

Shropshire Premier Bowling League

Code of Conduct

Adopted: March 2026

Review Date: March 2028

1. Introduction

The Shropshire Premier Bowling League (SPBL) is committed to promoting bowls as a safe, inclusive, and enjoyable sport. This Code sets out expected standards of behaviour and a clear disciplinary framework for misconduct. It is aligned with SCGBA and BCGBA policy and underpinned by UK law.

2. Aims and Purpose

- Promote respectful and sportsmanlike behaviour.
- Protect the reputation of the League, its clubs, and players.
- Ensure disciplinary matters are handled fairly, consistently, and transparently.
- Embed compliance with relevant legal frameworks.

3. Rights and Expectations

3.1 Rights

- Safe participation in the game.
- Respect and fairness.
- Freedom from abuse, discrimination, or intimidation.

3.2 Expectations

- Know and follow the rules.
- Treat others with courtesy.
- Accept officials' decisions.
- Act in a sportsmanlike way.
- Respect the green, facilities, and equipment.

4. Legal Compliance

The League and its clubs are bound by UK law as well as League rules:

- Duty of Care & Safety – Clubs and players must take reasonable steps to ensure bowls is played in a safe and respectful environment (Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 & 1984).
- Equality & Non-Discrimination – Under the Equality Act 2010, discrimination, harassment, or victimisation on grounds of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, or other protected characteristics is prohibited.
- Safeguarding – Where juniors or vulnerable adults are involved, clubs must comply with the Children Act 1989 & 2004 and safeguarding guidance.
- Criminal Conduct – Assault, harassment, threats, drug use, or possession of weapons will be referred to the police as well as sanctioned internally.
- Data Protection – The League and clubs must comply with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 when handling personal data.

5. Definitions (Language & Behaviour)

- Casual Swearing – Frustration not directed at any person. Punishable when persistent or disruptive.
- Directed Swearing – Swearing aimed at another person, whether player, official, supporter, or any other person. Always punishable and normally treated as Tier B or above.
- Verbal Abuse – Sustained, targeted or personalized insults intended to intimidate, humiliate, or harass. Does not include explicit threats of harm (see Threatening Behaviour).
- Threatening Behaviour – Language, gestures, or conduct that implies intent to cause harm, whether physical or emotional. Includes implied threats ("you'll regret that"), aggressive posturing, or behaviour that makes another person feel unsafe.
- Discriminatory Abuse - Any language, behaviour, or "jokes" that mock, demean, or target a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 (e.g., race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, gender reassignment). Always treated as Serious (Tier D) or Extreme (Tier E) misconduct.
- Humour is part of sport, but "banter" must never cross into abuse. Comments relating to protected characteristics, personal appearance, disability, or family circumstances are not acceptable and will be treated as misconduct.

6. Standards of Conduct

6.1 Players

Players must uphold the spirit and laws of the game at all times. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Following all League and SCGBA/BCGBA rules.
- Treating opponents, officials, and supporters with respect.
- Avoiding swearing, abuse, intimidation, harassment, or threatening behaviour. Not smoking, vaping, drinking alcohol, or using drugs on the green. Not playing while intoxicated.
- Not using unauthorised devices on the green.
- Not possessing offensive items or weapons.
- Respecting the green, facilities, and equipment.
- Any person not currently playing in a live game may enter the green only at the request of a player involved in that game, and only for legitimate purposes such as assessing the current status of an end, returning a jack, or stopping a strike. They must leave the green immediately afterwards.

6.2 Officials

Officials must act fairly, consistently, and transparently.

They are entitled to respect from all players, supporters, and club representatives.

Abuse of officials is always treated as misconduct.

6.3 Supporters

Supporters must:

- Encourage positively and respectfully.
- Avoid abuse, intimidation, or disruptive behaviour.
- Remain off the green at all times unless requested by a player involved in the game for a legitimate purpose such as assessing the current status of an end, returning a jack, or stopping a strike. They must leave the green immediately afterwards.

6.4 Clubs

Clubs are responsible for the behaviour of their supporters.

Misconduct by supporters may result in sanctions against the club, the individual supporter, or both.

6.5 Parents/Guardians

Parents and guardians must support children positively and act as appropriate role models.

They must not engage in behaviour that undermines the safety or enjoyment of juniors.

6.6 Social Media

All online activity including social media, email, messaging platforms, and group chats is subject to this Code.

Misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Abusive, discriminatory, defamatory, threatening posts or messages.
- Anonymous or alias accounts used to target individuals or the League.
- Sharing, forwarding, or "liking" abusive content.

All online conduct must comply with the Online Safety Act 2023.

Online misconduct will be treated as Tier C, D, or E depending on severity.

7. Disciplinary Process

7.1 Reporting a Breach

- Alleged breaches must be reported to the League Secretary within 14 days of the incident.
- Reports may be submitted by clubs, officials, players, or supporters.
- Reports should include all available evidence (statements, screenshots, video, etc.).

7.2 Initial Review

- The League Secretary will acknowledge the report and refer the matter to the Independent Disciplinary Sub-Committee.
- The Sub-Committee will consist of 3–5 members with no conflict of interest in the case.

7.3 Investigation & Evidence

- Both the complainant and the alleged offender may submit written statements.
- Additional evidence may be requested where necessary.
- The Sub-Committee may interview individuals or seek clarification from clubs.

