RFU REGULATION 16 – ADULT WOMEN COMPETITIONS

16.1 General

16.1.1 RFU Regulation 16 sets out the Regulations relating to the RFU Women Competitions in England. Regulation 16 is supplemental to other RFU Regulations (including RFU Regulation 13) and the Women’s Premier 15s Regulations, which, for the avoidance of doubt, shall have full force and effect save that in the event of conflict between Regulation 16 and the other RFU Regulations, the RFU Regulations (to the extent that they affect the teams) are deemed varied by RFU Regulation 16 and the Women’s Premier 15s Regulations.

16.1.2 For the purposes of this Regulation 16, ‘RFU Women Competitions’ shall mean the ‘Championship 1 North and 1 South’, ‘Championship 2’, ‘National Challenge Division 1’, ‘National Challenge Division 2’ and ‘National Challenge Division 3’; Levels 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 respectively.

16.1.3 There are separate regulations in place for the Women’s Premier 15s competition (Level 1).

16.1.4 RFU Regulation 15 (Age Grade Rugby) sets out the Regulations and Rules of Play for Girls Age Grade Rugby.

16.1.5 All RFU Women’s Competitions shall be organised by such designated Organising Committee to which powers have been delegated by the RFU Governance Standing Committee in accordance with RFU Regulation 13. Should the delegated Organising Committee wish to apply local variations to this Regulation 16, the procedure set out in RFU Regulation 13.1.4 shall apply in the same way that it applies to teams, clubs, Divisional Organising Committees and Constituent Bodies.

16.1.6 All matches played under the jurisdiction of the RFU and/or in RFU Women’s Competitions or any other competition or merit table must be played in accordance with the World Rugby Laws (including any variations or trials that may be adopted by the RFU, including those set out in Appendix 1), World Rugby Regulations, the RFU Rules, the RFU Regulations and any competition specific Regulations applicable to a competition.

16.1.7 The definitions set out in RFU Regulation 1 (RFU Definitions) shall apply to this RFU Regulation 16 unless stated otherwise.

16.1.8 The precise format and structure of the competitions, including league sizes, will be determined by the RFU Governance Standing Committee and communicated to participating teams and other stakeholders as soon as practicable in advance of the competitions.

16.1.9 For the purposes of these regulations, the Disputes Committee shall mean the Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) as designated by the RFU.

Effective from 19 October 2021
16.2 Eligibility of Teams

16.2.1 All clubs/teams participating in the RFU Women Competitions must:

(a) be affiliated to the RFU;

(b) have completed and submitted the league entry form by the deadline specified by the RFU (as amended by the RFU); and

(c) have received confirmation from the RFU that the team has been accepted into the league for the next Season.

16.2.2 Only one team per club can participate in each league in the same Season. If the first team of a club is relegated into the same league as the second team of the same club, the second team shall be relegated, and this same principle shall apply in respect of all other lower XV teams.

16.3 Eligibility of Individual Players and Effective Registration

16.3.1 All Players participating in the RFU Women's Competitions must hold Effective Registration as an adult with the RFU on the RFU’s Game Management System.

16.3.2 Student Pass Players and Service Pass Players are permitted to simultaneously hold Effective Registration with two clubs provided they comply with the RFU’s Student and Service Pass process in all respects and are approved by the RFU for a Student or Services Pass prior to the Transfer Deadline.

16.3.3 Players are permitted to simultaneously hold Effective Registration with both a Premier 15s club and another club in Championship 1 or below provided they comply with the RFU’s process for the dual registration of players in all respects and any such players are defined as ‘Dual Registered Players’. A club is not permitted to have more than 15 Dual Registered Players at any one time and any such players will not be included in any registration cap applicable to the Premier 15s competition.

16.3.4 Players who are members of the England Sevens Squad will be permitted to be registered with Premier 15s Clubs with the approval of the RFU and any such players will not be included in any registration cap applicable to the Premier 15s competition.

16.3.5 An application for registration of an Overseas Player wishing to be registered with a club in England must be accompanied by a Clearance (as defined in World Rugby Regulation 1) from her Current Union.

16.3.6 All players must be 18 years of age or over, unless otherwise permitted to play adult rugby in accordance with RFU Regulation 15.

