



## Downpatrick Youth Football League

### Disciplinary Code

Inclusivity & Restoration (See Appendix 1)

(Alternatives Restorative Justice Supplement)

**Season 2025/2026**

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AFFILIATED TO  
NORTHERN IRELAND YOUTH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION  
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## CONTENTS

ARTICLE 1 GENERAL PROVISIONS.....	3
ARTICLE 2 DEFINITIONS.....	5
ARTICLE 3 GENDER AND NUMBER.....	7
ARTICLE 4 RESPONSIBILITY.....	7
ARTICLE 5 DUTY TO COLLABORATE AND CONTEMPT OF THE DISCIPLINARY CODE.....	7
ARTICLE 6 FINES.....	8
ARTICLE 7 CAUTION AND DISMISSAL FINES .....	8
ARTICLE 8 CAUTIONS FOR PLAYERS AND OFFICIALS.....	8
ARTICLE 9 DISMISSALS FOR PLAYERS AND OFFICIALS .....	11
ARTICLE 10 SUSPENSION .....	14
ARTICLE 11 INTERIM SUSPENSION .....	17
ARTICLE 12 SUSPENSION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF DISCIPLINARY MEASURES .....	17
ARTICLE 13 NOTICE OF COMPLAINT .....	18
ARTICLE 14 MISCONDUCT BY PLAYERS, OFFICIALS OR MATCH OFFICIALS (OUTSIDE LAW 12 OF THE LAWS OF THE GAME) .....	19
ARTICLE 15 MEDIA & SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS/ CONTENT.....	21
ARTICLE 16 INCITING HATRED AND VIOLENCE.....	22
ARTICLE 17 PROVOKING THE GENERAL PUBLIC .....	22
ARTICLE 18 INELIGIBILITY THROUGH SUSPENSION AND BREACH OF SUSPENSION .....	22
ARTICLE 19 ABANDONMENT .....	22
ARTICLE 20 BRAWL .....	23
ARTICLE 21 UNIDENTIFIED AGRESSORS .....	23
ARTICLE 22 TEAM MISCONDUCT .....	23
ARTICLE 23 DISCRIMINATION.....	23
ARTICLE 24 COERCION OR UNDUE INFLUENCE .....	24
ARTICLE 25 FORGERY AND FALSIFICATION .....	24
ARTICLE 26 CORRUPTION.....	25
ARTICLE 27 MANIPULATION OF FOOTBALL MATCHES AND COMPETITIONS .....	25
ARTICLE 28 ORDER AND SECURITY AT MATCHES .....	25
ARTICLE 29 REMOVED .....	26
ARTICLE 30 DISCIPLINARY CHALLENGES.....	27
ARTICLE 31 HEARINGS BEFORE THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE .....	32
ARTICLE 32 PROCEDURES FOR THE CONDUCTING OF HEARINGS .....	33
ARTICLE 33 FAILURE TO RESPECT DECISIONS.....	38
ARTICLE 34 COMPLAINTS OF MISCONDUCT OTHER THAN BY MEANS OF A MATCH OFFICIAL'S REPORT.....	38
ARTICLE 35 APPEALS COMMITTEE.....	39
ARTICLE 36 DIVISIONAL ASSOCIATIONS' AND NORTHERN IRELAND YOUTH FA DISCIPLINARY CODES.....	39

## ARTICLE 1 GENERAL PROVISIONS

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This IFA Disciplinary Code was adopted by the NIYFA Disciplinary Committee, it has been adjusted to recognise the role and governance of Youth Football.

- 1.1.1 The IFA Disciplinary Code provisions are adapted to the '*general principles*' of the FIFA Disciplinary Code with the exception of **Article 9.3** of this Code which is considered mandatory (clarifications added).
- 1.2 This Code comes into force on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2025 and applies to all disciplinary matters arising from and concerning football under the jurisdiction of the NIYFA.
- 1.3 Save where expressly set out to the contrary, words and phrases as defined in the Articles of Association of the Irish Football Association shall have the same meaning in this Code.
- 1.4 The following are subject to this code:
  - (i) Northern Ireland Youth Football Association, its member leagues and clubs.
  - (ii) Officials;
  - (iii) Players;
  - (iv) Match officials; Disciplinary matters will be referred to the IFA Disciplinary Committee.
  - (v) Football agents licensed by FIFA under the jurisdiction of the Irish FA;
  - (vi) Anyone with an authorisation from the NIYFA and its member leagues in particular with regard to 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 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 in respect of all disciplinary matters.
  - 1.5.3 The Club must inform NIYFA upon affiliation of the name, telephone number and email address of the Club Disciplinary Officer at the commencement of the season. In the event that the 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 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. Disciplinary hearings are not formal court proceedings and are not required to follow formal court procedures or the strict technical rules of evidence used in courts (see also **Article 32.1** of this Code). Procedural and technical considerations shall take second place to the overriding objective of being just and fair to the parties.

- 1.7.1 Proceedings, findings or decisions 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 Compliance Manager may take such initial 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 **Article 1.6**, this Code provides for the following disciplinary powers:
- i. to sanction serious disciplinary infringements which have escaped a match official's attention;
  - ii. ***removed- not applicable to youth football.***
  - iii. to extend the duration of a match suspension or any other penalty incurred automatically by an expulsion;
  - iv. to impose disciplinary sanctions on natural and legal persons including:
    - a. Warning;
    - b. Reprimand;
    - c. Fine or any other pecuniary measure;
    - d. Return of awards;
    - e. Withdrawal of a title;
    - f. Ban from dressing rooms and/or team bench;
    - g. Ban on taking part in any football related activity;
    - h. Suspension;
    - i. An interim suspension;
    - j. Suspension or withdrawal of a football agent licence;
    - k. A ban on registering new players;
    - l. Playing a match without spectators;
    - m. Playing a match on neutral territory;
    - n. Ban on playing in a particular stadium;
    - o. Annulment of the result of a match;
    - p. Expulsion from a competition in progress or from future competitions;
    - q. Defeat by forfeit;
    - r. Deduction of points;
    - s. Relegation to a lower division;
    - t. Ban on spectators attending a match;
    - u. Ban prohibiting someone from entering the confines of one or several stadiums ("Stadium Ban");
    - v. Replay of a match;
- 1.10 Disciplinary sanctions imposed by any other recognised sporting body may be given effect under this Code. Any person suspended or banned by another sporting body may be suspended or banned concurrently within this jurisdiction.
- 1.11 Whilst the Committee and the Disciplinary Compliance Manager shall at all times strive to act consistently, they shall not have a doctrine of binding precedent, that is to say they are not formally bound by prior decisions. 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 sanction (fine and/or time-based) shall be based on what is considered the most serious offence committed. Depending on the circumstances, the sanction may be increased by up to fifty per cent of the maximum sanction specified for that offence.
- 1.13** Where a Notice of Complaint has been issued and challenged and the Committee find that the breach alleged in the Notice of Complaint has not been proven, the Committee shall be entitled to find that a lesser breach of the Code has been proven and sanction the person for that lesser breach without the issuing of a Notice of Complaint. The Committee 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 disciplinary decision or correspondence may be corrected at any time.
- 1.15** The fact that any person or body subject to this Code faces or has pending criminal, disciplinary or regulatory proceedings (whether public or private in nature, including by other authorities) in relation to the same or related matters shall not prevent or limit disciplinary proceedings under this Code (including commencing, conducting and concluding disciplinary proceedings). Disciplinary proceedings under this Code are separate and independent, and are pursued for the specific purpose of protecting the integrity, fairness and reputation of football.
- 1.16** The following video footage may be relied upon, provided it is relevant to the issues under consideration:
- a. broadcast footage from recognised television broadcasters, recognised streaming services, or authorised match streaming platforms;
  - b. official match recordings (such as Veo or equivalent systems) produced by clubs for match recording or analysis purposes.

In addition, the Disciplinary Compliance Manager or the Committee may, at their discretion, rely upon:

- c. other official video or CCTV footage.

