



# ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

**FOR** **MEDIA**

2020/21



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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Football Association [The FA] Media Essentials Guide for the 2020/21 season.

This guide is produced each year to inform and educate the media tasked with understanding and reporting on matters relating to The FA's Rules and Regulations for the benefit of their viewers, readers or listeners.

Background information is on hand to explain the main on and off-field regulatory and disciplinary processes that can involve football 'participants' in the form of step-by-step guides and timelines.

In addition, key updates from the International Football Association Board [IFAB] and FIFA that may have implications for English football are also clarified.

If you have any questions for The FA on these topics, please contact its Media Relations team in the first instance using the details below:

Email  
**Media.Relations@TheFA.com**

Telephone  
**0800 049 9901**

Further information on The FA's Rules and Regulations is available via:  
**[www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance](http://www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance)**

*N.B. The Media Essentials Guide for the 2020/21 season does not alter or replace The FA's Rules and Regulations, which should be referred to for the comprehensive provisions relating to all disciplinary matters, and is accurate at the date of publication.*

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# PARTICIPANTS

A 'participant' is defined as any affiliated association, competition, club, club official, which for the avoidance of doubt should include a director, intermediary, player, official, manager, match official, match official observer, match official coach, match official mentor, management committee member, member or employee of a club and all persons who are from time to time participating in any activity sanctioned either directly or indirectly by The FA.

All 'participants' are bound by The FA's Rules and Regulations. Any misconduct and breaches of them can result in disciplinary charges and sanctions where necessary.

# THE LAWS OF THE GAME

The 2020/21 Laws of the Game were published by the IFAB in April 2020 and came into force for all friendly matches and competitions that started on or after 1 June 2020. Competitions that were suspended or delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic have the option of retaining the 2019/20 Laws of the Game or adopting the 2020/21 Laws of the Game. Key changes and amends include:

## HANDBALLS:

- The boundary between the shoulder and the arm is defined as 'the bottom of the armpit';
- 'Accidental' handball by an attacking player should only be penalised if it occurs 'immediately' before a goal or clear goal-scoring opportunity.

## MISCONDUCT:

- If, at a goal kick or free kick, the goalkeeper 'flicks' the ball up and a team-mate immediately touches the ball back for the goalkeeper to catch, the kick should be retaken. There should be no disciplinary sanction unless this occurs persistently;
- A goalkeeper can receive a caution or be sent off for 'illegally' touching the ball a second time after a re-start [e.g. a goal kick or free kick] even if the touch is with the hand or arm;
- Any offence [not only a foul] that 'interferes with or stops a promising attack' should result in a caution;
- If the match referee plays advantage or allows a 'quick' free kick for an offence that 'interfered with or stopped a promising attack', the caution should not issued;
- A player who fails to respect the four-metre required distance at a dropped ball should receive a caution.





#### **OFFSIDES:**

- Deliberate handball by a defending player should be considered 'deliberate play' for offside.

#### **PENALTY KICKS:**

- Cautions and warnings should not be carried forward into penalties;
- An offence by the goalkeeper should not be penalised if a penalty misses the goal or rebounds [without a touch from the goalkeeper] unless the offence clearly affected the taker;
- The goalkeeper should be warned for a first offence and cautioned for any further offence;
- The taker should be penalised if the goalkeeper and taker offend at the same time.

#### **SUBSTITUTIONS:**

- Competitions scheduled to be completed by 31 July 2021 and international competitions scheduled to take place in July or August 2021 have the option of allowing teams to use a maximum of five substitutes due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Each team can only have three opportunities to make substitutions, although substitutions made at half-time should not be counted as one of these three opportunities;
- The decision on whether to apply this temporary amendment remains at the discretion of each competition organiser.

The full 2020/21 Laws of the Game are available via: **[www.theifab.com](http://www.theifab.com)**

# VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREES

Video Assistant Referees [VAR] will continue in the Premier League and certain rounds of the Emirates FA Cup and Carabao Cup during the 2020/21 season.

As standard, protocols limit the use of VAR to the following four categories of match-changing decisions or incidents:

## GOALS:

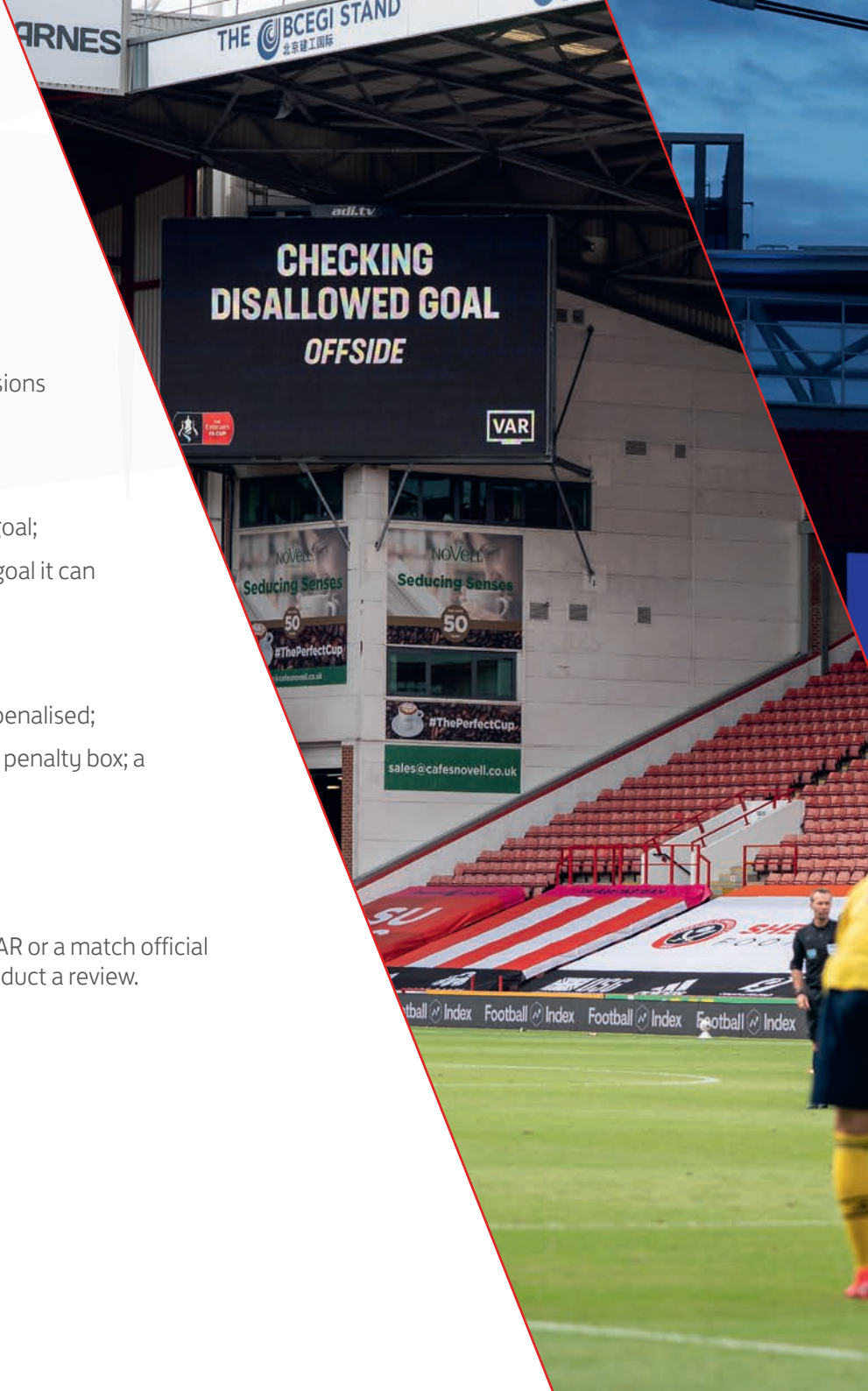
- VAR can review whether an offence has been made by the attacking team in the build-up to a goal;
- If there is a foul, a player is in an offside position or the ball goes out of play in the build-up to a goal it can subsequently be disallowed.

