



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

FOR MEDIA

2021/22



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INTRODUCTION

The Football Association (The FA) Media Essentials Guide is produced each season to support print, broadcast and online journalists who are responsible for understanding The FA's Rules and Regulations and ensure they report on any incidents accurately for their viewers, readers or listeners.

Detailed background information is available in the form of step-by-step guides and timelines to explain the main on and off-field regulatory and disciplinary processes that football 'participants' could be subject to during the 2021/22 season.

Any implications for English football following updates from FIFA and the International Football Association Board (IFAB) are also outlined throughout.

If you have any questions on these topics during the 2021/22 season, please contact The FA's Media Relations team in the first instance:

Email

Media.Relations@TheFA.com

The FA's Rules and Regulations are available in full via:

www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance

NB: The Media Essentials Guide for the 2021/22 season does not alter or replace The FA's Rules and Regulations, which should be referred to for the comprehensive provisions relating to all disciplinary matters, and is accurate at the date of publication.

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PARTICIPANTS

Any affiliated association; competition; club; club official, which for the avoidance of doubt should include a director; intermediary; player; official; manager; match official; match official observer; match official coach; match official mentor; management committee member; member or employee of a club; and all persons who are from time to time participating in any activity sanctioned either directly or indirectly by The FA are defined as 'participants' in English football.

Any misconduct and breaches of The FA's Rules and Regulations by 'participants' in English football may lead to disciplinary charges and sanctions where appropriate.



THE LAWS OF THE GAME

The 2021/22 Laws of the Game were approved by The International Football Association Board (IFAB) at its 135th annual general meeting and became effective from 1 July 2021 for all friendly matches and competitions. Key changes and amends include:

HANDBALLS:

- Not every contact of the ball with the hand or arm is an offence;
- A player's hand or arm position should be judged in relation to their body movement in that particular situation;
- Accidental handball by a teammate immediately before a goal is no longer an offence;
- Accidental handball that creates a goal-scoring opportunity is also no longer an offence.

OFFSIDES:

- The hands and arms of all players are not to be considered when determining an offside and the upper boundary of the arm is in line with the bottom of the armpit;
- The shoulder is a part of the body that can be used legitimately to score a goal and therefore it must be considered when judging offside.

SUBSTITUTIONS:

- 'Top-level' competitions have the option of allowing teams to use a maximum of five substitutes until 31 December 2022 due to the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Each team can only have three opportunities to make substitutions, although any made at half-time should not be counted as one of these three opportunities;
- The decision on whether to apply this temporary amendment remains at the discretion of each competition organiser.





VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREES

- The use of Video Assistant Referees (VAR) is only permitted where the match/competition organiser has fulfilled all the Implementation Assistance and Approval Programme (IAAP) requirements and received formal permission from FIFA, world football's governing body.

The 2021/22 Laws of the Game are available in full via: www.theifab.com

VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREES

Video Assistant Referees (VAR) will be active in certain rounds of the Emirates FA Cup and Carabao Cup, as well as the Premier League during the 2021/22 season and remain limited to the following four categories of match-changing decisions or incidents:

GOALS:

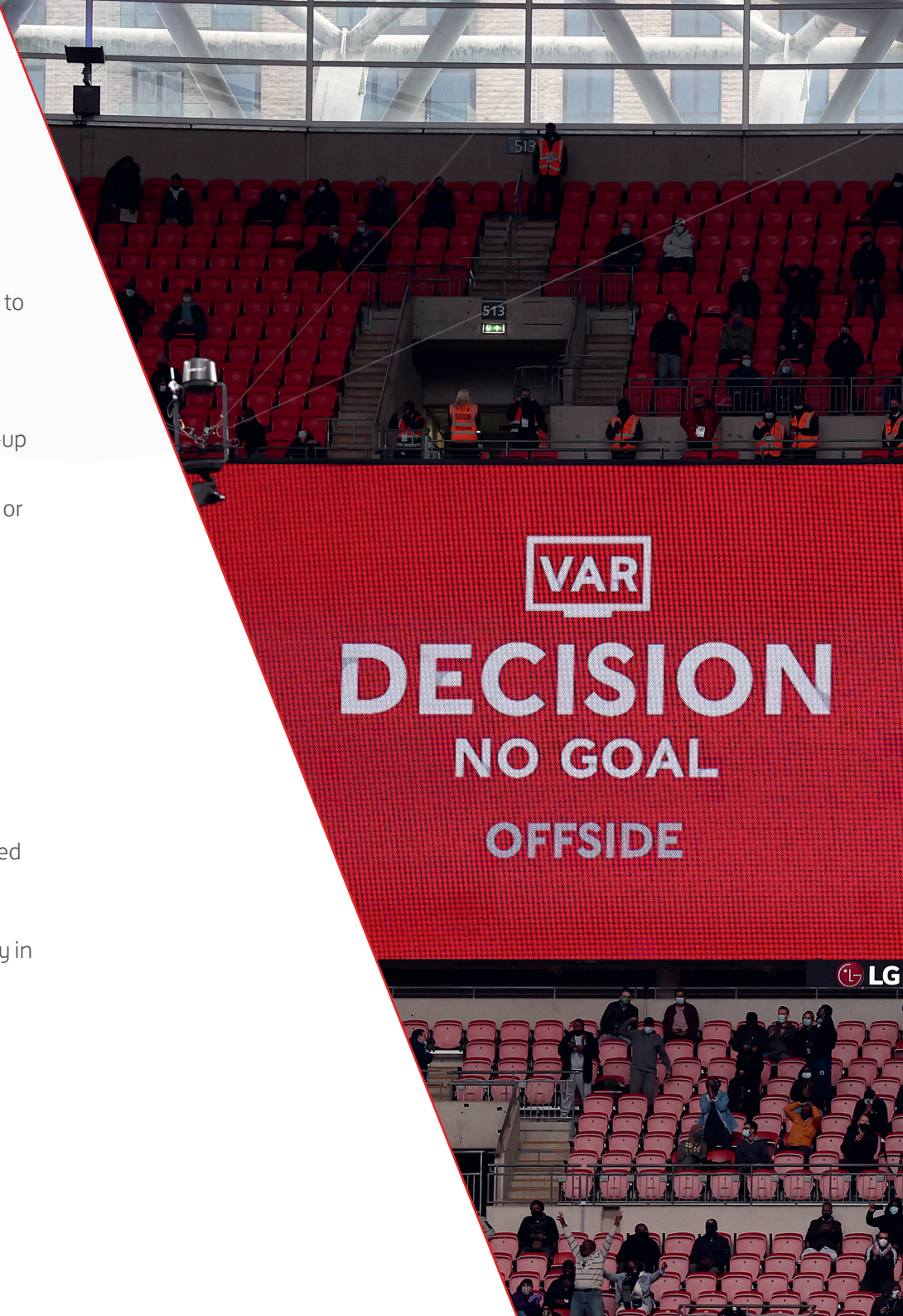
- VAR can review whether an offence has been made by the attacking team in the build-up to a goal;
- Goals can be disallowed subsequently if there is a foul; a player is in an offside position or the ball goes out of play in the build-up.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY:

- A possible mistaken identity in awarding a yellow or red card can be reviewed;
- Either a potential case of mistaken identity is noticed and reviewed by VAR or a match official suspects a potential case of mistaken identity has occurred and instructs for a review to be conducted.

