

Women's Membership Guidance Notes

1. Background Data

- Women are significantly under-represented within national golf club membership with Scottish Golf's data showing that only 13.3% of adult playing members were female.
- The rate of decline for women's membership is higher than that of men – female playing membership has fallen by 31.3% since 2008, compared to 21.5% for adult male playing membership.
- Participation figures as measured by the Scottish Household Survey 2018 show that on average, 10% of men play golf, whereas only 2% of women do, for those aged 16 or over.

2. What action is Scottish Golf taking to address these challenges?

- Appointed a Women and Young People Development Manager in January 2018, co-funded by the R&A and 2019 Solheim Cup.
- Identified increasing female and junior membership as one of three key strategic priorities within our 2018 – 2022 action plan.
- Supporting clubs to adopt the R&A Women in Golf Charter, targeting 100 clubs to make their pledge to commitments by the end of 2019.
- Launch of new Scottish Golf Solheim Cup Club Ambassador programme, encouraging more women to get involved in volunteering roles within their clubs.
- Providing clubs with equality advice via the Equality Act Advice Note.
- Providing clubs with comprehensive Governance and Business Planning support.
- Providing a Model Constitution to guide clubs.
- Supporting clubs with Get into Golf coaching and marketing resources, specifically aimed at female beginners.
- Providing clubs advice on rating all tees for men and women (ability-based tees rather than gender-based tees) and mixed gender competitions.
- Supporting the delivery of curricular and extracurricular golf activity in schools, providing opportunities for more girls to be introduced to the game.
- Launched the Young Persons Golf Panel to provide insights on increasing girls participation and membership.

- Delivered a series of This Girl Golfs events across the country, designed to improve retention among junior girl members.
- Promote good practice as part of the National Women and Girls Golf Week.

3. What else needs to be done?

A significant amount of work has been done at national and local level to address some of the challenges of membership inequality within golf clubs, but Scottish Golf believes more is needed, including further cultural change, to address the decline in women's participation and membership.

This paper aims to outline what more can be done by the governing body and by clubs. It seeks to recommend key principles and describe what good might look like for a golf club. In some cases, what is advocated goes beyond the minimum requirements of the law but at all times, to the best of our knowledge, it is compliant with the law.

The [Equality Act Advice Note](#), referred to above, provides an overview of the aims, objectives and implications for golf clubs through the introduction of that legislation and should be read in tandem with this paper.

4. Key Principle

It is the view of Scottish Golf that as a guiding principle, golf clubs should segment customers by their consumer behavior and **NOT** by their gender.

5. Access to Tee-Times and Competitions

The Equality Act 2010 is clear on aspects such as subscriptions and discounts linked to age and loyalty – see link below to read the full Advice Note:

<https://scottishgolf.org/equality-act-advice-note/>

However, the Act is not specific on allocation of tee-times and competitions. The Advice Note advocates a common-sense approach and proportional allocation of tee times. Scottish Golf has become increasingly aware that this advice is insufficient and some (but not all) clubs are seeking guidance on what this might look like.

Where a club has a membership consisting of men and women, Scottish Golf advocates the following:

- **Men and Women (who are 7-day members) should be able to play both competitive and**

non-competitive golf at the weekend;

- **Tee-times set aside for competitive golf should be equally accessible to players of both genders;**
- **Men and Women should be entitled to play in the same tee-time grouping, even if they are playing in separate competitions.**
- **Tee-times set aside for non-competitive golf should be equally accessible to both genders.**

It should be noted that there is no evidence to suggest that one gender play faster or slower than the other.

Example 1: *A club is running a men's medal and a ladies' medal on a given Saturday and is operating a tee sheet whereby members write their name into a time range. Play is to be in 3-balls. Good practice would enable any member to write their name into any available time slot on a first-come, first-served basis, irrespective of their gender.*

Accordingly, it is conceivable that any given tee-time might consist of 3 women, 3 men, 2 women and a man or 2 men and a woman.

In addition, the club is quite entitled to hold a competition where all members (Men, Women, Boys and Girls) compete in one competition for the same prizes.

6. Club Governance

Scottish Golf believes that clubs should be run for benefit of all members by people with the right blend of skills and experience. In some cases, a male-dominated committee can be unaware or oblivious of the consumer needs of female golfers. In other cases, a ladies' sub-committee consisting of non-working women can lack awareness of the consumer needs of working women or other female demographic groups. Separate competition/handicap committees are divisive and should be discouraged. Scottish Golf advocates the following:

- Clubs should not have separate Ladies and Gents Captains, rather a Club Captain that represents all members and with a position that is open to both genders. If changes are required to allow this to take place, the process of appointing a Club Captain should be considered as part of any governance review.
- The Main Board or Committee of the club should include a minimum of 25% of either gender:
- A Club constitution should not refer to a Ladies' or Gent's section but to categories such as full membership, associate membership, social membership etc.

- Accordingly, a club should not have a sub-committee established to administer affairs on behalf of one gender, i.e. a ladies' sub-committee.
- Clubs can establish any number of sub-committees but should take care to avoid any designation of roles and responsibilities by gender
- Clubs should have only one Competition/Handicap committee to administer these functions on behalf of all members, irrespective of gender. (Note: This has been a recommendation of the CONGU UHS since its inception – see CONGU UHS 2012-2015, page 17: “It is recommended that both genders are represented on a joint *Handicap Committee*).

7. Positive Action

Scottish Golf supports the use of positive action to address, where present, gender imbalance in Committee membership.

Positive action relates to encouraging interest and opportunities from under-represented sectors. This might include, for example, a marketing campaign to encourage new female members to join the club and, in particular, to stand for election to the Main Board or Committee. In taking positive action, clubs should first take steps to identify what potential barriers, if any, exist to engagement by female members at Committee level. However, the key is that positive action must be proportionate and targeted and cannot go beyond what is absolutely necessary; otherwise this risks becoming positive discrimination which is unlawful.

This should be contrasted with positive discrimination, which occurs where an individual gains preferential treatment and an advantage due to his or her protected characteristic but not due to merit.

Example 2: *A club determines that it should instigate a marketing campaign to encourage female membership within its ranks and, in particular, on the Committee. This is entirely permissible.*

However, if the marketing campaign seeks to incentivise female members to join by advising that votes cast for women were weighted higher than votes cast for men in terms of Committee elections, this would not be acceptable, nor would appointing a female to a Committee position simply to ensure a certain number of women are on that committee.

We appreciate that this may be a fine distinction in practice and so clubs should consider taking steps with caution.

8. Next Steps

Should your club require further support with making changes to your membership, please contact your Regional Club Development Officer. Scottish Golf can also provide a number of case studies which highlight good practice examples of other clubs who have delivered some of the changes featured within this paper.

We also recommend you read the attached template and guidance on Model Constitution. This model constitution aims to provide a template from which clubs can produce their own constitution to meet their own specific needs. The model constitution is a Microsoft Office Word document and so can be adapted by clubs.

www.scottishgolf.org/club-services/governance/model-constitution

Scottish Golf | January 2019