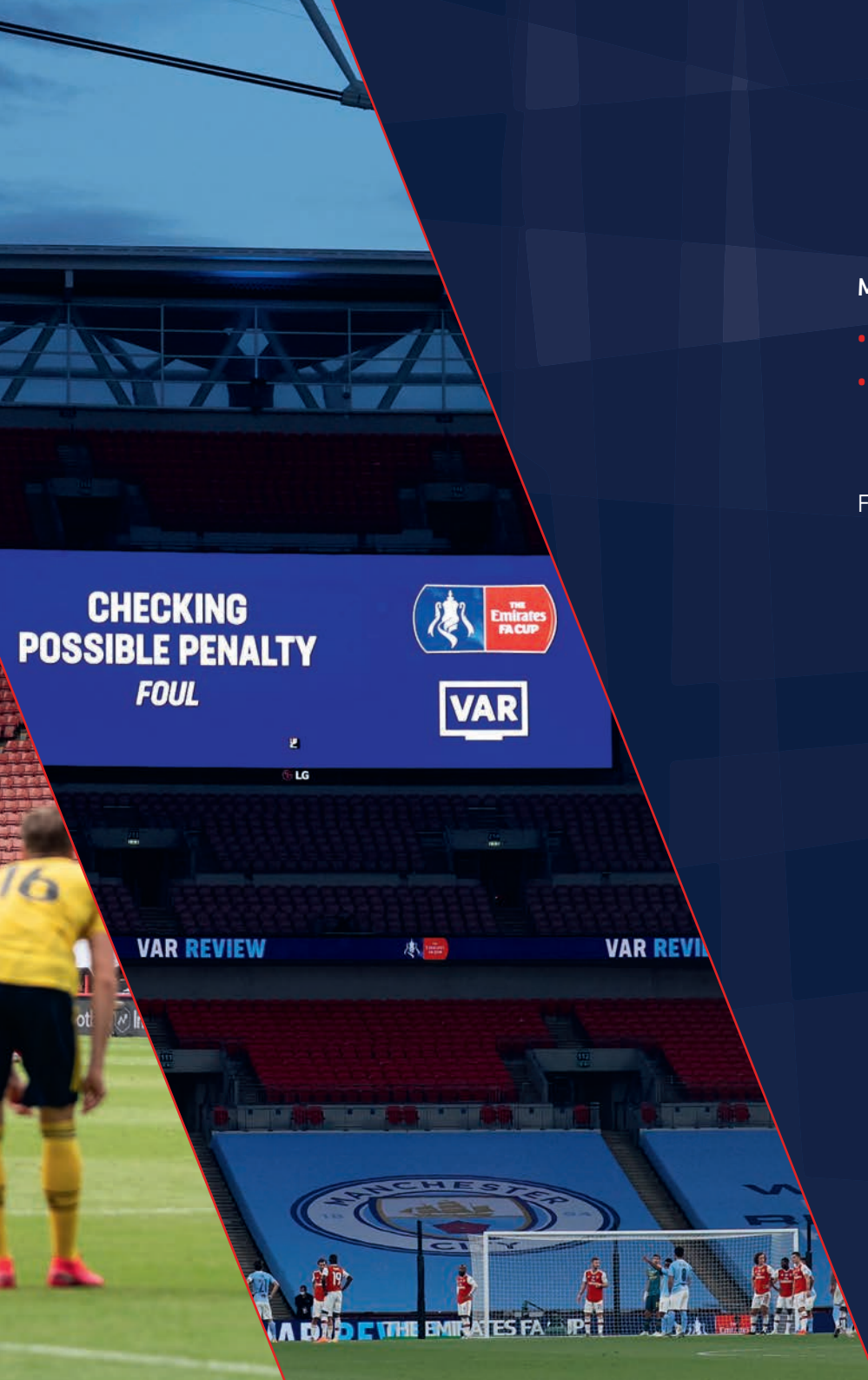
## PENALTIES:

- VAR can review whether a penalty has been awarded incorrectly or if an offence has not been penalised;
- VAR can review whether a foul has taken place; if an incident has occurred inside or outside the penalty box; a player is in an offside position or the ball has gone out of play in the build-up to a goal.

## RED CARDS:

- Reviews are limited to straight red card offences and not second cautions;
- Either a straight red card offence that was 'not seen' by the match officials is reviewed by the VAR or a match official suspects a potential straight red card offence has been missed and the VAR is instructed to conduct a review.





#### MISTAKEN IDENTITY:

- Reviews can be undertaken for possible mistaken identity in awarding a yellow or red card;
- Either a potential case of mistaken identity is noticed and reviewed by the VAR or a match official suspects a potential case of mistaken identity has occurred and instructs the VAR to conduct a review.

For full details of the 2020/21 VAR protocols, please visit: [www.fifa.com](http://www.fifa.com)

*N.B. Possible implications of VAR on The FA's Rules and Regulations are outlined in respective sections of this guide.*

# ON-FIELD MATTERS

## THE FAST-TRACK PROCESS

The FA's Fast-Track process was introduced to speed up the disciplinary timescales of incidents that occur on or around the field of play. The process means that cases can be investigated, charged and heard before the relevant 'participant' plays in their team's next competitive match.

The process for a typical Fast-Track case is:

TIMELINE	
Deadline for a charge to be issued:	Within two working days of the incident
Deadline for a reply and supporting evidence:	By close of play on the day following the charge
Deadline for a hearing to take place:	Prior to the team's next competitive match





## STANDARD CHARGE V. NON-STANDARD CHARGE

Most on-field matters are treated by The FA as either a standard case i.e. typical or a non-standard case i.e. deemed more serious or similar misconduct has been committed by the 'participant' over a recent period [usually 12-months].

