



Lincolnshire FA's Guide to Discipline



Yellow Cards

If a player receives a yellow card in a match, the club secretary will be notified either through a letter or with a notification on the Whole Game System. For all yellow cards except Temporary Dismissals (Sin Bins) a £12.00 administration fee is applied. These cases need to be acknowledged by returning the letter or on the Whole Game System confirming the individual player details are correct including the player's DOB address and post code. Failure to acknowledge these cases even though the £12.00 has been paid could lead to a late fine being applied and the player or club being suspended until the case is acknowledged.

Players who continue to accumulate yellow cards throughout the season will be subject to a continuing misconduct charge with the details shown in the table below:

Number of Cautions	Date received by	Sanction
5	31 st December	1 Match Suspension/£15
10	Second Sunday in April	2 Match Suspension/£15
15	Last Day of the Season	3 Match Suspension/£15

Temporary Dismissals (Sin Bins)

Sin Bins are used by referees for acts of dissent by word or action only and instead of a fine, the player who shows dissent towards a match official instead must spend 10 minutes on the sideline for all 90-minute matches and 8 minutes for matches of 80 minutes and below. The use of offensive, insulting and/or abusive language towards a referee is still a red card offence not a sin bin.

Ultimately however, it is the decision of the referee as to whether they determine the actions of the player to be dissent and a sin bin or Offensive, insulting and/or abusive resulting in a red card.

Players and club officials who are not actively taking part of the game such as substitutes can be shown a yellow card for dissent, but as they are not involved in the game directly, they cannot be sin binned. Instead the club are fined £12.00.

A detailed breakdown of the outcome of sin bin offences in relation to other yellow card offences is shown in the table below. It is important to remember if a player commits any other yellow/red card offence whilst in the sin bin they cannot return to the game after their sin bin has been completed and the player cannot be substituted.



Offence 1	Offence 2	Offence 3	Charge	Club Secretary Action	Fine	Player caution tally
Dissent			Sin Bin	Acknowledge sin bin confirming player details	No Admin Fee	Sin Bin is added to players caution tally
Dissent	Dissent		Sin bin – Sin Bin After the second sin bin player cannot come back on but can be substituted if the team has any left.	Club secretary to acknowledge both sin bins confirming player details.	£25 fine, £15 Admin fee plus 1 match suspension	2 sin bins are added to the players caution tally.
Dissent	Non – Dissent		Sin Bin – Yellow Card	Club Secretary to acknowledge both the sin bin and Yellow card confirming the player details.	£12 Admin fee for the Yellow Card. No fine for the sin bin.	Sin Bin and Yellow Card go against the players caution tally.
Dissent	Non – Dissent	Dissent	Sin Bin – Yellow Card – Sin Bin After the second sin bin player cannot come back on and cannot be substituted.	Club Secretary to acknowledge both Sin Bins and the yellow card, confirming player details.	£25 fine plus £15 Admin Fee plus one match suspension for second sin bin. £10 Admin fee for yellow card.	Yellow Card added to players caution tally and the two sin bins.
Non – Dissent	Dissent		Yellow Card – Sin Bin	Acknowledge Yellow Card and Sin bin confirming player details.	£12 Admin fee for the yellow card.	Sin Bin and Yellow Card go against players caution tally.
Non – Dissent	Dissent	Non – Dissent	Yellow Card – Sin Bin – RC. Player is sent off for S7.	Acknowledge Send Off and sin bin confirming player details.	£20 fine and £15 Admin Fee and one match suspension.	Sin bin and Red Card will go against players caution tally.
Non – Dissent	Dissent	Dissent	Yellow Card – Sin Bin – Sin Bin. After second sin bin player cannot come back on and cannot be substituted.	Acknowledge yellow card and both sin bins confirming player details.	£25 fine and £15 Admin fee and one match suspension. £10 Admin fee for yellow card.	Yellow Card will go against players caution tally and the two sin bins.



Red Cards

If a player receives a red card in a match, the club secretary will be notified through a letter or with a notification on the Whole Game System. Red cards will be listed as Standard Charges. The charge will also include the start date of the players suspension. The club secretary is required to provide the Association with the games the player will miss. If a player receives a second red card in the same playing season for the same offence, they will receive an additional match suspension.