PENALTIES:

- Whether a penalty has been awarded incorrectly or if an offence has not been penalised can be reviewed;
- VAR can review whether a foul has taken place; if an incident has occurred inside or outside the penalty box; a player is in an offside position or the ball has gone out of play in the build-up to a goal.





RED CARDS:

- Reviews are limited to straight red card offences and not second yellow cards;
- Either a straight red card offence that was 'not seen' by the match officials is reviewed by VAR or a match official suspects a potential straight red card offence has been missed and instructs for a review to be conducted.

The 2021/22 VAR protocols are available in full via: www.fifa.com

NB: The possible implications of VAR decisions on The FA's regulatory and disciplinary processes are outlined in respective sections of this guide.

ON-FIELD MATTERS

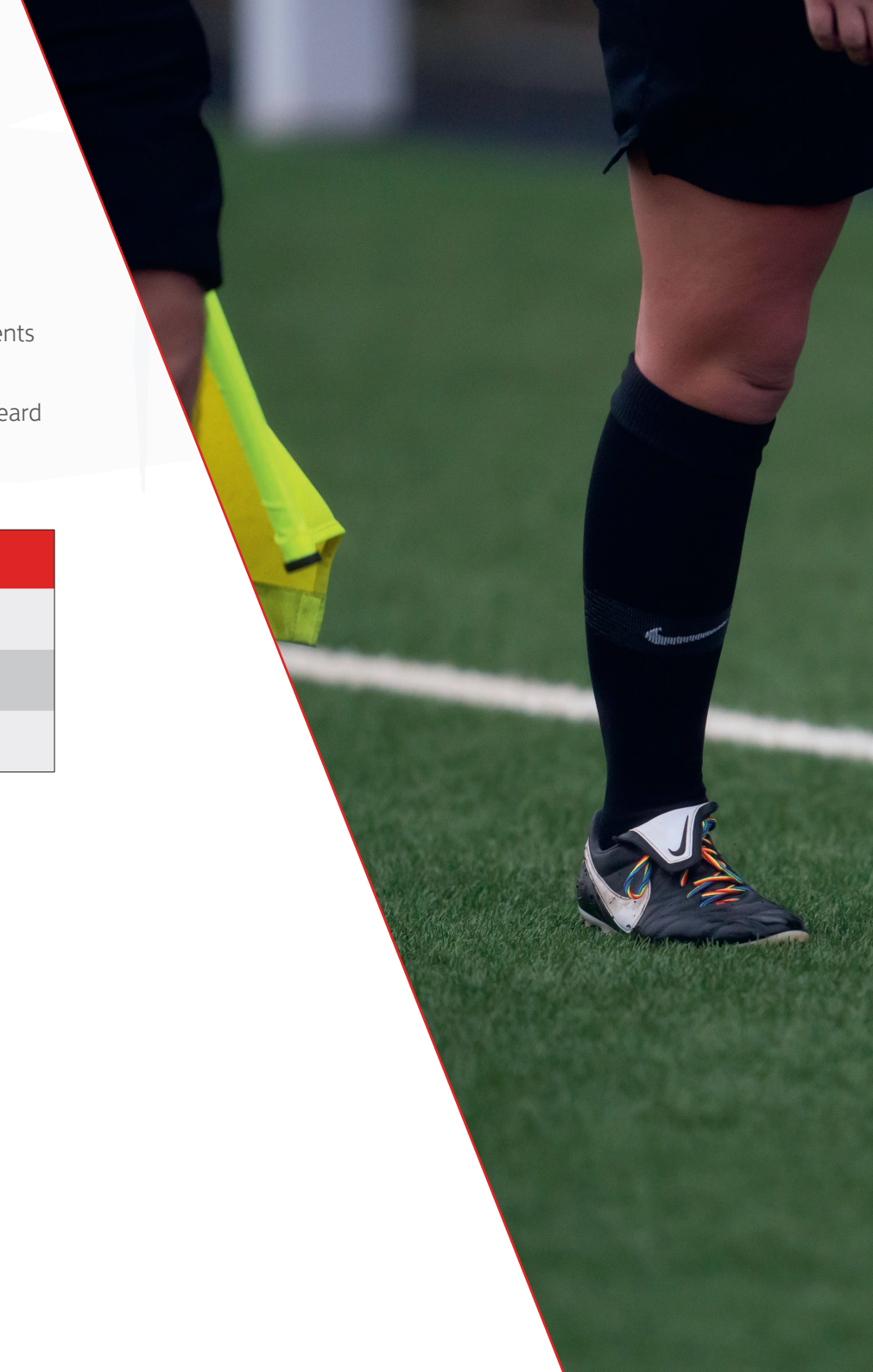
THE FAST-TRACK PROCESS

The FA's 'fast-track' process expedites the timescales of disciplinary proceedings for certain incidents that occur on or around the field of play.

Some cases that are considered under the 'fast-track' process can be investigated, charged and heard before the relevant 'participant' plays in their next competitive match.

The timeline for 'fast-track' cases such as this:

TIMELINE	
Deadline for a charge to be issued:	Within two business days of the incident
Deadline for a reply and supporting evidence:	By close of play on the day following the charge
Deadline for a hearing to take place:	Prior to the team's next competitive match





STANDARD CHARGE V. NON-STANDARD CHARGE

The FA treats most on-field incidents as either a 'standard' case i.e. typical or a 'non-standard' case i.e. more serious or where the 'participant' has committed similar misconduct over a recent period (usually 12-months).

In 'standard' cases, a pre-determined sanction for the type of misconduct is offered with the charge and the 'participant' can accept it without undergoing a Regulatory Commission hearing. Early admission of standard charges can also lead to a reduced penalty.

A 'participant' can also admit a 'standard' charge without accepting its pre-determined sanction if it is felt to be disproportionately harsh. A Regulatory Commission would then go on to consider written documentation in relation to the case in what is known as a 'paper hearing'.

If a 'standard' charge is denied, and the pre-determined sanction not accepted, the 'participant' can choose either a paper or personal hearing involving a Regulatory Commission. The sanction will likely be higher if the case is subsequently found to be proven.

In 'non-standard' cases, no pre-determined sanction is offered with the charge. A Regulatory Commission will go on to consider the case and any penalty ultimately imposed for proven or admitted charges will be solely at its discretion.