In standard cases, a pre-determined sanction for certain acts of misconduct is offered with the charge so that 'participant' can accept the standard penalty without undergoing a Regulatory Commission hearing. There is also a reduced financial penalty for early admittance of standard charges. A charge may be admitted but the standard penalty not accepted if it is felt to be disproportionately harsh. The case would then go before a Regulatory Commission via written documentation only, and this is known as a paper hearing.

If a charge is denied, and the pre-determined sanction not accepted, the 'participant' can choose either a paper or personal hearing. If the case is subsequently found proven at a Regulatory Commission hearing, the sanction will be higher.

In non-standard cases, no sanction is offered with the charge and any penalty ultimately imposed for proven charges by the Regulatory Commission will be solely at its discretion.

## RETROSPECTIVE ACTION

If video evidence clearly shows that a player has committed a dismissal offence that was 'not seen' at the time it occurred by the match officials, or reviewed in time by VAR, The FA may take retrospective disciplinary action.

### PROCESS:

- The FA can become aware of a potential 'not seen' incident in a variety of ways;
- A match referee may file an extraordinary incident report detailing that the incident was 'not seen' by the match officials, or reviewed at the time by VAR;
- Before considering whether to initiate proceedings for retrospective action, the match referee is asked whether they or any of the match officials saw the incident at the time;
- If VAR was in operation, it is also necessary to establish from the match referee or VAR whether the incident was reviewed at the time;
- If it is confirmed that the specific act of misconduct was seen or reviewed at the time it occurred, no further action is taken in almost all cases;
- If it is confirmed that the specific act of misconduct was not seen or reviewed at the time it occurred, a panel of three ex-professional match officials is convened and asked to review all the available video footage;
- Each panel member reviews the footage independently of the other members;
- Only in circumstances where the panel members are unanimous will a charge be issued, and the player asked whether they admit or deny it;
- If the charge is admitted, an automatic suspension is imposed to mirror the penalty that would have been applied if the incident been seen or reviewed at the time and the player dismissed;
- If the player denies the charge, the matter goes before a Regulatory Commission where video and/or written evidence only can be submitted;





- If the Regulatory Commission agrees that it was a dismissal offence, an automatic suspension is enforced to mirror the penalty that would have been applied if the incident had been seen or reviewed at the time and the player dismissed;
- In exceptional cases, the Regulatory Commission may also increase or decrease the suspension either where The FA has submitted that the standard punishment would be 'clearly insufficient' or the player has submitted that the standard punishment would be clearly excessive.

#### TIMELINE

<b>Deadline for a charge to be issued:</b>	Within two working days of the incident
<b>Deadline for a reply and supporting evidence:</b>	By close of play on the day following the charge
<b>Deadline for a hearing to take place:</b>	Prior to the player's next competitive match

## SUCCESSFUL DECEPTION OF A MATCH OFFICIAL

The FA can take retrospective disciplinary action in situations when a match official may have been deceived by simulation and, as a direct result:

- The offending player's team has been awarded a penalty;
- An opposing player has been dismissed from the field of play [where the act of simulation led to a straight red card or caused one of the two cautions that led to the dismissal].

This power is not utilised for debatable penalty decisions but only where there was overwhelming evidence to suggest that the player had intentionally deceived a match official.

### PROCESS:

- If The FA believes that there may be a case to answer, the incident will be referred to a three-person panel consisting of one ex-match official, one ex-manager and one ex-player;
- Each panel member will review the footage independently of the other members;
- Only in circumstances where the panel members are unanimous will a charge be issued;
- In accepted and/or proven cases of simulation and/or feigning of injury, a player would receive a two-match suspension;
- Although attempts to deceive a match official through simulation or feigning an injury are cautionable offences for unsporting behaviour, the fact that the simulation has succeeded and led to a penalty and/or dismissal justifies a more severe penalty that is also intended to act as a deterrent;





- If the player contests the charge, the case will be heard by a Regulatory Commission;
- Only written and/or video evidence will be considered by the Regulatory Commission;
- Where a charge is found proven, the Regulatory Commission will also consider whether to rescind a caution or dismissal that was received by an opposing player in the process.

#### TIMELINE

Deadline for a charge to be issued:	Within two working days of the incident
Deadline for the player's reply and evidence:	By close of play on the day following the charge
Deadline for a hearing to take place:	Prior to the player's next competitive match

## SURROUNDING MATCH OFFICIALS

Certain incidents or decisions during games can sometimes result in players surrounding the match officials to protest or apply pressure for action to be taken.

It is the match official's responsibility to report an incident 'where two or more players of one club approach a match official in a confrontational manner'. The FA will normally only investigate if such a report is received. However, it reserves the right to do so regardless.

It is the club, rather than the players, that will be sanctioned in the event of a charge. Any similar offences within the previous 12 months are likely to result in an increased penalty.

### PROCESS:

- A match official reports a 'surrounding' incident to The FA;
- This could lead to a charge, a warning or no further action being taken depending on the circumstances and seriousness of the incident;
- Charges can be either standard or non-standard.

TIMELINE	
Deadline for a charge to be issued:	Within three working days of the incident
Deadline for the club's reply and evidence:	By close of play on the third day following the charge
Deadline for The FA's response to the reply:	By close of play on the third day following the club's reply
Deadline for a hearing to take place:	At the earliest opportunity but no later than 10 days after The FA's response to the club's reply





## MASS CONFRONTATIONS

The FA defines a 'mass confrontation' as two or more players or club officials being involved in a confrontation with opposing players or club officials.

It is the responsibility of the match official to report a 'mass confrontation' incident. The FA will normally only investigate if such a report is received. However, it reserves the right to do so regardless of whether a report is received.

It is the club, rather than the players or officials, that will be sanctioned in the event of a charge. Any similar offences within the previous 12 months are likely to result in an increased penalty.

### PROCESS:

- A match official reports a mass confrontation incident to The FA;
- This could lead to a charge, a warning or no further action being taken depending on the circumstances and seriousness of the incident;
- Charges can be either standard or non-standard.

TIMELINE	
Deadline for a charge to be issued:	Within three working days of the incident
Deadline for the club's reply and evidence:	By close of play on the third day following the charge
Deadline for The FA's response to the reply:	By close of play on the third day following the club's reply
Deadline for a hearing to take place:	At the earliest opportunity but no later than 10 days after The FA's response to the club's reply

## TECHNICAL AREA MISCONDUCT, CAUTIONS AND DISMISSALS

All occupants of the technical area are bound by a code of conduct that aims to improve the environment for everyone involved and protect the image of the game. It is the match officials' responsibility to implement the code and report any unacceptable behaviours to The FA.

