



**FOR ALL**

# GRASSROOTS DISCIPLINARY GUIDE

2023/24 Season

**FOR CLUBS**





# APPLICABLE TO CATEGORY 5 FOOTBALL:

- Teams at Steps 5-6 of the National League System
- A team competing outside the National League System playing in Saturday Football, Sunday Football, Midweek Football, Representative Football, Veterans Football, Further Education Football
- Teams at Tier 3 and below of the Women's Pyramid



**FOR ALL**





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# INTRODUCTION

This guide has been prepared to provide helpful guidance to Clubs and Participants on the disciplinary procedures within Category 5 Football for the 2023/24 Season.

It will cover match-based discipline, regulation changes, hearings, the appeals process, and demonstrate how the Whole Game System can assist Clubs and Leagues with their day-to-day administration.

In the event of any inconsistency between this guidance and the Rules and Regulations, the Rules and Regulations shall take precedence.

Should you have any questions regarding the Grassroots Disciplinary Guide, please contact your local County FA (for example, [Discipline@SussexFA.com](mailto:Discipline@SussexFA.com)) or someone from The FA Grassroots Discipline Team, shown below:

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# REGULATION CHANGES 2023/24

Below provides a brief overview of the key Regulation amendments for 2023/24 Season for all Players, Clubs & Leagues operating within Category 5 Football. Please refer to The FA or County FA Handbook for the Rules and Regulations in their entirety and all other changes that may affect you. This is not intended to replace The FA Handbook.

## 1. ABANDONED MATCHES

- Charges arising from Abandoned Matches must be heard within 42 days of the County FA being first notified of the Misconduct that led to the Abandonment taking place, unless prior dispensation has been requested

## 2. TIME LIMITS

- A Charge must be heard by a Disciplinary Commission no later than 90 days from the date of first receipt of the alleged Misconduct, unless prior dispensation has been granted (exceptions include where an Interim Suspension Order is imposed, or the Misconduct relates to playing whilst suspended). This was formerly 180 days

## 3. CLOSE SEASON

- For proven offences of Threatening a Match Official, Physical Contact on a Match Official and Assault on a Match Official, guidance has been provided to allow a Disciplinary Commission discretion to add on additional days to a suspension to cover the Close Season

## 4. POINTS DEDUCTIONS

- Where 2 or more Participants from a Team committee aggravated E3.2 breaches, or 2 or more Participants from a Team committee serious offences against Match Officials, guidance has been provided to Disciplinary Commissions regarding Sanction Guidelines to include immediate points deductions. These sanction guidelines only apply in the men's adult game below Step 6 of the National League System and in the women's adult game at Tier 3 and below of the Women's Football Pyramid









# MATCH BASED DISCIPLINE CATEGORIES

*There are seven categories for Match Based Discipline:*

- Saturday
- Sunday
- Midweek
- Representative
- Veterans
- Further Education
- Friendly

Automatic suspensions for dismissals apply to one of these seven categories. If you are dismissed in a game, you are unable to play again in the same category of football until the automatic match-based suspension is served. For example, a Player sent off in Sunday football would still be eligible to play football for a Saturday team as the suspension would apply to Sunday football only.

These categories also apply with regards to continuing misconduct, receiving multiple cautions or dismissals in a Season. A Player would need to accumulate 5 cautions before the 31 December in the same category of football to receive an automatic one match suspension. For example, if during the same period, a Player received 3 cautions in Midweek football and 2 cautions in Sunday football, then they would not be subject to the automatic suspension for accumulated cautions.

Please note that suspensions resultant from misconduct cases (charges issued by the County FA) are from ALL football at CFA level (see definition of Category 5 on Page 2), so a Participant will not be able to play until the team they were playing for when the charge was issued serves the appropriate number of games.

In the event of non-receipt of paperwork following disciplinary sanctions being administered by the Match Official, the Club are required to contact the County Association and make them aware immediately.

If you have not received paperwork usually within four working days of the game, The FA advises that you must bring this to the attention of your County FA.

**Non receipt of paperwork is not an excuse!**





# YELLOW CARDS

A Yellow card received by a Player will be shown on the paperwork from the County FA as a 'Caution', and we will refer to both terms throughout the booklet.

Once a Referee has reported a Caution, you can find and acknowledge it on Whole Game System using the guide below:

## ACKNOWLEDGING YELLOW AND RED CARDS ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM

Suspensions which are imposed for reaching the thresholds below will commence automatically 7 days following the final caution.

Number of Cautions	Cut Off Date (Inclusive)	Automatic Suspension for Number of Cautions
5	31 <sup>st</sup> December	1 match suspension and £15 fine
10	Second Sunday in April	2 match suspension and £15 fine
15	End of Season	3 match suspension and £15 fine
20+		Every 5 cautions received thereafter will result in continuing misconduct charge

If a Player reaches one of the thresholds after the cut-off date, they will be warned as to their future conduct and no suspension shall be imposed, but an Admin Fee will be payable.

As mentioned previously, match-based discipline categories apply and to reach the threshold you must receive the amount in the same category of football.

Even if you have not received notification of suspension from your County FA you must contact them and inform them that there is information outstanding that has not been received.



For the avoidance of doubt, the accumulation of cautions by a Player in relation to matches in the same Football Category shall include those that are punished by a temporary dismissal.

Where a Player is the subject of more than one temporary dismissal during a match in a Football Category, that Player will receive a fine of £25.00 and an automatic suspension of 1 Match to be served in the same Football Category in which the temporary dismissals were incurred.

Except for single cautionable offences also punished by a temporary dismissal, an administration fee will be charged to the Player through their Club for the cost of processing each notification. The applicable administration fee is £12.00 for each notification of a cautionable offence.

Once the administration fee has been invoiced to your Club, you can follow the guide below which details how to pay disciplinary fines on Whole Game System:

### **PAYING DISCIPLINARY FINES ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM**





# COMPETITION SPECIFIC SANCTIONS FOR CAUTIONS

There is Competition Specific Sanctioning for Yellow Cards in the following Competitions:

## FA Cup and FA Vase

Therefore, the accumulation of 5/10/15/20 Yellow Cards in all other competitions only applies to League and League Cup matches.

The remaining Competitions will carry suspensions as follows:

COMPETITION IN WHICH CAUTIONS ACCUMULATED	NUMBER OF CAUTIONS ACCUMULATED	CUT OFF POINT (INCLUSIVE)	AUTOMATIC SUSPENSION FOR NUMBER OF CAUTIONS	COMPETITIONS TO WHICH AUTOMATIC SUSPENSION/ SANCTION APPLIES
FA Cup	4 and for every 2 further cautions	Sixth Round (Quarter Finals)	1 Match	FA Cup Only
FA Vase	2 and for every 2 further cautions	Sixth Round (Quarter Finals)	1 Match	FA Vase Only

It should be noted this Regulation is for cautions only and dismissals remain unaffected.





