

NEWRY AND DISTRICT POOL LEAGUE

CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

For players, team officials, substitutes, team-mates and supporters

Purpose: to protect fair play, safety and respect before, during and after league fixtures, including the conduct of people waiting to play.

Adoption date: _____ Version 1 - October 2026

1. Purpose and principles

This Code sets the standards of conduct expected at all Newry and District Pool League activities. It is intended to ensure that fixtures are played fairly, safely and in a respectful atmosphere, and that complaints and disciplinary matters are handled consistently.

The League promotes the following values:

- Integrity
- Respect
- Fairness
- Sportsmanship
- Safety

Everyone associated with a team is expected to help prevent problems, not merely avoid causing them.

2. Scope: who and what this Code covers

This Code applies to:

- registered players and substitutes;
- team captains, vice-captains and other team officials;
- team-mates who are waiting to play or who have finished playing;
- supporters, guests and any person attending with or on behalf of a team; and
- League officers, committee members and match officials when acting in a League capacity.

It applies before, during and after a fixture or competition, whether at the playing venue, immediately outside it, at a League meeting or presentation, or through a communication directly connected with League activity, including team or League messaging groups and social media.

A team may be required to answer for the conduct of its players, officials, team-mates, supporters or guests where the team knew, or reasonably should have known, of the behaviour and failed to take reasonable steps to prevent or stop it.

3. Rules of play

All League matches and competitions must be played in accordance with the International Rules for 8-ball pool (or any rules agreed by the Committee) adopted by the Newry and District Pool League, together with any published League constitution, competition rules, fixture rules and properly notified local arrangements.

- Players must make themselves familiar with the rules in force for the relevant season or competition.
- Where a rules question arises, play should be paused and referred calmly to the team captains or the appointed match official.
- A disagreement about a rule does not justify abuse, intimidation, delaying tactics or confrontation.
- Any formal protest must follow the League process and should not be argued repeatedly during the fixture.

4. Expected conduct at fixtures

4.1 Players at the table

- Play honestly, fairly and in the spirit of the game.
- Treat opponents, team officials, venue staff, match officials and spectators with courtesy.

- Accept decisions without aggression. A captain may seek a calm clarification through the proper channel.
- Do not deliberately distract an opponent by talking, movement, noise, gestures, mobile-phone use or other behaviour during a visit or shot.
- Do not use abusive, insulting, discriminatory, threatening or persistently provocative language.
- Do not damage tables, cues, balls, scoring equipment, furniture or any venue property.
- Do not cheat, falsify a result, manipulate a scorecard or use any unfair means.
- Comply with reasonable instructions from the venue, team captains, match officials and League officers.

4.2 Team-mates waiting to play

Players and team-mates who are waiting for their game remain subject to this Code. They must not:

- heckle, taunt, intimidate or crowd a player;
- coach or give tactical advice where the applicable rules prohibit it;
- create excessive noise or deliberately disrupt the playing area;
- repeatedly challenge refereeing or rules decisions from the side-lines;
- enter the playing area without permission or interfere with equipment;
- use threatening body language, aggressive gestures or unwanted physical contact;
- encourage retaliation, confrontation or disorder; or
- continue conduct after being asked by a captain, official or venue representative to stop.

Captains should deal early with side-line behaviour. A person does not need to be playing at the time for disciplinary action to follow.

4.3 Alcohol, substances and safety

- No person may participate or remain in the playing area if their condition or behaviour creates a safety risk or materially disrupts the fixture.
- Alcohol consumption does not excuse misconduct.
- Illegal drugs, weapons and violent conduct are prohibited.
- Venue licensing, safeguarding, health and safety, and house rules must be respected.
- Any immediate danger should be reported to venue staff and, where necessary, the appropriate emergency service.

5. Misconduct

Misconduct means unacceptable or improper behaviour that interferes with the proper running of the League or a fixture, undermines fair competition, harms or risks harm to another person, damages property, or brings the League into disrepute.

Misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- violent conduct, attempted violence, fighting or unwanted physical contact;
- conduct or language that is threatening, abusive, insulting, disorderly, obscene or persistently provocative;
- harassment, bullying, discriminatory abuse or victimisation;
- intimidation of an opponent, captain, official, committee member, witness, complainant or venue employee;
- deliberate interference with play, repeated unsporting conduct or refusal to follow a lawful and reasonable instruction;
- cheating, collusion, deliberate falsification of a result, fraud, deception or dishonesty connected with the League;

- damage, defacement, theft or misuse of League, venue or another person's property;
- conduct that creates an avoidable risk of injury or materially impairs safety;
- abusive or damaging online communications directly connected with League activity;
- retaliation against a person for raising a complaint or assisting an investigation;
- failure by a team captain or official to take reasonable steps to control their team or associated persons; and
- conduct connected with League activity that may constitute a criminal offence.