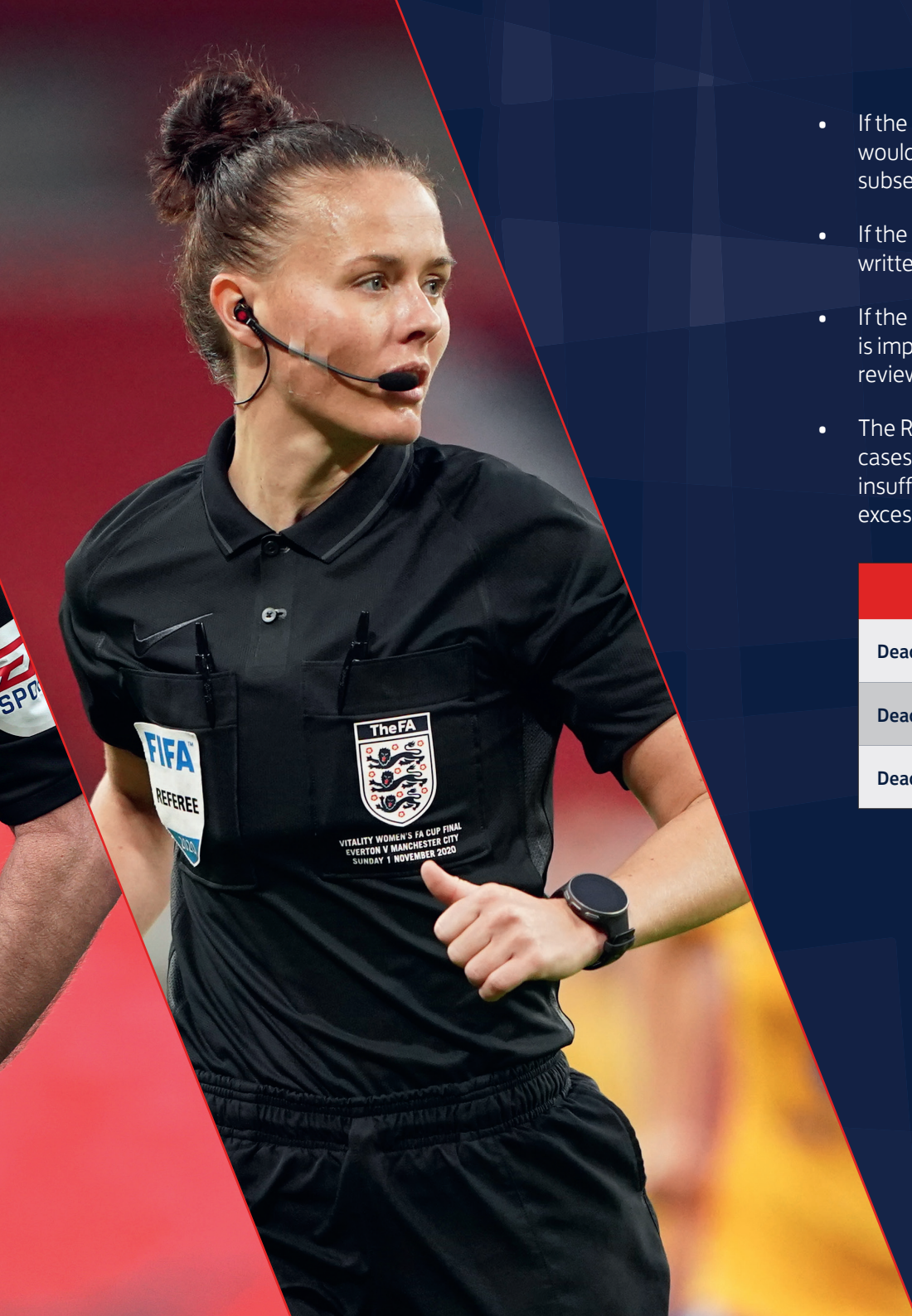
RETROSPECTIVE ACTION

The FA can take retrospective disciplinary action if video evidence clearly shows that a player has committed a dismissal offence that was 'not seen' by the match officials or reviewed by the VAR.

PROCESS:

- The FA can become aware of such an incident in a variety of ways;
- A match referee may file an extraordinary incident report detailing that an incident was 'not seen' by the match officials or reviewed by the VAR;
- The FA will ask the match referee whether they or any of the match officials saw the incident before considering whether to initiate proceedings for retrospective action;
- If a VAR was active, the match referee or the VAR are also be asked whether the incident was reviewed;
- If it is confirmed that the specific act of misconduct was seen or reviewed, then no further action is taken in almost all cases;
- If it is confirmed that the specific act of misconduct was not seen or reviewed, a panel of three ex-professional match officials is convened and asked to review all the available video footage independently;
- A charge will only be issued in circumstances where the panel is unanimous and the player in question then asked whether they admit or deny it;





- If the charge is admitted, an automatic suspension is imposed to mirror the penalty that would have been applied if the incident had been seen or reviewed at the time and the player subsequently dismissed;
- If the charge is denied, the case goes before a Regulatory Commission where video and/or written evidence can be submitted;
- If the Regulatory Commission agrees that it was a dismissal offence, an automatic suspension is imposed to mirror the penalty that would have been applied if the incident had been seen or reviewed at the time and the player subsequently dismissed;
- The Regulatory Commission may also increase or decrease the suspension in exceptional cases where either The FA has submitted that the standard punishment would be 'clearly insufficient' or the player has submitted that the standard punishment would be 'clearly excessive'.

TIMELINE

Deadline for a charge to be issued:	Within two working days of the incident
Deadline for a reply and supporting evidence:	By close of play on the day following the charge
Deadline for a hearing to take place:	Prior to the player's next competitive match

SUCCESSFUL DECEPTION OF A MATCH OFFICIAL

The FA can take retrospective disciplinary action in situations when a match official may have been deceived by simulation and/or feigning an injury that result directly in:

- The offending player's team being awarded a penalty;
- An opposing player being dismissed from the pitch.

This power is not utilised for debatable decisions but only where there was overwhelming evidence to suggest that a player intentionally deceived a match official.

PROCESS:

- The incident will be referred to a three-person panel consisting of one ex-match official, one ex-manager and one ex-player if The FA believes that there may be a case to answer;
- Each panel member will review the footage independently of the other members;
- A charge will only be issued in circumstances where the panel members are unanimous;
- A player will receive a two-match suspension in accepted and/or proven cases of simulation and/or feigning an injury;
- Attempts to deceive a match official through simulation or feigning an injury are normally cautionable offences for unsporting behaviour. However, the fact that the simulation has succeeded and led to a penalty and/or dismissal justifies a more severe penalty which is also intended to act as a deterrent;





- The case will be heard by a Regulatory Commission if the player contests the charge;
- Only written and/or video evidence will be considered by the Regulatory Commission;
- The Regulatory Commission will also consider whether to rescind a caution or dismissal that was received by an opposing player where a charge is found proven.

TIMELINE

Deadline for a charge to be issued:	Within two business days of the incident
Deadline for the player's reply and evidence:	By close of play on the day following the charge
Deadline for a hearing to take place:	Prior to the player's next competitive match

SURROUNDING MATCH OFFICIALS

Match officials are responsible for reporting any incident 'where two or more players of a club approach a match official in a confrontational manner'. In general, The FA will only investigate if such a report is received but it reserves the right to do so regardless.

The offending club, rather than its players, would be sanctioned in the event of a charge and any similar offences within the previous 12 months can result in an increased penalty.