# RED CARDS

A Red Card received by a Player will be shown on the paperwork from the County as a 'Standard Charge', but throughout the booklet will be referred to as a Red Card.

As with Cautions, once a Referee has reported a Red Card, you can find and acknowledge it on Whole Game System using the guide below:

## ACKNOWLEDGING YELLOW AND RED CARDS ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM

Suspensions commence automatically on the 7th day following the match in which the Player was dismissed. The County FA will send you the charge letter and response form via Whole Game System. The standard sanctions are shown below:

Dismissal Offence	Suspension	Penalty Points
Serious Foul Play	3 Matches	5
Violent Conduct	3 Matches	6
Spitting at an Opponent	6 Matches	7
Denial of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity	1 Match	3
Use of offensive, or insulting or abusive language	2 Matches	4
Receiving a Second Caution in a Match	1 Match	3

Players dismissed from Saturday football can still play Sunday football and vice versa as these are separate match-based discipline categories.







Qualifying matches for a suspension are based on the team the Player was playing for at the time they were sent off. Should a Player transfer, (i.e. cease to be a member of the original Club), to the satisfaction of the County FA, to a team at the same level and category as the original Club, then any remaining period of suspension may also be transferred to the new Club.

You can add qualifying matches to the relevant suspension on Whole Game System. A guide to processing can be access from the link below:

### **ADDING SUSPENSION MATCHES ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM**

If the team has no more fixtures remaining at the end of a Season, the suspension is lifted and commences when that teams first qualifying fixture takes place in the new Season.

The Player is free from suspension between the last qualifying fixture and the opening qualifying fixture of the new Season to participate for any team they wish to- this applies to Match Based Discipline football only.

An abandoned or postponed match will not count towards clearing a Player of suspension as it is not a completed fixture. Any Misconduct received in the abandoned fixture must still be processed by the County FA. Importantly, this is still the case even if a League decides that the result from the abandoned fixture stands. All matches must be completed for the fixture to count towards the suspension.

Leagues can only deal with status of the fixture once all disciplinary action has been completed by the County FA. Leagues will decide on the status of the game in accordance with the relevant League Rules.

A game that is classed as a 'double header' where teams play each other twice on the same day is classed as two matches. A Player can therefore use both fixtures as qualifying matches.



# CONTINUING MISCONDUCT

Players who are dismissed on more than one occasion during the Season will receive an automatic additional match ban.

This only occurs for multiple dismissals that have taken place within the same category of football.

For example, if you have been dismissed in a Sunday football match and are then sent off again in a Sunday football match later in the Season, then you will get an additional match ban. There would be an additional two matches for a 3rd dismissal within that category and so on.

There is no right of appeal against this punishment and it will be imposed automatically. However, if you have been sent off in Sunday football but are then sent off again later in the Season in a Saturday football match, you will not receive any additional suspension other than the standard charge.

## SENDING OFF SANCTION INSUFFICIENT

In truly exceptional circumstances, an Affiliated Association may seek to increase the disciplinary consequences of a sending-off offence by making a claim that the standard punishment is clearly insufficient. An Affiliated Association may bring such a claim where it is satisfied that the standard punishment otherwise applicable to the sending-off offence would be clearly insufficient. Such claims may only be made by an Affiliated Association for the following sending-off offences: (a) serious foul play; (b) violent conduct; or (c) spitting at an opponent or any other person.







# QUALIFYING MATCHES

The following competitions will qualify for a Player from Step 5 and below to serve the suspension imposed by the County FA:

- **FA Competitions (Cup, Trophy, Vase, Women's Cup and Sunday Cup)**
- League Matches
- League Cup Matches
- All County Cup Matches
- League Cup Competitions
- Any Competition as designated as a qualifying competition by the sanctioning authority

If you are unsure whether a fixture qualifies for a suspension, please contact your County FA who will be able to advise you further.

Suspensions under the Match Based Discipline System automatically commence 7 days from the date of the fixture.

If you have not received correspondence relating to a fixture within 3 working days of the Red Card, you must contact the County FA immediately.

Non-receipt of paperwork is not a valid defence, and a charge is issued for playing whilst under suspension for both the Club and the Player.



# FRIENDLY FIXTURE SANCTIONS

A Player shown a Red Card in a Friendly Match will receive an automatic immediate suspension from Friendly Matches until such time as their Club has completed its next Friendly Match, as decided by the relevant Affiliated Association. This is irrespective of the offence committed.

Should the County FA deem that the offence committed warrants further discipline action, they do have the ability to raise a misconduct charge if they feel that the standard punishment is insufficient.

Any Player who is sent off in the last friendly fixture of the Season will automatically have the suspension carried over to the following Season. They will not be suspended from their competitive fixtures in this instance.

## ADMINISTRATION FEE

The Administration Fee for non-caution offences (send offs and all misconduct cases) will be £15.00 to account for the additional administration of these cases.

The Administration fee for cautionable offences is £12.00







# CLAIMS OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY AND WRONGFUL DISMISSAL

Mistaken Identity claims can be made if the Referee cautions or sends off the wrong Player from the field of play.

A Club should identify the name of the person who was responsible and submit to the County FA any supporting evidence along with the appeal fee, within three working days of the match. If a claim is successful, the claim fee will be returned, and the suspension/fine will be removed from the incorrect Player's record and transferred to the correct Player.

In all cases the claim fee, which must be submitted with details of your claim is £50 (Steps 5-6 & NLS Feeder Leagues). For Clubs outside the National League system the fee is £30.00.

Time limits are strict, claims received late will not be considered

Day of Dismissal	Claim to be submitted 5pm on the third Business Day following the incident
Saturday	Wednesday
Sunday	Wednesday
Monday	Thursday
Tuesday	Friday
Wednesday	Monday
Thursday	Tuesday
Friday	Wednesday

*If Bank Holidays fall within this period, the appropriate number of extra days will be made available, but appeals will always be heard before any sanction commences.*



A full guide to raising a Claim for Mistaken Identity on Whole Game System can be found below:

### ADDING A CLAIM FOR MISTAKEN IDENTITY ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM

A claim of wrongful dismissal is lodged for on-field offences that result in a straight sending-off only – not for Players dismissed for receiving two bookings or a player dismissed for offensive, insulting, or abusive language/gestures.

A Club wishing to lodge a claim must notify the County FA in writing of its intention to do so by 5pm on the second business day following the game in which the dismissal occurred. By 5pm on the fourth business day any evidence relied upon in support of the claim must be submitted to the County FA.

In all cases the claim fee, which must be submitted with details of your appeal is £50.00 (Steps 5-6 & NLS Feeder Leagues). For Clubs outside the National League system the fee is £30.00.

Time limits are strict, claims received late will not be considered.