Suspensions for Red Cards begin 7 days from the date of the fixture, if a player is sent off on a Sunday, they will be suspended from the following Sunday. The suspension will only apply to the matchday based category of football the player was sent off in. If a club secretary does not receive the notification in writing or on the Whole Game System, please contact the County FA. Regardless of receiving the paperwork the suspension will still apply as per FA Regulations.

Standard Charges	Below NLS		Step 5 & 6	
	Fine	Matches	Fine	Matches
Serious Foul Play	£40.00	3	£40.00	3
Violent Conduct	£40.00	3	£40.00	3
Spitting	£55.00	6	£55.00	6
Denies an obvious goal scoring opportunity	£30.00	1	£30.00	1
Foul/Abusive Language	£40.00	2	£40.00	2
Second Caution	£30.00	1	£30.00	1
Second Sin Bin	£40.00	1	£40.00	1



Misconduct Charges

Misconduct charges are raised when an individual or a club has committed a breach of FA Rules. For players these offences are above and beyond the offences that are covered by red and yellow cards. For example, if a player has been sent off by the referee, and the player chooses to then use foul and abusive language towards the referee, this would result in a misconduct charge under FA Rule E3.1 Improper Conduct and the nature of the comments made would determine the level of fine and suspension the player would receive.

It is important to note that this also applies for comments made on social media. Any comment a participant makes on social media which is reported to the FA which is a breach of FA Rule E3 will result in that participant receiving a charge. For example, if a player took to twitter and used foul and abusive language in reference to a referee's performance, the player would be subject to a charge under FA Rule E3.1 and would receive a fine and suspension as a result.

Any individual who is a participant in football can be charged with misconduct. A participant in football is anyone who takes on a role in football such as a club official, player, manager, coach, match official including running the line as a club assistant referee. Where there is an act of misconduct by an individual who is not a participant in football such as a spectator, the club that spectator is believed to be associated with could be subject to a misconduct charge under FA Rule E20 Failed to ensure players/spectators/club officials conducted themselves in an orderly fashion. This charge also applies for incidents where there are too many participants involved to be able to charge them all individually, such as a mass confrontation. For incidents that involved participants who are u12, the club will be charged instead of the individuals or an alternative solution such as an education course may be offered.

If a participant is charged for misconduct, the club secretary will be notified via the Whole Game System or a letter will be sent with the details of the charge and the evidence upon which the charge is based. It is the responsibility of the club secretary to ensure the participant sees all the paperwork associated with the charge and responds appropriately. The fees for hearing misconduct charges are shown below and are added onto any fine that a disciplinary commission may impose. If a case is found not proven any hearing fee is returned.

A response to any misconduct charge raised against the participant or club must be sent to the County FA by the date given on the charge letter. A Participant will be given **14 days** to respond to a charge unless the offence is for playing whilst under suspension or a serious offence such as assault on a referee. In these instances, the participant will be given **7 days** to respond to the charge. Should a participant or club be pleading not guilty, they must submit written statements as to why they are pleading not guilty to a charge. Even if these statements were submitted as part of an investigation conducted by the County FA they must be submitted again as a reason for not being guilty to the charge.



Should the participant request a Personal Hearing or Verbal Plea for leniency after the date the response is required the County FA may refuse the request. If the County FA does not receive a response to the charge, the case will be taken to the next available disciplinary commission with a not guilty plea. Please be aware any costs incurred in defending a charge will be borne by the party incurring the costs as per FA regulation 54.1 in the FA Handbook. The outcome of a misconduct case can be appealed but these appeals must go directly to the National FA in London. Details of this are outlined on the hearing result letter the participant and club receive after a proven hearing.

In cases where a participant makes comments either in person or in writing such as on social media which refer to a person's race, nationality, sexuality, disability or ethnic origin they are charged with an aggravated breach under FA Rule E3.1 and FA Rule E3.2. These cases are heard by a disciplinary commission from the National FA due to the seriousness of the charge. This also applies to offences of physical contact against a match official or assault on a match official. The process for responding to these misconduct charges and the fee's associated with them are the same as cases dealt with by the County FA. The table below details fees that are payable for either a personal hearing or correspondence hearing whether the case is being heard by a panel from the County FA or the National FA.