16.3.7 “Waiting Period” means the period of time between the Registration Date and the Effective Date, as decided by the Registrar save in the circumstances set out below when the waiting period shall be as stated.

(a) The Waiting Period will be 7 clear days where a Player has Effective Registration with another Club on the Registration Date, unless the expedited registration process is followed, as set out in Regulations 16.4.3.
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(b) The Waiting Period will be 24 hours or less providing correct papers are lodged with the Registrar by 12 noon on a Friday (or the day of the match in respect of mid-week matches) where:

(i) an Age Grade player is transferring to become an adult player, either in the same Club or to a different Club;

(ii) a Player has not previously been Effectively Registered with any Club during the current Season.

16.3.8 An application for Effective Registration, for either a new or transferring player, whether made online or via an RFU Registrar, must include a completed RFU Registration Form signed by both the Player and the Club as well as any additional Application Documents as requested by the Registrar.

The applicant Club must retain the original signed Registration Form and copies of other Application Documents for at least one year (including evidence of posting or, if sent electronically, evidence of dispatch).

16.3.9 Where the Registrar is unable to accept the Registration Form or the Application Documents the Registrar will either return the documents to the Club or notify the Club that the application is incomplete and request the further information required to progress the application.

16.4 Player Transfers

16.4.1 A Player may:

(a) not hold Effective Registration with more than one Club at any one time; and

(b) not hold Effective Registration with more than three (3) Clubs in any Season; save that the above will not apply in respect of those players registered pursuant to Regulations 16.3.2, 16.3.3 and 16.3.4.

16.4.2 In the event of a Player transferring from one club to another, the Club wishing to sign the Player must, as well as completing a player registration form, send the player’s former Club a Notice of Transfer Form via GMS or by post/email. If the former Club has any objections it must submit them to the Registrar within seven days. Grounds for objection can include but are not limited to:

(a) the Player has a Contract with the current Club which has not yet expired;

(b) the Player is being disciplined under RFU Rule 5.12;

(c) the Player owes money to the current Club.

In the absence of any objection, or such objections being overruled, the Player will be Effectively Registered once the Waiting Period noted in 16.3.6 has passed.
16.4.3 Should a Club wish to make a transferring Player available in less than seven days it may apply for an expedited registration. This can be achieved by submitting:

(a) a player registration form
(b) confirmation from the player’s existing Club that it is prepared to release her with immediate effect
(c) a non-refundable fee of £45 in such a manner as the Registrar shall prescribe.

Subject to this paperwork being received by 12 noon on a Friday, the Player will be available from 4pm on the Friday afternoon.

16.4.4 The Transfer Deadline for all clubs is 18 February 2022 unless otherwise approved in writing by the RFU Player Experience Department.

16.4.5 The deadline for a club to register additional players before its next fixture is 12.00 noon on the Friday preceding the fixture for a weekend fixture, or 12.00 noon of the day preceding its fixture for a weekday fixture.

16.4.6 In relation to any Women’s cup competitions, a club/team may not be represented in that competition by any Player who has played or been a replacement (i.e. included in the match squad) for another club in that cup competition in the current Season or such other higher cup competition.

16.5 Movement of Players between teams inside a club

16.5.1 A Player who has been selected as a starting player or replacement in 50% or more league matches in a higher team or have played in the final league match of a higher team in the current season must not play for a lower team in any league or cup fixture unless:

(a) they are only playing for the higher team to replace an injured regular higher team Player, which will require written evidence from a doctor or physio; or
(b) they are returning from a period of not playing due to injury, which will require written evidence from a doctor or physio; or
(c) they have been dropped in favour of a better Player in agreement with the RFU Player Experience Department; or
(d) both teams are playing a league or cup match on the same day or weekend.

16.5.2 A Player cannot represent more than one team, including within the same Club, on the same day or the same weekend.

