

Code of Conduct for Officials

As a responsible official you will:

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every athlete and others involved in highland games and treat everyone equally.
- Place the welfare and safety of the athlete above the development of performance
- Keep up to date with any changes in the relevant competition rules and seek the advice of others if necessary
- Ensure that activities you direct or guide are appropriate for the age, maturity, experience and ability of the individual athlete
- At the outset clarify with athletes (and where appropriate, with parents or carers) exactly what is expected of them and what athletes are entitled to expect from you
- Cooperate fully with others involved in the sport such as other officials, competition providers/organisers, team managers, coaches, and representatives of the governing body in the provision of fair and equitable conditions for the conduct of athletics events under the relevant rules of competition.
- Act in a decisive, objective but friendly manner in your interaction with other officials, athletes, coaches and spectators and carry out your duties in an efficient and non-abrasive manner.
- Consistently promote positive aspects of the sport such as fair play and never condone rule violations or the use of prohibited or age-inappropriate substances
- Never smoke whilst officiating or consume alcoholic beverages to a degree that it affects your ability or competence to undertake your officiating duties.
- Be fully prepared for the officiating task that is assigned to you
- Dress appropriately, to the standard and nature of the competition as outlined by the relevant officials committee
- Arrive in good time for the competition and report to the official in charge
- Conduct the event in accordance with the rules and with due respect to the welfare of the athlete
- Work in a spirit of cooperation with other officials and do not interfere with their responsibilities
- Offer guidance and support to less experienced officials whenever appropriate
- Encourage and guide athletes to accept responsibility for their own performance and behaviour
- Develop appropriate working relationships with athletes based on mutual trust and respect, especially with those athletes under 18 years or with vulnerable adults
- Do not exert undue influence to obtain personal benefit or reward

- An Official **MUST** strictly maintain a clear boundary between friendship and intimacy with athletes and do not conduct inappropriate relationships with athletes. Relationship with athletes can cause significant problems for other athletes, coaches and team members, raising concerns of favouritism and/or victimisation should the relationship later end.
- In particular, you **MUST NOT** allow an intimate personal relationship to develop between yourself and any athlete aged under **18 years**. It may also be a criminal offence to conduct a relationship with an athlete aged under 16 years. It may also be a violation of your officials licence to form an intimate personal relationship with a vulnerable adult judged/officiated by you
- It is also **strongly recommended** that you do not allow intimate relationships to develop between yourself and athletes judged by you aged over 18 years.

As a responsible Official, when participating in or attending any athletics activities, including training/coaching sessions and competition events you will:

- Act with dignity and display courtesy and good manners towards others
- Avoid swearing and abusive language and irresponsible behaviour including behaviour that is dangerous to yourself or others, acts of violence, bullying, harassment and physical and sexual abuse
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour and language by others
- Never engage in any inappropriate or illegal behaviour
- Avoid destructive behaviour and leave athletics venues as you find them
- Not carry or consume alcohol to excess and/or illegal substances.
- Avoid carrying any items that could be dangerous to yourself or others excluding athletics equipment used in the course of your athletics activity

In addition, officials should follow these guidelines on best practice, in particular with young athletes or vulnerable adults

- Avoid critical language or actions, such as sarcasm which could undermine an athlete's self-esteem.
- Avoid spending time alone with young athletes unless clearly in the view of others
- Avoid taking young athletes alone in your car
- Never invite a young athlete alone into your home
- Never share a bedroom with a child
- Always explain why and ask for consent before touching an athlete
- Ensure that parents/carers know and have given consent before taking a young athlete away from the usual training venue
- Work in same-sex pairs if supervising changing areas
- Respect the right of young athletes to an independent life outside of athletics
- Report any accidental injury, distress, misunderstanding or misinterpretation to the parents/carers and RSHGA Welfare officer as soon as possible.
- Report any suspected misconduct by other officials, coaches or other people involved in highland games to the RSHGA Welfare officer as soon as possible.

Social media Postings

Posts by officials must be in the first person, reflecting their own personal opinion or views and related to their own personal experience.

Officials must not assume the role of a journalist, reporter or any other media capacity, other than when creating the RSHGA's own official communications/news.

Postings should be polite, courteous, and respectful in their messages to others and should not use obscene, profane, vulgar, sexually explicit, defamatory, or abusive language.

Posts must not disclose any confidential or private information in relation to any other person.

Sound or moving images

Any video/audio of this type must be for personal use only and not uploaded to any online platforms whether on a live or delayed basis, unless as part of the RSHGA's official communications.

Still Pictures

Officials may upload images from events for personal use. It is not permitted to commercialise, sell or otherwise distribute these photographs. If other persons are featured in still pictures, their consent to publish the picture should be obtained.

Such pictures must not infringe on a person's confidentiality or bring RSHGA into disrepute. They must also not compromise the security of individuals or events.

Officials must not take still or moving pictures of athletes whilst in back-of-house areas of any events, other than where authorised by the RSHGA in conjunction with the individual athlete's express permission. It is not sufficient to have the athlete's permission only.

Autographs and souvenirs

Officials enjoy a privileged position in being able to work with and assist athletes at all levels and stages in their careers. Therefore there has to be a degree of professional distance between athletes and officials. Whilst acting as an official you must not seek autographs from athletes or ask for souvenirs either for yourself or a third party. This includes the signing of memorabilia and personal clothing. Officials must not without authority remove items of equipment as souvenirs from events.

Liability

It is brought to your attention that, when officials choose to go public with their opinions on a social media platform, they are responsible for their commentary and will be personally liable for any legal actions raised as a consequence. RSHGA only indemnifies office bearers undertaking official RSHGA communications activities. Particular care is needed not to make any statements that may be interpreted as defamatory, obscene or proprietary. Social Media users post their content at their own risk and they should make it clear that the views expressed are their own, and not those of the organisation.