their age, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status or civil partnership, race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, ability or disability. There are no circumstances where abuse is acceptable.
 - ensuring that all allegations of abuse are responded to promptly, in a confidential manner and in line with statutory and Irish FA guidelines;
 - sharing information about concerns with safeguarding agencies that need to know and involving children and young people and their parents or guardians if appropriate.
2. Our Club/League/Organisation has a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people by protecting them from all forms of abuse, including bullying, and creating a safe playing environment. It is accepted that the Irish FA's Articles of Association in relation to Safeguarding Children and Young People apply to everyone in affiliated football whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, including coaches/managers, volunteers, match officials, medical staff or other club officials/representatives.
 3. We adopt the Irish FA's Safe Recruitment guidelines and, as a minimum, we will ensure:
 - We will meet with potential volunteer(s), ascertain their motivation for taking up their prospective role and interview people before appointing them;
 - Ask for and follow up with appropriate references before appointing someone;
 - We will communicate their full role and responsibilities within our club prior to them taking up a role;
 - All those in regulated activity (coaching, providing transport or medical/physiotherapy on behalf of the club, supervising overnight stays/residentials) complete an Enhanced Disclosure Check through AccessNI in accordance with Irish FA procedures prior to us offering them a role. This will be updated every three years;
 - All those acting on behalf of our club will attend Irish FA-approved safeguarding children and young people training relevant to their role. This will be refreshed every three years.
 - In the case of Leagues/Games Centres, we will take all reasonable steps to ensure participating clubs/coaches have followed safe recruitment procedures.

If there are concerns regarding the appropriateness of an individual who is already involved in affiliated youth football or who has approached us to become part of our football club, guidance will be sought from the Irish FA.

We accept that the Irish FA will consider the relevance and significance of the information obtained via AccessNI checks and that all suitability decisions will be made in accordance with legislation and in the best interests of children and young people.

We accept that the Irish FA aims to prevent people with a history of relevant and significant offending from having contact with children or young people and the opportunity to influence policies or practice with children or young people. This is to prevent direct sexual or physical harm to any person and to minimise the risk of 'grooming' within football.

4. Our Club/League/Organisation has appointed a Designated Child Safeguarding Officer (DCSO) in accordance with Irish FA Articles of Association.

The post holder will have completed Irish FA safeguarding training relevant to their role as well as a suitable AccessNI check. The DCSO is the first point of contact for all club members regarding concerns about the welfare of any child or young person.

The DCSO will play a proactive role in increasing awareness of respect, poor practice and abuse amongst club members and regularly communicate with the club management committee/ Board. The DCSO may liaise directly with the Irish FA Safeguarding Team for advice and guidance on potential safeguarding issues and inform them of any referrals to statutory services.

5. We acknowledge the Irish FA's identification of bullying as a form of abuse. Bullying of any kind is not acceptable at our club. If bullying does occur, all players and parents/carers should be able to access our anti-bullying policy and know that incidents will be dealt with appropriately. Incidents need to be reported to the DCSO. In cases of serious bullying we may seek advice from the Irish FA.
6. Codes of conduct for players, parents/spectators, officials and coaches have been implemented by our club. All those involved in our club have a responsibility to adhere to the positive behaviours outlined in the relevant code of conduct. Any behavioural issues will be addressed by our DCSO and sanctions may be imposed depending on the seriousness, intent, regularity and potential impact of behaviour in breach of the relevant code.
7. Blowing the whistle on practice or behaviour which compromises the safety and welfare of children and young people who participate in our club activities can be daunting. Volunteers who whistle-blow about concerning practice or behaviour at our club should be reassured that they will be believed and supported. Children and young people should be encouraged to disclose to a trusted adult, either internal or external to our club. Parents and guardians can voice their concerns, where appropriate, to the head coach/programme manager. You may contact the Irish FA on 028 9066 9458 should you wish to discuss any concerns.
8. The safety of the child will always be paramount. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and we know that inaction is not an option. If anyone is worried about a child, it is important that they report their concerns to the DCSO who may deal with reported concerns as follows:
 - i. Our DCSO will endeavour to address poor practice concerns with the support of our management structure. Where necessary we may seek advice from the Irish FA Safeguarding Team.
 - ii. Our DCSO may make referrals about more serious concerns to the Irish FA or, in an emergency, statutory services.
 - iii. We aim to meet the immediate needs of the child. If they require medical treatment, we may call an ambulance and tell them it is a child protection concern.
 - iv. Our DCSO will keep records of the actions taken and inform the Irish FA of any allegations of abuse or serious cases of poor practice.
 - v. If at any time our DCSO is not available, or the matter is clearly serious, all our members should be aware that they can:
 - Contact our club chairperson;
 - Contact the Irish FA's Safeguarding Team on 028 9066 9458;
 - Contact the Police on 101; and/or
 - Health and Social Care Trusts.