Day of Dismissal	Notification of Intention to Submit a Claim by 5pm on the second Business Day following the incident	Claim/Evidence to be submitted by 5pm on the fourth Business Day following the incident
Saturday	Tuesday	Thursday
Sunday	Tuesday	Thursday
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Tuesday	Thursday	Monday
Wednesday	Friday	Tuesday
Thursday	Monday	Wednesday
Friday	Tuesday	Thursday







If Bank Holidays fall within this period, the appropriate number of extra days will be made available, but appeals will always be heard before any sanction commences

Providing video footage of the incident is no longer mandatory at this level but should be made available if it exists. A successful claim will need to demonstrate that the Match Official made an obvious error in dismissing the Player from the field of play.

If a claim is successful, the claim fee will be returned, and the suspension/fine will be removed from the Player's record. However, the details of the dismissal will remain on the record as it is fact that the Player was sent off.

Should a player be dismissed for denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity because of a challenge outside of the Penalty area, a claim will only be considered as to whether the foul committed was an obvious error. The Commission will not consider whether the offence took place inside or outside of the penalty area, this is not an opportunity to re-referee the game and the Commission must only consider whether the Red Card for denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity was an obvious error.

Claims for wrongful dismissal will always be dealt with before any suspension commences. The onus will be on the County FA to ensure they have arranged a Commission to consider the case prior to any suspension.

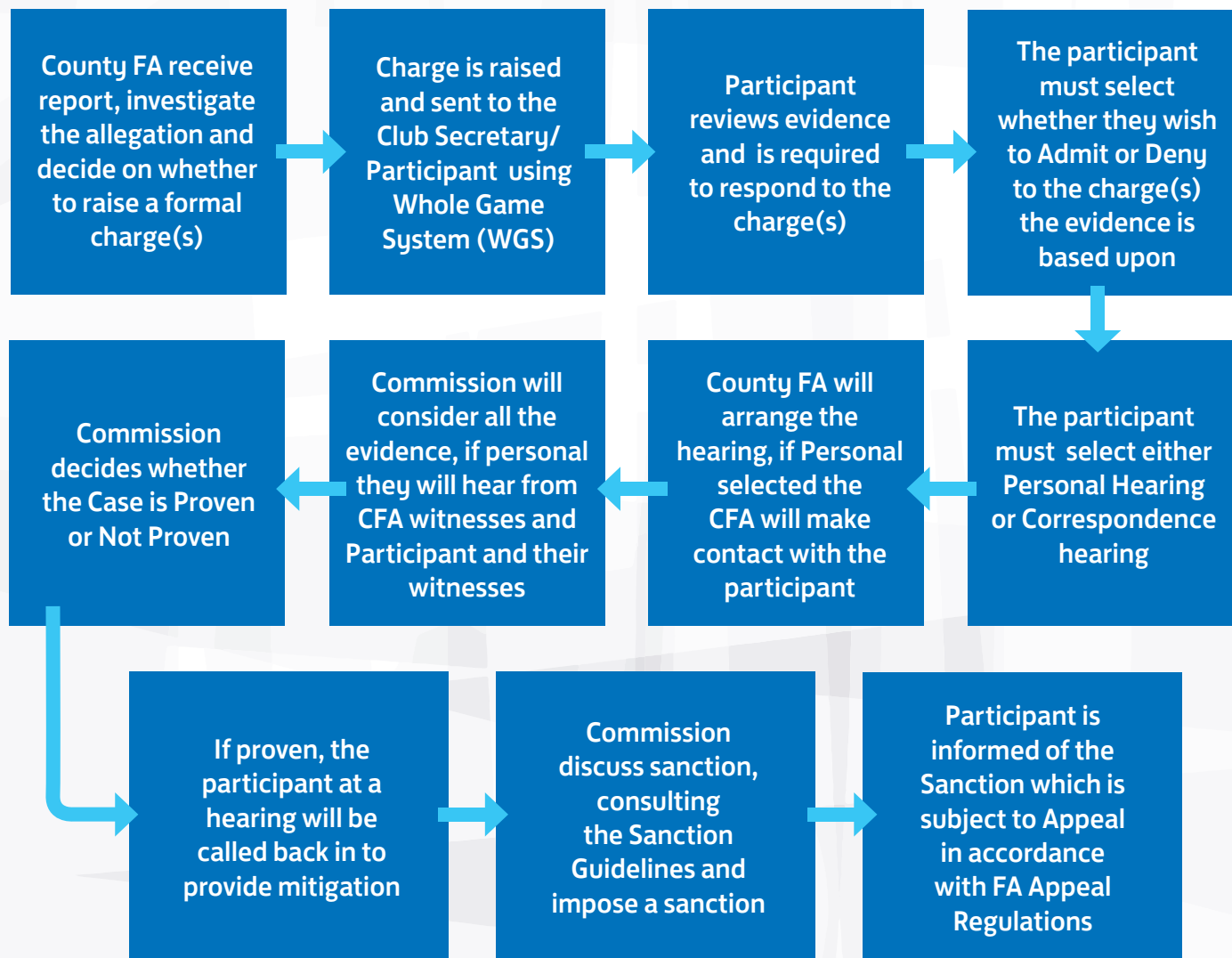
A full guide to raising a Claim for Wrongful Dismissal on Whole Game System can be found below:

### **ADDING A CLAIM FOR WRONGFUL DISMISSAL ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM**

All disciplinary commission decisions for Wrongful Dismissal or Mistaken Identity cases are final and binding on all parties and there is no further right to challenge.



# DISCIPLINE FLOWCHART - MISCONDUCT CHARGES





# MISCONDUCT CHARGES

A Misconduct Charge will be issued for a reported incident which does not fall under standard dismissal offences or is a serious offence.

A Disciplinary Commission will convene to consider all Misconduct Cases, whether the response to the charge is accepted or denied.

A Player can be charged with Misconduct following being sent from the field of play. For example, a Player is sent off for violent conduct (will receive the standard three match ban), and before leaving the field of play used abusive/insulting comments towards a Match Official.

The latter would be dealt with as Misconduct and subsequently the Player will have a second charge that they need to respond to, having the options to accept or deny the charge.

**A Club, League or any Participant in football can be charged with Misconduct (for example, Manager, Coach, Physio, Club Secretary, Chairperson).**

If you receive a Misconduct Charge and it is found Proven, any suspension will be from ALL Football at Category 5.

If you are issued with a Misconduct Charge you will receive a charge letter, response form and any evidence that the County have based their charge upon. You must ensure you respond to the charge within 14 days, or within 7 days where the Misconduct arises from an Abandoned Match, relates to playing whilst suspended, or where an Interim Suspension Order is imposed.