	Below NLS (Including Youth)	Step 5-7
Plea	Hearing fee	Hearing Fee
Not Guilty – Personal Hearing	£45.00	£65.00
Not Guilty – Correspondence	£15.00	£15.00
Guilty- Verbal Plea for Leniency	£45.00	£65.00
Guilty – Correspondence	£15.00	£15.00



Personal Hearings

A personal hearing can be requested by a charged club or participant who wishes to deny their charge and have their case heard by a discipline commission. The discipline commission will consist of a chairperson and two wing members who will decide the outcome of the case based on all the evidence presented. At Lincolnshire FA many of the discipline commissions that are put together to administer personal hearings are made up of people independent of the Lincolnshire FA but have extensive football experience. These include match officials, managers, former players and league officials.

The County FA will call witnesses such as the referee if their report has been used to support the charge and any other witnesses present when the offence took place. The participant charged will have the opportunity to question the referee and/or the witness(es) on their statements they submitted, and the commission will also question them. Once the evidence from the County FA witnesses has been heard they will then leave. The participant charged will then bring in their own witnesses.

Once all the evidence has been heard and considered, the commission will decide if the case is proven or not proven. When deciding if the case is found proven, the burden of proof the commission must work to is the balance of probability. Should the case be found proven the participant then can enter a plea for leniency and give reasons to the commission as to why the sanction should be less severe.

5 Stage Personal Hearing Process:

- Introductions
- County FA Evidence from witnesses and questions from the commission and participant charged
- Participant Charged Evidence and witnesses with questions from the commission
- Panel decides 'Proven' or 'Not Proven'
- Participant Charged makes a plea for leniency if found 'Proven' and a sanction is decided by the commission

For cases where the participant charged or a witness is under 18, they can only be questioned by the chair of the disciplinary commission. Any question from the wing members or the participant charged to an u18 witness have to be given to and reviewed by the chair of the commission prior to the hearing as per FA procedures. U18 witnesses or participants charged will also be able to have someone attending the hearing to support them through the process. This can be a parent, a member of the club such as the Club Welfare Officer (CWO) or a member of the County FA staff such as the Referee Development Officer (RDO) or Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO). The following link will take you to the guidance from the National FA regarding procedures for Personal Hearings with U18s. <https://www.thefa.com/-/media/thefacom-new/files/rules-and-regulations/safeguarding/section-7/7-3-personal-hearings-guidance-for-under-18s-colour-version.ashx>

Due to Covid-19, all personal hearings are currently being conducted virtually and it is not clear when Face-to-Face hearings can be conducted. For virtual Personal Hearings, the process for hearing the case is the same as Face-to-Face with participants able to bring as many witnesses as they choose. However, it is beneficial if any witnesses who are attending in support of a participant charged can put forward a written submission for a discipline commission to review alongside any verbal submission they may provide at a hearing.



Verbal Plea for Leniency

Verbal Pleas can be requested by a participant or club charged who accept the charge raised against them but feel they should be given a low sanction. For a verbal plea there will only be a disciplinary commission present in the room and the participant/club charged will have the opportunity to explain why the incident happened and provide some mitigation as a response to the charge for a disciplinary commission to consider before deciding on a sanction.

A club/participant charged can bring witnesses to provide further evidence of events that relate to the participants charge or provide a character witness to be considered alongside the participants misconduct history.

4 Step Process for Verbal Plea for Leniency:

- Introductions
- Participant charged submits mitigation in response to the charge – Commission may ask questions of the participant
- Participant able to bring any witnesses in support of the mitigation
- Commission decides on sanction

Due to Covid-19, all verbal pleas are currently being held virtually and it is not clear when Face-to-Face hearings can be conducted. For virtual Verbal Pleas, the process for hearing the case is the same as Face-to-Face with participants able to bring as many witnesses as they choose. However, it is beneficial if any witnesses who are attending in support of a participant charged to put forward a written submission for a discipline commission to review alongside any verbal submission they may provide at a hearing.



Correspondence Cases

A club or participant charged can request for their case to be dealt with via the written correspondence submitted. All written submissions will be considered by a disciplinary commission before deciding on whether a case is found 'proven' or 'not proven'.

