

Disciplinary Action

Procedure for Members

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

- The main form of discipline should be positive reinforcement for effort. It should encourage the development of emotional and social skills as well as skills in competition
- Children should be helped to become responsible about the decisions and choices they make within competition, particularly when they are likely to make a difference between competing fairly and unfairly
- There should be no place for fighting, over – aggressive or dangerous behaviour in competition or at any other time. Members should treat others in a respectful manner. They should not interfere with, bully or take unfair advantage of others.
- There should be no place for bad sportsmanship. No-one, child or adult, should be allowed to revile, demean or bully another for failing to win, to succeed, or for a poor performance, under any circumstances.

On rare occasions it may be necessary to indicate to Members, parents / guardians, supporters or officials / volunteers that their behaviour is not acceptable at Pony Club activities and competitions. In such instances it is essential that an agreed procedure is followed so that the Member may continue to take part in, and benefit from, Pony Club activities. It is anticipated that formal disciplinary action will only be used when all other avenues have been tried.

At competitions run under Pony Club rules. The rules for the competitive discipline are intended to ensure that competitions are run fairly and Members learn to compete in the correct spirit. When there is consistent bad behaviour at successive competitions or when the behaviour at a competition is excessively poor formal disciplinary action may be necessary. Similarly when behaviour is poor at non-competitive activities formal disciplinary action may be necessary.

The District Commissioner (DC) or his / her designated representative should look into the allegations against the member, parent / guardian, supporter or official to ascertain the basic facts and whether or not there were any other witnesses.

This should concentrate upon facts and details of what actually happened. Where possible, witnesses should be spoken to. Once the facts of the case have been established the appropriate course of action can be decided upon. While the time taken to investigate the incident may be beneficial as a “cooling off” period, the investigation should be completed as quickly as reasonably practicable. This should not prevent a verbal warning being given on the day of the incident with the investigation being carried out by the event organiser who can then give the warning and inform the DC of their actions.

In the first instance a formal verbal warning should be given by the DC or the activity organiser. When such a warning is given it is essential that strict confidentiality is maintained. The member or his/ her parent / guardian or suitable adult representative may discuss the warning at the time with the person giving the warning which may be withdrawn as a result of those discussions. There is no formal procedure to appeal against a verbal warning.

Formal Warning

Subsequent bad behaviour within a period of two years will result in a written warning being given. If the behaviour is considered to be sufficiently bad it may be necessary to give a written warning without first giving a formal verbal warning. Anyone given a written warning may appeal to the Area Representative against that warning within a period of three weeks from receipt of the warning. There is no formal procedure to appeal against the Area Representative's decision.

In the event of the bad behaviour recurring within two years of a written it may be considered necessary for the benefit of the other Members of the Branch to terminate or suspend membership. This may in extreme cases be considered necessary after a single act by the Member. The Member should be informed of the decision in writing. The Member may appeal within a period of three weeks from receipt of the warning in the first instance to the Area Representative, and subsequently, within a period of three weeks from receipt of the Area Representative's decision, either party may appeal against the Area Representative's decision to the Pony Club Appeals Committee.

Verbal

A formal warning can be given in a private setting with a witness and the Member's parent / guardian or other suitable adult present. The warning should be given by the DC or the activity organiser with another member of the Branch Committee present. The Member or their adult representative should have the opportunity to respond. If the warning is given by the activity organiser the DC should be informed as soon as reasonably practicably. The DC should keep a confidential record of the warning.

Written

A formal warning must be given in the form of a letter to the Member. Normally this would be given to the Member by the DC with another member of the Branch Committee present as a witness and the Member's parent / guardian or other suitable adult present. The Member or their adult representative should have the opportunity to respond. The warning should indicate that the Member can appeal against the warning to the Area Representative within three weeks of receipt of the warning. The DC should keep a confidential record of the warning.

Termination of Membership

Where the behaviour of a Member is considered to be detrimental to other Members it may be necessary to terminate their membership, or to suspend membership for a period of time. The procedure for this is detailed in the Rules of The Pony Club, published on The Pony Club website, and in The Pony Club Yearbook.

Appeal

Members may appeal against warnings, termination or suspension of their membership, in line with the complaints procedure outlined in the Rules of The Pony Club.

Procedure for Parents / Guardian or Other Supporters

Where the behaviour of a parent / guardian or supporter is considered to be detrimental to the conduct of Branch activities it may be necessary to give them a warning or ban them from attending Pony Club activities. A verbal warning may also be given to a parent / guardian or supporter. The warning should be given by the DC or the activity organiser with another member of the Branch Committee present. The parent / guardian or supporter should have the opportunity to respond. If the warning is given by the activity organiser the DC should be informed as soon as reasonably practicable. The DC should keep a confidential record of the warning.

A formal warning can be given in the form of a letter to a parent / guardian or supporter. Normally this would be given to a parent / guardian or supporter by the DC with another member of the Branch Committee present as witness. The parent / guardian or supporter should have the opportunity to respond. The warning should indicate that the parent / guardian or supporter can appeal against the warning to the Area Representative within three weeks of receipt of the warning. The DC should keep a confidential record of the warning. The appeal procedure is the same as that for a Member.