A guide to responding to a Misconduct Charge in Whole Game System can be found below:

**RESPONDING TO A MISCONDUCT CHARGE ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM**





# NON-RESPONSE TO A MISCONDUCT CHARGE

When a County FA raises a Misconduct charge, paperwork is generated to the Club and on some occasions will be sent directly to the Participant. Where it is sent to the Club, the Secretary must make the Participant aware of the charge and ask for their response. For each charge the Participant is invited to respond, selecting whether they accept or deny the charge and how they wish for the case to be heard (e.g. Personal or Non-Personal Hearing).

If the County FA fail to receive a response to the charge the matter will be passed to a Disciplinary Commission for them to consider at their discretion. No late fine or reminder will be sent to Participants who fail to respond to a Misconduct charge however the Participant forfeits the right for a Personal Hearing.



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# RESPONSE TO CHARGE

On the response sheet Participants will be offered four options, one of which must be chosen:

- A.** I am pleading guilty to the charge and I wish the case to be dealt with in my absence. I request any correspondence that I have submitted to be considered and I await the decision of the Disciplinary Commission as to my punishment.

*A Disciplinary Commission will consider the case, taking into consideration the Participant's/Club's disciplinary record from the previous five years and all documentation that has been sent to them in relation to the case. The Commission will come to a decision and the Participant(s) will be notified in writing by the County FA.*

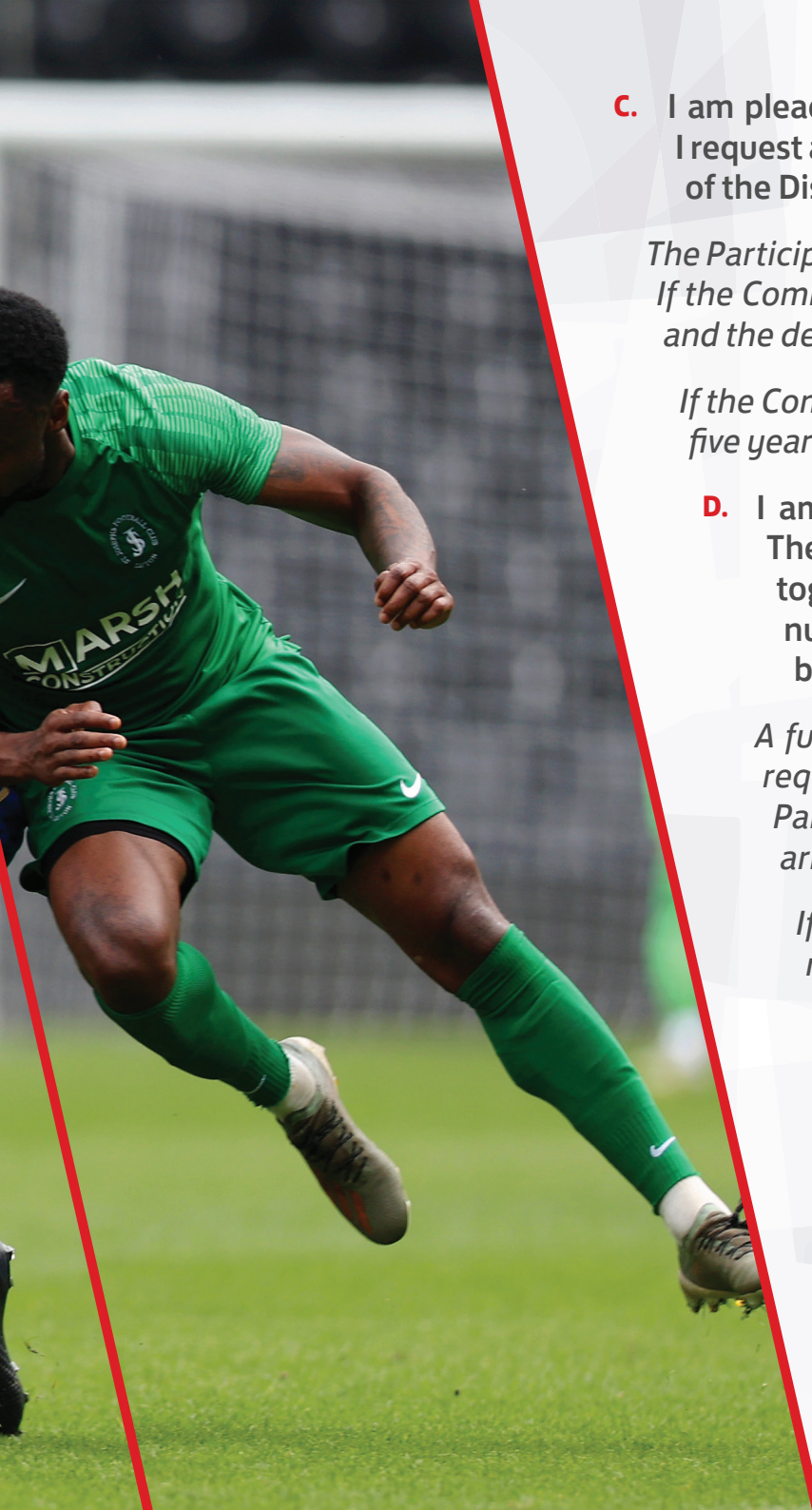
- B.** I am pleading guilty to the charge and I wish to attend a Discipline Hearing to enter a verbal plea for leniency. The hearing fee in addition to the administration fee is enclosed where applicable. I am aware that I am accepting the charge and I will not be able to question the basis of the charge and that the match officials will not be in attendance.

*The participant, having already accepted the charge, will put forward verbal mitigation in relation to the case, which could include reference to the participants previous disciplinary history. A Commission will consider the participants submission and impose a sanction that they deem appropriate.*

*The charge has already been accepted so the Match Officials report will not be able to be contested and neither will the Match Official/s be in attendance.*







- C.** I am pleading not guilty to the charge, and I wish the case to be dealt with in my absence. I request any correspondence that I have submitted be considered and I will await the decision of the Disciplinary Commission.

*The Participant/Club must submit the documentation that they wish the Commission to consider. If the Commission find the case not proven the case is concluded, with no further action taken and the details being removed from the Participant's record.*

*If the Commission decide the case is proven, they will consider the Participant/Club's previous five year history and decide on an appropriate sanction.*

- D.** I am pleading not guilty to the charge, and I wish to attend a Disciplinary Hearing. The personal hearing fee and the administration fee are enclosed where applicable, together with written reasons as to why I am requesting a personal hearing and the number of witnesses I intend to represent me, along with any other documentation to be considered.

