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England Golf Gender and Fairness in Competition Policy

Introduction

England Golf passionately believes that golf belongs to everyone. All who play, and all who aspire to play, should have an equal opportunity to do so. Equality, diversity and inclusion are fundamental principles which are at the heart of what we do and principles we strive to achieve, promote and uphold throughout the game of Golf.

At the same time, England Golf must also ensure that fair and level competition is achieved as far as possible, within the context of competitive events.

This policy has been published following guidance published in 2021 by the Sports Councils' Equality Group (SCEG), regarding their inclusion policies with respect to transgender and non-binary participants.

This policy aims to balance the principles of fairness and gender inclusion in a way that is reasonable and proportionate for the sport of amateur golf in England.

In considering this policy, the Board of England Golf have attempted, as far as possible, to reach an informed view, taking account of the medical evidence currently available and the emerging guidance. However, the Board recognises that there are limitations to the information available to it. For example, it is acknowledged that scientific evidence regarding transgender and gender diverse participation in sport is incomplete and continually developing, in particular relating to performance advantage at elite level, and there is currently insufficient evidence to unequivocally inform policy development.

England Golf is committed to keeping this policy, and its impact, under review and will continue to take account of the developing evidence around the issue of transgender and gender diverse participation in sport and any impact upon the issue of fairness in competition.

Revisions to this policy will be recorded in the modifications table at the bottom of this policy.

1. Application of the Policy

England Golf respects the right of all individuals to adopt a gender identity different than their sex assigned at birth. Except as set out below, individuals may participate in all England Golf activities without restriction. Unlawful discrimination, abuse or harassment, contrary to the Equality Act 2010, will not be tolerated.

This policy applies to golf competitions organised by and under the jurisdiction of the England Golf Championships Department ('Eligible Competition'). It applies to transgender and non-binary golfers who wish to compete in a gender that is different to their sex assigned at birth.



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It is recognised that there is a group of rare chromosomal/genetic conditions, referred to as differences in sex development (DSD) conditions. It is not possible to set out a policy for golfers with those conditions, and any golfer with such a condition can contact the England Golf Governance Department via compliance@englandgolf.org to confidentially discuss their circumstances.

England Golf is committed to providing an inclusive, respectful and welcoming environment for all who play and compete in England Golf competitions. In the event that any person has a concern regarding an individual's eligibility to participate within a competition, they should not attempt to raise those concerns directly with the individual. Any concerns should be directed to the England Golf Governance Team.

If any concern under this policy is identified during an event, the competitor should be permitted to continue, and England Golf can be contacted after. Any individual wishing to raise any concern under this policy should do so with the principles of respect, discretion and confidentiality in mind, remembering that such matters are likely to be sensitive in nature. Concerns under this policy should therefore be discussed with England Golf officials, but individuals are discouraged from sharing their concerns more widely.

This policy operates without prejudice to the other eligibility requirements that are applicable to individuals under any England Golf policies and regulations, including without limitation the England Golf and/or UKAD (UK Anti-Doping) Anti-Doping Rules in force from time to time.

Nothing in this policy permits, excuses, or justifies non-compliance with any of those requirements, including without limitation any requirement for an individual to obtain a therapeutic use exemption for the use of substances on the UKAD and/or WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) Prohibited Substances on the Prohibited List, and individual players have sole personal responsibility at all times for ensuring their own compliance with any restrictions or stipulations as set down by UKAD from time to time.

2. General Eligibility

At all times, the England Golf General Conditions, Hard Card and Terms of the Competition for the relevant competition shall apply. Therefore, all entrants into England Golf competitions are required to have a valid WHS™ Handicap Index®. WHS™ requires a golfer to be identified as male or female, and an individual can only hold one gender category of WHS™ handicap at a time.

3. Handicap Competitions

Handicap competitions are either male competitions, female competitions, or mixed competitions.

- For male competitions, competitors are required to hold a WHS™ handicap which identifies that they are a male golfer.



- For female competitions, competitors are required to hold a WHS™ handicap which identifies that they are a female golfer.
- For mixed competitions, competitors may compete in the gender in which they hold their WHS™ handicap.

4. Scratch Competitions

Scratch competitions are either male competitions, female competitions, or mixed competitions.