Normally a parent / guardian or supporter will have received a previous written warning before a ban is required, however certain types of behaviour are unacceptable and warrant banning a parent / guardian or supporter from Pony Club activities immediately. The parent / guardian or supporter should be informed of the decision by means of a letter from the DC, which should indicate the reasons for the decision and indicate that the parent / guardian or supporter can appeal against the ban to the Area Representative within three weeks of receipt of the ban, and that if this appeal is not successful they may appeal to the Pony Club Appeals Committee. They should also be informed that the Member with whom they are associated is still welcome at Pony Club activities and that the DC will indicate on entry forms to competitions run by other Branches that they have been banned from attending Pony Club activities.

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

Such a person could include, but is not limited to, someone who has been required to sign the sex offender's register or anyone who exhibits behaviour which is deemed to be prejudicial to the efficient and safe running of the event. These behaviours include, but are not limited to, physical or verbal violence, bullying, disruptive behaviour, drunkenness, sexually inappropriate behaviour, stealing, taking or selling illegal substances, any other criminal behaviour or any other behaviour which those people running the event find to be unacceptable.

Any individual who it is felt necessary to be restricted or prohibited from attending events will politely be asked to leave and to refrain from attending future events. This will be followed up in writing within seven days. In the event that s/he refuses to leave or attends future events after being restricted, then it is possible that the police may be called and asked to remove him / her from the premises.

If it is discovered that a parent / guardian or any other adult accompanying a member has been found guilty of an offence against a child or has been required to sign the sex offender's register, The Pony Club's policy is that s/he should not be permitted to attend any Pony Club activity.

Anyone who discovers that an adult has committed such an offence and is attending any Pony Club event or activity should inform the DC/ Centre Proprietor/ Manager, the Safeguarding Officer of the Branch/ Centre, and the Lead Safeguarding Officer via the Safeguarding Secretary of the Pony Club. The DC/ Centre Manager should consult with the Area Representative and the Pony Club's Lead Safeguarding Officer who will make enquiries via the relevant Police force and review the public documents concerning the individual and the case concerned. If the information is found to be true then that person will be asked to refrain from attending Pony Club events. This request will be followed up in writing.

If the adult will not comply with this request then s/he will be informed in writing that the police will be informed and may be requested to remove him/ her. If s/he continues to attend future events and/or displays unacceptable behaviour when asked to leave, the police will be called and asked for the adult to be removed.

The restriction only applies to the adult in question and does not extend to the member(s), family members or other relatives who will still be welcome to attend any Pony Club activities.

Procedure for Pony Club Officials or Volunteers

Any minor misdemeanours and general misbehaviour of a Pony Club Official or Volunteer should be dealt with immediately and reported verbally to the appropriate person, with the report followed up in writing. Serious or persistent breach of the code of conduct will result in disciplinary action and could lead to dismissal from the Pony Club, following the disciplinary procedure outlined above. A dismissal could be appealed using the same procedures.

If an allegation/ complaint of a safeguarding nature is made against an adult who is employed by, or volunteers for, the Pony Club, the correct procedures must be followed. It is important to note that the investigations must be brought to a conclusion via the appropriate disciplinary procedures whether or not the individual is still involved with the organisation (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015)

In these circumstances the Procedure if Allegations Made Against an Adult Within the Pony Club must be followed.

- If an allegation or complaint is made it must be taken seriously. Strict confidentiality must be observed at all times.
- The complainant must be asked if s/he will put the complaint in writing so as to ensure that the listener has not missed anything or misinterpreted what the complainant is saying.
- Failure to give a written complaint does NOT mean that the complaint will be disregarded or will not be treated seriously
- If necessary, write out the complaint whilst the complainant is there, asking him / her to check it and sign and date it when it is completed. All relevant known contact details must be included. Please note, this is not a statement, nor is it part of an investigation at this point, merely a written note of the actual complaint
- Give the complaint to the DC/ Centre Proprietor/ Manager, Branch/ Centre Safeguarding Officer or Area Representative unless the complaint is about one of these officers in which case it should be passed to the next level of responsibility.
- On receipt of the written complaint or a verbal account of the complaint the Lead Safeguarding Officer of the Pony Club must be contacted and informed of the situation.

- In consultation with the BEF Safeguarding Group, the Lead Safeguarding Officer will decide whether to pass the complaint to another agency (e.g. Police, Social Care Services, Local Authority Designated Officer) or whether internal scrutiny is required. It is important that the Safeguarding Group is consulted. No safeguarding decision should be made in isolation. A decision will be made at this stage when and what the person against whom the allegation has been made will be told. It must be considered if the Branch / Centre should consider whether or not to use this individual until the matter is concluded.
- If the complaint is passed on to another agency then the referring officer should ask the receiving officer if they can be included in any strategy meetings which may be held, and ask that they be kept informed.
- The person making the original complaint should be kept informed as far as is possible as must the person against whom the allegation has been made.
- If other agencies are involved nothing can be done in the Pony Club until the external investigation is complete. If this does not result in further action the case will return to the Pony Club to consider employment/ deployment issues. This investigation MUST be carried out regardless of whether the individual is still working for the Pony Club or is in any other contact with it.
- If the individual(s) has/ have been prosecuted and found guilty there is no need for a further investigation. The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) must be informed and all Branches / Centres instructed that they should no longer use this person / these people.
- If the case has not been considered in Court then the Pony Club may request assistance from the BEF Safeguarding Group, but an employment investigation must take place to ascertain on the balance of probabilities whether the offence took place.