Match officials can issue technical area occupants with yellow and red cards for cautions and dismissals respectively in the following competitions:

- Premier League;
- English Football League [EFL];
- The Vanarama National League;
- The Emirates FA Cup;
- The Carabao Cup;
- The EFL Trophy;
- The Buildbase FA Trophy;
- The Barclays FA Women's Super League;
- The FA Women's Championship;
- The Women's FA Cup;
- The FA Women's Continental League Cup.

In situations where an offender cannot be identified, the yellow or red card will be given to the respective team's senior manager or coach in the technical area.

Automatic and immediate touchline bans result from the accumulation of cautions. This is like the system for players, but the individual thresholds are different and there are no cut-off dates during the season. A suspension will occur when the following thresholds are reached:

NUMBER OF CAUTIONS	SUSPENSION
Four	One match
Eight	Two matches
12	Three matches
16	Misconduct charge and Regulatory Commission

*N.B. The Final of the Emirates FA Cup and play-off matches in the EFL and Vanarama National League are exempt from any automatic period of suspension arising from an accumulation of cautions by technical area occupants.*





## PROCESS:

- If an individual is dismissed from the technical area, they must immediately leave the touchline and take a position in the directors' box or a designated approved area;
  - Individuals dismissed from the technical area in the Vanarama National League are not permitted to observe the remainder of the game;
- The match official subsequently reports the incident to The FA. It could lead to a charge, a warning, a reminder of responsibilities or no further action being taken depending on the seriousness of the incident;
- Charges can be either standard or non-standard.

TIMELINE	
Deadline for a charge to be issued:	Within three working days of the incident
Deadline for the club's reply and evidence:	By close of play on the third day following the charge
Deadline for The FA's response to the reply:	By close of play on the third day following the club's reply
Deadline for a hearing to take place:	At the earliest opportunity but no later than 10 days after The FA's response to the club's reply

## TOUCHLINE BANS

- The individual must be away from the technical area and is not permitted to sit in or behind the area of the dugout or any barrier adjacent to the touchline or goal line;
- They may only communicate with those in the dugout by either phone or a runner;
- They can communicate with the team in the changing room prior to the game and at half-time unless an extended touchline ban has been imposed;
- An extended touchline ban can be imposed by a Regulatory Commission if conduct is deemed serious enough to warrant further measures. In that instance, the individual cannot communicate with the team from 30 minutes prior to the game and until 30 minutes after the game.





## STADIUM OR GROUND BANS

If a Regulatory Commission has ordered a stadium or ground ban, the following restrictions will apply:

- The individual cannot enter the ground or stadium that their team are playing in on a match day;
- They cannot enter or use any facilities on the site of the stadium or ground that their team are playing in on a match day;
- They cannot take any position immediately outside the perimeter of the stadium or ground that would give them a direct view of the pitch;
- Any breach of the terms of a ban may result in further disciplinary proceedings.

## INCIDENTS OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF MATCH OFFICIALS

Fast-Track charges may also be issued for incidents that occur outside the jurisdiction of the match officials. Examples include:

- An act of misconduct or refusal to leave the pitch following a dismissal;
- Two dismissal offences before a red card is shown;
- An act of misconduct after the match has ended and the match referee has left the pitch.

### TIMELINE

<b>Deadline for a charge to be issued:</b>	Within three working days of the incident
<b>Deadline for the club's reply and evidence:</b>	By close of play on the third day following the charge
<b>Deadline for The FA's response to the reply:</b>	By close of play on the third day following the club's reply
<b>Deadline for a hearing to take place:</b>	At the earliest opportunity but no later than 10 days after The FA's response to the club's reply





## CLAIMS OF WRONGFUL DISMISSAL

If a club can prove that a straight red card for one of its players was an 'obvious error' by the match officials, the suspension can be removed by a Regulatory Commission.

### PROCESS:

- The club must notify The FA of its intention to lodge a claim of 'wrongful dismissal' by 13:00 on the first working day following the game;
- The club must submit any evidence to support the claim of 'wrongful dismissal' by 13:00 on the second working day following the game;
- A Regulatory Commission will hear the case and the onus is on the club to demonstrate – via written and/or video evidence only – that the match officials made an 'obvious error' in dismissing the player;
- In incidents involving VAR, the club must demonstrate – via written and/or video evidence only – that the match referee made an 'obvious error' in dismissing the player following involvement of the VAR;
- The Regulatory Commission will decide whether the club's claim of 'wrongful dismissal' will be rejected, and the player's suspension remains, or is upheld and the player's suspension is withdrawn with immediate effect;
- If the Regulatory Commission rejects the claim of 'wrongful dismissal', it will then go on to consider whether the player's punishment should be increased;
- If the Regulatory Commission considers that the rejected claim 'had no prospect of success' and/or 'amounts to an abuse of process', it has the discretion to increase the punishment up to twice the standard amount with immediate effect.

## CLAIMS OF CLEARLY EXCESSIVE PUNISHMENT

Clubs can also attempt to limit the consequences of a player's straight red card if they can prove that the standard punishment is 'clearly excessive' for the offence that was committed.

### PROCESS:

- The club must notify The FA of its intention to lodge a claim of 'clearly excessive' punishment by 13:00 on the first working day following the game;
- The club must submit any evidence to support the claim of 'clearly excessive' punishment by 13:00 on the second working day following the game;
- A Regulatory Commission will hear the case and its only consideration will be whether it is clear and obvious that the standard punishment should not be imposed;
- If the Regulatory Commission decides that the club's claim is successful, it will then go on to decide the player's new punishment;
- At least a one-game suspension will be enforced as only a claim of 'wrongful dismissal' can achieve the full withdrawal of a player's suspension;
- If the Regulatory Commission decides to reject the club's claim, it will then go on to consider whether the player's punishment should be increased;
- If the Regulatory Commission considers that the rejected claim 'had no prospect of success' and/or 'amounts to an abuse of process', it has the discretion to increase the punishment up to twice the standard amount with immediate effect.

*N.B. Clubs can lodge a claim of "wrongful dismissal" at the same time as a claim of "clearly excessive" punishment.*





## CLAIMS OF CLEARLY INSUFFICIENT PUNISHMENT

If a sending-off offence is 'truly exceptional', and The FA can demonstrate that the standard punishment is 'clearly insufficient', it may seek to increase the consequences.

### PROCESS:

- The FA must notify the club of its intention to lodge a claim of 'clearly insufficient' punishment by 13:00 on the first working day following the game;
- The club has until 18:00 on the second working day following the game to submit any evidence supporting their case that the punishment is 'clearly sufficient';
- A Regulatory Commission will hear the case and its only consideration will be whether the standard punishment should not be imposed in view of the exceptional facts of the case;
- If the Regulatory Commission decides to reject The FA's claim, the player will serve the standard punishment;
- If the Regulatory Commission decides that The FA's claim is successful, it will then go on to decide the player's new punishment.

## CLAIMS OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

If a player believes that they have been cautioned or dismissed wrongly because another player committed the offence in question, a claim of 'mistaken identity' can be submitted.