PROCESS:

- A match official reports such an incident to The FA;
- This could lead to a charge, warning or no further action taken depending on the seriousness and circumstances of the incident;
- These charges can be treated as either standard or non-standard.

TIMELINE	
Deadline for a charge to be issued:	Within three business days of the incident
Deadline for the club's reply and evidence:	By close of play on the third day following the charge
Deadline for The FA's response to the reply:	By close of play on the third day following the club's reply
Deadline for a hearing to take place:	At the earliest opportunity but no later than 10 days after The FA's response to the club's reply





MASS CONFRONTATIONS

Match officials are responsible for reporting a 'mass confrontation' incident where two or more players or club officials are involved in a confrontation with opposing players or club officials. In general, The FA will only investigate if such a report is received but it reserves the right to do so regardless.

The offending clubs, rather than their players or officials, will be sanctioned in the event of a charge and any similar offences within the previous 12 months can result in an increased penalty.

PROCESS:

- A match official reports a 'mass confrontation' incident to The FA;
- This could lead to a charge, warning or no further action taken depending on the seriousness and circumstances of the incident;
- These charges can be treated as either 'standard' or 'non-standard'.

TIMELINE	
Deadline for a charge to be issued:	Within three business days of the incident
Deadline for the club's reply and evidence:	By close of play on the third day following the charge
Deadline for The FA's response to the reply:	By close of play on the third day following the club's reply
Deadline for a hearing to take place:	At the earliest opportunity but no later than 10 days after The FA's response to the club's reply

TECHNICAL AREA MISCONDUCT

All technical area occupants are bound by a code of conduct that aims to maintain a positive environment for everyone involved and protect the image of the game.

The match officials are responsible for implementing the code and reporting any unacceptable behaviours to The FA. Match officials can also issue technical area occupants with yellow and red cards for cautions and dismissals respectively in the following competitions:

- Premier League;
- English Football League (EFL);
- Vanarama National League;
- Emirates FA Cup;
- Carabao Cup;
- Papa John's Trophy;
- Buildbase FA Trophy;
- Barclays FA Women's Super League (WSL);
- The FA Women's Championship;
- Vitality Women's FA Cup;
- The FA Women's Continental League Cup.

The yellow or red card will be given to the respective team's senior manager or coach in the technical area if the offender cannot be identified.

Technical area occupants also receive automatic and immediate touchline bans for the accumulation of cautions if they reach the following thresholds:

NUMBER OF CAUTIONS	SUSPENSION
Four	One match
Eight	Two matches
12	Three matches
16	Misconduct charge and Regulatory Commission

N.B. The Final of the Emirates FA Cup and play-off matches in the EFL and Vanarama National League are exempt from any automatic touchline ban for the accumulation of cautions by technical area occupants.





PROCESS:

- If an individual is dismissed from the technical area, they must immediately leave the touchline and take a position in the directors' box or a designated approved area;
 - Individuals dismissed from the technical area in the Vanarama National League are not permitted to observe the remainder of the game;
- The match official subsequently reports the incident to The FA and this could also lead to a charge, warning, reminder of responsibilities or no further action taken depending on the seriousness and circumstances of the incident;
- These charges can be treated as either 'standard' or 'non-standard'.

TIMELINE

Deadline for a charge to be issued:	Within three business days of the incident
Deadline for the club's reply and evidence:	By close of play on the third day following the charge
Deadline for The FA's response to the reply:	By close of play on the third day following the club's reply
Deadline for a hearing to take place:	At the earliest opportunity but no later than 10 days after The FA's response to the club's reply

TOUCHLINE BANS

A touchline ban can be imposed by a Regulatory Commission for technical area misconduct and the following restrictions apply:

- The individual must be away from the technical area and is not permitted to sit in or behind the area of the dugout, any barrier adjacent to the touchline or goal line;
- The individual may only communicate with those in the dugout by either phone or a runner;
- The individual can communicate with the team in the changing room prior to the game and at half-time unless an extended touchline ban has been imposed;
- An extended touchline ban can be imposed by a Regulatory Commission if misconduct is deemed serious enough to warrant further measures;
- The individual cannot communicate with the team from 30 minutes prior to the game until 30 minutes after the game if an extended touchline ban is imposed.





STADIUM OR GROUND BANS

A stadium or ground ban can be imposed by a Regulatory Commission for technical area misconduct and the following restrictions apply:

- The individual cannot enter the ground or stadium that their team are playing at on a match day;
- The individual cannot enter or use any facilities on the site of the stadium or ground that their team are playing at on a match day;
- The individual cannot take any position immediately outside the perimeter of the stadium or ground that would give them a direct view of the pitch;
- Any breach of the terms of a ban may result in further disciplinary proceedings.

INCIDENTS OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF MATCH OFFICIALS

Certain incidents can fall outside the jurisdiction of the match officials and lead to 'fast-track' charges being issued. Examples include:

- An individual committing an act of misconduct or refusing to leave the pitch following a dismissal;
- Two dismissal offences occurring before a red card is shown;
- An individual committing an act of misconduct after the match has ended and the match referee has left the pitch.

TIMELINE

Deadline for a charge to be issued:	Within three business days of the incident
Deadline for the club's reply and evidence:	By close of play on the third day following the charge
Deadline for The FA's response to the reply:	By close of play on the third day following the club's reply
Deadline for a hearing to take place:	At the earliest opportunity but no later than 10 days after The FA's response to the club's reply





CLAIMS OF WRONGFUL DISMISSAL

A player's suspension for a straight red card can be removed by a Regulatory Commission if their club can prove that the decision was an 'obvious error' by the match official/s.

PROCESS:

- The player's club must notify The FA of its intention to submit a claim of 'wrongful dismissal' by 13:00 on the first business day following the game;
- The player's club must submit any evidence to support the claim of 'wrongful dismissal' by 13:00 on the second business day following the game;
- A Regulatory Commission will hear the case and the onus is on the player's club to demonstrate – via written and/or video evidence only – that the match official/s made an 'obvious error' in dismissing the player;
- In incidents involving VAR, the player's club must demonstrate – via written and/or video evidence only – that the match referee's decision was an 'obvious error' following involvement of the VAR;
- The Regulatory Commission will decide whether the claim of 'wrongful dismissal' will be rejected, and the player's suspension remains, or is upheld and the player's suspension is withdrawn with immediate effect;
- The Regulatory Commission will go on to consider whether the player's punishment should be increased if the claim of 'wrongful dismissal' is rejected;
- The Regulatory Commission also has the discretion to increase the punishment by up to twice the standard amount with immediate effect if it considers that the rejected claim 'had no prospect of success' and/or 'amounts to an abuse of the process';
- Where there are no, or insufficient, working days between fixtures there are further expedited timeframes to ensure the claim of 'wrongful dismissal' is heard before the next applicable fixture. In or around Boxing Day or New Year's Day are key examples.

NB: A club can lodge a claim of 'wrongful dismissal' at the same time as a claim of 'clearly excessive' punishment.

CLAIMS OF CLEARLY EXCESSIVE PUNISHMENT

Clubs may also attempt to limit the sanction for a player's straight red card if they can prove that the standard punishment is 'clearly excessive' for the offence that was committed.

