



## Zero Tolerance Policy

Gloucestershire FA has a duty and responsibility to ensure that staff (paid employees) and volunteers, such as directors and/or individuals, managing Glos FA activities (e.g. Club safeguarding audits, County Cup finals etc) are not subjected to any unacceptable, offensive or abusive behaviour either from external individuals or groups, or from other staff members and volunteers. We hope that you will understand and welcome this policy which is in place for the best interests of our hard-working staff and volunteers as well as the wider football community.

### 1. Principles

This policy applies to all football volunteers, participants and members of the public who contact the Association via email, social media, letter, telephone or in person.

Our staff come to work to protect, develop, govern and grow football participation for all, and it is important that they are treated with consideration and respect.

We always aim to treat customers and stakeholders courteously and expect football volunteers, participants and members of the public to treat our staff in a similarly respectful way. We take seriously any threatening, abusive or offensive behaviour against any of our staff.

### 2. Aggressive or abusive behaviour

We understand that people can become angry when they feel that matters about which they feel strongly are not being dealt with as they wish, or they do not agree with the response they are given. If that anger escalates into verbal or written aggression that our staff consider offensive, we will consider such behaviour to be unacceptable.

Any aggressive or offensive communication directed towards our staff will not be tolerated, and each case may be referred to the FA Regional Discipline Manager. They will act independently to determine if a football disciplinary charge is applicable or appropriate: staff will act on their advice.

Aggressive or offensive behaviour includes language (whether verbal or written) that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused and may include threats, verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and rudeness.

The use of swear words in written or verbal communication will not be tolerated and these communications will not be responded to. Swearing at members of staff will not be tolerated.

Any inflammatory statements, unsubstantiated allegations and/ or remarks of a racial or discriminatory nature and, will be considered abusive behaviour and they will be referred to The FA.

### **3. Unreasonable demands**

A 'demand' becomes unacceptable when it starts to or complying it would, impact excessively on the work of our staff. Or, dealing with the matter takes up an excessive amount of staff time and in so doing, disadvantages other members of the football family.

For example:

- Repeatedly demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale
- Demanding responses from several members of staff on the same subject;
- Insisting on meeting or speaking to specific members of staff when that is not possible;
- Repeatedly changing the substance of an enquiry or complaint or raising unrelated concerns;
- Repeatedly posing the same question, when a response has already been provided, but the individual does not like the answer received.

### **4. Unreasonable levels of contact**

Sometimes the volume and duration of contact made to our staff by an individual can cause problems. This can occur over a short period, for example, when many calls or emails are received from the same person.

When we are dealing with an issue or enquiry, this may occur when a person:

- repeatedly makes long telephone calls to us or;
- Inundates GFA with emails or;
- Sends copies of information that have been already sent or that are irrelevant to the substance of the issue or enquiry.

We consider that the level of contact has become unacceptable when the amount of time spent talking to an individual on the telephone, or responding to emails or written correspondence, impacts on our ability to deal with the matter, or on our responsibility for carrying out tasks relating to other stakeholders, clubs, leagues or participants.

### **5. How we manage abusive or aggressive behaviour:**

Any member of staff who directly experiences aggressive, abusive or offensive behaviour has the authority to deal immediately with that behaviour in a manner they consider professionally appropriate to the situation and in line with this policy.

Staff will end telephone calls if they consider the caller aggressive, abusive or offensive. Our staff have the right to make this decision, to tell the caller that their behaviour is unacceptable and to end the call if the behaviour then persists.

If behaviour persists in future correspondence, the person will be informed in writing that GFA staff will not engage in any future contact.

## **6. How we deal with other categories of unreasonable behaviour**

Where a football volunteer, participant or member of the public repeatedly phones, visits GFA offices, raises the same issue repeatedly, or sends large numbers of documents about which the relevance is not clear, we may decide to:

- Limit contact to telephone calls from the person at set times on set days;
- Restrict contact to a nominated member of staff who will deal with future calls or correspondence;
- See (via MS Teams or in person) that person by appointment only;
- Restrict contact to written correspondence only;
- Refuse to deal with further correspondence and return any documents;
- Take any other action that we consider appropriate to the circumstances.

Where someone repeatedly demands a response on an issue on which they have already been given a clear answer, we may refuse to respond to further enquiries from the person.

We will always tell the person in writing the action we are taking and the reasons why.

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Directors on an annual basis.

Reviewed and approved on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022