### PROCESS:

- A club must notify The FA of its intention to lodge a claim of 'mistaken identity' by 13:00 on the first working day following the game;
- The club must submit any evidence to support the claim of 'mistaken identity' by 13:00 on the second working day following the game;
- A Regulatory Commission will hear the case and either accept or reject the claim before the player's next fixture and any suspension commences;
- If the Regulatory Commission decides to reject the claim, it will go on to consider whether the player's punishment should be increased;
- If the Regulatory Commission considers that the rejected claim 'had no prospect of success' and/or 'amounts to an abuse of process', it has the discretion to increase the punishment up to twice the standard amount with immediate effect;
- If the claim is successful, the standard punishment will be transferred to the appropriate player;
- It should be noted that where evidence clearly shows a case of 'mistaken identity', but a club does not submit a claim, The FA reserves the right to request a Regulatory Commission to review the matter;
- Furthermore, if there is evidence that a club sought to gain an advantage by not submitting a claim of 'mistaken identity', it may be charged with misconduct.





## CAUTIONS

Suspensions for the accumulation of yellow cards by players will remain 'competition-specific' during the 2020/21 season in the following:

- Premier League;
- English Football League [EFL];
- The Vanarama National League;
- The Emirates FA Cup;
- The Carabao Cup;
- The FA Trophy.

The cut-off dates for the accumulation of yellow cards by players in leagues matches are as follows:

NUMBER OF CAUTIONS	CUT OFF DATE [INCLUSIVE]
Five [Premier League and EFL]	19 league fixtures
Five [The Vanarama National League]	23 league fixtures
10 [Premier League]	32 league fixtures
10 [EFL and The Vanarama National League]	37 league fixtures
15 [All leagues]	*End of the season

Any player that accumulates 20 cautions during the season will be charged with misconduct.

The Barclays FA Women's Super League and The FA Women's Championship do not have cut-off dates. Automatic suspensions for players accumulating five, 10, 15 or more cautions will take effect at any stage during the season.

Players will be suspended in cup competitions when they receive two yellow cards.

*\*This applies to the last day of the relevant league season before any play-off matches.*

## SUSPENSIONS

All suspensions are served immediately in the category of match that they were received in. For example, if a player is sent off in a reserve match, he or she would still be able to play first-team competitive matches and vice versa.

All automatic suspensions, whether in first-team or reserve matches, commence with immediate effect and a standard sanction is applied automatically for the following offences:

DISMISSAL OFFENCE	AUTOMATIC SUSPENSION
A second yellow card	One match
Denying a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity	One match
Using offensive, insulting or abusive language or gestures	Two matches
Violent conduct or serious foul play	Three matches
Spitting	Six matches
Five cautions within the time limit	One match
10 cautions within the time limit	Two matches
15 cautions within the time limit	Three matches

Any player that accumulates 20 cautions during the season will be charged with misconduct.

The Barclays FA Women's Super League and The FA Women's Championship do not have cut-off dates. Automatic suspensions for players accumulating five, 10, 15 or more cautions will take effect at any stage during the season.

Players will be suspended in cup competitions when they receive two yellow cards.





## CROWD MANAGEMENT

The FA does not have jurisdiction over individual spectators unless they are also 'participants' in football. Therefore, any disciplinary action for crowd management issues such as discrimination, missile throwing or incursions onto the pitch would be taken against the club.

### PROCESS:

- The FA will investigate almost all crowd management issues at matches;
- The FA's investigations usually involve seeking observations from the club[s] concerned and, on many occasions, agencies such as the Police;
- The FA will work closely with the club[s] and any agencies to ensure that those responsible are identified, dealt with appropriately by the club[s] and if, appropriate, the courts;
- In serious cases where The FA's investigations conclude that the club[s] did not do enough to prevent and/or deal with the misconduct of spectators, disciplinary charges may follow.

*N.B. Further information in relation to discriminatory behaviour by crowds is on pages 32-33.*

# DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The FA strongly condemns discrimination of any kind and has endeavoured to ensure that football in England is diverse, inclusive and equal in recent years. In 2018, The FA published a three-year equality, diversity and inclusion strategy called In Pursuit of Progress, with clear targets and ambitions to drive meaningful change within the organisation and across the game.

It delivers initiatives primarily focused around gender and ethnicity across its general workforce and leadership roles to ensure the diversity of those leading and governing football better reflects the modern game today, on and off the pitch.

These targets continue to make The FA a more diverse organisation while also helping to bring down barriers and inspire the next generation. In addition to The FA and its culture, In Pursuit of Progress also focuses on the England teams' support structure, the game's grassroots workforce, and inclusion programmes across the game. Key achievements so far include:

- Increasing diversity amongst The FA's own workforce;
- The smallest gender pay gap of any major sports governing body in England;
- Developing programmes to encourage Asian communities to get involved in football;
- Wide-ranging support for the LGBTQ+ community, including a partnership with Stonewall, the Rainbow Laces campaign and participating in the annual Pride in London parade;
- Providing BAME coaching placements on England camps through the Elite Coach Placement Programme and the Into High Performance Programme.





Further commitments that aim to create better opportunities for people from under-represented groups include:

- Ensuring qualified and diverse candidates are interviewed for England roles;
- Supporting the development of future BAME and female coaching talent through the National Specialist Development Coaches' Programme and the Elite Mentee Programme;
- Providing BAME and female coaching bursaries across the grassroots and professional game, including Senior Pro Licences, UEFA A and B Licences, and Advanced Youth Awards;
- Setting and exceeding inclusion targets in the new National Game Strategy, ensuring growth in the number of newly-qualified BAME and female coaches across levels 1, 2 and 3;
- Launching a partnership with the Black Collective of Media in Sport [BCOMS]. With the support of the Mayor of London and London Sport, The FA is providing BCOMS a range of opportunities to practice newly-learned skills and gain real-world experience within football;
- Announcing the Football Leadership Diversity Code, which would mean a firm and tangible commitment from organisations and clubs across English football to diversity and inclusion in boardrooms, senior administration and coaching.

# ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

Anti-discrimination, both on and off the pitch, has also played a central role throughout In Pursuit of Progress with new reporting mechanisms, stricter regulations and tougher sanctions having been introduced.

‘Participants’ and spectators who believe that they have been subjected to or witnessed discriminatory abuse are actively encouraged to report it through the appropriate channels: The FA; the County Football Association network; or our partners at Kick It Out, as all allegations will be investigated thoroughly.

The FA will support any ‘participant’ who wishes to take a stand against discrimination in a respectful manner and this includes taking the knee. Where any behaviours or gestures on the pitch that may constitute a breach of the Laws of the Game have to be assessed, they will be reviewed on a case by case basis with a common sense approach and understanding of their context.