*A full list of witnesses who will be attending and the reason why the hearing has been requested needs to be submitted to the County FA (and any other documentation the Participant wishes the Commission to consider at the hearing). The County FA will arrange the hearing.*

*If the Participant denies any aspect of the charge and report on which it is based, they must select option C or D.*

*Should the Misconduct charge be found proven, Participants are permitted to lodge an appeal against a decision of the County FA. They are required to adhere to FA Regulations for Appeals.*

*A Participant who receives a match suspension as a result of a Misconduct charge is unable to participate in any football within Category 5, including refereeing, until the team they were playing for when charged serves the qualifying number of fixtures, as imposed by a Disciplinary Commission.*



# APPEALING A COUNTY FA DECISION

A Participant charged can lodge an appeal against the decision of a County FA concerning their own case. Any Participant seeking to appeal their decision should contact Judicial Services ([JudicialServices@TheFA.com](mailto:JudicialServices@TheFA.com)) – the department who facilitate the appeal process – at the earliest opportunity for the relevant information regarding how to formally appeal.

An intention to Appeal must be submitted within 7 days of the written decision.

The full written submissions are required within 14 days of the written decision and should be sent to [JudicialServices@thefa.com](mailto:JudicialServices@thefa.com)

**FURTHER DETAILS ON THE APPEALS PROCESS CAN BE FOUND HERE:**

## SANCTION GUIDELINES

The Disciplinary Sanction Guidelines have been produced to improve consistency in the application of sanctions for Misconduct charges across all County FA.

In an ever-changing world of football, it is important that the processes of The Football Association and County Associations evolve to provide a safe, enjoyable environment for Players, Referees and Participants alike, whilst maintaining the need for a fair and transparent disciplinary process for all involved.

As well as sporting sanctions and fines, a Commission is also able to order Participants to attend various workshops or seminars to help improve poor behaviour. Discipline is not a matter of just issuing match bans and financial sanctions but is also a process to help educate people and encourage best practice.







# STANDARD MINIMUM SANCTIONS

To ensure consistency nationally, sanction ranges and standard minimum sanctions have been introduced. An individual who receives a charge for any of the three offences outlined below which is subsequently found proven will face a minimum sanction as listed below. A Commission can increase the sanction based upon the aggravating factors that are present.

These are not an entry point.

- Assault or attempted Assault on a Match Official – standard minimum of 5 years (2 years minimum if the player is aged 14 or under) or 10 years where the assault causes a serious injury to the Match Official.
- Physical Contact or attempted Physical Contact on a Match Official – standard minimum of 112 days & £75.
- Threatening behaviour towards a Match Official – standard minimum of 56 days & £50.

## EDUCATION SANCTIONS

There are several alternatives to the traditional sanctions that may be used if a Disciplinary Commission considers they will be of benefit to the Participant.

Educational sanctions are a great tool when dealing with younger Players and the Club Welfare Officer can play a key role by discussing the 'rights' and 'wrongs' with the Participant during or following a disciplinary hearing. Only a Disciplinary Commission can enforce such an order on a Participant.

There are a variety of education sanctions, subject to availability, and they are:

- RESPECT courses
- Safeguarding Children Workshop
- Mandatory Equality Education (Online and Face to Face)
- Mandatory Education for Serious Offences against Match Officials (Online and Face to Face)



# GROUND BAN

What is a ground ban? In simple terms, it is a ban from attending the ground during any match that a particular team participates.

This can also be applied to teams playing on public playing fields as the Participant charged agrees by their very participation to abide by the Rules and Regulations of The Football Association and therefore to any orders made by a Disciplinary Commission.

It is The FA's Policy that all County FAs issue ground bans instead of touchline bans as at grassroots level a touchline ban can be difficult to enforce given that games may be played on public playing fields. There can also be uncertainty regarding the distance required to be away from the touchline.

**TO VIEW THE FULL SANCTION GUIDELINES DOCUMENT PLEASE [CLICK HERE](#)**

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# PERSONAL HEARINGS

There may be occasions when Participants are asked to attend to a Disciplinary Hearing – either as a Player charged with Misconduct, or attending as a witness to Misconduct, or as a Match Official giving evidence.

The FA has produced a series of guides to help Participants prepare for the Personal Hearing and let them know what to expect covering topics such as:

- What should I bring with to the hearing?
- What should I wear?
- Can I bring witnesses with me?
- How long do Personal Hearings normally last?
- What happens if I am not happy with the result of my hearing?
- Procedures for young people

These can be downloaded from the links below:

**PERSONAL HEARING SUPPORT GUIDE**

**PERSONAL HEARING GUIDANCE FOR UNDER 18S**



# MULTIPLE/ALTERNATE CHARGES

A County Association may raise a multiple or an alternate charge against a Participant where required. A multiple charge is raised when there are several charges relating to a Participant on the same day. An alternate charge occurs when a Participant is charged, and there is also an alternate charge which is within a lower threshold than the original charge that was issued.

## MULTIPLE CHARGE

A multiple charge occurs when an individual has been reported for more than one offence in a game which constitutes Misconduct. For example, this could be whereby a Player is reported for refusing to give a name but also will be charged with playing whilst suspended. This would be raised as a multiple charge as both incidents arise from the same game. Each charge is dealt with on its own merit and therefore two responses are required and are both separate cases. For example, a Participant could admit the first charge, but deny the second charge.

## ALTERNATE CHARGE

An alternate charge is where an individual has been reported for a matter of Misconduct and the County can raise an alternate charge (second charge) which is a lesser charge.

For example, if a Player was charged for Assault or Attempted Assault against a Match Official, the County would have the opportunity to raise an alternate charge which would be for Physical Contact or Attempted Physical Contact against a Match Official. The Participant would be required to respond to the higher charge (first named charge) and if pleading guilty the lesser charge is not considered.

If the higher charge is denied the individual must respond in writing or attend a hearing. If the higher charges are successfully denied, the alternate charge (lesser) is then considered and depending on the Participant's response, the outcome is decided. The alternate charge will only be considered however if a Commission find that the main charge is not proven.





# MULTI PLAYER MISCONDUCT CHARGE

Any Club who has six or more individual Players cautioned or dismissed from the field of play in the same match will be automatically fined as per the table below. Please note that the team must be playing at the level detailed below to be subject to the fines.

	1 <sup>st</sup> Occasion	2 <sup>nd</sup> Occasion	3 <sup>rd</sup> Occasion	4 <sup>th</sup> Occasion
Step 5 & 6	£150	£300	£450	£600
Outside National League System	Warned as to future conduct	£25	£50	£75

## EXAMPLE

Players 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are cautioned and Player 6 is sent from the field of play.

The Club (depending on the level) will be dealt with as detailed above for 1st Occasion in a Season.

Players 1, 2, 3 and 4 are cautioned and Players 2 and 3 are then sent off for persistent Misconduct.

The Club would not be fined as only four Players have been disciplined during the match. For the above fines to be enforced you must have six different individuals disciplined in the game.

There is no appeal process against a Multi-Player Misconduct charge. However, in exceptional circumstances a plea of mitigation can be put forward to a Disciplinary Commission who will consider the evidence before them.