PROCESS:

- The player's club must notify The FA of its intention to submit a claim of 'clearly excessive' punishment by 13:00 on the first business day following the game;
- The player's club must submit any evidence to support the claim of 'clearly excessive' punishment by 13:00 on the second business day following the game;
- A Regulatory Commission will hear the case and its only consideration will be whether it is clear and obvious that the standard punishment should not be imposed due to truly exceptional circumstances;
- The Regulatory Commission will go on to decide the player's new punishment if the club's claim is successful;
- At least a one-game suspension will be enforced as only a claim of 'wrongful dismissal' can achieve the full withdrawal of a player's suspension;
- The Regulatory Commission will go on to consider whether the player's punishment should be increased if the club's claim is rejected;
- The Regulatory Commission has the discretion to increase the punishment by up to twice the standard amount with immediate effect if it considers that the rejected claim 'had no prospect of success' and/or 'amounts to an abuse of the process'.

N.B. A club can lodge a claim of 'wrongful dismissal' at the same time as a claim of 'clearly excessive' punishment.





CLAIMS OF CLEARLY INSUFFICIENT PUNISHMENT

The FA may seek to increase the consequences of a dismissal offence if it is 'truly exceptional' and can demonstrate that the standard punishment is 'clearly insufficient'.

PROCESS:

- The FA must notify the player's club of its intention to lodge a claim of 'clearly insufficient' punishment by 13:00 on the second business day following the game;
- The club has until 18:00 on the second business day following the claim to submit any evidence supporting their reply to the claim by The FA;
- A Regulatory Commission will hear the case and its only consideration will be whether the standard punishment should clearly and obviously not be imposed in view of the exceptional facts of the case due to truly exceptional circumstances;
- The player would serve the standard punishment if the Regulatory Commission decided to reject The FA's claim;
- The Regulatory Commission will go on to decide the player's new punishment if The FA's claim is successful.

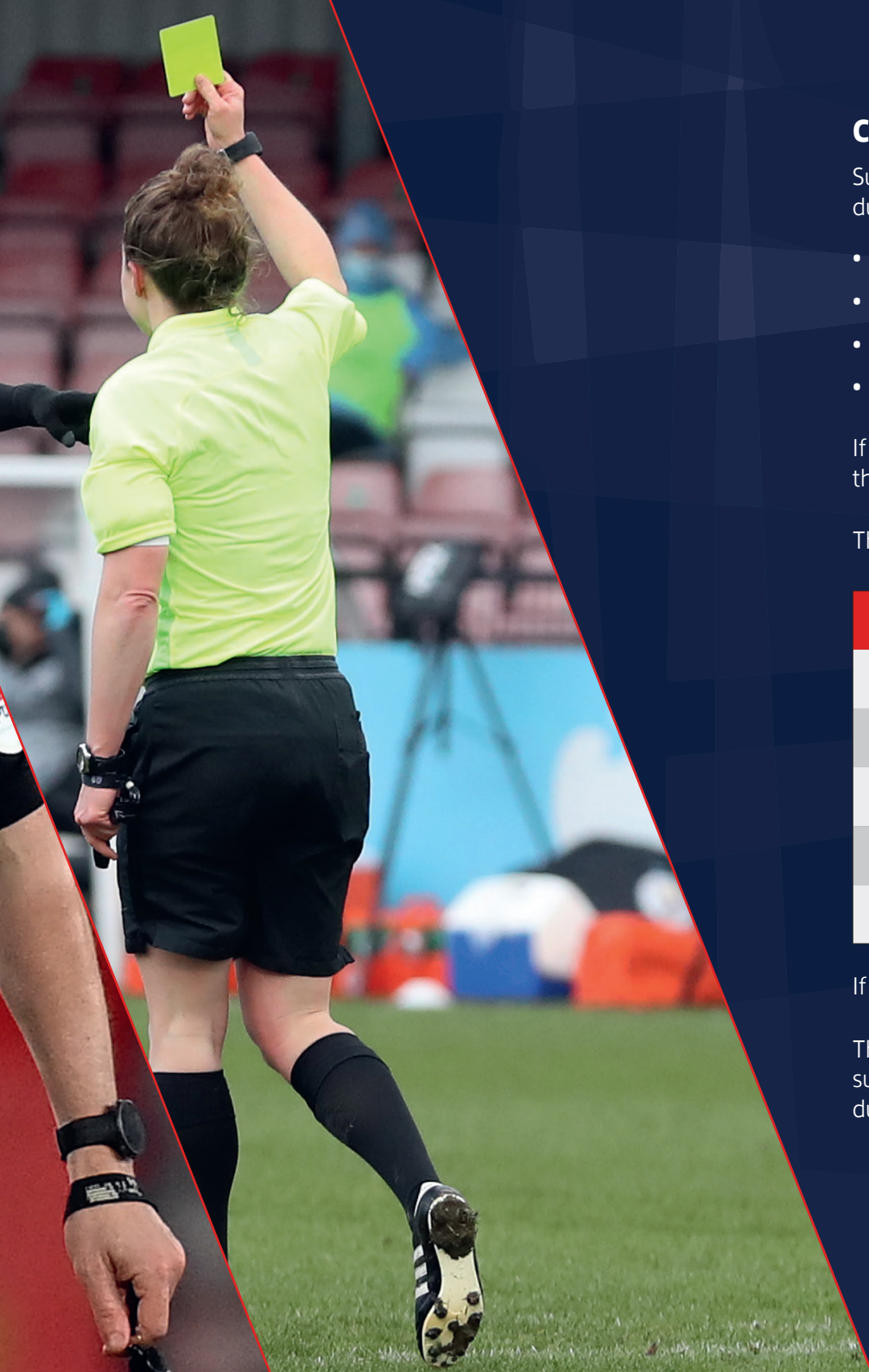
CLAIMS OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

A claim of 'mistaken identity' can be submitted if a player believes that they have been cautioned or dismissed incorrectly because another player committed the offence in question.

PROCESS:

- A player's club must notify The FA of its intention to lodge a claim of 'mistaken identity' by 13:00 on the first business day following the game;
- The player's club must submit any evidence to support the claim of 'mistaken identity' by 13:00 on the second business day following the game;
- A Regulatory Commission will hear the case and either uphold or dismiss the claim before any suspension would be served;
- The Regulatory Commission will go on to consider whether the player's punishment should be increased if the claim is dismissed;
- The Regulatory Commission has the discretion to increase the punishment by up to twice the standard amount with immediate effect if it considers that the dismissed claim 'had no prospect of success' and/or 'amounts to an abuse of the process';
- The standard punishment will be transferred to the appropriate player if the claim is upheld;
- The FA reserves the right to request a Regulatory Commission to review an incident where evidence clearly shows a case of 'mistaken identity' but a club does not submit a claim;
- A club can also be charged with misconduct if there is evidence that it sought to gain an advantage by not submitting a claim of 'mistaken identity'.