Ahead of the 2020/21 season, new charging policies and sanctioning guidelines for discrimination by individual ‘participants’ and spectators were published after a detailed consultation process with focus groups and stakeholders such as Kick It Out, the PFA, the LMA and various representatives from clubs and leagues.

The fact that an alleged incident of discrimination by an individual ‘participant’ has taken place in private or outside of a standard football setting is no longer a barrier to The FA issuing proceedings and it has been agreed by football’s stakeholders that such measures are appropriate.

Match-based sanctions of six to 12 games will be recommended to Regulatory Commissions for almost all ‘aggravated breaches’ of FA Rule E3 that are a first offence by an individual ‘participant’. While the previous minimum of six games could be increased or decreased in certain circumstances, it is believed that providing a range allows greater scope for cases to be sanctioned appropriately and consistently based on their individual circumstances and seriousness.





Feedback and consultation with the focus groups and stakeholders suggested that flexibility may be required in rare circumstances where the range of six to 12 games could lead to unfair outcomes. As a result, the sanctioning guidelines allow Regulatory Commissions to apply a match-based sanction below the standard range where an offence is 'in writing only or via any communication device' and another specific mitigating factor is present. However, any decision must be in the best interests of anti-discrimination in football and the absolute minimum sanction in such cases will be three games.

If a match-based sanction cannot be applied due to the role of a 'participant', a Regulatory Commission shall consider any appropriate sanction that it considers to be suitable.

As part of all sanctions set down by Regulatory Commissions for 'aggravated breaches' by any 'participants', there will also be mandatory education courses.

The FA does not have jurisdiction over individual spectators unless they are also a 'participant' in football. Therefore, any action for discriminatory behaviour will be taken against a club for the behaviour of its spectators.

In cases where there is clear evidence of discriminatory chanting by a group of supporters, The FA will act against the relevant club and recommend that a Regulatory Commission imposes an action plan for a first offence. While a range of financial penalties are possible, action plans implement practical and measurable improvements to match-day operations that in some instances can come at a significant financial cost to offending clubs. Any subsequent offences will be treated with the utmost seriousness. In such circumstances, Regulatory Commissions can impose any sanctions they deem appropriate, but full or partial stadium closures and financial penalties will be considered.

*NB: For up-to-date statistics on anti-discrimination, please contact [Media.Relations@TheFA.com](mailto:Media.Relations@TheFA.com)*

# OFF-FIELD MATTERS

## MEDIA COMMENTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

The FA's Rules and Regulations are designed to strike a balance between allowing 'participants' freedom of speech while protecting the integrity and reputation of the game. However, if media comments or social media activity are deemed to breach FA Rule E3[1] it may consider charges.

A typical example would be comments made either before or after a match in the media that relate specifically to a match official who has been appointed for a particular fixture.

Any pre-match media comments concerning an appointed match official, whether they are identified by name or implication, will be treated as a breach of FA Rule E3[1].

Any post-match media comments that criticise the performance or competence of a match official are permitted unless they imply bias; attack their integrity; are personally offensive; are prolonged; or are particularly unreasonable. However, it is not always the case that a charge will follow due to the seriousness of the case or the track record of the 'participant'. Instead, The FA may issue a formal warning; remind them of their responsibilities or take no further action.





## PROCESS:

- Within three working days of The FA being made aware of the comments or social media activity, it may charge or contact the 'participant' and seek their written observations;
- If requested, the 'participant' will have three working days to provide any observations;
- The FA will then have three further working days to decide whether to issue any charge;
- If a charge is issued, the 'participant' will have three working days to reply;
- A Regulatory Commission hearing will take place within 10 working days of the reply..

## SANCTIONS:

- There are no set sanctions for breaches of FA Rule E3[1] for media comments or social media activity. Instead, the Regulatory Commission will decide on an appropriate sanction.

## INTEGRITY

The integrity of football is of paramount importance and The FA is committed to ensuring that it is maintained in partnership with the whole game and stakeholders from other key industries.

The FA has a dedicated Integrity team that supports 'participants' to understand and follow its Rules and Regulations, but also undertakes investigations into any alleged breaches.

Education is a key focus of the team's overall approach. In conjunction with the PFA, leagues and other partners, regular club visits, educational films, literature and a 'player essentials' app are provided in relation to betting, inside information, match-fixing, anti-doping and media activities.

All 'participants' have an obligation to report any approaches to bet, accept a bribe, share inside information, influence an event, fix the outcome or result of a game or competition, and possible breaches of the World Anti-Doping Agency [WADA] 'code' or The FA's Anti-Doping Regulations.

The team will investigate all alleged breaches of The FA's Rules and Regulations on integrity, with dedicated and anonymous reporting lines available via **0208 795 9640** or **[Integrity@TheFA.com](mailto:Integrity@TheFA.com)**





## BETTING

In 2014, all of football's stakeholders agreed that 'participants' should be prohibited from betting on any football or football-related activity. This rule applies to 'participants' involved with clubs in the Premier League, EFL, Barclays FA Women's Super League, The FA Women's Championship and the National League System.

The simple and straightforward message is that 'all bets are off' and this includes gambling on matches, match events, competitions, manager markets, players transfers and novelties.

In 2017, The FA reinforced this message by ending its commercial betting partnerships.

The FA's Integrity team work closely with statutory bodies and law enforcement agencies and share data with betting operators to ensure a bespoke intelligence handling system. In addition, The FA ensures all markets on English football are monitored in order to identify any suspicious activity.

Investigations into any unusual betting patterns are also supported by partnerships with the Gambling Commission's Sports Betting Integrity Unit and UK betting operators, and representation on the national Sports Betting Group and the Sports Betting Integrity Forum.

## INSIDE INFORMATION

Inside information in English football is defined as a 'participant' having knowledge about a club activity due to their position in the game that is not publicly available. Examples can include a team member's injury status or team selection ahead of an upcoming fixture.

'Participants' involved with clubs in the Premier League, EFL, Barclays FA Women's Super League, The FA Women's Championship and National League System are prohibited from the passing of any inside information to either place a bet or instruct someone else to do so on their behalf.

Even if a 'participant' was unaware that the information might be used to place a bet it is still treated as a serious breach of The FA's Rules and Regulations.





## **MATCH-FIXING**

All 'participants' are prohibited from seeking to influence the result, progress, conduct or any other incident in a match or competition for an improper purpose. This is to prevent any attempt to fix not just a result but spot-fixing of any incidents that may occur in or around a fixture of competition.

Any 'participant' who is approached to get involved in match or spot-fixing must report it and failure to do so is also a serious breach of The FA's Rules and Regulations.

## ANTI-DOPING

Although the use of performance-enhancing or recreational drugs in English football is rare, The FA takes anti-doping extremely seriously and it remains a priority for the organisation.

The FA ensures 'participants' have an awareness and understanding of the WADA Code, and its own Anti-Doping and Social Drug Regulations and processes, but also operates one of sport's most comprehensive testing programmes in partnership with UK Anti-Doping [UKAD] to apprehend any offenders.