# RESPECT SANCTIONS

Over recent years The FA has been promoting Respect both on and off the pitch with the aim to improve discipline and promote good behaviour from Players, Clubs and all Participants who are involved in the game.

Respect Sanctions have been introduced for Clubs with automatic punishments to try and deter bad behaviour.

The Respect Sanctions will affect all teams who operate within Category 5 Football. An administration fee of £12 is applicable for all cases.

*Offences that will contribute to the automatic punishments as detailed below in the table are as follows:*

- Caution for Dissent (C2) including those dealt with as a Temporary Dismissal
- Sending off for Use of offensive, or insulting or abusive language (S6)
- Misconduct charges (E3)

*The table below provides further details on the sanction that will be imposed if the thresholds are reached by a team throughout the Season:*

	STAGE 1 (Accumulation of 6 offences)	STAGE 2 (Accumulation of 10 offences)	STAGE 3 (Accumulation of 15 offences)	STAGE 4 (Accumulation of 20 offences)
Step 5	Warning as to future conduct	£150	£300	Charge under FA Rule E20
Step 6	Warning as to future conduct	£75	£150	Charge under FA Rule E20
Outside NLS (including Youth)	Warning as to future conduct	£50	£100	Charge under FA Rule E20

(N.B. Any team exceeding Stage 4 will receive an automatic charge of FA Rule E20 for each subsequent 5 qualifying offences)







# APPEALING A SANCTION

A team is only permitted to enter a plea in mitigation and to present extenuating circumstances that a Commission may consider at a non-personal hearing at Stages 2 or 3.

The decision of that Commission is final and binding.

## MULTI PLAYER MISCONDUCT CHARGE

E20 charges will be issued to Clubs with a poor disciplinary record based upon the number of disciplinary cases and repetition of particular offences. To ensure an appropriate process is in place, each offence will have an automatic standard penalty point attributed to it.

*The penalty points for each offence are set out below:*

### CAUTION

- 1 point (Exception for dissent which will incur 2 penalty points)

### SEND OFFS

- S1 Serious Foul Play – 5 points
- S2 Violent Conduct – 6 points
- S3 Spitting at an Opponent – 7 points
- S4 Denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball – 3 points
- S5 Denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by an offence punishable by a free kick or penalty – 3 points
- S6 Use of offensive, or insulting or abusive language – 4 points
- S7 Receiving a Second Caution in a Match – 3 points



# MISCONDUCT CHARGES

- 5 points each unless increased by the Disciplinary Commission

*A charge under FA Rule E20 would be raised against a Club in any of the following circumstances:*

- Any Team's points tally reached 75.
- Any Team within the Club reaches Stage 4 of the RESPECT Sanction process.
- A Club has four or more incidents of violent conduct across all its teams, (the number of teams within a Club is irrelevant for charging purposes but could be considered as a mitigating factor when considering the sanction).







# USE OF SMOKE BOMBS, FLARES OR FIREWORKS

The FA recognises a worrying recent trend regarding the possession and/or use of smoke bombs, flares or fireworks at Grassroots Football matches.

This guidance serves as reminder that possession and/or use of such items could be a criminal offence in addition to a breach of disciplinary regulations.

You don't have to let off a flare inside a stadium for it to be a criminal offence. Possession of a smoke bomb or flare is itself a crime if you even attempt to enter a stadium, and that can include possession en-route to the match. The law does not distinguish between smoke bombs, flares or fireworks either.

Anyone found guilty of a criminal offence relating to smoke bombs, flares or fireworks could be subject to a custodial sentence as well as a football banning order.

A club could also be charged with a breach of FA RulesE21 if disciplinary charges are pursued by a County FA. This could result in a sizeable fine in addition to other orders at the discretion of the Disciplinary Commission.

*The dangers of using these items are widespread, and include:*

- Serious injuries, such as loss of limb or fingers
- Severe burns, due to temperatures of up to 2,000°C
- Breathing problems, due to smoke inhalation
- Loss of hearing or sight, because of the explosive power



The FA acknowledges these dangers and will look to work with County FAs to actively address the issue using both criminal proceedings and disciplinary regulations.

We encourage Clubs to be vigilant and proactive to protect themselves against a possible charge. Such steps could include:

- Clear communication to Supporters that smoke bombs, flares or fireworks are prohibited at football matches
- Detail that anyone found in possession of such an item could be subject to criminal and disciplinary proceedings
- Highlight the dangers of using the items
- Clubs to issue their own banning orders against Supporters found in possession



# FOR

# ALL







# LEAGUES

Leagues form an integral part of the football family, which allows Clubs to play football under strict rules and regulations. All Leagues are formed by a League Management Committee (LMC) and the members are voted in at the AGM by the Member Clubs.

Leagues are governed by their County Association or The Football Association, who affiliate the Leagues each season and sanction the rules for the competition.

## POWERS & DUTIES OF A LEAGUE

A League's responsibility is to enforce their competition rules and allow Players to participate in the correct environment and ensure that it is fair and equal for all involved within the League. Should a Club breach a competition rule the League may charge the Club and hear the case following their response. The League is not permitted to deal with matters of misconduct, which are the responsibility of the County Association or The Football Association.

The LMC can make an application to refuse or cancel a registration of a Player if they have received suspensions in excess of 10 matches/112 days in a period of 2 years or less from the date of the first offence. The punishment must be across at least two offences.



# WHAT ACTION CAN LEAGUES TAKE AGAINST POORLY BEHAVED CLUBS AND INDIVIDUALS?

The League can take several steps to assist Clubs/Individuals with improving their behaviour in football. Working with Clubs/Individuals is crucial in addressing what the problem is and working together in rectifying the problem.

A Player who has previously had their registration removed is permitted to compete within the League again upon completion of the punishment the League imposed.

However, the Player is only registered to compete within the League under probation period of 12 months, and should the Player receive further act of proven Misconduct (excluding Standard dismissals) the League are empowered to consider a further charge of bringing the Competition into disrepute.

## APPEAL

Clubs, Officials, or Players have a right of appeal against a League's decision to the relevant sanctioning authority (The FA or County FA).

Within 14 days of the posting of written notification of any decision by the Management Committee or the Competition, a Club, Official, or Player against whom such action is being taken must appeal against such decision by lodging particulars with their relevant County FA, along with any required fee, for the adjudication of a Board of Appeal.

The grounds of appeal shall be in accordance with FA Rules.







# STANDARD CODE OF RULES TEMPLATE

The Standard Code of Rules are provided by The Football Association and are mandatory for all competitions outside the National League System and for Regional NLS Feeder Leagues.

Competitions seeking sanction must draft their rules in conformity with this code, putting them in the correctly numbered rule and showing standard headings.