All video footage must be genuine, unaltered, and of sufficient quality and context to allow a fair assessment of the incident. The party adducing the footage bears the burden of proof in this respect. Such weight may be assigned to the video evidence as deemed appropriate, including with reference to its source, content, and quality.

Unofficial video footage, including social media clips, spectator recordings, or other unverified online sources shall not be relied upon.

## ARTICLE 2 DEFINITIONS

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- 2.1** **Appeals Committee:** The Committee appointed pursuant to **Article 14** of the Irish Football Association Articles of Association to deal with all appeals.
- 2.2** **Business Day:** Any day of the week except a Saturday or Sunday or Designated Holiday.
- 2.3** **Comet System:** Means the football management system adopted by the NIYFA for the administration of Youth football in Northern Ireland.
- 2.4** **Designated Holiday:** A public holiday or bank holiday in Northern Ireland.
- 2.5** **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.

- 2.6 *Disciplinary Committee:*** The Committee convened pursuant to **Article 13** of the Irish Football Association Articles of Association (as amended from time to time). The composition, number of members and quorum of the Committee shall be as set out in Article 13 of the Articles of Association. The Committee shall have the power to appoint Sub-Committees. Each Sub-Committee shall comprise of no fewer than 3 members, including one legal member (who shall act as Chair) and one elected football stakeholder representative.
- 2.7 *Disciplinary Challenge:*** means a Mistaken Identity Challenge, or a Notice of Complaint Challenge pursuant to **Article 30** of this Code.
- 2.8 *Disciplinary Committee Secretary:*** The official appointed by the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association to service the Committee.
- 2.9 *Disciplinary Compliance Manager:*** Includes any duly authorised nominee acting on their behalf, and refers to the officer appointed by the NIYFA with primary responsibility for identifying, reviewing and evaluating potential breaches of the Disciplinary Code, and for initiating disciplinary proceedings. The Disciplinary Compliance Manager's role includes issuing Notices of Complaint and, where appropriate, proposing sanction offers. The duties of the Disciplinary Compliance Manager, include, but are not limited to these functions. The power to adjudicate and make final disciplinary rulings remains the responsibility of the Disciplinary Committee.
- 2.10 *Disciplinary Department:*** The members of the NIYFA staff authorised by the Football Committee to manage and administer disciplinary matters under the Disciplinary Code.
- 2.11 *IFA:*** The Irish Football Association.  
***NIYFA:*** Northern Ireland Youth Football Association
- 2.12 *Match Official:*** The Referee, Assistant Referees, 4<sup>th</sup> Official, Match Observer or any other person appointed by the IFA, Divisional Association or League in connection with a match.
- 2.13 *Match Officials' Reports:*** A report made individually, or collectively, by match officials. Facts contained in match officials reports and in any additional reports or correspondence submitted by the match officials are presumed to be accurate. Proof of their inaccuracy may be provided.
- 2.14 *Members:*** Any Full Member, Associate Member, Organisational Member or League as per IFA Articles of Association.
- 2.15 *Official:*** A person, with the exception of Players (See **Article 2.16** of this Code) who is connected to a football club.
- 2.16 *Player:*** A person whose name appears on the match card for the relevant match. This includes Player Managers or an Official who is also a Player.

### ARTICLE 3 GENDER AND NUMBER

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- 3.1** Terms within this Code referring to natural persons are applicable to both genders. Any term in the singular applies to the plural and vice-versa.

### ARTICLE 4 RESPONSIBILITY

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- 4.1** Unless otherwise specified in this Code, infringements are punishable regardless of whether they have been committed deliberately or negligently. In particular, clubs may be responsible for the behaviour of their members, players, officials or supporters or any other person carrying out a function on their behalf even if the club concerned can prove the absence of any fault or negligence.

- 4.2** Acts amounting to attempt are also punishable. If, with intent to commit an act in breach of this Code, a person or entity who is subject to the provisions of this Code, commits an act which is more than just preparing to commit a breach, he shall be found to have breached the Code.
- 4.2.1** A person or entity who is subject to the provisions of this Code, may be in breach of this Code by attempting to commit a breach of this Code (as described at **Article 4.2**) even if it would have been impossible to complete the act in breach of this Code.
- 4.3** Anyone who takes part in committing an infringement or induces someone to do so, whether as instigator or accomplice, may also be sanctioned. The degree of guilt of the party involved shall be taken into account when deciding upon the sanction.

## ARTICLE 5 DUTY TO COLLABORATE AND CONTEMPT OF THE DISCIPLINARY CODE

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- 5.1** The parties shall act in good faith throughout the disciplinary proceedings.
- 5.2** The parties or the persons subject to this Code shall collaborate to establish the facts and, in particular, comply with requests for information within the stipulated time limits.
- 5.3** In particular, persons subject to this Code shall help to establish and/or clarify the facts of a case or any possible breaches of this Code and, in particular, shall provide any evidence requested.
- 5.4** Any breach of this Article by any person subject to this Code may lead to the appropriate sanctions being imposed.
- 5.5** If the parties fail to collaborate, especially if they ignore the stipulated time limits, a decision may nonetheless be made based on the information available in the case file.
- 5.6** Where it appears to the Committee that, during any disciplinary procedure or hearing, any party has sought to deliberately mislead the Committee or endeavoured by any means to frustrate the due process of proceedings pursuant to this Code, such conduct shall constitute contempt of the Irish FA Disciplinary Code.
- 5.6.1** In such circumstances, the Committee will determine whether to deal with such matters summarily as they arise or whether to adjourn pursuant to the overriding objective. The Committee shall have the power to sanction any party found to have been in breach of these provisions as set out under **Article 1.9**.

## ARTICLE 6 FINES

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Clubs are liable for fines imposed on their players or officials. Subject 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.

- 6.1** 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 will 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.
- 6.2** 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.
- 6.3** Match Officials may be fined **£10** for late submission of Match Reports.

- 6.4** The referee's Match Report must be submitted by the referee via the Comet System at the earliest opportunity following completion of the match and not later than 24 hours after the commencement of the match. If the report is submitted late, this will not invalidate or otherwise affect the admissibility of the report or its contents, and any disciplinary matters contained within it will remain valid and enforceable, but the referee may be subject to **Article 6.4** of the Code for late submission.

## ARTICLE 7 CAUTION AND DISMISSAL FINES

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- 7.1** 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**
- (i) Senior matches (cautions and dismissals): **£8**
  - (ii) Intermediate matches (cautions and dismissals): **£6**
  - (iii) Junior/Youth matches (cautions and dismissals): **£4**
- OFFICIALS**
- (iv) Senior, Intermediate, Junior and Youth matches (cautions): **£25**
  - (v) Senior, Intermediate, Junior and Youth matches (dismissals): **£100**
- 7.2** 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 **Article 6.2**.
- 7.3** 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.

## ARTICLE 8 CAUTIONS FOR PLAYERS AND OFFICIALS

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- 8.1** 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).
- 8.2** 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 **Articles 8.3, 8.4, 8.5 or 8.6** of this Code.
- 8.3 PLAYERS – LEAGUE COMPETITIONS**
- 8.3.1** 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 **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.
- 8.3.2** 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 **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.
- 8.3.3** 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 **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.

- 8.3.4 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 **Articles 8.3.1, 8.3.2 and 8.3.3** above i.e. 20 cautions incurs a 4 match automatic suspension, 25 cautions incurs a 5 match suspension etc., subject to **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.
- 8.3.5 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 **10.9**.

#### **8.4 PLAYERS – CUP COMPETITIONS**

- 8.4.1 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 **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.
- 8.4.2 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 **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.
- 8.4.3 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 **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.
- 8.4.4 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.
- 8.4.5 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.

- 8.4.6 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 **Article 10.9**.

#### **8.5 OFFICIALS – LEAGUE COMPETITIONS**

- 8.5.1 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 **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.
- 8.5.2 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 **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.
- 8.5.3 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 **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.

