



## **Frequently Asked Questions in relation to the Protocol for the safe re-introduction of golf in Northern Ireland.**

**Last Updated: April 8 2021 to take effect on 12 April 2021**

*Please note that Golf Ireland continue to engage with all relevant N. Ireland Executive departments & Sport NI with the priority being the full reopening of all golf activities as soon as the public health situation allows.*

### **Q. Is Member Only golf allowed?**

A. Yes, in phase 2 of the N.Ireland Executive's plan, travel needs to be minimised and therefore golf will remain for members only.

### **Q. How far can I travel to play golf?**

A. You can travel to your home club within Northern Ireland, until further notice. In accordance with the continuing Level 5 measures in the Republic of Ireland, members must not travel from a place of residence in the Republic of Ireland to play golf until after April 12.

### **Q. How many people can I play golf with?**

A. You can play with a maximum of 3 other people on an arrive, play and leave immediately basis only – there is no household restrictions in place.

### **Q. When will any reviews of the current protocols take place?**

A. The N. Ireland Executive will decide when to move into stage 3 of their recovery plan – Golf Ireland will receive advance notice of this change and will communicate any changes to the protocol at that time.

### **Q. What will happen on April 12?**

A. Outdoor sports training will resume, with no more than 15 participants permitted in one training group. Indoor club facilities, apart from toilets, will remain closed. This will mean golfers will be able to play in groups of 4 from 4 different households.

### **Q. Can I play handicap qualifying golf?**

A. The Northern Ireland Expert Group on Sport have stipulated in their sectoral guidance regarding the sports that are resuming in Step 2, that no formal competitions can be organised or promoted, especially on social media, by clubs in this phase of reopening. Clubs are permitted to administer handicap-qualifying activities which may involve collection of entry/registration fees (which should be done online), a procedure for players registering to play a counting round, and collation of scores and handicap adjustments in accordance with the Rules of Handicapping. However, all such golf activities should be solely on the basis of "arrival-play-depart without delay". Measures which can be taken for activities accepted for handicap purposes can be found [here](#).

**Q: Can our club run internal competitions as part of the handicapping activities that are permitted in the initial phase?**

A: A club can facilitate handicap-counting activities that occur on the basis of the principle of “arrival-play-depart without delay”, as set out in the protocol.

As the Government Expert Groups on Sport for both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland has stipulated that no formal organised competitions can take place in the initial phase, clubs must not promote any activities as competitions, or that meet the definition of competitive sport in a golf club setting, including but not limited to organised stroke/stableford/v-par events and rounds of internal club match play tournaments or club championships.

However, not all activities in the golf club setting are organised in such a competitive manner, and regular handicap-counting activities that involve players arriving, playing golf and departing the facility without delay are generally permitted. Therefore, clubs may facilitate a form of play that involves the submission of scores for handicapping purposes, which under the Rules of Handicapping may take the form of either a) General Play with scores submitted in a manner prescribed by the club, which may include the Golf Ireland App or b) with the computer system set up for a competition, for the purposes of collating all scores on the day and calculating a PCC (Playing Condition Calculation).

In either of these forms, the following associated activities are permitted:

- an entry fee may be charged (which should be online),
- registration to compete (i.e., sign-in) may be taken at a club terminal or in a golf shop.
- submission of scores is made, and results are published internally to membership databases along with handicap adjustments.

To ensure clear differentiation between these activities and competitive sport, in the initial phase the following must also be observed:

- No such activities must not be promoted as competitions. If set up on the computer system, the title of the activity should be the form of play (ie, “Singles Stableford”, “Singles Stroke” etc).
- Prize presentations must not be organised, and results must not be promoted in public media.

**Q. I have received both doses of my vaccine, are the rules different for me?**

A. No, the protocols for participation in golf activities are the same for those who vaccinated and those who are not. If the restrictions for those who have received both doses of their vaccine change and it is possible for these to be adopted into the return to Golf protocol this will be communicated to clubs.

**Q. Is Golf Ireland recommending these restrictions?**

A. The protocol will set out the basis on which golf has been permitted as an activity can be played in accordance with the measures announced by the Government and set out in



detail on [The Executive's pathway out of restrictions | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Golf Ireland commends clubs for having shown a high level of compliance thus far and encourages all golfers and clubs to continue to follow protocols issued in accordance with these measures.

**Q. Are golfers exempt from the national restrictions and public health measures that have been put in place by the Government?**

A. No, golfers are expected to observe the underlying public health guidance set out at [The Executive's pathway out of restrictions | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](#) including any restrictions which apply on travel from home.

**Q. Can I pay a green fee to play at my local course?**

A. Not at this time. Members have priority access in the first phase of reopening in Step 2. Visitors and members will be permitted in later stages of reopening.

**Q. Whose role is it to monitor members coming to our club?**

A. It is the responsibility of individuals to observe society-wide public health guidelines. Whilst golf clubs must ensure that the game is played safely, it is not the responsibility of golf clubs to ensure that members adhere to the laws of the land.

**Q. Golf Clubs have no potential for revenue with what is being proposed (no green fees) but increased costs by opening. What advice do you have?**

A. Golf returning will allow members to enjoy their club facilities in the first instance and membership revenue is an important income stream for clubs. As restrictions on movement are eased there will be a return to visitors (see Golf Ireland Protocol Document).

**Q. Can we advertise membership at this time?**

A. Yes. Clubs should be mindful not to undermine their existing membership and be conscious that existing members may want to avail of any discounted package that would be available to new members. In the coming weeks Golf Ireland will run a promotion campaign to enhance public awareness of golf club membership opportunities. In addition, Golf Ireland Development & Club Support Officers will be delivering webinars to clubs on engaging with new and existing members.

**Q. Can a Golf Club issue temporary membership to golfers?**

A. A club is entitled to offer memberships to individuals in line with its own constitution/byelaws. As above clubs need to be mindful of the value of each category of membership and ensure members don't switch to a cheaper membership category that is perceived as better value.

**Q. What should our club do for employees coming back to work?**

A. Golf Clubs with employees should ensure that they have the necessary policies and practices in place relating to Covid-19. An overview of the key areas that employers (Golf Clubs) must assess to ensure compliance and to minimise risk to employees can be found on the following website: [HSENI Website](#)

**Q. Can a Professional Golfer give a lesson to a member?**

A. Coaching can resume outdoors in groups of 15, socially distanced. See PGA website for more details here [UPDATE - Golf in Northern Ireland to reopen on 1st April \(pga.info\)](#)

**Q. Can members of the same household share a buggy?**

A. Yes, if it is sanitized prior to and after use and is not used by any other person during your round.

**Q. Are juniors allowed to play on the course?**

A. Yes, as outlined in the protocol document juniors are encouraged to return to golf.

**Q. Can junior group activity resume?**

A. Outdoor sports training will resume, with no more than 15 participants inc. Coach permitted in one training group. U12 Groups can have a maximum of 3 groups and U16 can have a maximum of 2 groups. Individual group members must remain in the same group even when changing to a different station. Social distancing MUST be in place at all time. Indoor club facilities, apart from toilets, will remain closed.

**Q. Can practice facilities open?**

A. Outdoors practice facilities, inc. Driving Range can be open