CAUTIONS

Suspensions for the accumulation of yellow cards by players will remain ‘competition-specific’ during the 2021/22 season for fixtures in the following leagues, cups and trophy:

- Premier League;
- EFL;
- Vanarama National League;
- Emirates FA Cup;
- Carabao Cup;
- Buildbase FA Trophy;
- Barclays FA WSL;
- The FA Women’s Championship.

If a player receives two yellow cards in a cup campaign they will be suspended for the next fixture in that competition. However, any single yellow cards are expunged following the quarter-final stages.

The cut-off dates for the accumulation of yellow cards by players in leagues matches are as follows:

NUMBER OF CAUTIONS	CUT OFF DATE (INCLUSIVE)
Five (Premier League and EFL)	19 league fixtures
Five (the Vanarama National League)	23 league fixtures
10 (Premier League)	32 league fixtures
10 (EFL and the Vanarama National League)	37 league fixtures
15 (All leagues)	*End of the season

If a player accumulates 20 cautions during the season they will be charged with misconduct.

The Barclays FA WSL and The FA Women's Championship do not have cut-off dates. Automatic suspensions for players that accumulate five, 10, 15 or more cautions will take effect at any stage during the season.

**This applies to the last day of the relevant league's season and before its play-off matches.*

SUSPENSIONS

All automatic suspensions are served immediately in the category of match in which they were received. For example, any player sent off in a first-team competitive match would only be able to play in reserve team matches throughout their suspension.

Typical offences and their corresponding automatic suspensions include:

DISMISSAL OFFENCE	AUTOMATIC SUSPENSION
A second yellow card	One match
Denying a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity	One match
Using offensive, insulting or abusive language or gestures	Two matches
Violent conduct or serious foul play	Three matches
Spitting	Six matches
Five yellow cards within the cut-off date	One match
10 cautions within the cut-off date	Two matches
15 cautions within the cut-off date	Three matches

Any player that accumulates 20 yellow cards during the season will be charged with misconduct.

Players that are dismissed for a second time in a season will receive a one-match ban in addition to the automatic suspension for their offence. Players that are dismissed for a third time will receive two additional matches; a fourth time will receive three additional matches, etc.





CROWD MANAGEMENT

Any disciplinary action for crowd management issues such as discriminatory behaviour, missile throwing or incursions onto the pitch is taken against the relevant club/s as The FA does not have jurisdiction over individual spectators, unless they are also 'participants' in football.

PROCESS:

- The FA investigates almost all crowd management issues at fixtures;
- The FA's investigations usually involve seeking observations from the club/s concerned and agencies such as the Police;
- The FA works closely with the club/s and any agencies to ensure that those responsible are identified, dealt with appropriately by the club/s and the criminal courts where appropriate;
- Disciplinary charges may follow if The FA's investigations conclude that the club/s did not do enough to prevent and/or deal with the misconduct of spectators.

N.B. Further information in relation to discriminatory behaviour by crowds is on the following pages.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The FA stands firmly against all forms of discrimination. One of its strategic objectives over the next three years is to use its influence to deliver a game free from discriminatory behaviour.

The organisation is striving to ensure our national sport is a safe environment for all, which truly embraces diversity and inclusion and challenges hateful conduct both on and off the pitch.

In 2018, The FA launched its three-year equality, diversity and inclusion plan, In Pursuit of Progress. It set clear and ambitious targets to drive meaningful change within the organisation and across the game, focusing on initiatives to promote equality and increase the diversity of those playing, officiating, coaching, leading and governing English football.

This has been a key part of The FA's work towards tackling discrimination at all levels and ensuring opportunities are accessible for all. Highlights include:

- Increased ethnic and gender diversity amongst The FA's leadership, while reducing its gender pay gap, and voluntarily publishing its ethnicity pay gap;
- Expansion of the Elite Coach Placement Programme into the women's game, while exceeding ethnicity and gender targets set for England coaching staff;
- Growth in disability football participation, with continued investment into the Disability Workforce Fund and 100 disability-specific recreation centres now operating;
- Introduction of an industry-first regional Code of Governance, with provisions for gender diversity, ethnic diversity and youth representation across the County FA network;
- Creation of the Football Leadership Diversity Code, which has over 50 signatories, aiming to improve transparency in recruitment across the game and increase ethnic minority and female representation across senior leadership positions, team operations and coaching roles.





A review of In Pursuit of Progress, as well as details of The FA's next equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, will be published later in 2021.

The FA also continues to be proactive in tackling online discriminatory abuse, having led English football's social media boycott from 30 April to 03 May 2021, which was joined by sporting organisations, governing bodies and high-profile individuals across the UK and Europe. Factored into this is the organisation's continued lobbying of government on the Online Safety Bill, as well as consistently urging social media companies to act faster to tackle hate on their platforms. The FA will not stop challenging this issue until tangible changes are made and users are better protected from abuse.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

Anti-discrimination has played a key role throughout In Pursuit of Progress with stricter regulations, new reporting mechanisms and tougher sanctions all having been introduced in recent seasons.

'Participants' and spectators who believe that they have been subject or witness to discriminatory abuse are actively encouraged to report it through the appropriate channels: The FA; the County FA network; or key partners such as Kick It Out. All allegations will be investigated thoroughly.

New charging policies and sanctioning guidelines for an act of discriminatory behaviour by individual 'participants' and spectators were published ahead of the 2020/21 season. They were published after a detailed consultation process with focus groups and stakeholders such as Kick It Out, the PFA, the LMA and various representatives from clubs and leagues.

An alleged incident of discriminatory behaviour by an individual 'participant' in private or outside of a standard football setting is no longer a barrier to The FA issuing proceedings and it was agreed by football's stakeholders that such measures are appropriate.

Match-based sanctions of six to 12 games are recommended to Regulatory Commissions for almost all 'aggravated breaches' of FA Rule E3 that are a first offence by individual 'participants'. A range provides greater scope for cases to be sanctioned appropriately and consistently based on their individual circumstances and seriousness.

The sanctioning guidelines also allow Regulatory Commissions to apply a match-based sanction below this standard range where an offence is 'in writing only or via any communication device' and another specific mitigating factor is present to ensure fair outcomes. However, any decision must be in the best interests of anti-discrimination in football and the absolute minimum sanction in such cases will be three games.





A Regulatory Commission will impose any sanction that it considers to be appropriate if a match-based sanction cannot be applied due to the role of a 'participant' and impose mandatory education courses as part of all sanctions for 'aggravated breaches' by 'participants'.

In cases where there is clear evidence of discriminatory chanting by supporters, The FA will act against the relevant club/s and recommend that a Regulatory Commission imposes an action plan for a first offence. While a range of financial penalties are possible, action plans implement practical and measurable improvements to matchday operations that can come at a significant financial cost to offending clubs. Any subsequent offences will be treated with the utmost seriousness. Partial or full stadium closures and financial penalties will always be considered but Regulatory Commissions can impose any sanctions they deem appropriate in such circumstances.