8.5.4 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 **Articles 8.5.1, 8.5.2 and 8.5.3** above i.e. 12 cautions incurs a 4 match automatic suspension, 15 cautions incurs a 5 match suspension etc., subject to **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.

8.5.5 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 **Standard Suspension** as detailed under **10.9**.

## 8.6 **OFFICIALS – CUP COMPETITIONS**

8.6.1 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 **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.

8.6.2 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 **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.

8.6.3 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 **Articles 10.1 and 10.12**.

8.6.4 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.

8.6.5 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.

8.6.6 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 **Standard Suspension** as detailed under **10.9**.

8.7 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 **Article 8.1** of this Code).

8.8 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 **Article 8.1** of this Code).

8.9 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.

8.10 Cautions received during one season are cancelled at the conclusion of that season and are not carried over to the next season.

8.11 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

- 8.12** Cautions issued in a match that is subsequently forfeited shall not be annulled.

## **ARTICLE 9 DISMISSALS FOR PLAYERS AND OFFICIALS**

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- 9.1** A dismissal (sending-off) 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 team bench as outlined in **Law 5** of the Laws of the Game.
- 9.2** A dismissal shall normally be communicated by showing a red card for players and officials. However, the validity of the dismissal is not affected if the referee fails to show the red card, provided the decision to dismiss was clearly communicated. 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.
- 9.3** A sending-off in a competitive match automatically incurs suspension for the next competitive fixture. A sending-off in a friendly match automatically incurs suspension for the next friendly fixture, subject to **Article 10.3** below. Additional match suspensions and other disciplinary measures may be imposed.
- 9.3.1** 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.
- 9.3.2** A player who has been sent off shall immediately return to the dressing room and remain there for the remainder of the match. Alternatively, the player may be permitted to sit in a stand, provided their integrity and security are safeguarded, they are not picked for doping control (where applicable), and they have changed out of their playing kit.
- 9.3.3** 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.
- 9.3.4** A player or official who has been sent off is not entitled to attend the post-match press conference or any other media activity held in the stadium.
- 9.4** **ADDITIONAL PLAYER SANCTIONS – ALL COMPETITIONS**
- 9.4.1** A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the team bench for any offence (other than for receiving a 2<sup>nd</sup> caution) having previously received a caution in the same match will have the caution upheld.
- 9.4.2** A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the team bench for using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures will be suspended for an **additional 1 match**.
- 9.4.3** A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the team bench for serious foul play or for violent conduct will be suspended for an **additional 2 matches**.
- 9.4.4** A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the team 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**.
- 9.4.5** A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the team bench for using threatening or intimidating behaviour towards a towards a match official will be suspended for at least an **additional 10 matches**.
- 9.4.6** **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.

9.4.7 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the team 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.**

9.4.8 **Assault (whether or not 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.

9.4.9 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the team 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.**

9.4.10 **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.

9.4.11 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 **Article 9.1** of this Code).

## 9.5 **ADDITIONAL OFFICIAL SANCTIONS – ALL COMPETITIONS**

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

9.5.2 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.**

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

9.5.4 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.**

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

9.5.6 **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.

9.5.7 An official who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the team 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.**

9.5.8 **Assault (whether or not 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.

9.5.9 An official who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the team 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.**

9.5.10 **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.

9.5.11 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.**

9.5.12 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for deliberately leaving the technical area to **a)** show 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.**

9.5.13 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) or **b)** interfere with play, an opposing player or match official, will be suspended for an **additional 2 matches.**

9.5.14 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.**

9.5.15 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.**

9.5.16 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 **Article 9.1** of this Code).

- 10.1** 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 **Article 9** must be served prior to any other notified suspension.
- 10.1.1** 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.
- 10.1.2** 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.
- 10.1.3** Special dispensation may also be given in exceptional circumstances.
- 10.1.4** Where an application for dispensation is deemed 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, disciplinary action may be taken against the player, official and/or club as deemed appropriate.
- 10.2** 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.
- 10.3** Suspensions resulting from dismissals in competitive matches will cover all domestic competitive matches (league and cup) 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.
- Suspensions received in friendly matches will apply to the next friendly match or matches played by that team. However, where a friendly match involves misconduct, discretion may be exercised to impose a suspension covering both competitive and friendly matches, for any period deemed appropriate to reflect the gravity of the misconduct.
- 10.3.1** If a match is abandoned, cancelled or forfeited (except for a violation of **Article 10.3.2**), 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.
- 10.3.2** A match suspension is regarded as no longer pending if a match is retroactively forfeited because a player played in a match despite being **ineligible**. This also applies to the match suspension imposed on the player who played in the match despite being ineligible.
- 10.4** If a suspension is combined with a fine, the suspension may be prolonged until the fine has been paid in full.
- 10.5** 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.

- 10.6** 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.
- 10.7** Any period of suspension arising from the acceptance of a sanction offer made via an **Article 13** 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 **Article 30.3**.
- 10.8** Suspensions imposed by the Committee following a Disciplinary Hearing will be imposed from the Monday after the date of the Disciplinary Hearing.
- Suspensions imposed by the Committee 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.
- 10.9** **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 team bench, the field of play and the immediate vicinity of the field of play at any match played under the jurisdiction of the Association during the period stipulated in **Article 10.9.1**. The Committee 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 **Article 10.9.1**.
- 10.9.1** The terms of the suspension (exclusion) detailed in **Article 10.9** 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.
- 10.9.2** 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.
- 10.9.3** 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.
- However, due to the nature of some grounds, a suspended player or official may be able to position themselves in a stand or behind the pitch perimeter barrier in a manner that allows them to remain close enough to the field of play and/or technical area to allow them to coach, issue instructions to the coaching/technical staff or communicate/ engage with match officials. Where a player or official under suspension engages in such conduct, it shall be regarded as a breach of the suspension and will result in a Notice of Complaint being issued to the individual concerned for a breach of **Article 18**.
- 10.10** On request, an official who is suspended for a cup final in which his club are involved following his 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.
- 10.11** 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.

- 10.12** 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.
- 10.13** A player, official, match official, club or league serving a suspension (other than a suspension imposed as a result of an accumulation of cautions) is suspended from all affiliated football including NIYFA.
- 10.14** In the event of the 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 FA and shall not be dealt with by any Divisional Association.
- 10.15** No sanction prescribed in this Code shall prevent a determination that a person may be banned from taking part in any kind of affiliated football-related activity, where it is deemed reasonable and proportionate to do so.

## ARTICLE 11 INTERIM SUSPENSION

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- 11.1** The Committee 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 IFA Disciplinary Committee Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson or Disciplinary Department. Details of the suspension will be communicated in writing, by email or via the Comet system.
- 11.2** Following the imposition of an interim suspension, the person suspended shall have the right of appeal to the Irish FA Appeals Committee as set out under **Article 14** of the Articles of Association. A hearing will be convened as soon as is reasonably practicable. The procedure for the disciplinary hearing shall be determined by the Chairperson of the Committee.
- 11.3** The interim suspension shall automatically cease:
- (i) When the matter has been dealt with at a disciplinary hearing; or
  - (ii) When the allegation is withdrawn, and no further disciplinary action is taken; or
  - (iii) After 120 days from its issue, unless the Committee determines that it is in the interests of the Association that it should be extended for a further period or periods of not more than 120 days.

## ARTICLE 12 SUSPENSION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

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- 12.1** The implementation of a disciplinary measure may be fully or partially suspended.
- 12.2** Where the implementation of the sanction is suspended, the person sanctioned shall be subject to a probationary period of up to four years.
- 12.3** If the person benefiting from a suspended sanction commits another infringement of a similar nature and gravity during the probationary period, the suspension shall be revoked and the sanction enforced without prejudice to any additional sanction imposed for the new infringement.
- 12.4** Disciplinary measures relating to match manipulation cannot be suspended.

## ARTICLE 13 NOTICE OF COMPLAINT

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- 13.1** The Disciplinary Compliance Manager 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 Compliance Manager 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 the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association pursuant to **Article 17 of the Irish FA Articles of Association** or in respect of any matter deemed to potentially be in breach of the spirit of this Code.