Accept Correspondence:

For cases where a club/participant has accepted the charge raised against them, it is beneficial for them to submit a written response to the charge in mitigation for the charge that has been raised. This gives a disciplinary commission an understanding of the circumstances that caused the event and may cause them to decide on a lower sanction. However, this is not a mandatory requirement.

Deny Correspondence:

For cases where a misconduct charge raised has been denied, the participant charged will need to submit written evidence as to why they are not guilty of the charge that has been raised against them. The participant can submit as many witness statements as they wish for consideration by the panel. It is important that any correspondence submitted make direct reference to the charge raised as this is what the Disciplinary Commission will consider rather than a general commentary of incidents that may have taken place in the fixture but don't specifically relate to the charge raised.

Sanctions:

Any sanction imposed by a disciplinary commission that is match/day based where an interim suspension has not been put in place will commence three days following the date of the hearing. Any fines will be invoiced separately. Should an individual be given a days-based suspension where an interim suspension was already in place due to the nature of the offence, the suspension will consider the number of days already served as a result of the interim suspension.



Sanction Guidelines

These sanction guidelines are used by disciplinary commission when determining a sanction for a proven case. Please note these are guidelines/minimum sanctions and the sanction imposed can be varied where appropriate mitigating or aggravating factors exist.

Please Note: These are Guideline/Minimum Sanctions and must be followed but can be varied where appropriate mitigation or aggravating factors exist.		NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM (NLS), TEAMS and PLAYERS/OFFICIALS			[Including Youth Club Officials] OUTSIDE NLS LEAGUES, TEAMS and PLAYERS/OFFICIALS			[Excluding Youth Club Officials] YOUTH LEAGUES, TEAMS and PLAYERS		
FA Rule	Charge Description	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High
E1.2	Failed to comply with the Rules and Regulations of The Association (Club and/or League Charge)	£0-£40	£40 - £125	£75-£200	£0-£30	£30 - £100	£75-£200	£0-£30	£30 - £75	£75-£150
E3	Improper Conduct (Failure to report misconduct) (Referee Charge)	0-14 days £0 - £25	14-28 days £15- £40	21-42 days £20- £50	0-14 days £0 - £20	14-28 days £10- £30	21-42 days £20 - £40	0-14 days £0 - £15	14-28 days £10- £20	21-42 days £20 - £30
E3.1	Improper Conduct against a Match Official (including Abusive Language/Behaviour)	0/2 £0 - £40	1/3 £15- £60	3/6 £20- £100	0/2 £0 - £35	1/3 £10- £50	3/6 £20 - £70	0/2 £0 - £25	1/3 £10- £30	3/6 £20 - £50
E3	Improper Conduct (Not including Threatening and/or Abusive Language/Behaviour)	0/1 £0 - £25	1/2 £15- £40	2/3 £20- £50	0/1 £0 - £20	1/2 £10- £30	2/3 £20 - £40	0/1 £0 - £15	1/2 £10- £20	2/3 £20 - £40
E3	Improper Conduct against a Match Official (Including Threatening and/or Abusive Behaviour)	Recommended punishment for Threatening Behaviour against a Match official carries 112 days/12 Matches plus up to £100 fine but minimum is 56 days/6 matches & £50 fine								
E3	Improper Conduct (Including Threatening and/or Abusive Language/Behaviour)	1/2 £15 - £30	2/3 £20 - £50	3/4 £30- £60	1/2 £10 - £25	2/3 £15 - £40	3/4 £25 - £50	1/2 £10 - £20	2/3 £15 - £30	3/4 £25 - £40
E3	Improper Conduct against a Match Official (Including Physical Contact, Violent Conduct and Threatening and/or Abusive Language/Behaviour)	Recommended punishment for Physical conduct against a Match official is 182 days plus up to £150 fine but minimum 84 days & £100 fine								
E3	Improper Conduct (Including Violent Conduct and Threatening and/or Abusive Language/Behaviour)	1/3 £30 - £60	2/4 £50 - £100	3/10 £75 - £150	1/3 £20 - £50	2/4 £40 - £80	3/10 £70 - £125	1/3 £15- £30	2/4 £20 - £50	3/10 £40 - £80
E3	Improper Conduct (Including foul & abusive language)	1/3 £0 - £25	2/4 £15- £40	3/10 £20- £50	1/3 £0 - £20	2/4 £10- £30	3/10 £20 - £40	1/3 £0 - £15	2/4 £10- £20	3/10 £20 - £40
E3	Assault by Participant on Participant	140 Days £150	1 to 2 Years £150	5 Years £150	140 Days £150	1 to 2 Years £150	5 Years £150	140 Days £150	1 to 2 Years £150	2 to 5 Years £150
E3	Assault on a Match Official	Minimum 5 Year	7 Year	10 Year	Minimum 5 Year	7 Year	10 Year	Minimum 5 Year*	5 to 7 Year	7 to 10 Year
E4	Discrimination on Grounds of origin/colour/race/nationality/religion/sex/sexual orientation/disability	6 £30 - £60	6/7 £50 - £75	7/10 £60 - £150	6 £20 - £50	6/7 £40 - £65	7/10 £50 - £125	6 £20 - £40	6/7 £30-£50	7/10 £50 - £100
E10	Failed to comply with a decision of the Association (Participant Charge)	1/2 £0 - £25	2/4 £15- £40	3/5 £20- £50	1/2 £0 - £20	2/4 £10- £30	3/5 £20 - £40	1/2 £0 - £15	2/4 £10- £20	3/5 £20 - £40
E12	Failed to comply with a decision of the Association (Club Charge)	£0-£40	£40 - £125	£75-£200	£0-£30	£30 - £100	£75-£200	£0-£30	£30 - £75	£75-£150
E20	Failed to ensure Players/Spectators and/or Club Officials conducted themselves in an orderly fashion	£0-£75	£75-£150	£150-250	£0-£50	£25-£75	£75-£150	£0-£40	£25-£60	£60-£100



