



Irish Pony Club Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure

The Irish Pony Club is committed to providing the best possible environment for all young people involved in sport. The Irish Pony Club also has a duty to care for volunteers working with its Members on behalf of the organisation. The Irish Pony Club expects appropriate behaviour from all Members, Parents and others participating in any Irish Pony Club activity. Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing the following behaviours are considered breaches:

- Minor:** Breaches relating to welfare of the Horse.
Inappropriate behaviour towards another person.
Failure to comply with the rules and regulations.
- Serious:** Failure to maintain a safe environment.
Slanderous behaviour of any kind towards another person.
Discrimination against another person.
Victimisation of another person for exercising their rights through the codes of conduct.
- Criminal:** Sexual harassment or intimidation of another person.
Theft.
Embezzlement.
Violent or abusive behaviour toward another.

Any conduct or action not befitting or in breach of the Irish Pony Club ethos by a Member, Parent or Guardian, Instructor, Official or Committee Member can be considered by the Panel of Investigation.

The Irish Pony Club has developed Complaints, Disciplinary and Appeals Procedures for each of the following:

1. Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure for Members
2. Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure for Parents or Guardians or Other supporters
3. Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure for Irish Pony Club Instructors Officials or Volunteers

The Irish Pony Club has also developed the following:

1. The Complaints Procedure Process – a graphical representation
2. The Formal Complaints Procedure
3. The Appeal Procedure
4. The Competition Complaints and Objections Procedure

The guidelines in this document are based on national documents as outlined in the Code of Ethics adopted by the Irish Pony Club which can be found at:

<https://irishponyclub.ie/images/pdf/2018/safeguarding/ipc-codeofethics-updated10.12.2018.pdf>



Irish Pony Club Complaints Procedure

I'm not happy, how do I make a complaint??





Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure for Members

Discipline in sport should always be positive in focus, providing the structure and rules that allow participants to learn to set their own goals and strive for them. It should encourage young people to become more responsible for themselves and therefore more independent.

- The main form of discipline should be positive reinforcement for effort. It should encourage the development of emotional and social skills as well as skills in competition.
- Children should be helped to become responsible about the decisions and choices they make within competition, particularly when they are likely to make a difference between competing fairly and unfairly.
- There should be no place for fighting, over – aggressive or dangerous behaviour in competition or at any other time. Members should treat others in a respectful manner. They should not interfere with, bully or take unfair advantage of others.
- There should be no place for bad sportsmanship. No-one, child or adult, should be allowed to revile, demean or bully another for failing to win, to succeed, or for a poor performance, under any circumstances.
- It is anticipated that formal disciplinary action will only be used when all other avenues have been tried.
- Complaints must be raised within three months of you knowing the facts (we do not deal with complaints that are older).

Complaints against Members:

The District Commissioner (DC) or his or her designated representative should look into the allegations against the Member to ascertain the basic facts and whether or not there were any other witnesses. This should concentrate upon facts and details of what actually happened. Where possible, witnesses should be spoken to. Once the facts of the case have been established the appropriate course of action can be decided upon. While the time taken to investigate the incident may be beneficial as a “cooling off” period, the investigation should be completed as quickly as reasonably practicable. This should not prevent a verbal warning being given on the day of the incident with the investigation being carried out by the activity organiser who can then give the warning and inform the DC of their actions. **See outline on page CD 2 above.**

Disciplinary procedures for Members:

- In the first instance, a **formal verbal warning** should be given by the DC or the activity organiser. When such a warning is given it is essential that strict confidentiality is maintained; it should be given in a private setting with a witness and the Member’s parent/guardian or other suitable adult present. The Member or his/her parent/guardian or suitable adult representative may discuss the warning at the time with the person giving the warning which may be withdrawn as a result of those discussions. If the warning is given by the activity organiser the DC should be



informed as soon as reasonably practicable. The DC should keep a confidential record of the warning. There is no formal procedure to appeal against a verbal warning.

- Subsequent bad behaviour will result in a **written warning** in the form of a letter being given to the Member. Normally this would be given to the Member by the DC with another member of the Branch Committee present as a witness and the Member's parent/guardian or other suitable adult present. The Member or their adult representative should have the opportunity to respond. If the behaviour is considered to be sufficiently bad it may be necessary to give a written warning without first giving a formal verbal warning. The warning should indicate that the Member can appeal against the warning to the Area Representative within three weeks of receipt of the warning. The DC should keep a confidential record of the warning. There is no formal procedure to appeal against the Area Representative's decision.
- In the event of the bad behaviour being repeated it may be considered necessary for the benefit of the other Members of the Branch to **terminate or suspend Membership** for a period of time. This may in extreme cases be considered necessary after a single act by the Member. The Member should be informed of the decision in writing. Normally this would be given to the Member by the DC with another member of the Branch Committee present as a witness and the Member's parent/guardian or other suitable adult present. The DC should keep a confidential record of the warning. The warning should indicate that the Member may appeal within a period of three weeks from receipt of the notification, in the first instance to the Area Representative, and subsequently, within a period of three weeks from receipt of the Area Representative's decision, either party may appeal against the Area Representative's decision to the Irish Pony Club Appeals Committee (see below).
- Members may **appeal** against written warnings, termination or suspension of their Membership, in line with the appeals procedure on page CD 10 below.



Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure for Parents or Guardians or Other supporters

It is anticipated that formal disciplinary action will only be used when all other avenues have been tried.

Complaints must be raised within three months of you knowing the facts (we do not deal with complaints that are older).

Complaints against Parents or Guardians or Other supporters:

The District Commissioner (DC) or his or her designated representative should look into the allegations against the Parent or Guardian or Other supporter to ascertain the basic facts and whether or not there were any other witnesses. This should concentrate upon facts and details of what actually happened. Where possible, witnesses should be spoken to. Once the facts of the case have been established the appropriate course of action can be decided upon. While the time taken to investigate the incident may be beneficial as a “cooling off” period, the investigation should be completed as quickly as reasonably practicable. This should not prevent a verbal warning being given on the day of the incident with the investigation being carried out by the activity organiser who can then give the warning and inform the DC of their actions. **See outline on page CD 2 above.**

Disciplinary Procedure for Parents or Guardians or Other Supporters:

Where the behaviour of a parent or guardian or supporter is considered to be detrimental to the conduct of Branch activities it may be necessary to give them a formal warning or ban them from attending Irish Pony Club activities.

- The **formal verbal warning** should be given by the DC or the activity organiser with another member of the Branch Committee present. The parent or guardian or supporter should have the opportunity to respond. If the warning is given by the activity organiser the DC should be informed as soon as reasonably practicable. The DC should keep a confidential record of the warning.
- A **formal written warning** can be given in the form of a letter to a parent/guardian or supporter. Normally this would be given to a parent or guardian or supporter by the DC with another member of the Branch Committee present as witness. The parent or guardian or supporter should have the opportunity to respond. The warning should indicate that the parent or guardian or supporter can appeal against the warning to the Area Representative within three weeks of receipt of the warning. The DC should keep a confidential record of the warning. There is no formal procedure to appeal against the Area Representative’s decision.
- Where the behaviour of a parent or guardian or supporter is considered to be detrimental to the conduct of Branch activities it may be necessary **to ban them from attending Irish Pony Club activities**. Normally a parent or guardian or supporter will have received a previous written warning before a ban is required, however certain types of behaviour are unacceptable and warrant banning a parent or guardian or supporter from Irish Pony Club activities immediately. The parent or guardian or supporter should be informed of the decision by means of a letter from the DC, which should indicate the reasons for the decision and indicate that the parent or guardian

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or supporter can appeal against the ban to the Area Representative within three weeks of receipt of the ban, and that if this appeal is not successful they may appeal to the Irish Pony Club Appeals Committee. They should also be informed that the Member with whom they are associated is still welcome at Irish Pony Club activities and that the DC will indicate on entry forms to competitions run by other Branches that they have been banned from attending Irish Pony Club activities.

- Parents or guardians or other supporters may **appeal** against written warnings or banning from Irish Pony Club activities in line with the appeals procedure on page CD 10 below.

The Irish Pony Club reserves the right to restrict and or prohibit attendance at any of its activities to any person whom the Irish Pony Club considers to be unsuitable.



Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure for Irish Pony Club Instructors Officials or Volunteers

Any minor misdemeanors and general misbehaviour of an Irish Pony Club Instructor, Official or Volunteer should be dealt with immediately and reported verbally to the appropriate person, with the report followed up in writing as soon as is practicable. **See outline on page CD 2 above.**

However, complaints must be raised within three months of you knowing the facts (we do not deal with complaints that are older).

Serious or persistent breach of the code of conduct will result in disciplinary action and could lead to dismissal from the Irish Pony Club, **following the procedures as outlined for Parents or Guardians or Other supporters on page CD 5 above.**

A dismissal could be appealed in line with the appeals procedure on page CD 10 below.



The formal complaints procedure (Step 3 on page CD 2 above) is as follows:

1. The written statement of complaint must be submitted to the Chairman of the Equestrian Executive Committee (EEC) using the formal complaint form (from I.P.C website) together with any other supporting evidence. This must be done within 2 weeks of the meeting arranged by the Area Rep at Step 2 on page CD2 above.
2. The Chairman of the EEC will send the written complaint to the person or persons against whom the complaint is made, who may respond in writing to the Chairman of the EEC within 2 weeks.
3. A Panel of Investigation will be appointed by the EEC and will consist of **three** of the following:
 - The President of the IPC
 - The Chairman of the IPC
 - Member of the Executive committee
 - Branch District Commissioner
 - IPC sub-committee Members (SJ, Tetrathlon, Dressage/CT, Mounted Games, Horse Trials etc)
 - Parent of a Member of the IPC

The Chairman of the IPC may appoint any additional person who has in his/her opinion expertise in dealing with breaches or disciplinary procedures or disputes.