- 13.2** A Notice of Complaint may be accompanied by a proposed sanction offer that would apply to the offence which is detailed in each Article. Any proposed sanction offer will be determined based on the facts and circumstances of the alleged breach(es) of this Code. Where the Disciplinary Compliance Manager 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.

- 13.2.1** Any Notice of Complaint accompanied by a proposed sanction offer is intended to resolve the majority of cases efficiently. Where an alleged breach of this Code and/or proposed sanction offer is not contested, this fast-track system allows the matter to be concluded quickly without the need for a formal hearing.

- 13.3** A Notice of Complaint under this Article should be issued within **28 days** from the time the incident is reported to the NIYFA Disciplinary Department, or within such period as may be extended by the Committee 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 case where a Notice of Complaint is not issued within **28 days** of the incident being reported to the Disciplinary Department, the player official, match official, club and or league should be notified within that same time period of the nature of any incident under investigation.

- 13.4** 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 the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association may accept or deny the alleged breach(es) of this Code set out within the Notice of Complaint.

- 13.4.1** The Disciplinary Compliance Manager's role involves issuing a Notice of Complaint and, where appropriate, proposing a sanction offer, rather than making the final disciplinary ruling. Where a Notice of Complaint and proposed sanction offer is issued, the alleged breach and proposed sanction will be deemed accepted if not challenged within the specified timeframe (see also **Article 30.4.3** of this Code), and no further disciplinary ruling by the Committee is required. However, if the Notice of Complaint is challenged, the matter will be referred to the Committee for determination and a final disciplinary decision.

- 13.5** Where 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 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 the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association rejects the proposed sanction, they must confirm whether they wish to make representations as to the proposed sanction in writing or at an oral hearing.

- 13.6** Where 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 denies the

alleged breach(es) of this Code set out within a Notice of Complaint, the relevant party is required to submit a Disciplinary Challenge as directed in **Article 30** of this Code.

- 13.7** Where a proposed sanction is not accepted, the Committee shall not be bound by the proposed sanction. All alleged breaches must be advised to parties at the time the Notice of Complaint is issued, subject always to the discretionary powers of the Committee as outlined under **Article 1.13**.
- 13.8** At all times the Committee 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 the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association who is the subject of a Notice of Complaint to attend a hearing.
- 13.9** For the purpose of determining the appropriate alleged breach and sanction offered at the point of issuing of Notice of Complaint, the facts contained in the Match Official's reports will be presumed to be accurate.
- 13.10** 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 infringements relating to international transfers involving minors
  - (iii) Five years for all other offences.

## **ARTICLE 14 MISCONDUCT BY PLAYERS, OFFICIALS OR MATCH OFFICIALS (OUTSIDE LAW 12 OF THE LAWS OF THE GAME)**

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- 14.1** Where there is a finding of misconduct against a player or official for the first time in a playing season, they will be sanctioned with a **minimum 1 match standard suspension** and a **£100 fine** will be imposed on the club to which the player or official belongs.
- Where the first finding of misconduct in a playing season relates to a match official, a **£100 fine** will be imposed, and they may be suspended pursuant to **Article 10.14**.
- 14.2** Where there is a second finding of misconduct against a player or official in the same playing season, they will be sanctioned with a **minimum 2 match standard suspension** and a **£100 fine** will be imposed on the club to which the player or official belongs.
- Where the second finding of misconduct in the same playing season relates to a match official, a **£200 fine** will be imposed, and they may be suspended pursuant to **Article 10.14**.
- 14.3** Where there is a third or subsequent finding of misconduct against a player or official in the same playing season, they will be sanctioned with a **minimum 4 match standard suspension** and a **£100 fine** will be imposed on the club to which the player or official belongs.
- Where the third or subsequent finding of misconduct in the same playing season relates to a match official, a **£500 fine** will be imposed, and they may be suspended pursuant to **Article 10.14**.
- 14.4** Where any part of a report relates to cautions or dismissals of players or officials, that part will be dealt with in accordance with **Articles 8 and 9** of the IFA Disciplinary Code.
- 14.5** A player or official who is found to have committed 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 **£100 fine** will be imposed on their club.
- 14.6** A player or official who is found to have deliberately received a yellow or red card (in order to be suspended for an upcoming match and to manipulate the timing of disciplinary sanctions) will be sanctioned with a **minimum 1 match standard suspension** and a **£100 fine** will be imposed on their club.

- 14.7** A player or official who is found to have acted 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 a **£100 fine** will be imposed on their club.
- 14.8** A player or official who is found to have committed an assault or battery against 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** will be imposed on their club.
- 14.9** A player or official who is found to have bitten or spat 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** will be imposed on their club.
- 14.10** A player or official who is found to have engaged in unsporting conduct towards a match official will be sanctioned with a **minimum 5 match standard suspension** and a **£100 fine** will be imposed on their club.
- 14.11** A player or official who is found to have used **threatening or intimidating behaviour** towards a match official as defined in **Articles 9.4.6 and/or 9.5.6** will be sanctioned with a **minimum 10 match standard suspension** and a **£100 fine** will be imposed on their club.
- Misconduct under **Article 14.11** is also subject to the same sanction where the offence has been committed off the field of play, including via social media.
- 14.12** A player or official who is found to have **committed an assault** on a match official (whether or not causing bodily harm) as defined in **Articles 9.4.8 and/or 9.5.8** will be sanctioned with a **minimum 15 match standard suspension up to a maximum suspension of 2 years**, and a **£250 fine** will be imposed on their club.
- 14.13** A player or official who is found to have **committed an assault** on a match official (causing serious bodily harm) as defined in **Articles 9.4.10 and/or 9.5.10** 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** will be imposed on their club.
- 14.14** The sanctions described in **Articles 14.8, 14.9 and 14.10** may also apply where a player or official is found to have committed misconduct against officials of clubs, leagues, divisional associations or the IFA.
- 14.15** A match official who is found to have assaulted any person shall be sanctioned with a **minimum fine of £100** and may be suspended in accordance with **Article 10.14**.
- 14.16** A match official who is found to have committed misconduct or reported for unsporting conduct towards a player, official or any other person may be suspended in accordance with this Code.
- 14.17** A match official may only be sanctioned by the Committee.

## ARTICLE 15 MEDIA & SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS/ CONTENT

- 15.1** A reprimand, suspension or fine may be issued to players, officials, match officials, clubs, leagues or any other recognised football body or person under the jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association in the case of inappropriate comments or content in the media or social media.
- 15.1.1** Players, officials, match officials, clubs, leagues or any other recognised person under the jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association 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.
- 15.1.2** 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.

**15.2** 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 must not make comments or post content in the media or social media which are improper, or which bring the game into disrepute, such as:

- (i) Comments relating to football which are abusive, offensive or insulting; and
- (ii) Comments about match officials which express or imply bias, incompetence or question integrity on the part of such match official(s), or which impinge on their character.

**15.2.1** 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 **Article 15.2** (including 15.2.1) will be sanctioned as stipulated below:

Applying to	Suspension (if applicable)	Fine (imposed on club)
NIFL Premiership teams, players, officials	Minimum 1 match standard suspension	Minimum £100
NIFL Championship teams, players, officials	Minimum 1 match standard suspension	Minimum £100
All other teams, players, officials	Minimum 1 match standard suspension	Minimum £100
Leagues, recognised football bodies or other persons under the jurisdiction of the NIYFA.	Minimum 1 match standard suspension	Minimum £100

**15.3** If a match official makes comments or posts content in the media or social media in contravention of **Article 15.2**, they will be sanctioned with a minimum fine of £100 **and** may be suspended pursuant to **Article 10.14**.

**15.4** A sanction may be issued in the case of repeat offences by players, officials or match officials.

## ARTICLE 16 INCITING HATRED AND VIOLENCE

**16.1** A player or official who, in the context of a match (including pre- and post-match) or competition, publicly incites others to hatred or violence will be sanctioned with a ban on taking part in any-football-related activity for **no less than 6 months** and a minimum fine of **£250** which will be imposed on their club.