16.6 Borrowing and Loaning Players

For the purposes of this Regulation 16:

“Borrowing” shall mean the informal borrowing or loaning of a Player on an ad-hoc basis for one match and for which no written agreement is required and applies as between clubs at National Challenge 2 and below, and in accordance with the borrowing process stipulated by the RFU. ‘Borrow’ and ‘Borrowed Player’ shall be construed accordingly;
"Loaning" shall mean the loaning of a Player on a formal basis, for an allotted period of time in which the Player can only play for the loanee Club, for which a written agreement is required between the clubs and any loaning of players must be done in accordance with the loaning process stipulated by the RFU. ‘Loan’ and ‘Loan Player’ shall be construed accordingly and excludes those players registered in accordance with Regulation 16.3.2, 16.3.3 and 16.3.4.

16.6.1 Save as set out in Regulation 16.6.2 below, Loan Players may not hold Effective Registration with the same Club more than three (3) times after the opening day of the Season. When counting the number of consecutive Effective Registrations a Loan Player has held, the Player’s Effective Registration with that Club on the first day of the Season shall not count providing the player has not been subject of a transfer during the Season, irrespective of the number of times they have been loaned to a different club.

16.6.2 In respect of Loan Players loaned between Premier 15s Clubs and Championship 1 Clubs, a player may move freely between those Clubs until the Transfer Deadline but once the Transfer Deadline has passed a player may not hold Effective Registration with the same Club more than three (3) times. When counting the number of consecutive Effective Registrations a Loan Player has held, the player’s Effective Registration with that Club on the Transfer Deadline day shall not count providing the player has not been subject of a transfer during the Season.

16.6.3 No side can play more than three Loan players in any match day squad.

16.6.4 A player playing at a lower level can be loaned upwards to any club at any level.

16.6.5 A player other than a Premier 15s player can be loaned down to a Club up to 2 levels lower in the league structure.

16.6.6 A Premier 15s player can be loaned between Premier 15s Clubs, and otherwise can only be loaned down to a Club in Championship 1, Championship 2 or National Challenge 1 (Level 4).

16.6.7 Borrowing is only allowed to happen between National Challenge 1 (Level 4) and below clubs, subject to the following conditions:

(a) no side can play more than three Borrowed players in any match day squad:

i. in National Challenge 1 and 2, teams can only borrow from their matchday opposition or teams in parallel or below leagues. They may not borrow from other teams in their league.

Note: There will be a trial in NC2 South West (West) that removes Regulation 16.6.7 a(i) for the 2021-22 season as notified to the applicable Clubs.

ii. in National Challenge 3 and below, teams can only borrow from their matchday opposition, other teams within their league or teams in parallel leagues and below.

(b) a Borrowed Player must be declared to the opposition prior to the start of the fixture;
(c) a Player can only be Borrowed in order to fulfil a fixture to complete a playing squad or as cover for front row positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Can loan to</th>
<th>Can loan from</th>
<th>Can borrow to</th>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1-4</td>
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<td>3-6</td>
<td>4, 5 (parallel) and Opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Challenge 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>4-6</td>
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16.7 Match Management

Specific procedures for match management will be circulated by the RFU Player Experience Department before the start of the Season.

Date of match

16.7.1 Teams may mutually agree to move a fixture to a different day but the home team must ensure to contact the Results Service and appropriate referee society once a date and time has been agreed by both teams. All matches will be initially scheduled to be played on the Sunday designated unless such other date is specified by the Disputes Committee or agreed by the teams and RFU Player Experience Department.

Any changes for a given week must be communicated to the Results Service by midday Friday.

Kick Off

16.7.2 All matches shall kick off at the following times:

- September, March and April 2.45pm
- October and February 2.30pm
- November, December and January 2.00pm

16.7.3 Kick-off time may be varied by mutual agreement between two teams and the home team must advise the referee of any changes. If the away team disagrees, RFU Regulation 16.7.2 shall apply.

16.7.4 Any delay to the kick-off of a match may be reported by the non-offending team to the RFU Player Experience Department together with confirmation by the referee of any delay. The Disputes Committee will investigate and may then take appropriate action, when all the circumstances have been taken into consideration.

16.7.5 If a delay in kick-off occurs, wherever possible every effort must be made by the two
teams concerned to play the match on the day of the fixture.

