

This protocol aims to deal with discriminatory behaviour by spectators at football matches. The club safety officer, home club representative (e.g. club secretary/chairman), stewards and police are responsible for monitoring, reporting and acting on abuse from spectators.

This protocol applies specifically where incidents are heard or witnessed by players, managers or match officials on the pitch. It aims to ensure that racist, homophobic or other abuse directed at players, managers or match officials is effectively addressed and that participants feel protected.

Offenders should be identified and dealt with efficiently by the club and police, while ensuring that the match is not unduly interrupted.

- The incident should in the first instance be brought to the attention of the referee.
- The referee should report the incident to the home club's safety officer or responsible home club representative and police via the fourth official. (If there is no fourth official appointed the referee should stop play and report the incident to a member of the home club's safety management and note the incident with an assistant referee.)
- The police and safety officer/home club representative should seek to identify the person/people responsible and take appropriate action while the match continues.
- If, within an amount of time agreed by the safety officer/home club representative and referee, the problem continues, the referee (in consultation with the police and safety officer/home club representative) may remove the players from the field and suspend the match, allowing the police and safety officer/home club representative a further opportunity to deal with the problem.
- If the matter cannot be dealt with satisfactorily and the welfare of any participants, in terms of the threat of continued abuse, remains at risk, the referee should consider abandoning the match.
- Any decision to suspend or abandon a match should be taken by the referee after full consultation with the police and safety officer/home club representative, and after consultation with the team managers and captains.

Where no police are present in the stadium, the initial decision-making responsibility belongs to the safety officer, including informing the police. Where the safety officer or police are not present initial decision-making responsibility should be made in consultation between the referee and home club representative.

The protocol should be appropriately referenced in pre-match safety briefings for match officials and in the training of match day stewards.