In Northern Ireland each health trust has a Gateway team to deal with initial reports of abuse and to provide contacts for ongoing professional liaison and advice on concerns.

Northern HSC Trust Tel 0300 1234 333 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

South Eastern HSC Trust Tel 0300 1000 300 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

Southern HSC Trust Tel 0800 7837 745 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

Belfast HSC Trust Tel 028 9050 7000 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

Western HSC Trust Tel 028 7131 4090 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

You can also call the NSPCC 24-hour Helpline for advice on 0808 800 5000 or text 88858 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

Additional contacts are available on the Irish FA Safeguarding App at

<https://www.irishfa.com/irish-fa-foundation/grassroots-and-youth-football/safeguarding>

Members of _____ Committee understand procedures.

We commit to ensuring our members are aware of and have access to our policies.

Role	Name	Contact details
Chairperson		
Designated Child Safeguarding Officer (DCSO)		
Deputy DCSO		
Secretary		

APPENDIX 2 - VETTING CHECKS

To register an official, all clubs, leagues, affiliated bodies and Associations must follow appropriate selection procedures ensuring they are satisfied with the applicant/volunteer. This process should include but is not limited to:

An application process.

- Confirmation of any experience working with children.
- Previous coaching experience.
- A commitment to engage in additional training as required by the club.
- Reference checking.

If satisfied with the applicant/volunteer, the club, league or association/affiliated body must ensure that all volunteers engaging in Regulated Activity complete an Enhanced Disclosure Vetting Check prior to confirmation of their membership.

To allow the Irish FA/**NIYFA** to assess the suitability of a club official to take up membership of the **NIYFA**, the club, league/association or affiliated body must ensure that the club official engaging in Regulated Activity completes a satisfactory vetting check.

The application process is as follows:

- When satisfied with the applicant, the club will issue a hard copy of the AccessNI application form to each applicant. This application can be found at <https://www.irishfa.com/irish-fa-foundation/grassroots-and-youth-football/safeguarding>
- Each applicant must complete the application full, including the online registration for an Enhanced Disclosure Check (against the Barred list if the work is unsupervised).
- Each applicant must return the application form to the club welfare officer or chairperson along with 3 pieces of identification for identity checking.
- Each applicant should, if necessary, submit the self-declaration form outlining any relevant cautions and/or convictions to Kevin Doyle, Irish FA Safeguarding Manager, NFS Windsor Park, Belfast, BT12 6LU.
- The club welfare officer/chairperson should record the name, dob and AccessNI reference number and forward the application form and copies of identification to Kevin Doyle, Irish FA Safeguarding Manager, NFS Windsor Park, Belfast, BT12 6LU. All information should be included on the relevant online club registration system.
- On receipt of the completed application the Irish FA will:
 - Process the application to AccessNI.
 - Receive notification from AccessNI outlining:
 - (i) **Nothing to disclose** – The Irish FA/**NIYFA** will inform the club welfare officer/chairperson that the individual could be considered for appointment.
 - (ii) **Certificate Issued** – The Irish FA will request from the applicant, the original disclosure certificate and a full explanation of any disclosures outlined within. The applicant may provide or be required to provide relevant additional information allowing the Irish FA to assess the individual's suitability to fulfil their proposed role. This may include but is not limited to written references and/or additional reports relating to the convictions. The applicant may be required to attend an interview as part of the assessment process. The Irish FA will inform the club, league or affiliated body if the applicant has been successful and any measures that should be put in place to manage any identified risk. The club/league/affiliated body may be required to engage in this assessment process.
 - (iii) **Further information required** – the Irish FA may be required to request additional information from the applicant for the purposes of progressing the application.