**16.2** In serious cases, in addition to the above sanctions and in particular if the infringement is committed using social networks and/or the mass media (such as the press, radio or television) or takes place on a match day in or around a stadium, a minimum fine of **£1000 shall be imposed on senior clubs, £450 on intermediate clubs and £250 on junior clubs**.

## ARTICLE 17 PROVOKING SPECTATORS

**17.1** A player or official who provokes spectators at a match by any means will be sanctioned with a **minimum 2 match standard suspension** and a **minimum fine of £250** which will be imposed on their club.

## ARTICLE 18 INELIGIBILITY THROUGH SUSPENSION AND BREACH OF SUSPENSION

**18.1** If any player plays in a match whilst being suspended, his club will be sanctioned with a minimum fine of **£600** (imposed on Senior teams), **£450** (imposed on Intermediate teams) and **£350** (imposed on Junior teams). Additionally, the Club will forfeit the match by the score 3-0. If

the goal difference at the end of the match is less favourable to the team at fault, the result on the pitch is upheld.

- 18.2** If any player does not play in a match but still breaches the terms of his suspension, his club will be sanctioned with a minimum fine of **£600** (imposed on Senior teams), **£450** (imposed on Intermediate teams) and **£350** (imposed on Junior teams), and a further period of suspension imposed.
- 18.3** If any official breaches the terms of his suspension, his club will be sanctioned with a minimum fine of **£600** (imposed on Senior teams), **£450** (imposed on Intermediate teams) and **£350** (imposed on Junior teams), and a further period of suspension imposed.
- 18.4** The timeframe for payment of a fine may be extended if a club can produce to the Committee evidence of severe financial hardship. A payment plan may be agreed with the Committee pursuant to **Article 6.2**.

## ARTICLE 19 ABANDONMENT

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- 19.1** 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.
- 19.1.1** 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 team or teams whose supporters, players or officials were responsible for the conduct shall forfeit the match. Such abandonments shall be referred to the Irish FA and shall not be dealt with by the Divisional Associations or NIYFA.

## ARTICLE 20 BRAWL

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- 20.1** 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.
- An individual does not need to have committed a separate act of Violent Conduct to be considered as having participated in a brawl. Participation alone, such as entering an incident, contributing to its escalation, or failing to withdraw, may be sufficient.
- 20.2** Anyone who tried merely to prevent a fight, shield others or separate those involved in a brawl is not subject to punishment.

## ARTICLE 21 UNIDENTIFIED AGGRESSORS

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- 21.1** If, in the case of an act of violence or threat of violence (physical or verbal), it is not possible to identify the perpetrator(s), the club to which the aggressors are deemed to belong may be subject to sanction.

## ARTICLE 22 TEAM MISCONDUCT

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- 22.1** 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.

## ARTICLE 23 DISCRIMINATION

- 23.1** 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, sectarianism, origin, disability, gender or sexual orientation shall be suspended for a **minimum of 10 matches**, with a minimum fine imposed as follows:

Applying to:	Players	Officials
Senior clubs	£500	£1000
Intermediate clubs	£250	£450
Junior/Youth clubs	£150	£250

If the perpetrator(s) cannot be identified, the club to which they are deemed to belong may be subject to sanction.

- 23.2** In determining whether the dignity of a person or group of persons has been offended, reasonable inferences may be drawn. That is to say, there is no requirement to identify a specific individual who was offended at the time the comments were made or published or the actions occurred. In finding a matter to be proven, it will be open to conclude that by their very nature, the comments or actions in question offend the dignity of a person or group of persons. Where an individual is identified as a direct recipient of the alleged discriminatory behaviour, they may be invited to make an oral or written victim impact statement.
- 23.3** Where several persons (officials and/or players) from the same Club or association simultaneously breach **Article 23.1** or where other aggravating circumstances exist, the team concerned may be subject to the following sanctions: a deduction of three points for a first offence and six points for a second offence. Any further offence may result in relegation to a lower division. In the case of matches in which no points are awarded, the team may be disqualified from the competition.
- 23.4** Where supporters of a team are found to have breached **Article 23.1** at a match, a **minimum fine shall be imposed on the relevant club as follows: £1000 for Senior clubs, £450 for Intermediate clubs and £250 for Junior clubs**. This sanction applies irrespective of culpable conduct or culpable oversight unless the club proves that exceptional circumstances exist in which case the fine may be reduced.
- In determining the appropriate sanction, consideration may be given to any previous occurrences of such behaviour. Nothing contained in this paragraph shall limit the authority to impose any of the sanctions outlined in paragraph 1.9 of this Code.
- 23.5** Any determination as to whether supporters have acted in a manner in contravention of this Article will be guided by the terms of **Article 28** of this Code.
- 23.6** The offences and fines referred to in these clauses are not exhaustive and additional sanctions may be imposed, taking into account 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 points deduction or disqualification from the competition.
- 23.7** Spectators found to have breached **Article 23.1** shall be subject to a stadium ban of not less than **2 years**.

- 23.8 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.

## ARTICLE 24 COERCION OR UNDUE INFLUENCE

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- 24.1 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 a **minimum fine of £150** which will be imposed on their club.
- 24.2 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 **Article 30**, will be sanctioned with a **minimum 4 match standard suspension** and a **minimum fine of £150** which will be imposed upon their club.

## ARTICLE 25 FORGERY AND FALSIFICATION

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- 25.1 Anyone who, in football-related activities, forges a document, falsifies a document or uses a forged or falsified document will be sanctioned with a fine and a ban of at least six matches or for a specific period of no less than **12 months**.
- 25.2 A club may be held liable for an act of forgery or falsification by one of its officials and/or players.

## ARTICLE 26 CORRUPTION

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- 26.1 Anyone who offers, promises or grants an unjustified advantage to any person or body under the jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association, including match officials, players or officials on behalf of himself or a third party in an attempt to incite it or him to violate this Code or any other Irish Football Association regulations, will be sanctioned with a **minimum fine of £1,500**, a ban on taking part in any football related activity for **a maximum of 2 years** and a ban on entering any stadium for **a maximum of 2 years**.
- 26.2 Passive corruption (soliciting, being promised or accepting an unjustified advantage) will be sanctioned in the same manner.

## ARTICLE 27 MANIPULATION OF FOOTBALL MATCHES AND COMPETITIONS

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- 27.1 Anyone who directly or indirectly, by an act or an omission, unlawfully influences or manipulates the course, result or any other aspect of a match and/or competition or conspires or attempts to do so by any means shall be sanctioned with a **minimum five-year ban** on taking part in any football-related activity as well as a fine of at least **£5,000**. In serious cases, a longer ban period, including a potential lifetime ban on taking part in any football-related activity, shall be imposed.
- 27.2 If a player or official engages in behaviour described in **Article 27.1**, the club or association to which the player or official belongs may be sanctioned with the forfeiting of the match in question or may be declared ineligible to participate in a different competition, provided the integrity of the competition is protected. Additional disciplinary measures may be imposed.
- 27.3 Persons bound by this Code must cooperate fully with the NIYFA, Irish FA and FIFA at all times in its efforts to combat such behaviour and shall therefore immediately and voluntarily report to the Disciplinary Department any approach in connection with activities and/or information directly or indirectly related to the possible manipulation of a football match or competition as

described above. Any breach of this provision shall be sanctioned with a ban of at least two years on taking part in any football-related activity and a fine of at least **£1,500**.

- 27.4** The Committee shall be competent to adjudicate on all conduct on and off the field of play in connection with the manipulation of football matches and competitions.