**Score Reporting**

16.7.6 The home team is required to telephone the result in by no later than 6pm on the day of the match or 10pm for an evening match. All results, including all relevant bonus point information (tries & squad size) for all leagues (including abandoned and postponed matches) must be telephoned to the RFU women’s result line on 01676 478 080 or text 07797 800102. Where electronic match card is used the club is not required to report the score as above providing the score section of the electronic match card is completed by the above deadlines. In the case of postponed, abandoned or unplayed matches the home team is required to inform the telephone results service as above.

**Match Day Forms**

16.7.7 All RFU Women’s Leagues (Level 2-6) & Cup matches will use electronic match cards.

16.7.8 The home team is responsible for ensuring that the match day forms are completed and returned to the RFU Player Experience Department within 5 days of the match day.

16.7.9 Each team must ensure that information provided on a match day form is accurate and true. The provision of false or misleading information on players or replacements shall be a serious breach of this Regulation and may give rise to a severe penalty.

**Referee Appointments**

16.7.10 The home team is responsible for making every attempt to organise the local Referee Society to appoint a Referee, otherwise a qualified Referee must be used.

16.7.11 The deadline for leagues matches to be played in the 2021-22 season is 24th April, with the exception of Championship 1, where the league deadline is 3rd April, unless otherwise agreed by the RFU Player Experience Department.

**16.8 Non-fulfilment of Fixtures**

*NB: Lack of available players is not a valid reason for failing to fulfil a fixture.*

16.8.1 If a team fails to fulfil an away league fixture then the reverse fixture will, where possible, automatically become an away fixture for the defaulting team.

16.8.2 For Championship 1 and below, teams that fail to fulfil one or more of their fixtures will have their league status reviewed at the end of the Season.

16.8.3 The above Regulations set out in this Regulation 16.8 are all subject to this Regulation 16.8.3 which permits matches to be cancelled and re-arranged due to pitch or Weather Conditions, subject to the approval of the RFU Player Experience Department.

**16.9 Abandonment**

16.9.1 It is the responsibility of the home team to provide a suitable pitch for the match to be played on. If a team’s pitch is prone to being waterlogged or frozen, every effort must be made to secure another pitch within a reasonable distance of the team’s
ground to try to ensure the fixture takes place on the designated day.

16.9.2 If a match is abandoned because of Weather Conditions when 60 minutes or more has been played (or 50 minutes or more of the match has been played in accordance with the World Rugby U19 Law Variations) then the score at the moment of abandonment shall stand and be deemed to be the final score in the match. The Referee’s decision as to the necessity for abandonment and the number of minutes played and the time of abandonment shall be final.

16.9.3 If a match is abandoned because of Weather Conditions when less than 60 minutes has been played (or less than 50 minutes if the match has been played in accordance with the World Rugby U19 Law Variations), the match shall be replayed on a date to be agreed by both teams and the RFU Player Experience Department in accordance with 16.10.

16.9.4 If the Referee finds it necessary to abandon the match for any reason other than Weather Conditions, then irrespective of the number of minutes played the result of that match may be determined by the RFU Disputes Committee or the match be ordered to be replayed.

16.9.5 If the match is abandoned as in 16.9.4 above both teams shall contact the Results Agent stating the exact time of the match abandonment, the number of minutes played, the score at the time of abandonment and the reason for abandonment. The Result Agent will then fill in the electronic match card accordingly.

16.10 Re-arrangement of Fixtures

16.10.1 Teams may rearrange a fixture if they can mutually agree on a new date in writing. If both teams are not in agreement the fixture is to be played on the set date and if it is not fulfilled, a walkover may be awarded as determined by the Disputes Committee. Any change in date must be confirmed by the RFU Player Experience Department and league registrar. Match Officials must also be notified of the change. Any fixture date change must be agreed and approved by the RFU Player Experience Department at least 5 days prior to the original fixture date.

16.10.2 If a fixture is postponed, teams will have 7 days to agree to a rearranged fixture date. If an agreement is not made and approval is not confirmed by the RFU Player Experience Department within the 7 days, then the postponed fixture must be played on the next available reserve date as listed on the RFU Women’s League Calendar. If a match is postponed for adverse weather, following the first postponement, the Home Club must take all possible steps to ensure the match is played on the second date. This must include the provision of a suitable alternative pitch and, for the avoidance of doubt, this will include the opponent’s pitch if it is available. This will also apply to the return fixture even if that would mean both matches between the two clubs being played at the same venue.