6. Responsibilities of team captains

The captain is the primary point of contact during a fixture and should:

- brief players and team-mates on expected behaviour;
- help maintain an orderly playing area;
- address low-level issues promptly and calmly;
- liaise with the opposing captain and venue representative;
- ensure the result and any incident report are accurate;
- preserve relevant evidence and identify witnesses where a serious incident occurs;
- avoid public arguments about a disciplinary matter; and
- cooperate with any League investigation.

Captaincy does not make a person personally responsible for every unexpected act, but a failure to intervene reasonably, report serious misconduct or comply with League instructions may itself be considered misconduct.

7. Immediate management of an incident

1. Safety first. Stop play where necessary and separate those involved without using unnecessary force.
2. The captains should speak privately and calmly, away from the table where possible.
3. A clear warning may be given for lower-level behaviour. The warning and the behaviour should be noted.
4. **Playing under protest: where a captain has first approached the opposing captain verbally about bad behaviour, that approach has been ignored or has not resolved the issue, and the bad behaviour continues, the captain should send a WhatsApp or text message to a League officer or a person they know to be a member of the Disciplinary Committee. The message must describe the incident and state clearly that the team is playing "under protest". This message must only be sent after the initial verbal approach and the bad behaviour continuing.**
5. **The captain sending the message must make the opposing captain or vice-captain aware that the message has been sent and that the team is playing under protest.**
6. **The captain may withdraw the complaint at any point by sending a further WhatsApp or text message to the same recipient. However, the Committee reserves the right to investigate the incident and take any action permitted under this Code and the League rules, even if the complaint is withdrawn.**
7. **This procedure does not require play to continue where it is unsafe and does not delay the reporting of a serious incident.**
8. A person may be asked to leave the playing area or venue where the behaviour continues or the incident is serious, subject to the authority of the venue and match officials.
9. If the fixture cannot safely or fairly continue, record the score and circumstances at the point play stopped. Do not invent or agree a final result outside the League rules.
10. Serious incidents should be reported to the League Secretary as soon as reasonably practicable.

8. Making a complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about conduct or about the handling of a League matter that requires a formal response. Wherever possible, complaints should be submitted in writing to the League

Secretary. A WhatsApp or text message sent to a League officer or a known member of the Disciplinary Committee under the playing-under-protest procedure in section 7 also constitutes written notification of a complaint.

A complaint should include:

- the complainant's name, team and contact details;
- the date, venue and fixture or event;
- the names of the person or people complained about, if known;
- a clear factual description of what occurred;
- the names of witnesses;
- any relevant score sheet, photograph, video, message or other evidence; and
- the outcome sought, if the complainant wishes to state one.

Anonymous information or casually overheard comments may be considered for safeguarding or risk purposes, but formal disciplinary action should not normally be based on rumour alone. The Committee may act without a formal complaint where credible information indicates serious misconduct or a risk to safety or the integrity of the competition.

9. Initial assessment

The League Committee, or a designated disciplinary panel, should conduct an initial assessment and may:

- take no further action where the matter is outside the Code, unsupported or too minor to justify formal action;
- seek clarification or additional evidence;
- encourage an informal resolution where appropriate and accepted by those involved;
- refer a rules or result issue to the relevant competition process;
- open a formal disciplinary investigation;
- impose an interim measure where reasonably necessary to protect safety, participants or the integrity of the competition; or
- refer a matter to the venue, governing body or appropriate authority.

An interim measure is precautionary and is not a finding of guilt. It should be proportionate and reviewed as the matter progresses.

10. Formal disciplinary procedure

11. Notice: the respondent should receive written notice of the allegation, the relevant part of the Code, the available evidence and the possible consequences.
12. Response: the respondent should have a fair opportunity to provide a written response, identify witnesses and submit relevant evidence.
13. Investigation: the appointed person or panel may gather statements, records and other relevant material.
14. Hearing or paper review: the matter may be decided at a hearing or on the papers, depending on seriousness and the League's constitution or rules.
15. Impartiality: a person with a material conflict of interest should not decide the case.
16. Decision: the panel should decide the facts on the balance of probabilities and give a written outcome with reasons and any sanction.
17. Confidentiality: information should be shared only with those who reasonably need it, subject to fair process, safety and any legal obligation.