## ARTICLE 28 ORDER AND SECURITY AT MATCHES

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- 28.1** The home club or organising body are responsible for order and security both in and around (i.e. areas under the control of the stadium authority) the stadium before, during and after matches. **Without prejudice to individual club responsibility for the inappropriate behaviour of their own supporters**, they are liable for incidents of any kind, including but not limited to those listed in **Article 28.2** below, and may be subject to disciplinary measures and directives unless they can prove that they have not been negligent in any way in the organisation of the match. In particular, home clubs or organising bodies who organise matches shall:
- a. assess the degree of risk posed by the match and notify the relevant bodies of those that are especially high-risk;
  - b. comply with and implement existing safety rules and regulations, and take every reasonable safety precaution demanded by the circumstances in and around the stadium before, during and after the match and if incidents occur;
  - c. ensure the safety of the match officials and the players and officials of the teams;
  - d. keep local authorities informed and collaborate with them actively and effectively;
  - e. ensure that order and security are maintained in and around the stadium and that matches are organised properly.
- 28.1.1** The degree of compliance with **Article 28.1 (a-e)** will form part of the consideration when determining disciplinary measures to be imposed where a breach of **Article 28.1** is proven.
- 28.2** All clubs are liable for inappropriate behaviour on the part of one or more of their supporters and may be subject to disciplinary measures and directives even if they can prove the absence of any negligence in relation to the organisation of the match. Inappropriate behaviour includes, but is not limited to:
- a. the invasion or attempted invasion of the field of play;
  - b. the throwing of objects;
  - c. the use of any materials, articles or objects which can result in the generation of smoke, heat and/or flames including fireworks, flares, pyrotechnics, smoke canisters/bombs or other devices that produce similar effects; the use of laser pointers or similar electronic devices;
  - d. the use of gestures, words, objects or any other means to transmit a message that is not appropriate for a sports event, particularly messages that are of a political, ideological, religious or offensive nature;
  - e. acts of damage;
  - f. violence towards persons;
  - g. causing a disturbance during national anthems;
  - h. any other lack of order or discipline observed in or around the stadium.
- 28.3** Repeated infringements of **Articles 28.1 and 28.2** may attract further sanctions.

## ARTICLE 29 ANTI DOPING

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*Removed - not applicable to youth football.*

**30.1 Mistaken Identity Challenge (Cautionable or Sending-Off Offences)**

- 30.1.1 In the case of a player or official who has been cautioned or dismissed 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 **Articles 30.1.2** and **30.1.3**.

For the avoidance of doubt, it is the Referee's disciplinary decision during a fixture which must be viewed as the determining factor and trigger for a player, club or official to lodge a Mistaken Identity Challenge, not the Referee's Comet match report and accompanying sanction.

- 30.1.2 Where a player, official or their club wishes to make a Mistaken Identity Challenge, they must notify the Association that they intend to make such a Challenge. **Notification** of intent to lodge a Mistaken Identity Challenge must be provided to the Disciplinary Department via email to [discipline@niyfa.co.uk](mailto:discipline@niyfa.co.uk) by **5pm of the next business day** after the date on which the error allegedly occurred.

- 30.1.3 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 **Article 30.1.6**.

The time limits for notification of intent to lodge a Mistaken Identity Challenge (**Article 30.1.2**), the full Mistaken Identity Challenge along with written submission(s) and supporting evidence (**Article 30.1.3**) 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.

- 30.1.4 Where there are no or insufficient Business Days before the next match 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 of intent to lodge a Mistaken Identity Challenge must be provided to the Disciplinary Department via email to [discipline@niyfa.co.uk](mailto:discipline@niyfa.co.uk) at the latest by **5pm on the day of the next match**.
- (ii) Where there is just one Business Day before the next match, notification of intent to lodge a Mistaken Identity Challenge as set out in **Article 30.1.2** must be complied with.

In respect of the circumstances detailed in **Articles 30.1.4 (i)** and **30.1.4 (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 **Articles 30.1.4 (i)** or **30.1.4 (ii)** has been adhered to.

The procedure detailed in **Article 30.1.3** must then be complied with on the second Business Day after the date on which the error allegedly occurred.

- 30.1.5 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 Committee 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 **Article 30.1**, whilst the burden of proof is on the Association, the Committee 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 Committee 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.

- 30.1.6 Where a player, official, or their club wish to submit a Mistaken Identity Challenge a deposit of **£100** must be lodged with the IFA 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 Committee and subsequently withdrawn, the deposit will not be returned.

- 30.1.7 The Committee reserves the right to retain the deposit where the club is found to have caused the mistaken identity.
- 30.1.8 Where a Mistaken Identity Challenge is rejected, the applicable disciplinary sanction is applied with immediate effect.
- 30.1.9 If the Committee'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.
- 30.1.10 Should the Committee 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.
- 30.1.11 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.
- 30.1.12 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.

### **30.2 Obvious Error Challenge (Sending-Off Offences)**

***Removed - not applicable to youth football.***

### **30.3 Notice of Complaint Challenge**

- 30.3.1 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 pursuant to **Article 13** of this Code.
- 30.3.2 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 **Article 30.3.4**.

- 30.3.3 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.
- 30.3.4 Where the Notice of Complaint or sanction is being challenged, a deposit of **£100** must be lodged with the NIYFA 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. This sum will be returnable only where the Notice of Complaint Challenge is either successful or not heard.
- 30.3.5 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 Committee 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.

#### **30.4 Provisions in relation to all Disciplinary Challenges**

- 30.4.1 On receipt of a Disciplinary Challenge and providing that the player, official or club have received written notification from the Committee 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.
- 30.4.2 When a player, official or match official facing a suspension participates or officiates at a match without such written notification from the Committee, the appropriate Notice of Complaint will be issued against the player, official or match official concerned for participating or officiating in a match whilst being ineligible.
- 30.4.3 Disciplinary Challenges must meet the requirements of this Article to be considered by the Committee. The time limits and other requirements are to be strictly applied, and only complete notifications/ claims submitted before the relevant deadline will be considered.

Once a Disciplinary Challenge has been submitted within the required timeframe, no further grounds of challenge may be introduced without the prior permission of the Chair or Vice Chair of the Disciplinary Committee.

The Committee may, however, at its discretion, consider additional evidence not included in the original submission, provided it is relevant and material to the matter under consideration, submitted as soon as reasonably practicable after becoming available, and does not cause unfair prejudice, delay or disruption to the disciplinary process.

- 30.4.4 No Disciplinary Challenges will be heard against cautions or dismissals except in the case of a Mistaken Identity Challenge (cautions and dismissals)
- 30.4.5 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.

Should the Committee 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.

- 30.4.6 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 **Article 10.7** of this Code) has not passed.

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 Mistaken Identity Challenges.

Where a Notice of Complaint Challenge is abandoned, the sanction offer will be imposed from the following Monday, subject to the overriding objective.

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

- 30.4.7 All Disciplinary Challenges must be submitted with the relevant disciplinary authority of the Divisional Associations which issued the sanction or Notice of Complaint in question.

## **ARTICLE 31 HEARINGS BEFORE THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE**

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- 31.1** The Committee will 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 Committee otherwise deems appropriate to do so pursuant to the over-riding objective.

- 31.2** The Committee will have the power to direct the attendance of any member, player, official, match official, football agent licensed by FIFA, representatives of any club or anyone with an authorisation from the NIYFA, in particular with regard to a match, competition or other event organised by the NIYFA to attend at a hearing convened pursuant to this Article.

The Committee 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 the Committee immediately of any difficulty in attending a hearing. The Committee will be guided by the requirement to have the matters dealt with in accordance with the overriding objective.

- 31.2.1 In the event of a person or club whose attendance has been directed does not attend, the Committee will be entitled to draw any inference it deems appropriate by their failure to attend when reasonable notice has been provided.

- 31.3** Should a referee fail to attend a hearing without just or reasonable cause, the Committee has the discretion to report the individual to the Referee's Committee to take whatever action they feel appropriate in the circumstances.

- 31.4** The Committee shall have the power to direct that any person required to attend, produce documentation or items which in the opinion of the Committee 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.

- 31.4.1 The Committee 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 Committee it would have been obvious to the relevant party that such material should have been produced to assist the Committee with its deliberations.