Appeals

Appeals can be made to the County FA following a decision made by a league. For example, should a league choose to fine a club for a breach of their league rules, this decision can be appealed firstly to the league committee and then to the County FA.

Appeal Process:

1. Within 14 days of receiving written notification of the decision of a league's management committee, a club can lodge an appeal with the County FA. This appeal must include the grounds of appeal set out below and any information which would support any appeal as well as the appeal fee of £50.00.
2. The appellant can appeal on any of the following grounds: 2.1 Failed to give the participant a fair hearing; 2.2 Misinterpreted or failed to comply with the rules and/or regulations of the association relevant to its decision; 2.3 Came to a decision to which no reasonable such body could have come; 2.4 imposed a penalty, award, order or sanction that was excessive.
3. This appeal pack is then shown to the league as the respondent who have 21 days to respond to the appeal
4. Any correspondence between the appellant/respondent and the County FA must have all parties copied in
5. Once the response from the league is received the appeal is heard by an independent appeal board either on the appeal pack papers or with the appellant and respondent present. If the appellant and respondent are present, they will be given an opportunity to provide oral submissions for the appeal board to consider as well as the written submissions.
6. The appeal board after careful consideration of all submissions will either allow or dismiss the appeal. If the appeal is allowed the appeal fee is returned to the club and any such penalty imposed by the league removed. For a dismissed appeal, the appeal fee is retained, and the decision of the league is upheld.
7. The decision of any appeal board is final and binding and there is no right to any further appeal.



Claims for Wrongful Dismissal

When a player has been sent off in a match the player and/or their club may make a claim for wrongful dismissal to the County FA. It is the responsibility of the player and/or club to demonstrate that the decision was wrong, and ***the Referee made an obvious error in dismissing the player.***

The Claim must be submitted in accordance with the process and timescales below: -