**PLEASE CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD A COPY OF  
THE STANDARD CODE OF RULES TEMPLATE.**

**PLEASE CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD A COPY OF  
THE STANDARD CODE OF RULES FOR YOUTH TEMPLATE.**



# For ALL



# LEAGUES

## *The League can:*

- Call the Club/individual in for a meeting to account for their behaviour and outline how to improve
- Refuse the Club entry into invitational Cups
- Refuse to offer fixtures to the teams or Club If there are outstanding debts with the League or there has been a failure to reply.
- Require multiple adult teams to operate with fewer teams if they encounter continued poor administration
- Vote on future membership with the league at an EGM or AGM, but the League must ensure it is a fair process
- Draw the attention of lenient sanctions by CFAs to the attention of The FA

Leagues should always be willing to work with teams and individuals in order to improve behaviour on and off the field, and if they believe that further training or help is required they should address this to their County Association who could assist.







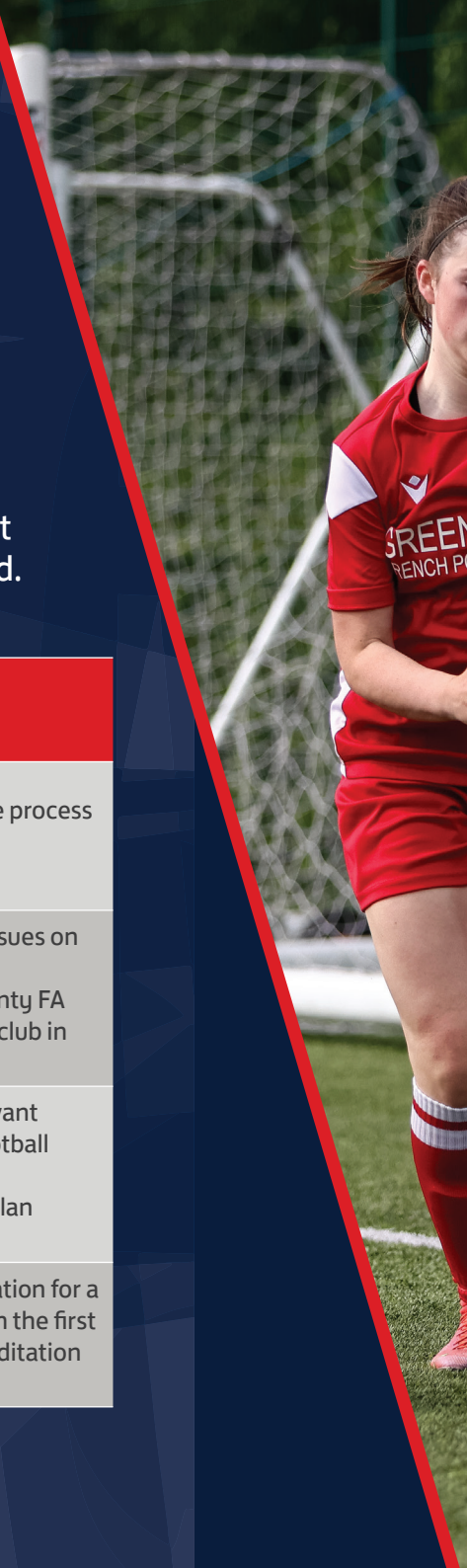


# RESPECT AND ENGLAND FOOTBALL ACCREDITED DISCIPLINE PROCESS

The England Football Accredited discipline process remains aligned to the Respect Sanctions and Procedure for the 2023/24 season. This will ensure that the England Football Accredited Clubs continue to set high standards with the discipline process aligning to the delivery of the Respect programme and we only do positive activations.

The existing 4 stage discipline process for England Football Accreditation (formally FA Charter Standard) will remain based on the accumulation of penalty points from Teams across a Club with the addition of the Respect Sanctions, ensuring a Clubs on field discipline and their adherence to the Respect programme are monitored. Please see below:

RESPECT SANCTION	RESPECT SANCTION DEFINITION (PER TEAM)	ENGLAND FOOTBALL ACCREDITED PROCESS	ENGLAND FOOTBALL ACCREDITED SANCTION
STAGE 1	Accumulation of 6 incidents of qualifying offences	A warning is sent to the club from the County FA as part of the Respect Sanction process.	Warning to include England Football accredited discipline process and sanctions
STAGE 2	Accumulation of 10 incidents of qualifying offences	Clubs will be invited to attend a County FA Accreditation Working Party (or relevant committee/party) with the accumulation of 10 incidents of qualifying offences	The club will be asked what it has done to address the issues on their initial warning for 6 incidents. The County FA accreditation Working Party or the County FA development and governance officers will support the club in developing an action plan to improve standards
STAGE 3	Accumulation of 15 incidents of qualifying offences	Clubs will be called in front of the Accreditation Working Party (or relevant committee/party) with the accumulation of 15 incidents of qualifying offences	The County FA accreditation Working Party (or relevant committee/party) may suspend a club's England Football accreditation for between 3-12 months. The County FA will provide the club with an action plan and review dates
STAGE 4	Accumulation of 20 incidents of qualifying offences	Clubs will be called in front of the Accreditation Working Party (or relevant committee/party) with the accumulation of 20 incidents of qualifying offences	An England Football accredited Club may lose its accreditation for a first offence but should be given an action plan to follow in the first instance. For a 2nd offence the Club will lose their accreditation and not be allowed to re-apply within 12 months







	AMOUNT	ENGLAND FOOTBALL ACCREDITED PROCESS	ENGLAND FOOTBALL ACCREDITED SANCTION
<b>DISCIPLINARY POINTS PER TEAM</b>	75 points	Stage 2	The County FA accreditation Working Party or the County FA development and governance officers will support the club in developing an action plan to improve standards
<b>(AS ABOVE)</b>	150 points	Stage 3	The Accreditation Working Party (or relevant committee/ party) may suspend a club's accreditation for between 3-12 months. The County FA will provide the club with an action plan and review dates
<b>(AS ABOVE)</b>	225 points	Stage 4	An England Football accredited Club may lose its accreditation for a first offence but should be given an action plan to follow in the first instance. For a 2nd offence the Club will lose their accreditation and not be allowed to re-apply within 12 months
<b>A CLUB HAS BEEN CHARGED AND THE CASES PROVEN WHERE GAMES HAVE BEEN ABANDONED AS A RESULT OF MISCONDUCT</b>	2 games abandoned	Stage 2 *	(See above sanction for stage 2)
<b>(AS ABOVE)</b>	3 games abandoned	Stage 3 *	(See above sanction for stage 3)
<b>(AS ABOVE)</b>	5 games abandoned	Stage 4 *	(See above sanction for stage 4)
<b>A CLUB HAS CASES OF VIOLENT CONDUCT ACROSS ALL ITS TEAMS INCLUDING ALL S2 CHARGES AND ANY CHARGE OF ASSAULT ON A MATCH OFFICIAL OR PHYSICAL CONTACT ON A MATCH OFFICIAL AND ASSAULT PARTICIPANT ON PARTICIPANT</b>	4 incidents	Stage 2 *	(See above sanction for stage 2)
<b>(AS ABOVE)</b>	6 incidents	Stage 3 *	(See above sanction for stage 3)
<b>(AS ABOVE)</b>	8 incidents	Stage 4 *	(See above sanction for stage 4)
<b>A CLUB HAS E3.2 CHARGES AGAINST ANY PLAYER IN A 12-MONTH PERIOD</b>	2 charges	Stage 2	(See above sanction for stage 2)
<b>(AS ABOVE)</b>	3 charges	Stage 3	(See above sanction for stage 3)
<b>(AS ABOVE)</b>	4 charges	Stage 4	(See above sanction for stage 4)