- 31.5** It shall be the duty of anybody or anyone facing any complaint to notify the Committee 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 Committee will entitle the Committee to exclude any person from the hearing.
- 31.6** The Committee 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.
- 31.7** In advance of the hearing, any person or club appearing before the Committee to answer a Notice of Complaint must be given copies of any material relevant to the facts of the case that is already in the possession of the party presenting the case and upon which reliance may be placed. Where documentation is received for the first time in the course of any hearing, the Committee 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.
- 31.8** If before a hearing it becomes apparent to the Committee that the case will involve specialist (including medical) evidence, or has elements which are unusual or difficult, the Committee may direct that such evidence be served in such a manner that the hearing of the case may be properly and fairly conducted.
- 31.9** Subject to the limitations set out in **Article 1.16**, the Committee shall be entitled to consider audio or video footage, including but not limited to television evidence, when considering any case before it.
- 31.9.1** Where a person or club who is the subject of a Notice of Complaint intends to rely on such material, it will be the responsibility of that person or club to provide copies of the footage no later than **48 hours** in advance of the hearing.
- 31.10** Subject to the limitations set out in **Article 1.16**, the Committee shall be entitled to consider any evidence or material which it deems capable of being relevant to the issues before the Committee 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.
- 31.11** Where it appears 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 may take account of such conduct when making its determination.
- 31.12** The Committee may arrange for a hearing to be conducted by video conference or any other similar method.

## ARTICLE 32 PROCEDURES FOR THE CONDUCTING OF HEARINGS

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- 32.1** Hearings before the Committee are disciplinary proceedings; the Committee is not a court of law. The Committee shall endeavour, where possible, to abide by the provisions under this Article; however, it shall retain an overriding discretion to act in accordance with the overriding objective.
- 32.2** 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 Committee and establish a case against a person or club subject to disciplinary proceedings. Where it appears

to the Committee that the Association has failed to discharge that burden, the Committee shall be entitled to discontinue disciplinary proceedings.

#### 32.1.1 **Removed – not applicable to youth football**

- 32.3** The standard of proof in all disciplinary cases is on the balance of probabilities. For the avoidance of doubt, there is no sliding scale.
- 32.4** During any hearing, all submissions and questioning must be directed through the appointed Chairperson of the Committee. The Chairperson of the Committee shall, in their discretion, direct the parties on how proceedings are to be conducted and shall also have the discretion to restrict any representations, including placing a time limit upon them.
- 32.5** Where a hearing is convened, all members of the Committee 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 Committee or the overriding objective. In particular, no member of the Committee shall be entitled to vote on any matter directly related to or involving the Club that they represent or are associated with.
- 32.5.1** Members of the Committee must declare any such conflict of interest to the Committee as soon as they become aware of it. It will be incumbent upon any person or club appearing at a hearing before the Committee to identify at the outset of proceedings whether they believe any such conflict of interest arises. If required, the Chairperson of the Committee 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.
- 32.6** Any person or club subject to a Notice of Complaint and appearing before the Committee 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 Committee to consider whether an adjournment should be granted. The Committee will determine whether any adjournment is required pursuant to the overriding objective.
- 32.7** Where notice has been given of a hearing to any person or club subject to a Notice of Complaint pursuant to **Article 13** the Committee 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 Committee 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 Committee will have the power to suspend any such person or club until such time as they appear before the Committee, in which event every reasonable attempt will be made to agree with the person the date for a further hearing.
- 32.8** 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 Committee 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 Committee to refuse such a person entry to the hearing.
- 32.9** 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 Notice of

Complaint(s) before the Committee, including evidence relied upon by the person or club charged. It will be at the discretion of the Committee to refuse any such person entry to the hearing where there has been inadequate notice as directed in this Code.

- 32.10** The Committee 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 Committee. In any case where a witness required by the Committee to attend the hearing refuses or fails to attend, the Committee 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.
- 32.11** 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 Committee 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 Committee 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.

#### **Proceedings at Hearings**

- 32.12** At the commencement of a hearing, the Chairperson shall confirm the identities of the persons admitted to the hearing and introduce the Committee members.
- 32.13** Before hearing evidence, the Committee 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.
- 32.14** The Disciplinary Compliance Manager may appoint a legally qualified Case Presenter to assist in presenting cases before the Committee at a hearing when it is deemed appropriate to do so. The Case Presenter will have the role of outlining the case and presenting the evidence defined at paragraph **32.16** to the Committee. 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 Committee's determination.

In cases where a Case Presenter is appointed, supplementary questions from the Committee will only be asked by the Chairperson of the Committee.

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

#### **Sanction Only Hearings**

- 32.15** 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 Committee be invited to attend a hearing to make relevant representations to the Committee; the Committee shall be guided by **Article 32.21** in terms of the receipt of such representations.

Where the person or club charged wishes to call evidence in these circumstances, the Committee will be guided by the principles set out at **Articles 32.16 - 32.21**. All deliberations and decisions of the Committee shall be guided by **Articles 32.22 - 32.28** of this Code.

- 32.15.1 The Committee 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 **Article 1.6**.

### **Notice of Complaint & Sanction Hearings**

- 32.16** The Committee will first hear and/or consider the evidence available to the Committee 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 Chairperson to challenge any such evidence. The Chairperson of the Committee shall have discretion to restrict questioning pursuant to the overriding objective.
- 32.17** The Committee 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 Committee may, through the Chairperson, challenge any such evidence.
- 32.18** The Committee 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.
- 32.19** The Committee will be entitled to consider any relevant disciplinary record of any person or Club as part of the evidence in the case. However, the Committee 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.
- 32.20** Subject to the limitations set out in **Article 1.16**, the Committee 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 Committee for any other relevant purpose including separate disciplinary proceedings. Where evidence is not first-hand, such evidence will be given such weight as the Committee deems fit.
- 32.21** At the discretion of the Chairperson, 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 Committee and make limited representations on the evidence before the Committee 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 Chairperson of the Committee shall have a discretion to restrict any representations including placing a time limit upon them.

### **Deliberations**

- 32.22** Having heard the evidence and any submissions, the Chairperson will invite all persons other than the members of the Committee to retire whilst the Committee considers its decision in private.

- 32.23** When coming to their determination, the Committee will do so only on the evidence which has been called, referred to or presented before the Committee at hearing. At the Chairperson's discretion, following retirement the Committee may recall the parties to deal with any issue concerning their deliberations.
- 32.24** The Committee will come to its determination in respect of a Notice of Complaint and any sanction based on a straightforward majority. Where required, the Chairperson will have a casting vote.

### **Decisions**

- 32.25** Following their deliberations, the person or club subject to a Notice of Complaint and/or their representatives shall be invited to return before the Committee for the delivery of the Committee's determination. The Committee pass their decisions entirely independently; in particular, they shall not receive instructions from any other body. The person or club subject to a Notice of Complaint will be informed of the Committee's 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 Committee 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.
- 32.26** Any person or club against whom, following a hearing, an alleged breach has been proven, will be notified by the Committee 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 **Article 14 of the Articles of Association** both at the conclusion of the hearing and subsequently in writing.
- The Committee reserves the right, at its discretion, to notify other parties of the hearing outcome.
- 32.27** Removed – not applicable to youth football.
- 32.28** The deliberations of the Committee are private and will not be divulged to any person who was not present during the course of the Committee's retirement. The deliberations of the Committee, including the opinions or votes of any of its members will not be disclosed.
- Nothing in this Article will prevent the Committee 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 Committee in respect of any case.
- 32.29** Where it is not proven to the satisfaction of the Committee 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.
- 32.30** The members of the Committee will not be held liable for any deeds or omissions relating to any disciplinary procedure.