- For male competitions, players may compete in a competition if any one of the following circumstances apply:
 - their sex assigned at birth is male
 - they identify as a transgender man
 - they identify as non-binary
- For female competitions, players may compete in a competition if any one of the following circumstances apply:
 - their sex assigned at birth was female, **and** they have not undergone or commenced any process to transition to a transgender man
 - they identify as non-binary, but their sex assigned at birth was female **and** they have not undergone or commenced any process to transition to a transgender man
- For mixed competitions:
 - a player may only compete as a female golfer if any one of the following circumstances apply:
 - their sex assigned at birth was female, **and** they have not undergone or commenced any process to transition to a transgender man
 - they identify as non-binary, but their sex assigned at birth was female **and** they have not undergone or commenced any process to transition to a transgender man
 - a player may compete as a male golfer if any one of the following circumstances apply:
 - their sex assigned at birth was male
 - they identify as transgender man
 - they identify as non-binary

Combined Competitions – Scratch and Handicap Combined

Where there is a competition that allows individuals to play for both prizes (scratch **and** handicap), the eligibility requirements for players to win in either section of that competition will continue to apply. For example, a transgender women would be permitted to play in a



combined competition but would only be eligible to compete for the handicap competition prize, and not for the scratch prize.

5. Investigations

England Golf has the right to investigate whether an individual who is competing, is intending to compete or has competed within an eligible competition, if there are any circumstances which indicate non-compliance of this policy by that individual, including a suspicion of non-compliance which is reasonably held in good faith.

An individual who is subject to an investigation under this section is required to co-operate fully in good faith. Failure to do so may result in a decision to provisionally suspend the individual from competing in an eligible competition, pending a resolution and/or, disciplinary proceedings being instigated which, where a competition has already been played, could result in disqualification of individual results and/or the forfeit of any prize already won.

In addition, England Golf has a right to temporarily suspend an individual from competing in an eligible competition where further investigation is required before a conclusion can be reached.

England Golf will use reasonable endeavours to complete any investigation as quickly as possible.

6. Disciplinary Proceedings

Where an individual is found to have contravened this policy, either intentionally or negligently, England Golf may, at its sole and absolute discretion, provisionally suspend the individual, and/or disqualify the individual results obtained within the relevant competition. In such an event, any associated prize, status, or other such award, shall be forfeited.

Furthermore, at the sole and absolute discretion of England Golf, any such breach of this policy may be subject to investigation and/or disciplinary action pursuant to the applicable rules or policies of England Golf.

The England Golf Disciplinary Regulations set out the process that will be followed in cases where a disciplinary process is deemed appropriate.

7. Malicious or Bad-Faith Allegations

Where an allegation is raised in respect of an alleged breach of this policy, and there is reasonable suspicion or evidence to suggest that the allegation has been made either in bad-faith and/or with malicious intent, England Golf reserves the right to investigate and/or take appropriate action against the individual who made the allegation, as deemed necessary, including but not limited to, disciplinary sanction.

8. Unforeseen Issues

Should an issue arise which is not foreseen within this policy, England Golf reserves the right to address the issue in a manner which it considers is reasonable, appropriate and in keeping with the general principles of this policy.

9. Appeals

There is a right of appeal against any action taken under section 6 of this policy, as detailed in the England Golf Disciplinary Regulations.

Definitions

The following terms have the following meanings in this policy

Handicap Competition	A competition played in accordance with Rule 3.1.c (2) of the Rules of Golf: <i>"In a handicap competition: The player's 'net score' for a hole or the round is the gross score adjusted for the player's handicap strokes.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>This is done so that players of differing abilities can compete in a fair way."</i>
Scratch Competition	A competition played in accordance with Rule 3.1.c(1) of the Rules of Golf: <i>"How Players Score: Gross Scores or Net Scores</i> <i>(1) Scratch Competitions. In a scratch competition: The player's 'gross score' for a hole or the round is their total number of strokes (including strokes made and penalty strokes).</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>The player's handicap is not applied."</i>
Sex Assigned at Birth	The designated sex, whether male or female, that is ascribed to an individual at birth, based on genitalia and recorded on an individual's birth certificate at the time of birth, regardless of any subsequent changes to the birth certificate
Gender	Expressing or considering oneself to be a man or a woman
Transgender	An individual who adopts a different sex identification than their sex assigned at birth
Transgender Man	An individual assigned female at birth, who identifies as male
Transgender Woman	An individual assigned male at birth, who identifies as female

Non-binary	An umbrella term used to describe someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman
DSD Conditions	A term used to describe a broad group of rare conditions involving genes, hormones and reproductive organs, including the genitals. It means a person's sex development is different than expected.

Version History

Version	Approval date	Description of changes	Approved by