- DO NOT WAIT TO RECEIVE THE CHARGE FROM THE COUNTY FA AS YOU WILL MORE THAN LIKELY BE OUT OF TIME FOR ANY CLAIM.
- A Claim for Wrongful Dismissal is a Claim that the Referee made an Obvious Error in sending the player off and not what the referee submits as his report.
- A club/player may make a claim for Wrongful Dismissal on any sending off except where the player is sent off for (S7) receiving a second caution in the same match or (S6) using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures.
- Upon receipt of a Wrongful Dismissal Claim the Association will determine if it complies with the requirements and timescales as detailed.
- An accepted claim for Wrongful Dismissal will be placed before an Association Disciplinary Commission as soon as possible but no later than the date upon which an automatic suspension is due to start.
- After considering the evidence the Disciplinary Commission will decide if the claim is rejected or successful. A Claim will only be successful where the club /player have demonstrated the Referee made an obvious error in dismissing the player.
- If the Claim is successful, the automatic suspension will be withdrawn, and any fee paid returned to the club/player. If the Claim is unsuccessful any fee paid is non-returnable.

Making a Claim

- When a player is dismissed, and the club/player intend to make a claim for a Wrongful Dismissal they must notify the County Association of their intention to claim by email to either discipline@lincolnshirefa.com hayley.cain@lincolnshirefa.com or alistair.hayes@lincolnshirefa.com by 5pm on the second business day following the incident. Or via the club's Whole game Portal.
- After submitting an intention to claim the club/player need to submit to the Association the following by the fourth business day following the incident-
- Written submissions upon which the claim is founded.
- Any evidence to support the claim this must include video footage if available. If video footage is not available a claim can still be submitted on the written correspondence.
- The relevant fee of £30 (outside National League System) or £50 (Step 5-7 of National League System).



	<u>Timings</u>	<u>General Guide</u>
Notification of Intention to Submit a Claim	5pm on second Business day following the incident	Tuesday
Claim Evidence	5pm on fourth Business day following the incident	Thursday
Disciplinary Commission	To be determined prior to the suspension being served	Friday

Fees

Step5-7 of National League System	£50.00
Outside of the National League System	£30.00



Case Studies

Below you will find some example of misconduct cases dealt with by the County FA in the 2020/2021 season. These case studies alongside the flow chart of the stages a discipline case goes through at Lincolnshire FA, will help to explain both the process and possible sanctions that arise from acts of misconduct.

Physical Contact with a Match Official:

In 2020 a referee reported the County FA that during a match a player having been sent off approached the referee and shoved the player in the chest with both hands. The County FA discipline team investigated the incident and promptly charged the player with physical contact against a Match Official which caused the player to be placed under suspension from all football immediately. The County FA RDO also provided support to the referee following the incident. As this is classed as a serious case the case was heard by a panel from the National FA. The player received the recommended sanction for this offence of a 182-day suspension from all football. The player was also fined £125.00.