This decision will be taken by the Irish FA Case Management Panel.

The Irish FA is committed to equal opportunities for all and does not preclude applicants with criminal convictions. Convictions will only be considered when relevant to the position that the applicant has applied for.

Applicants whose disclosure certificate returns information in relation to their criminal record will be judged on a case-by-case basis. Disclosures do not necessarily preclude a person from taking a role within affiliated youth football.

The assessment of suitability will depend on several factors:

- the nature of the position.
- the self-disclosure of any prosecutions or convictions.
- the seriousness, timing and any possible pattern that emerges of any information disclosed.
- the potential of reoffending to cause harm to young people/vulnerable adults.

The following information is considered:

- Age of applicant now and at the time of the offence.
- Type and nature of the offence.
- Number of offences on record.
- Pattern of offending or date since last offence.
- Contact with young people and/vulnerable adults.
- Any mitigating factors.
- Any aggravating factors.
- Disclosure by applicant.
- Cooperation with case management process.

Disclosure of certain types of convictions/prosecutions may automatically preclude the applicant from a position working with children. Examples of offences that may prohibit an applicant are:

- Any offence of a sexual nature.
- Any offence against a child.
- An offence that causes gross bodily harm.
- An offence of kidnapping.
- A series of continuous offending that might cause concern for the well-being of children.

Any applicant who submits inaccurate information (at any stage of the process), omits relevant information, or does not engage meaningfully in the assessment process may not be permitted to take up membership of the NIYFA either temporarily or permanently.

All documentation will be returned to the applicant on completion of the process. The Irish FA will retain confirmation of the decision to grant membership or not.

All clubs, leagues, affiliated and associated bodies must ensure they maintain accurate and up to date record of all club officials including confirmation of vetting checks and safeguarding training, both of which should be updated every 3 years.

Appeals

An appeals process can be made available to any individual who is subject to a decision made by the CMP.

- All requests must be submitted in writing, by special-delivery post, within 14 days after the date the decision was intimated in writing to the individual concerned.
- A fee of £75 must be enclosed with the appeal. The fee shall be returned only where the appeal is upheld or not heard.
- The request must clearly identify the decision the individual wishes to appeal, on what grounds they wish to make the appeal, and reasons as to why it would be unfair not to change the decision. Evidence must also be submitted to support the claim.
- The Appeals Panel will exclude any person who sat on the original CMP.
- Where an appeal has been rejected or not heard, the initial decision made by the CMP will stand.
- The Appeals Panel will notify the individual, in writing, of the outcome of the appeal process.

Should an individual wish to withdraw their appeal prior to the hearing taking place, they must notify the Irish FA's Safeguarding Team in writing. In such cases, the original decision made by the CMP will be upheld. The individual may also be subject to a cancellation fee.

APPENDIX 3 - PLAYER TRAINING/TRIALS AGREEMENT FORM

Agreement for club registered players to attend trial, training or as a guest player for another club during the period of the registration. Please PRINT ALL sections except for signature.

Name of Player _____ Name of Club _____

I _____ head of youth/secretary* of the above-named club hereby approve the Request from Name of Club _____ to invite the above named player to a trial, to train and or to guest for the said team in a tournament between the following dates _____ to _____ inclusive.

Signed _____ Role _____ Date _____

Declaration

I _____ head of youth/secretary* of Name of Club _____

Acknowledge the cooperation of; Name of Club _____

In releasing the above-named player and will comply with the agreed dates noted above. I also understand any failure to comply with these dates will leave our club subject to sanction as per the current league disciplinary code.

Signed _____ Role _____ Date _____

*delete as appropriate but the approval must be authorised by an official at this level of the club.

This signed document and a copy must now be submitted to the league or leagues of the two clubs named above.

League use only

Name of League: _____

Received by: _____ (Print Name)

Date: _____