

An interview with a County Welfare Officer



ENGLAND
GOLF

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How did you get involved as a County Welfare Officer?

“I decided that I wanted to be part of the County Executive in 2018 as I was very keen to support and be involved in developing innovative initiatives which would grow the game in our county. Whilst in my role, I was made aware that the county were looking to appoint a Welfare Officer. As my career has majorly focussed on supporting young people within the community, I thought I had the experience, knowledge and skills which would be complementary to the role and support the county to make golf a safe environment for all playing the game.”

How have you found the role?

“One of the most interesting and educational elements of the role has been taking the county through the SafeGolf accreditation and ensuring that our county volunteers are on board with safeguarding and protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults.

“Often safeguarding and child protection can be seen as very uncomfortable subjects, but it is essential that as many employees and volunteers within the golf industry are educated to gain a better understanding in these areas.

“Too many golfers would not even recognise some things as being a safeguarding or child protection issue so the exciting challenge as County Welfare Officer is to change this and make golf an even safer sport to participate in.

Have you been able to provide guidance or help with an issue raised?

“I am pleased to say that I have not had to deal with too many safeguarding issues and, touch wood, long may this continue.

“However we did have a report from a county junior event where my support was requested. The County Welfare Officer’s approach should always be impartial and empathetic to all parties’ accounts of such events. I think adopting this approach helped to defuse the situation and enabled the county to bring the issue to a conclusion which addressed all concerns and issues.

What support have you had from England Golf?

“One of the things I always mention to Club Welfare Officers is if you are unsure or need

someone to talk to about a concern, then England Golf’s safeguarding team are always at hand to help out. I wanted further clarity on how to deal with a report and what procedures I should follow and the safeguarding team were very helpful in speaking to me about the incident and then sending through guidance of how I may look to deal with the report.

What would you say to those thinking about volunteering for the role?

“Safeguarding and protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults should not be seen in a negative light. I would promote the role to people as an opportunity to make a positive contribution towards preventing the forms of abuse which we hear about in the media raising its heads in the game we love.

“The more people we have volunteering and being educated in these areas then the safer golf is for everyone.

How have the members in the county responded to you in your role?

Our members have been great and have fully supported me in endorsing the need for clubs to achieve the SafeGolf accreditation across the county. Our Executive have just agreed to work with England Golf to deliver a series of SafeGolf Q&A webinars with the aim being to get all our clubs accredited by the end of March 2021.

How big a benefit has SafeGolf been for your county?

“As a county we are just about to be accredited with SafeGolf and it has been beneficial to our team of volunteers in ensuring that county events, matches and championships have been conducted in a safe environment.

“The SafeGolf policies have been extremely useful as these are the ‘go-to’ documents should anything occur and help us to be reassured that we are following the correct procedures and processes if any safeguarding issues arise in our county.