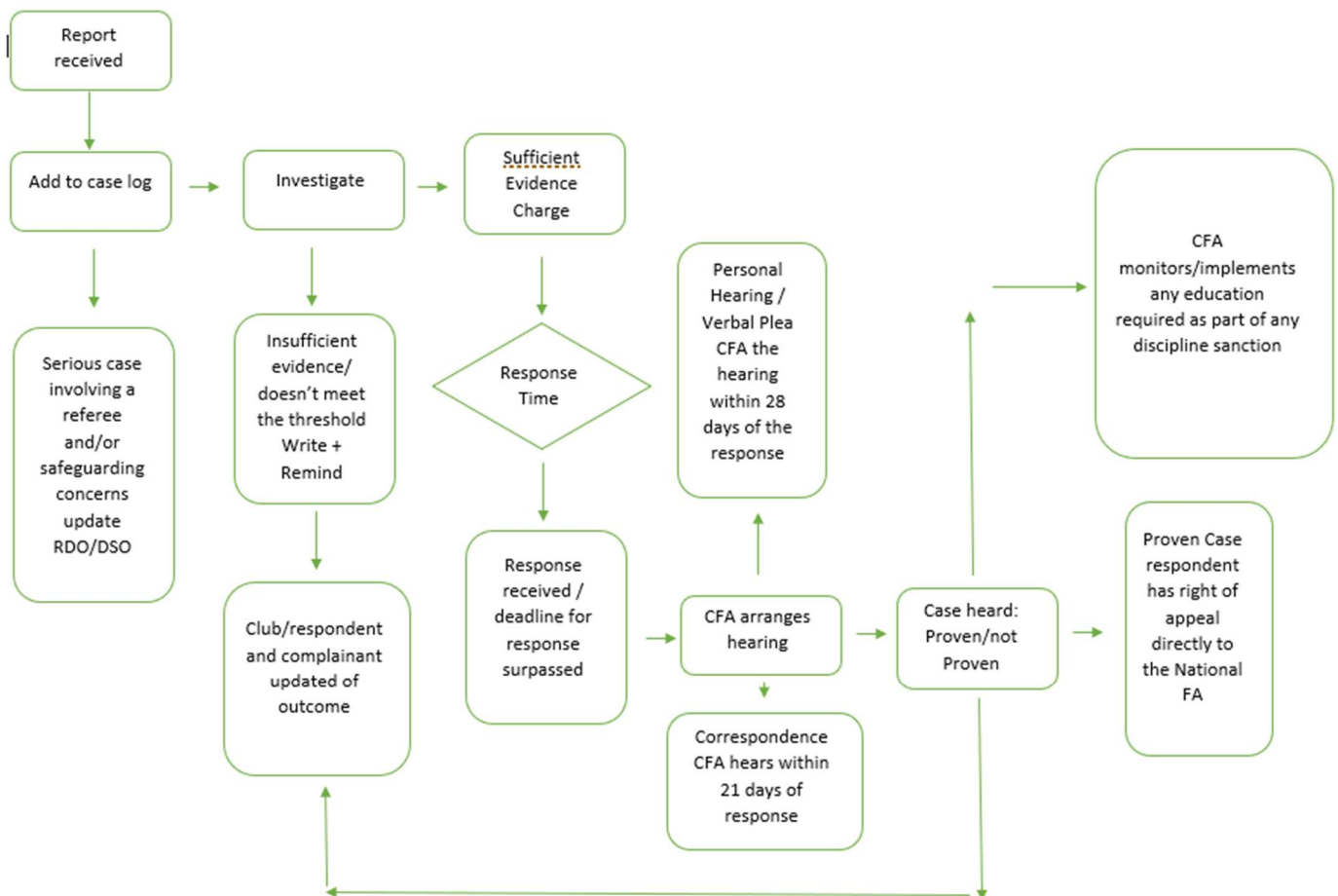
Abuse towards an u18 referee:

U18 referee's in Lincolnshire are provided with a purple shirt to highlight the fact these referees are u18 and as a result are still children. This means that when coaches or spectators abuse a referee that is wearing a purple shirt, they will receive an increased sanction as this is an aggravating factor. In a youth match in 2020, the match referee received abuse from the coaches of one team and the individual also running the line for that team including some foul & abusive language directed towards the referee. This was reported to the County FA and investigated by the discipline team resulting in an E20 charge to the offending club for failing to control managers/club officials. The disciplinary commission when reviewing the evidence for the case considered the level of abuse directed towards the referee and the fact the referee was wearing a purple shirt both to be aggravating factors. As a result, they placed the seriousness of the offence into the high category and as a result the club were fined £90.00 and the coaches from the team required to complete a RESPECT course for coaches or be placed under suspension.

Offences on Social Media:

Where participants make improper comments on social media, these are often reported the County FA's discipline team who investigate and charge the individuals who make these comments. A player sent comments and voice messages to a referee that included foul & abusive language. The comments also made reference to the referee's gender and sexuality. As a result, the player was charged with an aggravated breach for the comments that made reference to gender and sexuality and the case was heard by a disciplinary commission from the National FA. The player was given an 8 Match suspension from all football and fined £75.00, highlighting that offences can still be committed on social media.

Lincolnshire FA Discipline Steps





Report It

For any incidents that happen before, during or after football, any comments you see on social media or are just looking for advice on anything related to discipline in football, you can contact the following:

The discipline team at Lincolnshire FA:

Hayley.Cain@LincolnshireFA.com

Alistair.Hayes@LincolnshireFA.com

Discipline@LincolnshireFA.com

03449670708



@LincolnshireFA

Kick It Out:

For any incidents relating to discrimination in football as well as the County FA you can contact Kick it Out. Kick It Out will notify the discipline team at Lincolnshire FA as well as the serious case team at the FA who monitor serious cases across the country of your report.



@Kick It Out

Report@Kickitout.org.uk