

GENDER AND FAIRNESS IN COMPETITION POLICY 2026

NLCGA

This document has been developed using guidance from England Golf and has been written to comply with the Supreme Court ruling regarding the definition of a female under the 2010 Equality Act.

England Golf has undertaken its own extensive review of available information and evidence and has produced a policy that is informed by its research and aligns with its values. England Golf has invested considerable time in determining its approach on the subject matter of this policy, and has thought carefully about how to mitigate, as far as possible, any negative consequences for any affected individuals.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Northumberland Ladies County Golf Association (The NLCGA/County) shares the belief of England Golf that golf belongs to everyone. All who play, and all who aspire to play, must have an equal opportunity to do so. The NLCGA is committed to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion throughout its membership, its paid and volunteer workforce, and any others with whom the NLCGA engages.

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

In considering this policy, the County have attempted, as far as possible, to reach an informed view, taking account of The Supreme Court ruling of April 16, 2025 regarding the legal definition of a women. Specifically, they ruled that sex as used in the Equality Act 2010 is “binary” and decided by biology – a person who was not born as a biological female cannot obtain the legal protections the Act affords to women by changing their gender with a Gender Recognition Certificate.

Notwithstanding this, it is acknowledged that this is a complex matter and the scientific evidence regarding transgender and gender diverse participation in sport is continually developing, in particular relating to performance advantage at elite level.

- 1.2 The NLCGA will keep 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.

2. APPLICATION OF THE POLICY

- 2.1 This policy applies to golf competitions organised by the NLCGA.
- 2.2 The NLCGA absolutely do not condone unlawful discrimination, abuse or harassment, contrary to the Equality Act 2010, will not be tolerated by the NLCGA.
- 2.3 This policy applies to golf competitions organised by the NLCGA. It applies to transgender and non-binary golfers who wish to compete in a gender that is different to their sex assigned at birth.
- 2.4 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 NLCGA Competition Secretary to confidentially discuss their circumstances. The NLCGA may contact England Golf in such a case, to obtain support on the recommended approach. In the event the Competition Secretary is unavailable contact the NLCGA Secretary.

- 2.5 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 Competition Secretary at the NLCGA. In the event the Competition Secretary is unavailable contact the NLCGA Secretary
- 2.6 If any concern under this policy is identified during an event, the competitor should be permitted to continue, and the NLCGA 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 the Competition Secretary at the NLCGA, but individuals are discouraged from sharing their concerns more widely. In the event the Competition Secretary is unavailable contact the NLCGA Secretary

3 General Competition Eligibility

- 3.1 At all times, the NLCGA's Terms of Competition and Bye-laws, which are available on the NLCGA website, will apply to Competitions and Inter-Club matches..
- 3.2 Where the NLCGA enters England Golf competitions, the NLCGA is obliged to adhere to all England Golf requirements at all times. In that respect, 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.

4 Handicap Competitions

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

5 Scratch Competitions

- 5.1 For scratch competitions for females or mixed 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

6. 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, For example, a transgender woman would be permitted to play in a combined competition but would only be eligible to compete for the individual nett prizes and the nett team prize but , but not for the scratch prize or scratch team prize. Neither would they be able to qualify for knockout stages in the event of matchplay follow up rounds.

7 Investigation

- 7.1 The NLCGA 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.

- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 In addition, the NLCGA may consider a temporary suspension of an individual from competing in an Eligible Competition where further investigation is required before a conclusion can be reached.
- 7.4 The NLCGA will use reasonable endeavours to complete any investigation as quickly as possible.
- 7.5 The NLCGA reserves the right to seek support and/or guidance from England Golf relating to investigations for alleged breach of this policy.

8 Disciplinary Proceedings

- 8.1 Where an individual is found to have contravened this policy, either intentionally or negligently, the NLCGA may provisionally suspend the individual from Association events, report the competitor to England Golf, disqualify individual results and any associated prize, status or other such award would be forfeited.
- 8.2 Furthermore, 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.
- 8.3 The NLCGA reserves the right to seek support and/or guidance from England Golf relating to disciplinary proceedings for alleged breach of this policy.
- 8.4 The NLCGA's disciplinary policy sets out the process that will be followed in cases where a disciplinary process is deemed appropriate.

9. 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, the NLCGA 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.

10. Unforeseen Issues

Should an issue arise which is not foreseen within this policy, the NLCGA 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.

11. Appeals

There is a right of appeal against any action taken under section 7 of this policy, as detailed in the NLCGA's disciplinary policy.

12. Single Sex Facilities

- 12.1 The NLCGA wishes to create and encourage an inclusive, safe and welcoming environment for all. Consideration will be given to the provision of safe washroom and changing facilities in selecting clubs as venues for NLCGA organized competitions. Specifically, if there are suitable single sex facilities and whether

there is any private, self-contained or accessible facility that can be used where appropriate. This policy reflects the guidance on Single sex spaces provided by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

- 12.2 Any concerns relating to the issue of same sex facilities within the NLCGA should be directed to the Competition Secretary. In the event the competition secretary is unavailable contact the NLCGA secretary.

13 Further Guidance and Support

Additional information can be found from the following sources:

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: “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. • This is done so that players of differing abilities can compete in a fair way.”
Scratch Competition	A competition played in accordance with Rule 3.1.c(1) of the Rules of Golf: “How Players Score: Gross Scores or Net Scores (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). • The player’s handicap is not applied.”
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.