While current practices are some of the best in the world, the anti-doping programme is reviewed constantly, and improvements are made where possible.

### TESTING:

- Targeted, researched and intelligence-led testing is undertaken across the Premier League, EFL, Barclays FA Women's Super League and The FA Women's Championship clubs, as well as the England men's, women's and development teams;
- Players are subject to blood and urine testing, including an Athlete Biological Passport programme and urine steroid profiling;
- 'In-competition' drug tests are carried out on a matchday immediately after a game;
- 'Out-of-competition' drug tests are carried out on a non-matchday. For example, at a club's training ground or at a player's home address. However, a player can be tested anytime and anywhere on a 'no advance notice' basis, regardless of whether they have or haven't been absent from training that day;
- Most banned substances on WADA's Prohibited List are detectable in urine, while some might not be in blood. The FA works closely with UKAD to ensure as effective a testing programme as possible and the split between blood and urine testing is reviewed each year;
- This flexible approach allows The FA and UKAD to decide upon a test[s] at each opportunity depending upon any specific perceived doping risk.





### WHEREABOUTS:

- If a player is not going to be at training, is leaving early, or arriving late, they must notify The FA in advance and provide a one-hour time slot for that day when they will be available at their home address to be tested. Any player that fails to adhere to these requirements may incur a missed test 'strike', with three 'strikes' within a 12-month rolling period triggering a suspension from football for at least 12-months;
- Clubs must also inform The FA of their training schedules, any changes to their time[s] or the location[s] that players are attending and a list of addresses where each player regularly resides. Clubs that fail to adhere to these requirements three times within a 12-month rolling period will be charged under The FA's Anti-Doping Regulations. .

### ADVERSE ANALYTICAL FINDINGS:

- An 'adverse analytical finding' in a player's sample, otherwise known as a positive test, does not automatically lead to an 'anti-doping rule violation' and a suspension.

### SUSPENSIONS:

- If a player were to: test positive for any banned substance listed on WADA's Prohibited List; evade a sample collection; refuse or fail to provide a sample; fail to attend the doping control station immediately; use abusive or insulting words or behaviour to a doping control official; tamper or interfere with the drug testing processes; be in possession of a banned substance; traffic a banned substance or assist another 'participant' in breaking The FA's Anti-Doping Regulations they could face a suspension.

## SOCIAL DRUGS REGULATIONS:

- A positive test for social drugs such as cocaine, ecstasy or cannabis 'out-of-competition' is not a WADA offence and therefore The FA is not obliged to test for them;
- To safeguard the physical and mental wellbeing of players, uphold the ethics of the sport and protect the image of the game, social drugs are always prohibited under The FA's Social Drugs Regulations and a positive test can lead to a suspension;
- Offenders may have any number of reasons for taking prohibited substances, including experiencing difficulties in their lives. Therefore, while The FA seeks to impose suspensions for social drug use, it also recognises that players in these circumstances would benefit from attending education courses, counselling and treatment in order to seek to overcome and cope with the difficulties they are facing;
- The FA shall decide in its absolute discretion whether to publish any detail relating to a charge brought under its Social Drugs Regulations.

## PUBLICATION:

- The FA does not discuss or disclose the details of its testing programmes or specific adverse analytical findings and will only publish the outcomes relating to specific cases once any and all appeals have been exhausted and a suspension is in place.





## INTERMEDIARIES

Any individual or company that would like to carry out ‘intermediary’ activity on behalf of a player or club in England must:

- Be registered by The FA;
- Complete a ‘test of good character and reputation’;
- Pay a fee.

FIFA **has recently announced** a number of proposed reforms in relation to ‘intermediaries’ that aim to ‘improve transparency, protect player welfare, enhance contractual stability and also raise professional and ethical standards’ and is currently developing them into formal regulations.

The FA’s Regulations on Working with Intermediaries [The Regulations] already go beyond the minimum criteria set down in FIFA’s current Regulations on Working with Intermediaries. For example, there are additional provisions for those who wish to represent minors [under 18s]:

- They must provide a DBS Check and be authorised to do so;
- They are not permitted to make any approach to, or enter into any agreement with, a player before the 1 January in the year of the player’s sixteenth birthday.

The FA also operates a ‘clearing house’ system, which requires every payment made by a club to an ‘intermediary’ or an overseas club in relation to a player transfer is made via The FA, and it is the first and only National Association in the world to currently do so.

Clubs are required to declare every ‘intermediary’ involved in a transaction to The FA and checks on this information form part of the player registration process. All representation contracts between ‘intermediaries’ and players or clubs are required to be lodged with The FA within 10 days as well.

The FA publishes the total fees paid by each club to ‘intermediaries’ and the details of each transaction involving an ‘intermediary’ that each club has entered into on an annual basis. The latest list of payments and transactions is available **here**.

A list of all registered ‘intermediaries’ and any disciplinary sanctions against them from The FA are available **here**.

*NB: This guidance does not alter or replace The Regulations, which should be referred to in all cases for the comprehensive provisions in relation to working with ‘intermediaries’ in England. The 2020/21 edition and associated materials are available in full [here](#).*

# REGULATORY COMMISSIONS

If a misconduct charge leads to a Regulatory Commission, The FA's Regulatory Legal department acts as prosecutors at the hearing against the charged 'participant'.

The Regulatory Commission is made up of three Judicial Panel Members that are selected from five distinct pools [with at least one member being from the Football Panel]:

- The Chairs Panel – consisting of suitable personnel from the Council Panel and the Football Panel;
- The Council Panel – consisting of The FA Council members with appropriate experience;
- The Football Panel – consisting of former players and managers or other independent football people with appropriate experience in football who can provide expert opinion;
- The Legal Panel – consisting of junior barristers and solicitors with expertise in sport and/or regulatory matters;
  - All of whom may sit as a Chairperson;
- The Specialist Panel – consisting of independent barristers or solicitors of seven or more years' standing and are generally reserved for complex or unusual cases;
  - All of whom may also sit as a Chairperson.

The appointment of a Regulatory Commission to hear a disciplinary case is the responsibility of the Judicial Panel Chairman [or nominee] via The FA's Judicial Services department.

All Judicial Panel members undergo continual training, education and assessment. Any member with a conflict of interest in a particular case is not selected. The Judicial Panel Members will assess all the evidence in the case and decide a relevant sanction if necessary.





## WHAT DOES THE 'STANDARD OF PROOF' MEAN?

The 'standard of proof' is the civil standard. This means that cases will only be proven if the Regulatory Commission in question is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the event in question occurred. This civil standard of proof is widely used in civil and regulatory forums, including the Civil Courts, Family Courts and professional regulatory bodies. It is also used by other Sports Governing Bodies. As such, it is applied industry wide and is the most appropriate standard for the tribunal-based forum in which The FA's cases are determined.

