



OXFORDSHIRE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

EQUALITY POLICY

The Oxfordshire Football Association are committed to promoting equality and diversity in all areas of our work.

We will not accept any form of discrimination and will ensure all individuals and groups associated with our organisation are treated equally and fairly.

We will endeavour to eradicate discrimination in our county across all nine protected characteristics; Age, Disability, Sex, Religion and Belief, Race, Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity and Marriage and Civil Partnership.

This statement is applicable to all employees, volunteers, partner organisations and members of the football family who are involved with our organisation, at all levels.

We are committed to working in partnership with organisations throughout our county to support each other to eliminate discrimination in our game.

Ian Mason

Chief Executive

Policy Statement

The Oxfordshire Football Association endorses the principle of sports equality and will strive to ensure that everyone who wishes to be involved in football, whether as participants, club or league officers, managers, coaches, referees, spectators within the Oxfordshire Football Association:

- has a genuine and equal opportunity to participate to the full extent of their own ambitions and abilities, without regard to their age, sex, gender identity, disability, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, religion, race, ethnic origin, socioeconomic status or sexual orientation; and
- can be assured of an environment in which their rights, dignity and individual worth are respected, and in particular that they are able to enjoy their sport without the threat of intimidation, victimisation, harassment or abuse.

Legal obligations

Oxfordshire Football Association is committed to avoid and eliminate unfair discrimination of any kind in football, and will under no circumstances condone unlawful discriminatory practices. The organisation takes a zero tolerance approach to harassment. Examples of the relevant legislation and the behaviours in question are given in the Appendix.

Positive action

The principle of Sports Equality goes further than simply complying with legislation. It entails taking positive steps to counteract the effects of physical or cultural barriers – whether real or perceived – that restrict the opportunity for all sections of the community to participate equally and fully.

Oxfordshire Football Association will therefore seek to institute, support or contribute to appropriate measures or initiatives that enable access to football and participation in associated activities by people from any group that is under-represented in the sport or has difficulty accessing it.

Implementation

The following steps will be taken to publicise this policy and promote sports equality in football:-

- A copy of this document will be published on the Oxfordshire Football Association website.
- The Oxfordshire Football Association Chief Executive will take overall responsibility for ensuring that the policy is observed.
- The Committee will take full account of the policy in arriving at all decisions in relation to activities of the Oxfordshire Football Association.
- The Oxfordshire Football Association will collaborate fully with any surveys or other initiatives designed to assess the level of participation of different sections of the community in football and will take account of the findings in developing measures to promote and enhance sports equality in football.
- The Oxfordshire Football Association will provide access to training for all of its Board Members and any associate committee members to raise awareness of both collective and individual responsibilities. All Oxfordshire Football Association accredited and licensed coaches will be encouraged to undertake equality and diversity training.
- It will be a condition of Oxfordshire Football Association membership that member clubs:
 - formally adopt this policy, or produce their own equality and diversity policy in terms that are consistent with it; and

- take steps to ensure that their Committees, members and volunteers behave in accordance with the policy, including where appropriate taking disciplinary action under the Club's constitution; and
- ensure that access to membership is open and inclusive
- support such measures and initiatives that Oxfordshire Football Association may institute or take part in to advance the aims of this policy.
- It will be a condition of Oxfordshire Football Association membership that individual and corporate members
 - commit to act in accordance with this policy; and
 - support such measures and initiatives that Oxfordshire Football Association may institute or take part in to advance the aims of this policy.

Responsibility, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Board will be responsible for ensuring the implementation of this policy.

The Board will review all Oxfordshire Football Association activities and initiatives against the aims of the policy on an annual basis, and the Chief Executive will report formally on this issue annually.

The Board, or where appropriate a designated project leader, will review any measures or initiatives that Oxfordshire Football Association may institute or take part in to promote and enhance sports equality in Oxfordshire Football Association.

The Board will review the policy itself at intervals of no more than three years, (or when necessary due to changes in legislation) and will report with recommendations to the membership.

Complaints and compliance

Oxfordshire Football Association regards all of the forms of discriminatory behaviour, including (but not limited to) behaviour described in the Appendix as unacceptable, and is concerned to ensure that individuals feel able to raise any bona fide grievance or complaint related to such behaviour without fear of being penalised for doing so.

Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against any employee, member or volunteer who violates the Oxfordshire Football Association Equality and Diversity Policy.

Any person who believes that he or she has been treated in a way that they consider to be in breach of this policy by a member club or individual member of Oxfordshire Football Association, should first complain to that person or organisation. If this does not resolve the matter, or in the case of allegations of discriminatory behaviour against Oxfordshire Football Association itself, the person may raise the matter by writing directly to the Chief Executive. Contact details are available through the website

www.OxfordshireFA.com

The Chief Executive will investigate the complaint personally or appoint a member to do so. The investigation will be conducted impartially, confidentially, and without avoidable delay. Any person or organisation against whom a complaint has been made will be informed of what is alleged and given the opportunity to present their side of the matter.

The outcome of the investigation will be notified to the parties in writing and reported to the Oxfordshire Football Association Board. If the investigation reveals unacceptable discriminatory behaviour on the part of an individual member or member club the Board may impose sanctions on that person or organisation. Sanctions may range from a written reminder concerning future conduct up to and including temporary or permanent expulsion from Oxfordshire Football Association membership. In deciding what sanction is appropriate in a particular case the Board will consider the severity of the matter and take account of any mitigating circumstances.

Where the violation of the Equality Policy by way of harassment, victimisation or discrimination amount to a criminal offence, the appropriate authority will be informed.

In the event that an individual or organisation associated with Oxfordshire Football Association is subject to allegations of unlawful discrimination in a court or tribunal, the Oxfordshire Football Association Board will co-operate fully with any investigation carried out by the relevant lawful authorities and, subject to the outcome, may consider taking action as above in relation to the matter concerned.

Ian Mason

Company Secretary

Oxfordshire Football Association

February 2023

APPENDIX – Relevant legislation and forms of unacceptable discrimination

Legal rights

Discrimination has been legally defined through a series of legislative acts, including the Race Relations Act, the Sex Discrimination Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Equality Act 2006.

In April 2010, the Equality Act 2010 received Royal Assent. The Equality Act 2010 is a new law which harmonises where possible, and in some cases extends, protection from discrimination. It applies throughout the UK and came into force in October 2010.

Discrimination refers to unfavourable treatment on the basis of particular characteristics, which are known as the 'protected characteristics'. Under the Equality Act 2010, the protected characteristics are defined as age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.

Under the Equality Act 2010, individuals are protected from discrimination 'on grounds of' a protected characteristic¹. This means that individuals will be protected if they have a characteristic, are assumed to have it, associate with someone who has it or with someone who is assumed to have it.

Forms of discrimination and discriminatory behaviour include the following:

Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination can be described as less favourable treatment on the grounds of one of the protected characteristics.

Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice is applied to an individual or group that would put persons of a particular characteristic at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons.

Discrimination arising from disability

When a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability and this unfavourable treatment cannot be justified, this is unlawful. This type of discrimination only relates to disability.

Harassment

Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct relating to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or which creates an intimidating or hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

Victimisation

It is unlawful to treat a person less favourably because he or she has made allegations or brought proceedings under the anti-discrimination legislation, or because they have helped another person to do so. To do so would constitute victimisation.

Bullying

Bullying is defined as a form of personal harassment involving the misuse of power, influence or position to persistently criticise, humiliate or undermine an individual.

¹ The exception to this is pregnancy and maternity, which does not include protection by association or assumption – a woman is only protected from discrimination on grounds of her own pregnancy.