7.4 Hearings

- Hearings may be held in person or via video call.
- Both parties may attend and present their account.
- Failure to attend without good reason may result in the hearing proceeding in their absence.

7.5 Decisions

- Decisions are made on the balance of probabilities.
- Sanctions will be applied in line with the League's Sanctions Framework.
- Written outcomes will be issued to the relevant club(s) and recorded by the League.

7.6 Appeals Process

Appeals must follow the recognised pathway:

1. Club Level – internal review (if applicable).
2. League Level – appeal to the SPBL Committee.
3. County Level (SCGBA) – appeal with a £50 deposit.
4. National Level (BCGBA) – appeal with a £100 deposit.

Deposits are refundable only if the appeal is upheld.

7.7 Safeguarding & Criminal Matters

- Any safeguarding concern involving juniors or vulnerable adults must be referred immediately to the County Safeguarding Officer.
- Where appropriate, matters will also be referred to the police.
- Criminal conduct may be investigated by the League in parallel with police involvement.

7.8 Time-frames

All disciplinary hearings and communications will follow the timeframes set out in Rule 17 of the SPBL Match Rules.

8. Punishable Conduct

The behaviours listed below constitute misconduct under this Code.

This list is illustrative, not exhaustive.

Any conduct that undermines safety, fairness, respect, or the reputation of the League may result in disciplinary action.

8.1 Language & Behaviour

- Casual swearing when persistent, disruptive, or clearly audible to others.
- Directed swearing at any person (player, official, or supporter).
- Verbal abuse, including sustained insults, intimidation, humiliation, or harassment.
- Threatening behaviour, including gestures or language implying intent to cause harm.
- Discriminatory abuse relating to any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.
- Bullying, harassment, or behaviour that makes another person feel unsafe.

8.2 Respect for the Game

- Repeated breaches of the Laws of the Game.
- Disrespect, abuse, or undermining of officials.
- Conduct that brings the game, the League, or its officials into disrepute.
- Deliberate disruption of play or attempts to influence a match unfairly.

8.3 On the Green

- Smoking, vaping, or drinking alcohol on the green.
- Playing while intoxicated.
- Use of unauthorised devices on the green.
- Possession of offensive items or weapons.
- Damage to the green, facilities, or equipment

8.4 Supporters & Clubs

- Supporter abuse, intimidation, or encroachment onto the green.
- Disruptive behaviour that affects players, officials, or the match environment.
- Failure of clubs to control or identify supporter misconduct.
- Non-cooperation with disciplinary investigations.

8.5 Online & Social Media Conduct

- Abusive, defamatory, discriminatory, or threatening posts or messages.
- Anonymous or alias accounts used to target individuals or the League.
- Sharing, forwarding, or “liking” abusive or discriminatory content.
- Conduct that breaches the Online Safety Act 2023.

8.6 Serious Offences

- Physical or sexual assault.
- Safeguarding breaches involving juniors or vulnerable adults.
- Illegal drug use or possession.
- Criminal conduct of any kind.
- Possession of weapons or offensive items.
- Repeat offences at Tier D or above.

9. Sanctions Framework

Sanctions escalate by severity. Fines are mandatory in addition to bans. Match bans apply to all SPBL fixtures; time bans exclude individuals from all SPBL activity.

Tier	Examples of Misconduct	Sanction
A – Minor	Casual swearing (frustration), dress code breach, smoking / vaping / drinking on green	1st offence: Written Warning 2nd offence: 1 match ban 3rd offence: 2 match ban 4th offence: 3 match ban + £25 fine Further: Escalates to Tier B – 3rd offence
B – Disruptive	Directed swearing, disrespect to officials, supporter misconduct, intoxication, minor social media misuse	1st offence: Written Warning 2nd offence: 1–3 match ban + £25 fine 3rd offence: 4–6 match ban + £25 fine Further: Escalates to Tier C
C – Abusive	Verbal abuse (no threats), bullying, intimidation, harassment, repeat Tier B offences	6–12 Match Ban or 6-Month Ban plus £50 Fine
D – Serious	Threatening behaviour, discriminatory abuse, serious supporter misconduct, bringing game into disrepute	12–18 Month Ban plus £75 Fine
E – Extreme	Physical/sexual assault, safeguarding breaches, weapons, illegal drugs, repeat Tier D offences	2-Year Ban or Expulsion plus £100 Fine and Mandatory Police Referral

10. Enforcement Notes

- Repeated minor offences will escalate to higher tiers in line with the Sanctions Framework.
- Suspensions apply to all SPBL activity, including playing, officiating, attending, or organising matches or events.
- Clubs are responsible for ensuring suspended individuals do not participate or attend fixtures at their venue.
- Failure by a club to enforce a suspension may result in additional sanctions against the club.
- All disciplinary outcomes will be reported to SCGBA and BCGBA in accordance with governing-body requirements.
- Expulsion applies to the SPBL only unless escalated to county or national level.
- Police referral is mandatory for illegal drugs, sexual offences, and safeguarding concerns, and strongly advised for physical assault or credible threats of harm.
- The League may continue its own disciplinary process even if a police investigation is ongoing, provided it does not interfere with legal proceedings.

11. Approval

This Code of Conduct was formally adopted by the Shropshire Premier Bowling League Committee in March 2026 and will be reviewed in March 2028.