The appointment of a Regulatory Commission to hear a disciplinary case is the responsibility of the Judicial Panel Chairman [or nominee] via The FA's Judicial Services department.

## WHAT ARE 'WRITTEN REASONS' AND WHEN ARE THEY PUBLISHED?

'Written reasons' are produced by the Chairperson of a Regulatory Commission or Appeal Board, are agreed with the relevant 'wing members' and are a detailed record of how the adjudicating body reached its decision. Subject to the facts of the case, it is normal practice for 'Written Reasons' to be published, when produced, via: **[www.TheFA.com](http://www.TheFA.com)**

# SAFEGUARDING

Football takes the safety and welfare of children extremely seriously. For many years, English football's leadership authorities have worked collaboratively on safeguarding and child protection matters. The shared and unequivocal goal has always been to ensure the game is safe, fun and inclusive for all. However, the allegations of non-recent child sexual abuse that came to light from November 2016 onwards has seen football re-double its efforts to drive a culture and safer working practices to support every child and young person to have a safe and fun experience when playing or participating in the world's most popular team game.

As the game's governing body in England, The FA has led this work. Alongside the Premier League, EFL, PFA, LMA, PGMOL, County FAs, leagues and clubs, the united strategy has been, and continues to be, to:

- Implement **preventative safeguarding measures** and create fun, safe football environments via policies, standards, guidance, vetting, raising awareness and educating;
- Make the **reporting of concerns** as easy as possible and ensure concerns are investigated swiftly and thoroughly in conjunction with statutory agencies;
- Maintain a network of **Designated Safeguarding Officers** [DSOs] across the game to guide safeguarding to be embedded at every level, ensuring safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

To do this, The FA has a significant, full-time team of safeguarding professionals. Some of the team drive preventative measures via policy, procedures, standards, education and sharing good practice. They also:

- Support the national network of DSOs, who work across professional and grassroots football;
- Oversee safeguarding at The FA's venues and events;
- Directly support the safeguarding work in the National League System, the Barclays FA Women's Super League and The FA Women's Championship.

Another part of The FA team manages referrals and reported concerns. It comprises safeguarding professionals with significant experience in social work, policing, the probation service and legal and child protection in sport. In relation to investigations, they work with statutory agencies and, where appropriate, the relevant County FA and professional club. They assess people who pose, or may pose, a risk of harm and put safeguards in place, including suspensions from football and making referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service where necessary.

All DSOs are DBS-checked, trained and their role includes taking preventative safeguarding measures, promoting good practice, helping their organisation to maintain standards, as well as making referrals to the appropriate authorities.

The Premier League and EFL, and their respective charitable arms, undertake vital roles in supporting their clubs to implement safeguards. They also oversee and guide club safeguarding provisions.

The FA's proactive work also includes working directly with victims, survivors and those with 'lived experience', via a Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group, which offers essential learnings to this often complex landscape. The FA is also supporting access to counselling via Sporting Chance, providing practical assistance via The FA Benevolent Fund and facilitating meetings with The FA Chairman, for any survivor who would value this opportunity.





## WHY DOESN'T THE FA COMMENT PUBLICLY ON SAFEGUARDING CASES?

The FA does not ordinarily comment publicly about individual safeguarding cases. The reasons for this and a brief explanation of The FA's safeguarding process are:

The FA has the power to investigate safeguarding concerns. Following a risk assessment process, The FA may refer a case to an independent Safeguarding Review Panel, which is composed of independent safeguarding experts, for them to consider the matter. The function of the Safeguarding Review Panel is to assess risk and determine whether the risk assessment process has shown that the individual may present a risk of harm to children or adults at risk. Safeguarding measures, which can include suspensions from football, will be imposed on an individual where necessary to prevent potential future risk of harm.

It is important to note that safeguarding measures may be amended and can change in response to changing levels of risk. This means that safeguarding cases are treated differently from disciplinary cases which result in the final determination of a matter. For example, in a safeguarding case, if a suspension is initially imposed due to a failure to provide information, that suspension may be lifted once the information is received.

Safeguarding measures can be imposed for a wide range of reasons and publication of details can have serious consequences. This includes re-traumatising victims and/or causing them to re-live harmful abusive experiences. In addition, vigilantism can have harmful effects on innocent people connected to those involved in safeguarding cases. It is important to remember that a safeguarding suspension doesn't always mean sexual or serious abuse has taken place, but the public stigma is such that people often immediately link the two things.

Further detailed information on this can be found [here](#) or via a document entitled **Keeping Football Safe and Enjoyable**.

# THE COUNTY FOOTBALL ASSOCIATIONS

The County Football Association network consists of the individual devolved organisations across England detailed below. Each is responsible for local football delivery in its respective area:

- Amateur Football Alliance
- Army FA
- Bedfordshire FA
- Berks & Bucks FA
- Birmingham FA
- Cambridgeshire FA
- Cheshire FA
- Cornwall FA
- Cumberland FA
- Derbyshire FA
- Devon FA
- Dorset FA
- Durham FA
- East Riding FA
- Essex FA
- Gloucestershire FA
- Guernsey FA
- Hampshire FA
- Herefordshire FA
- Hertfordshire FA
- Huntingdonshire FA
- Isle of Man FA
- Jersey FA
- Kent FA
- Lancashire FA
- Leicestershire & Rutland FA
- Lincolnshire FA
- Liverpool FA
- London FA
- Manchester FA
- Middlesex FA
- Norfolk FA
- Northamptonshire FA
- North Riding FA
- Northumberland FA
- Nottinghamshire FA
- Oxfordshire FA
- RAF FA
- Royal Navy FA
- Sheffield & Hallamshire FA
- Shropshire FA
- Somerset FA
- Staffordshire FA
- Suffolk FA
- Surrey FA
- Sussex FA
- Westmorland FA
- West Riding FA
- Wiltshire FA
- Worcestershire FA





The role of every County FA involves promoting participation, ensuring accessible opportunities across all formats; growing diversity and inclusion, ensuring equal opportunities to play; regulating the game by implementing The FA's Rules and Regulations, and ensuring a fun and safe environment for all.

The FA provides £50m of funding to County FAs and educational partners to deliver its 2018-21 National Game Strategy. County FAs, like The FA, are not-for-profit and all money is reinvested back into football.

In 2020, having identified the diversity of County FA boards as an area requiring focus, The FA became the first national governing body in English sport to introduce a Regional Code of Governance that builds upon and sets a higher precedent than Tier 3 of Sport England's Code of Governance, which is the current gold standard for National Governing Bodies across England. It lays out several diversity and inclusion requirements, including gender and ethnic diversity of County FA boards, to ensure that those leading and working at these organisations are better reflective of the communities they serve.

Numerous County FAs have dedicated marketing and communications functions, which are either in-house or outsourced, and their respective contact details can be found **here**.



**FOR ALL**

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