16.10.3 In the event of a league match not being played the Disputes Committee in its absolute discretion may award the competition points to either side, divide the competition points equally between the sides, decide that no competition points shall be awarded or if the Disputes Committee is of the view that the team has unjustifiably failed to fulfil its obligations, deduct competition points from the team. In addition, the Disputes Committee may order the match to be replayed on a specified date or order a match to be counted as a “double header” whereby the outcome of the match will count against both fixtures, this taking into account the promotion and relegation issue in the league concerned, (including the effect on other teams in the league not
involved in the league match) the commitments of the teams concerned and giving priority to arguments of the team that was not at fault in the event of a dispute on any re-arranged match date.

16.11 **Promotion and Relegation**

The principles of promotion and relegation are as set out below:

**Championship 1 North and South**

16.11.1 Upon conclusion of the league programme:

(a) The top 2 clubs from Championship 1 North and the top 2 clubs from Championship 1 South will play in the Championship Playoff. The top club from each league will host the 2nd place team from the opposite league. The winners of those matches will contest the Championship Playoff Final.

*Note: League regulations will also apply for the Championship 1 Playoff. There are no separate regulations or guidelines for this competition.*

(b) If the Championship Playoff match ends in a tie then the tiebreaker process as per the Women’s Intermediate & Junior Cup guidelines will apply.

16.11.2 There will be no automatic promotion and/or relegation into and out of the Women’s Premier 15s and the entry and exit mechanism will be as determined by the RFU. In the event a Club is removed from the Competition at any time and for any reason, the RFU will determine whether and by which mechanism that Club will be replaced and where such Club will play.

16.11.3 At the end of the league programme, there will be 2 teams relegated from each league at Championship 1 level, subject to Regulations 16.8.2 and 16.8.3.

**Championship 2 – North, Midlands, South East, South West**

16.11.4 The winners of each league at Championship 2 level will be promoted.

16.11.5 At the end of each Season, there will be 2 teams relegated from each league at Championship 2 level, subject to Regulations 16.8.2 and 16.8.3.

**National Challenge 1**

16.11.6 The winners of each league at National Challenge 1 level will be promoted.

16.11.7 At the end of the Season, there will be a minimum of 1 side and a maximum of 2 sides relegated. Please note that the worst (as per Best Playing Record) 2nd bottom placed team may also be relegated.

**National Challenge 2**

16.11.8 The winners of each league at National Challenge 2 level will be promoted.

16.11.9 At the end of the Season, there may be a minimum of 1 side and a maximum of 2 sides relegated. Please note that the worst (as per Best Playing Record) 2nd bottom placed may also be relegated. This will be determined by RFU Governance Standing Committee upon entries for the following season.
National Challenge 3

16.11.10 The winners of each league at National Challenge 3 level will be promoted.

16.11.11 Entry to National Challenge 3 will be as determined by the RFU Governance Standing Committee.

General

16.11.12 Teams wishing to opt out of promotion must notify the RFU Player Experience Department by 31 January 2022. Clubs will be asked for evidence to explain their decision to opt out and must provide any supporting documentation as requested by the RFU. A team will not be permitted to opt out of promotion unless approved by the RFU Player Experience Department.

16.12 League Points

Championship 1, Championship 2 and National Challenge 1

16.12.1 In Championship 1, Championship 2 and National Challenge 1, league points are awarded as follows:

(a) 4 points for a win
(b) 2 points for a draw
(c) 0 points for a loss
(d) 5 points for a walkover

16.12.2 A bonus point will be awarded to a team:

(a) on each occasion it scores four or more tries in a league match
(b) on each occasion it loses a league match by 7 points or less

National Challenge 2 and below

16.12.3 In National Challenge 2 and below, league points are awarded as follows:

(a) 3 points for a win
(b) 2 points for a draw
(c) 1 point for playing and losing
(d) 0 points for not playing
(e) 4 points for a walkover

16.12.4 A bonus of 1 point will be awarded to a team that plays 15 Players or more, unless a team has borrowed Players to make up 15 Players in which case a bonus point will not be awarded. The Match Card must be submitted and confirmed before the bonus point can be added.
All Levels

16.12.5 Final league positions will be calculated as follows:

(a) The team scoring the highest number of league points (including bonus points) shall be placed first, and the other teams placed in descending order according to the points gained.

