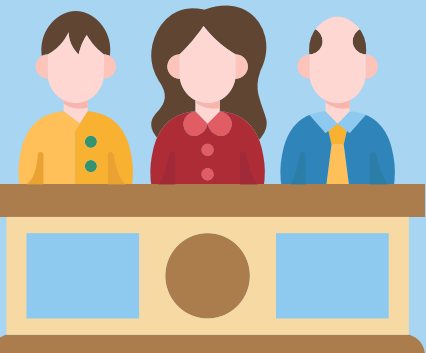


GUIDE TO MISCONDUCT HEARINGS



If you have been issued with a misconduct charge, it is your right to attend a Personal Hearing to either submit a verbal plea for leniency following a guilty plea, or defend yourself against any charge and call witnesses alongside providing verbal testimony to a Discipline Commission panel. If you are a Referee or a witness you may also be called to a Personal Hearing to go through any observations you may have and to answer any questions that the Panel or the individual or Club charged with misconduct may have. This will serve as a brief overview to the hearing process if you are attending in-person. The full FA guide can be found at the following page: <https://www.calameo.com/read/001230235ff30ea88370a>

FORMAT



Before: physically in-person

Prior to the Pandemic, all Personal Hearings took place in-person at Northumberland FA's headquarters. The hearings were set up so that any charged Participant or witness would sit physically face-to-face with a Discipline Commission panel. Obvious struggles with this set-up were that it could be an intimidating experience alongside a need for participants to travel from across the County.



Now: Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Northumberland FA have held hearings virtually now for over 2 years to great success. Participants do not need to attend early and set aside hours of their time as they will be given a working time in which to attend and can leave the call once their input has been provided. Participants can access the hearing from the comfort of their home or any other personal safe space and the hearing's Secretary will be a point of contact if there are any technical issues.



What if I struggle to access the hearing?

The County FA's Discipline Officer will offer test-runs of the software to anyone who may be anxious about their internet connection and will be a point of contact for any queries about accessing the hearing. The Discipline Officer will attend most hearings as its Secretary and will be on hand to sort any technical issues. Should it be impossible for a hearing to take place online, the County FA will arrange an in-person hearing at the County FA.

PROCEDURE

Prior to attending any hearing the Discipline Officer will confirm with you the date and time of the hearing as well as going through with you how your experience in the hearing will look. You will be provided with a link to access the hearing, a time in which you should access the link and clear instructions for how to join. You will be able to request a trial-run of the software if you wish.

All charges are determined by an independent 3-person Discipline Commission panel. They are FA-trained and are assisted by a Secretary. The Secretary is there to ensure that administratively the hearing flows well and is conducted in accordance with FA Regulations. The Secretary does not have a vote and cannot ask questions of witnesses. The Discipline Commission will determine if a charge is Proven or Not Proven based upon the civil standard of the Balance of Probability.

Personal Hearing

This is where you have denied any charges raised against you and wish to defend yourself in-person. The procedure is summarised here.

Personal Plea for leniency

This is where you have accepted the charge against you and wish submit a personal plea for leniency to be shown by the Discipline Commission in any sanction they may issue.

There will be no referee or any other witness to support the charge in attendance. You will attend to submit any mitigation and character reference. You can call others to also attend to supply character references. The panel will consider these before retiring to consider any sanction.



PROTOCOL FOR WHEN U18s ARE IN ATTENDANCE



At all times you will need to be accompanied by an adult parent or carer.



The only person who can direct any questions towards you will be the Chair of the discipline panel. If any other panel member or the individual charged have a question for you, it will be the Chair of the panel that will obtain and then ask these.



If you are attending as a witness you will not see the person charged - their camera and mic will be switched off. The only people in attendance will be the panel, the Secretary, the charged person (in the background) and you and your parent/carer.



You can only be charged with misconduct if the offence was committed when you were at least 12. You can only attend a hearing in any capacity if you are at least 12.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS



Have your camera and mic enabled throughout. Contact the hearing Secretary for any technical support.



You are free to take notes throughout the hearing for your reference.



Hearings are private and confidential and will therefore not be recorded. Do also make sure you have suitable privacy.



There is no formal dress code - feel free to dress in what you are comfortable in.



If you are a witness you are not on trial - you have been called to talk through your eye-witness testimony.



If you have been charged read over the case bundle served to you before the hearing. Info from there will be referenced.

If you need any support or guidance as to how FA misconduct hearings are conducted then do not hesitate to reach out to Discipline Officer Adam Williamson at Discipline@NorthumberlandFA.com.