The FA continues to support any player who wishes to take a stand against discriminatory behaviour in a respectful manner. A minority of spectators continue to boo those who take the knee ahead of fixtures and we thank those who move to drown out this booing with applause. We will always condemn the behaviours of anyone who chooses to actively oppose these values and we would encourage those who boo the gesture in this context to reflect on the message they are sending to the players they are supporting. We continue to work with the appropriate bodies to ensure that supporters are dealt with if they are deemed to behave in an actively discriminatory manner and would look to take further action against those individuals if necessary.

OFF-FIELD MATTERS

MEDIA COMMENTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

The FA's Rules and Regulations are designed to strike a balance between allowing 'participants' freedom of speech while protecting the integrity and reputation of the game. However, if comments in the media or on social media are deemed to breach FA Rule E3.1 The FA may consider charges.

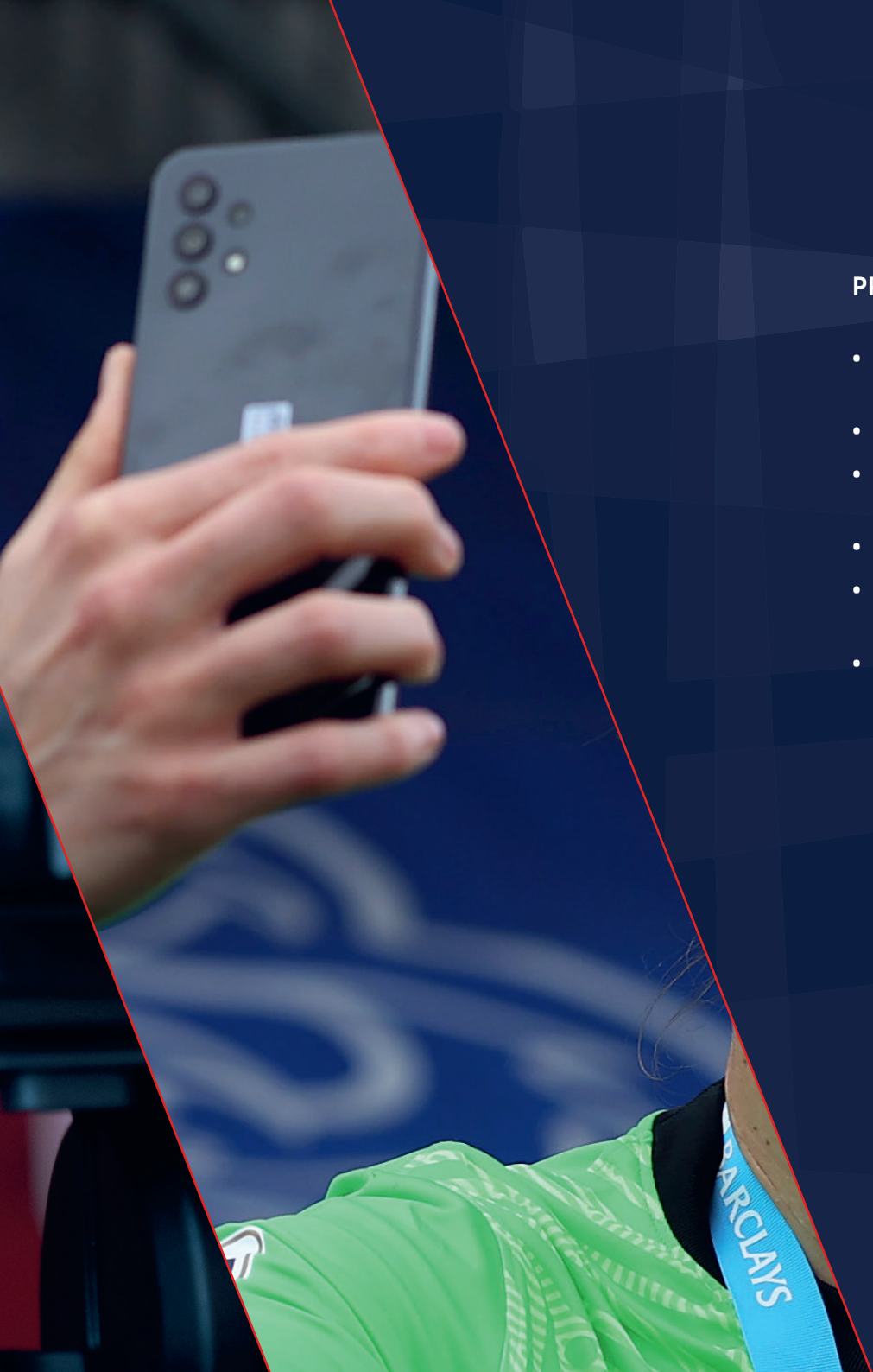
FA Rule E3.1 states: 'A participant shall at all times act in the best interests of the game and not act in any manner which is improper or brings the game into disrepute or use any one, or a combination of violent conduct, serious foul play, threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting words or behaviour'.

A typical example would be comments made either pre or post-match in the media or on social media that relate specifically to a match official who has been appointed for a particular fixture.

Any pre-match comments in the media or on social media concerning an appointed match official, whether they are identified by name or implication, will be treated as a breach of FA Rule E3.1.

Any post-match comments in the media or on social media that criticise the performance or competence of a match official are permitted unless they imply bias; attack their integrity; are personally offensive; prolonged; or particularly unreasonable. The FA will: issue a charge or formal warning; remind them of their responsibilities or take no further action depending on the seriousness of the incident or track record of the 'participant'.





PROCESS:

- The FA may charge or contact the 'participant' to seek their written observations within three business days of being made aware of the comments in the media or on social media;
- The 'participant' will have three business days to provide any observations if requested;
- The FA will then have three further business days to decide whether to issue any charge; a formal warning; remind them of their responsibilities or take no further action;
- The 'participant' will have three further business days to reply if a charge is issued;
- A Regulatory Commission hearing will take place within 10 business days of the reply by the 'participant';
- The Regulatory Commission will decide an appropriate sanction if required as there are no set sanctions for breaches of FA Rule E3.1 for media comments or social media activity.

INTEGRITY

The FA is committed to ensuring that the integrity of football is maintained in partnership with the whole game and stakeholders from other industries.

Its dedicated Integrity team supports 'participants' to understand and follow the Rules and Regulations but also undertakes investigations into any alleged breaches and provides evidence where there is a case to answer.

Education is a key focus of the team's overall approach and regular club visits, educational films, literature and a 'player essentials' app are provided alongside materials from the PFA, leagues and partners in relation to betting, inside information, match-fixing, anti-doping and media activities.

If a 'participant' is approached to bet, accept a bribe, share inside information, influence an event, fix the outcome of a game or competition, or becomes aware of possible breaches of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Code or The FA's Anti-Doping Regulations they are obliged to report it to The FA.

Dedicated, anonymous reporting lines are available via **0208 795 9640** or Integrity@TheFA.com





BETTING

All 'participants' involved with clubs in the Premier League, EFL, Barclays FA WSL, The FA Women's Championship and National League System are prohibited from betting on any football or football-related activity by The FA's Rules and Regulations.

The simple and straightforward message is that 'all bets are off' and this includes gambling on matches, match events, competitions, manager markets, players transfers and novelties. The FA reinforced this message by ending its commercial betting partnerships in 2017.