4. The complaints form, response(s) and any other relevant documents should be sent to the Members of the Panel of Investigation.
5. A meeting of the Panel of Investigation is arranged to investigate the complaint.
 - Parties present should include the Area Rep, a member of the EEC relevant to the complaint, the complainant plus one witness or supporter, the person against whom the complaint is made plus one witness or supporter.
 - A responsible adult (parent or guardian) must be present if the complainant is under 18 years of age.
 - All relevant parties must be interviewed.
6. Where it is established that an incident of misconduct has taken place, the Panel of Investigation will notify any persons of any sanctions being imposed. This Notification will be in writing, setting out the reasons for the sanction. If the member is under 18 years of age, correspondence should be addressed to Parent or Guardians.



Sanctions available:

- **Minor and Serious breaches:**

- Request an apology (whether verbal or written to be decided by the appropriate committee).
- Issue a reprimand.
- Issue an official warning in writing.
- Suspend the adult or Member for an appropriate period of time (from the committee, Branch, or activity), such period of time to be decided by the Panel of Investigation or Appeals Committee.
- Termination of Membership of Member.
- Suspension or expulsion of adult from I.P.C. activities.

In the event that a parent or guardian of an Irish Pony Club Member is suspended from Irish Pony Club activities, they should be informed that the Member with whom they are associated is still welcome at Irish Pony Club activities, and the DC will inform organisers of subsequent I.P.C activities of their suspension.

- **Criminal breaches:**

- Alleged criminal breaches should be referred without delay to the Gardai and or Tusla.
- It may be appropriate to suspend Membership until the case is dealt with by the appropriate authorities.

7. The Panel of Investigation should submit a formal written report and any recommendations to the EEC.



Appeal

- If, following the **Disciplinary procedures** for Members, Parents or Guardians or other supporters, Instructors, Officials or volunteers as outlined above, a Member (or parent or guardian on their behalf) or adult (parent or guardian or other supporter, instructor, official or volunteer) wishes to appeal against a written warning, termination or suspension of Membership, or banning from Irish Pony Club activities imposed by a DC or activity organiser they should, within three weeks of receiving written notice of the sanction, write in confidence to their Area Representative indicating their wish to appeal and a reason for the appeal. The Area Representative will either request written submissions to be able to consider the appeal or will arrange to meet all parties at a suitable location; the Area Representative will obtain assistance to hear the appeal as they consider necessary. The Area Representative will give their response to the appeal in writing. The Member (or parent or guardian) and their District Commissioner, or adult, may appeal against the Area Representative's decision by writing within a period of one month to the Chairman of the EEC of the I.P.C who will make the necessary arrangements for the appeal to be heard by an **Appeals Committee**. A deposit of €50 is required which will be refunded if the appeal is upheld.
- If any Member (or parent or guardian on their behalf) or adult (parent or guardian or other supporter, instructor, official or volunteer) involved in a **complaint** is unhappy with the decision of the **Panel of Investigation**, he or she will have the right to appeal the decision. Any appeal should be made in writing to the Chairman of the EEC within a period of one month of the issue of the original decision of the Panel of Investigation. The Chairman of the EEC will make the necessary arrangements for the appeal to be heard by an **Appeals Committee** (independent of the Panel of Investigation).
- A deposit of €50 is required which will be refunded if the appeal is upheld.



The Appeals Committee

The Appeals committee is to be appointed by the EEC when required and will consist of **three** of the following:

- The President of the IPC
- The Chairman of the IPC
- Member of the Executive committee
- Branch District Commissioner
- IPC sub-committee Members (SJ, Tetrathlon, Dressage/CT, Mounted Games, Horse Trials etc)
- Parent of a Member of the IPC

It shall be understood that any persons hearing the original complaint shall not form part of the Appeals committee or be involved with the hearing of any subsequent appeal.

If a Member under 18 years of age wishes to make a verbal representation to the Committee, the Committee will require the presence of a parent or guardian over the age of 18.

The Appeals Committee will have the power to confirm, set aside or amend the sanctions imposed by the Panel of Investigation. Their decision is final.



Competition complaints and objections

Complaints and objections arising from within competitions should be dealt with in accordance with the procedures detailed in the relevant Discipline rule book. Decisions made in this way are final and no appeal will be entertained.

Should a breach of eligibility subsequently be discovered, then the Discipline committee may disqualify the offending team or individual. If the said individual was a member of a qualifying team, and their score contributes to the qualification, the team will be disqualified unless the qualification holds up using the discard score. In the event of disqualification, the next best placed team or individual will be promoted. Decisions made by the Discipline committee shall be final. No issue of eligibility can be considered once 30 minutes have passed after the posting of the final results on the day the Championship competition has been held.