(b) If two or more teams have equal points, they will be placed according to the match points difference.

Note: To calculate the final league positions where two or more teams have equal league points and defaulted fixtures/walkovers are involved, the points scored for and against in any equivalent fixture for the other team(s) will not be used in the final calculations.

(c) If two or more teams have equal match points difference, they shall be placed according to the greatest number of match points scored (incorporating note above as applicable).

(d) If two or more teams have equal match points they shall be placed according to the greatest number of tries scored.

(e) If two or more teams have scored equal number of tries they shall be placed according to the greatest number of drop goals scored.

(f) If two or more teams are still equal they shall be placed according to the greatest number of conversions scored.

(g) If two or more teams are still equal they shall be placed according to the number of penalties scored.

(h) If two or more teams are still equal they will share the league title and the winner of the league will be decided with a play-off game between the two teams.

16.13 Discipline

16.13.1 All allegations of Foul Play and Misconduct shall be dealt with in accordance with RFU Regulation 19.

16.13.2 Subject to the variations set out below, all allegations of Foul Play or Misconduct shall be dealt with in accordance with RFU Regulation 19.

16.13.3 Any Player ordered-off the field of play, cited by an opposition team (in accordance with RFU Regulation 19, Appendix 4) or subject to an allegation of Misconduct shall appear before an RFU Disciplinary Panel to answer the charge(s). Any appeal against a decision of an RFU Disciplinary Panel will be to an RFU Appeal Panel.

16.13.4 Any Player ordered-off the field of play will be provisionally suspended until her case has been dealt with by an RFU Disciplinary Panel and, if there is an appeal, until the matter has been determined by an RFU Appeal Panel.

16.13.5 The disciplinary administration fees applicable as set out in RFU Regulation 19,
Appendix 3 will apply.

**16.14 Breaches of Regulations**

16.14.1 Any matters alleged to be in breach of these Regulations shall be dealt with in the first instance by the Disputes Committee who shall have the power to deal with and discipline any team, Player or such other individuals for such breach including (without limitation) imposing sanctions such as loss of match or competition points, review of the result, altering league position, match replay, monetary fines or compensation award and/or disqualification. The Disputes Committee and/or the RFU Head of Discipline shall also have the power to request that any breach of these Regulations is dealt with in accordance with the RFU Disciplinary Procedures as set out in RFU Regulation 19.

16.14.2 Any alleged breach or complaint should be referred, in writing, to the RFU Player Experience Department within 7 days of the alleged breach.

16.14.3 Any appeal of the Disputes Committee’s decision may be made by a party to the proceedings to the RFU Head of Discipline in accordance with the appeal disciplinary procedures set out in RFU Regulation 19.

**16.15 Fixed Sanction**

16.15.1 Without prejudice to any of the above Regulations, where it is determined by the Disputes Committee that a team has not complied with the Regulations, it may, in the first instance only, issue a formal reprimand, after which, as set out below, the following fixed sanctions shall apply in respect of that breach and such sanctions will be final and binding with no right of appeal:

- Failure to notify of rearrangement or postponement (Regulation 16.7.6) £25
- Failing to submit match result on EMC by 6pm (Regulation 16.7.6) £25
- Failing to telephone (if non-EMC) result in by 6pm (Regulation 16.7.7) £25
- Failure to send in completed EMC form within 5 days (Regulation 16.7.8) £25

**16.16 Laws of the Game (including replacements and substitutes)**

All matches played under the jurisdiction of the RFU and/or in RFU Women’s Competitions or any other competition or merit table must be played in accordance with the World Rugby Laws and any such law variations set out in Appendix 1 (and/or otherwise agreed by the RFU).

**16.17 Additional Competition Regulations**

There are specific competition regulations relating to the following Women’s Competitions and these regulations are available upon request from the Player Experience Department:

- (a) Women’s Premier 15s Competition
- (b) Intermediate Cup
- (c) Junior Cup
- (d) County Championships Regulations

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Effective from 19 October 2021