11. Sanctions

Where misconduct is established, one or more proportionate sanctions may be imposed, having regard to the seriousness, impact, intent, previous relevant conduct, cooperation, remorse, provocation, risk of repetition and any action already taken by the venue.

Possible sanction	Typical use
Informal or formal warning	For minor or first-time misconduct.
Match-related direction	Removal from the playing area, loss of eligibility for the remainder of a fixture, or another outcome permitted by competition rules.
Behaviour agreement	Conditions governing future attendance or participation.
Suspension	Temporary suspension from playing, attending fixtures, acting as captain or holding League office.
Points, match or competition sanction	Only where authorised by the League constitution or competition rules.
Expulsion or long-term exclusion	For the most serious cases or persistent misconduct, in accordance with the League constitution.
Team sanction	Where misconduct is attributable to a team, is repeated, or was enabled by a failure to control associated persons.
Referral	Referral to the venue, governing body, police or another competent authority where appropriate.

No points, match, competition or team sanction should be imposed unless the League's constitution or competition rules give authority for that sanction.

12. Appeals

A respondent may appeal a formal decision in accordance with the League constitution or disciplinary rules. Unless those rules state otherwise, an appeal should identify a specific ground, such as a material procedural error, a decision not reasonably supported by the evidence, significant new evidence that could not reasonably have been supplied earlier, or a sanction that is clearly disproportionate.

The appeal should, where practicable, be considered by people who did not make the original decision. The appeal outcome should be recorded in writing and will be final within the League's internal process, subject to any rights under the League constitution or applicable governing-body rules.

13. Records, communication and non-retaliation

- The League should keep proportionate records of complaints, evidence, decisions, sanctions and appeals.
- Decisions should be communicated only to those who need to know, while providing enough information to implement a sanction and maintain fair process.
- No person may threaten, disadvantage or harass someone for making a complaint in good faith, giving evidence or participating in the process.
- A complaint made maliciously or knowingly based on false information may itself be misconduct. A complaint is not malicious merely because it is not upheld.

14. Venue action and League action

A venue may use its own rules and may refuse service, require a person to leave or restrict access. Venue action does not automatically prevent the League from considering the same conduct under this Code. Equally, a League decision does not limit the lawful authority of a venue or public authority.

15. Relationship with other League rules

This Code should be read with the League constitution, International Rules (or any rules agreed by the Committee) adopted by the League, competition rules and published League decisions. If there is a conflict, the League should apply the document with the higher authority under its constitution and record how the conflict was resolved.

16. Review and amendment

This Code may be amended by the body authorised under the League constitution. Members and teams should be notified of material amendments before they take effect, except where an urgent temporary measure is reasonably required for safety or competition integrity.

Appendix A: Fixture-night quick guide

Situation	Expected response
Before play	Captains identify themselves, confirm the applicable rules and remind their teams that waiting players and supporters are covered by the Code.
Low-level issue	Raise it captain-to-captain, state the behaviour that must stop, and note any warning.
Playing under protest	First raise bad behaviour verbally with the opposing captain. If the approach is ignored or does not resolve the issue and the behaviour continues, send a WhatsApp or text to a League officer or known Disciplinary Committee member describing the incident and stating that the team is playing "under protest". Make the opposing captain or vice-captain aware of the message.
Withdrawing a complaint	The captain may send a further message to the same recipient at any point to withdraw the complaint. The Committee may still investigate and take action under the Code and League rules.
Rules dispute	Pause play, check the applicable rule or refer to the appointed official. Do not argue across the table.
Serious or repeated behaviour	Stop play if necessary, protect safety, involve venue staff, preserve evidence and report promptly.
Fixture abandoned	Record the score, time and circumstances. Leave the outcome to the authorised League process.
After the fixture	Submit a factual written report. Avoid social-media debate, retaliation or attempts to influence witnesses.

Appendix B: Incident report information

- Fixture / competition and date
- Venue and approximate time
- Teams involved
- Person(s) involved and their role
- Factual account in chronological order
- Words or actions directly witnessed
- Immediate steps taken and by whom
- Score and status of the fixture
- Witness names and contact details
- Available evidence
- Name, role, signature and date of person submitting report