# DELIVERING A GAME FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION

## HANDLING DISCRIMINATION AND SERIOUS CASES

For any individual or group to suffer discrimination is just not acceptable. We cannot solve a societal issue on our own but as the national governing body we promise to bring the full weight of our influence to deliver a game free of discrimination.

The positive steps demonstrated through our In Pursuit of Progress initiative since 2018 and creating the Football Leadership Diversity Code, are just the start and we will build on this momentum.

To achieve this ambition by 2024 we will ensure everyone in the game can be confident of reporting abuse irrespective of where it takes place (on or off the pitch) while our updated sanctions framework will give us the ability to accurately reflect the severity of each incident.

Further information can be found below:

**TIME FOR CHANGE- THE FA STRATEGY 2020-2024**







As part of The FA's commitment to deliver a game free from discrimination, we have enhanced the way in which discriminatory and serious cases are investigated and heard at grassroots level.

County FAs are responsible for all cases arising from Steps 5 and below and the details of Serious Cases will also be reported centrally to The FA.

This is part of a wider project within The FA whereby Discipline is now housed within the Grassroots Division. This is led by the following Team:

- **Fraser Williamson** – Senior Discipline Manager
- **Hayley Mather** – Regional Discipline Manager – East
- **Alex Francis** – Regional Discipline Manager – South
- **Craig Lee** – Regional Discipline Manager – North
- **Ollie Powell** – Regional Discipline Manager – West

Investigations will be managed by the relevant County FA and, where appropriate, charges will be raised upon completion of a thorough investigation. The Regional Discipline Managers will assist and advise the County FAs during this process.

This process is summarised in the:

**SERIOUS CASE FLOWCHART**

The FA has also established a diverse Serious Case Panel who will be selected to hear grassroots Serious Cases. All members of the Panel undertake regular training and assessment to ensure the highest standards.

The FA will appoint all members of the Panel to hear cases concerning Assault or attempted Assault on a Match Official, Physical Contact or attempted Physical Contact on a Match Official, Threatening behaviour towards a Match Official, Assault by Participant on Participant, Aggravated Breaches of FA Rules E3 and E20, and FA Rule E4.



# SANCTIONS FOR AGGRAVATED BREACHES

Discriminatory behaviour is unacceptable and there is a Sanction Range of between 6 and 12 matches for a first offence, plus a mandatory education programme where an “Aggravated Breach” of FA Rule E3 is found proven.

## **RULE E GENERAL BEHAVIOUR**

3.1 A Participant shall at all times act in the best interests of the game and shall not act in any manner which is improper or brings the game into disrepute or use any one, or a combination of, violent conduct, serious foul play, threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting words or behaviour

A breach of Rule E3.1 is an “Aggravated Breach” where it includes a reference whether direct or indirect to any one or more of the following: - ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or disability.

For a first offence of discriminatory abuse the sanction will be within the Sanction Range between 6 and 12 matches. The lowest end of the Sanction Range, i.e. 6 matches, will operate as the Standard Minimum punishment. This sanction may be increased depending on the specific facts of any case and any further such offence will carry a mandatory minimum suspension of no fewer than 7 matches.

A Regulatory Commission may only consider imposing a suspension below the Standard Minimum where the following specific (and exhaustive) circumstances arise such that the Regulatory Commission determines that the Standard Minimum would be excessive:

*Where the offence was committed in writing only or via the use of any communication device and:*

- Where the Regulatory Commission is satisfied that there was no genuine intent on the part of the Participant Charged to be discriminatory or offensive in any way and could not reasonably have known that any such offence would be caused; or
- The age of the Participant at time of the offence (e.g. where the Participant was a minor at the time the offence was committed); or
- The age of the offence (e.g. a social media post made a considerable time ago)

Club will be liable to be sanctioned if two or more of its Participants commit an act of discriminatory abuse in any twelve-month period.

In all cases the Participant may be fined as well as suspended and will be required to undergo an education programme.







# HOW DO I REPORT?

We recognise that there may be under-reporting of incidents of discrimination in the game and we encourage those who feel that they have been discriminated against to report their concerns.

We hope that the changes outlined above will help increase confidence in reporting discrimination cases.

Should Participants wish to report an incident of discrimination then they can do so using the link below:

**GRASSROOTS DISCIPLINE DISCRIMINATION REPORTING FORM**

Incidents can also be reported to Kick it Out via their reporting app or email: [info@kickitout.org](mailto:info@kickitout.org)

**FOR**

**ALL**

REPORTING DISCRIMINATION FILM

The FA has launched the Reporting Discrimination video and short film to show players







# SPORTING CHANCE SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF DISCRIMINATORY ABUSE

The FA have secured dedicated and specialist support for all victims of discrimination, following the request of many stakeholders. Sporting Chance now offer free support to victims of discrimination from the point where the allegation is made. When a County FA respond to an allegation of discrimination, it is expected that a letter will be included in the correspondence to ensure all victims get the opportunity to reach out for support if needed. As this support is available from the point of allegation it should be sent immediately and must not be withheld until an investigation is underway.

*When Sporting Chance are contacted, a reference number is required; The reference to be quoted is:*

The surname of the alleged victim with their initial, for allegations that have not yet led to charges. For example: Brown, J.

OR

The surname of the victim and case number where a charge has been raised. For example: Brown, 123456

This service agreement with Sporting Chance will not only provide high quality support to victims but it will also reduce much of the time County Football Associations currently spend on after care matters with victims of discrimination.

However, it is important this runs in tandem with their continued contact with victims to keep them updated, ensuring they are listened to and empathised with throughout the process.



# GRASSROOTS DISCIPLINE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The FA Grassroots Discipline Team have implemented a new Grassroots Discipline Complaints Process for the 2023/24 season. Full details are available from the link below:

## GRASSROOTS DISCIPLINE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The document outlines The FA's commitment to dealing with disciplinary complaints and provides information on how the process will be managed, responded to and how we will reflect upon complaints when reviewing disciplinary procedures.

# FOR



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**FOR ALL**



**TheFA**



**FOR ALL**