### **ARTICLE 33 FAILURE TO RESPECT DECISIONS**

- 33.1** Anyone who fails to pay another person (such as a player, a coach or a club) or the NIYFA a sum of money in full or part, even though instructed to do so by a body, a committee, panel or

Appeals Committee of the Irish FA, or anyone who fails to comply with another decision (non-financial decision) passed by such bodies:

- (i) will be fined for failing to comply with a decision;
- (ii) will be granted a final deadline by the relevant bodies of the NIYFA or Irish FA 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. A transfer ban may also be pronounced;
- (iv) (in the case of NIYFA affiliated leagues, 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.

**33.2** If a club disregards the final time limit, the NIYFA or Irish FA shall implement the sanctions notified.

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

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

**33.5** Any appeal against a decision passed in accordance with this **Article** shall be lodged with the Irish FA Appeals Committee in accordance with the applicable appeal regulations.

**33.6** Any financial or non-financial decision that has been pronounced against a club by a tribunal, arbitration panel, or disputes committee recognised by the Irish FA shall be enforced by the Association in accordance with the principles established in this **Article**.

**33.7** Any financial or non-financial decision against a natural person by a tribunal, arbitration panel, or disputes committee recognised by the Irish FA shall be enforced by the Association in accordance with the principles established in this **Article**.

#### **ARTICLE 34 COMPLAINTS OF MISCONDUCT OTHER THAN BY MEANS OF A MATCH OFFICIAL'S REPORT**

**34.1** A club submitting a complaint of misconduct about any player, official, match official or club must submit their complaint in writing dispatched by email to [discipline@niyfa.co.uk](mailto:discipline@niyfa.co.uk) within **14 days** from the alleged misconduct coming to their attention. The NIYFA will send a copy of the complaint to the club or person who is the subject of the complaint.

**34.2** A deposit of **£100** must be lodged with the NIYFA with each complaint pursuant to **Article 34.1**, 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 IFA has received the deposit.

**34.3** 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.

**34.4** A League, Committee, Committee member, match official, or NIYFA Department submitting a complaint of misconduct must submit their complaint in writing dispatched by email to [discipline@niyfa.co.uk](mailto:discipline@niyfa.co.uk) within **14 days** from the alleged misconduct coming to their attention. The NIYFA will send a copy of the complaint to the club or person who is the subject of the complaint.

**34.5** A League, Committee, Committee member, match official, or NIYFA Department will not be required to adhere to the procedure detailed in **Article 34.2** of this Code.

- 34.6** In lodging a complaint, a League, Committee, Committee member, match official, or NIYFA Department 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.
- 34.7** Cases of serious misconduct that arise outside of the referee's attention may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.
- 34.8** All complaints of misconduct from a club will require full co-operation from the claimant.

## ARTICLE 35 APPEALS COMMITTEE

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

## ARTICLE 36 DIVISIONAL ASSOCIATIONS' AND NORTHERN IRELAND YOUTH FA DISCIPLINARY CODES

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- 36.1** The procedures described within the code may be adapted to suit each Divisional Association or the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association noting that some powers can be administered by the Irish FA only. However, the fines & sanctions detailed in this code must be adopted for the purpose of harmonising disciplinary sanctions.
- 36.2** Divisional Associations shall be entitled to choose their means of communication when notifying suspensions or Notice of Complaints.
- 36.3** The Northern Ireland Youth Football Association shall carry out all its football administration, including notifications of suspensions or Notice of Complaints, via the Comet system.
- 36.4** Notwithstanding **Article 36.1**, the appropriate disciplinary authority shall have discretion to vary sanctions imposed on youth players participating in youth football where it considers such variation to be appropriate for educational reasons, substantiated welfare concerns, or to reflect the player's maturity and stage of development, provided that any variation remains consistent with the objectives of this Code.

For youth players participating in adult football, standard sanctions apply, but the appropriate disciplinary authority retains discretion to:

- i. Suspend all or part of any sanction;
- ii. Impose educational measures in addition to or instead of sanctions;
- iii. Consider the player's age, maturity, and substantiated welfare reasons when determining appropriate action.

**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.

## Appendix 1

### Inclusivity & Restoration (Alternatives Restorative Justice Supplement)

- 1.1 **Acknowledging Our Youth:** The Irish Football Association (IFA) Disciplinary Committee, hereinafter referred to as "the Committee," has approved this adaptation of the IFA Disciplinary Code. This adaptation recognises the unique role and governance of Youth Football within Northern Ireland. The approved adaptation has been thoughtfully integrated into the constitution and rules of the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association (NIYFA) and its affiliated leagues.
- 1.2 **Embracing Restorative Principles:** This code comes into effect from August 2023 and extends its influence over all football activities under the jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association, with a strong emphasis on restorative principles.
- 1.3 **Shared Language:** Unless explicitly stated otherwise, the terms and phrases defined in the Rules of the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association and the IFA Articles of Association maintain their meanings within this code.

- 1.4 **Inclusivity and Accountability:** This code extends its influence on the following entities:

Northern Ireland Youth Football Association, its member leagues, and clubs.

Officials.

Players.

Match officials — for disciplinary matters, concerns will be referred to the IFA Disciplinary Committee.

Anyone authorised by the NIYFA and its member leagues regarding a match, competition, or event organised by them.

- 1.5 **Restorative Cooperation:** Every individual or organisation subject to this code is expected to actively engage in restorative processes, collaborating with a League, NIYFA, or IF-A to resolve disputes and promote personal growth and accountability.
- 1.6 **Restoring Fair Play:** The primary objective of this Code is to uphold and promote fair play, safeguard the well-being of players and other stakeholders, address acts of indiscipline both on and off the field, and restore relationships and the positive image Of association football and the Northern Ireland Youth Football Association.
- 1.7 **Restorative Proceedings:** Disciplinary hearings will be conducted with a strong emphasis on restorative justice principles, focusing on accountability, empathy, and the restoration of harmed relationships. Procedural and technical considerations will take a back seat to the overarching goal of restoration and reconciliation.
  - 1.7.1 **Empathy and Understanding:** Proceedings, findings, or decisions of the Disciplinary Panel will prioritise understanding and addressing the root causes of behaviour, with an aim to repair harm caused.
- 1.8 **Adaptive Responses:** In cases where this Code lacks provisions for a specific incident, including procedural matters, jurisdiction, or sanctions, the Disciplinary Panel may take appropriate restorative actions aimed at repairing harm, restoring relationships, and promoting personal growth.

1.9 Restorative Sanctions: The Disciplinary Panel has the authority to:

Address serious disciplinary infractions that may have been overlooked by match officials.  
Implement restorative sanctions, including but not limited to:

- a) Restitution to the harmed party.
- b) Restorative conferences or circles involving the offender, harmed party, and affected community.
- c) Educational and awareness programs on fair play and sportsmanship.
- d) Community service aimed at giving back.
- e) Written apologies and amends.
- f) Mediation and conflict resolution processes.
- g) Restorative mentoring and counselling.

1.10 Wider Recognition: NIYFA may recognise and collaborate with Other restorative justice programs and initiatives within the sporting community. Individuals suspended or banned by any other sporting body may undergo concurrent restorative processes by the Disciplinary Panel.

1.11 Consistency and Fairness: The NIYFA Disciplinary Panel strives for consistency in its restorative actions. While does not adhere to binding precedents, it assesses each case on its own merits, with an unwavering commitment to restorative principles.

1.12 Restorative Graduated Response: When an individual commits multiple offences simultaneously, the Panel will base the response on restorative justice principles, seeking to address the underlying issues and repair relationships. Depending on the circumstances, the Panel may increase the restorative measures to ensure full restoration and accountability.

1.13 Flexibility in Assessment: If a Notice of Complaint has been issued, challenged, and the Disciplinary Panel finds that the alleged breach has not been proven, the Panel may determine a lesser breach of the Code and facilitate a restorative process, without the need for a new Notice of Complaint. The Panel retains sole discretion to decide on the appropriate restorative measures, provided that the aim is always to repair harm and promote accountability.

1.14 Ensuring Clarity: Any clerical errors or accidental omissions in written decisions or correspondence on behalf of the Panel may be corrected by the Panel at any time, with a commitment to transparency and restorative principles.