The FA's Integrity team work closely with statutory bodies and law enforcement agencies and shares data with betting operators to ensure a bespoke intelligence handling system. In addition, The FA ensures all markets on English football are monitored to identify any suspicious activity.

Investigations into any unusual betting patterns are also supported by partnerships with the Gambling Commission's Sports Betting Integrity Unit and UK betting operators, as well as having representation on the national Sports Betting Group and the Sports Betting Integrity Forum.

INSIDE INFORMATION

Inside information in English football is defined as a 'participant' having knowledge about a club activity due to their position in the game that is not publicly available. Examples can include a team member's injury status or team selection ahead of an upcoming fixture.

It is prohibited for 'participants' involved with clubs in the Premier League, EFL, Barclays FA WSL, The FA Women's Championship and National League System to pass inside information for the purpose of either betting or instructing someone else to bet on their behalf.

Even if a 'participant' was unaware that the information might be used to place a bet it is still treated as a serious breach of The FA's Rules and Regulations.





MATCH-FIXING

All 'participants' are prohibited from seeking to influence the result, progress, conduct or any other incident in a match or competition for an improper purpose. This is to prevent any attempt to fix not just a result but spot-fixing of any incidents that can occur in or around a fixture or competition.

If a 'participant' is approached to get involved in match or spot-fixing but doesn't report it then that could also be a serious breach of The FA's Rules and Regulations.

ANTI-DOPING

Although the use of performance-enhancing or recreational drugs in English football is rare, The FA takes anti-doping extremely seriously and is fully compliant with the National Anti-Doping Policy published by the UK Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport in April 2021.

All 'participants' are made aware of their responsibilities in relation to the WADA Code and The FA's Anti-Doping Regulations, as they are strictly liable for any breaches. The FA funds one of sport's most comprehensive anti-doping programmes and inputs into testing directed by UK Anti-Doping (UKAD).

While current practices are some of the best in the world, the anti-doping programme is constantly reviewed and improvements are made wherever possible. Key aspects include:

TESTING

- Targeted, researched and intelligence-led drug testing is undertaken across the England men's, women's and development teams, as well as clubs in the Premier League, EFL, Barclays FA WSL and The FA Women's Championship;
- Players are subject to blood and urine drug testing, including an Athlete Biological Passport programme;
- 'In-competition' drug testing is carried out on a matchday immediately after a game;
- 'Out-of-competition' drug testing is carried out on a non-matchday. For example, at a club's training ground or at a player's home address. However, a player can be tested anywhere and at any time on a 'no advance notice' basis, regardless of whether they have or haven't been absent from training that day;
- Most banned substances on WADA's Prohibited List are detectable in urine, while some might not be in blood. The FA works closely with UKAD to ensure as effective a drug testing programme as possible and the split between blood and urine tests is reviewed each year;
- UKAD employs a flexible approach to decide upon testing at each event depending upon any specific perceived doping risk.

ADVERSE ANALYTICAL FINDINGS

- An 'adverse analytical finding' in a player's sample, which is otherwise known as a positive test, does not automatically lead to an 'anti-doping rule violation' and a suspension.





SUSPENSIONS

- If a player commits one or more of the following anti-doping rule violations it could lead to a suspension from the game:
 - **Presence** – the presence of a prohibited substance or its metabolites or markers in a player's sample;
 - **Use** – use or attempted use by an athlete of a prohibited substance or a prohibited method;
 - **Evasion, Refusal or Failure** – evading, refusing, or failing to submit to sample collection;
 - **Tampering or Attempted Tampering** – tampering or attempted tampering with any part of doping control. This includes engaging in fraudulent conduct e.g. submitting falsified documents to an anti-doping organisation or asking a witness to lie in their witness statement;
 - **Possession** – possession of a prohibited substance or prohibited method;
 - **Trafficking** – trafficking or attempted trafficking in any prohibited substance or prohibited method;
 - **Administering or Attempted Administration** – administration or attempted administration to any player of any prohibited substance or prohibited method;
 - **Complicity or Attempted Complicity** – are complicit in helping someone commit an anti-doping rule violation or avoid detection;
 - **Prohibited Association** – associating in a professional or sport-related capacity with a person such as a coach, doctor, physio or trainer who is serving a ban or who has been found guilty of a criminal or disciplinary offence equivalent to a doping violation;
 - **Acts to Discourage or Retaliate Against Reporting to Authorities** – acts that threaten or seek to intimidate another to discourage them from sharing information about doping (also referred to as whistleblowing) or retaliating against another for doing so;
 - **Whereabouts** – failure to notify The FA in advance that they are not going to be at training, are leaving early, arriving late or failure to provide a one-hour time slot for that day when they will be available at their home address to be tested.

WHEREABOUTS

- If a player is not going to be at training, is leaving early, or arriving late, they must notify The FA in advance and provide a one-hour time slot for that day when they will be available at their home address to be tested. Any player that fails to adhere to these requirements may incur a missed test 'strike' and three 'strikes' within a 12-month rolling period would trigger a suspension from football for at least 12 months.

SUBSTANCES OF ABUSE

- The 2021 WADA Code introduced 'substances of abuse' as those 'prohibited substances which are specifically identified on the Prohibited List because they are frequently abused in society outside of the context of sport';
- Cocaine, heroin, ecstasy and cannabis are designated as 'substances of abuse' under the Anti-Doping Regulations and if an athlete can demonstrate that their use was out-of-competition and unrelated to sport performance following an 'adverse analytical finding' detected in-competition, any suspension will be three months and may be reduced to one if they complete a treatment programme.

PUBLICATION

- The FA does not discuss or disclose the details of its testing programmes or specific 'adverse analytical findings' and will only publish the outcomes relating to specific cases once any and all appeals have been exhausted and a suspension is in place.





SOCIAL DRUGS

The FA's Social Drugs Regulations are in place voluntarily and separately from the WADA Code, with social drugs prohibited at all times within football.

From the 2021/22 season, The FA's social drugs programme will be run independently from its anti-doping programme and have a renewed focus on education and rehabilitation. Key changes include:

TESTING

- Hair testing will be the primary method of sample collection and this will lead to both a faster collection process and increased detection window;
- Urine testing may be collected on occasion as a secondary method of sample collection;
- Testing numbers will be spread more evenly across the professional leagues.

SANCTIONS

- For a first offence, a player will receive a warning, fine and have to undergo a mandatory course of education and/or counselling/treatment;
- For a second or subsequent offence, a player will receive a three-month suspension that can be reduced to one-month if the player agrees to complete a course of education and/or counselling/treatment, mirroring the WADA Code's new 'substances of abuse' provision;
- For refusing to be tested, or evading sample collection, a suspension in the range of four to 12 months will be imposed.

INTERMEDIARIES

Any individual or company that would like to carry out 'intermediary' activity on behalf of a football player or club in England must:

- Be registered by The FA;
- Complete a 'test of good character and reputation';
- Pay a registration fee.

FIFA has announced a number of proposed reforms in relation to 'intermediaries', which aim to 'improve transparency, protect player welfare, enhance contractual stability and also raise professional and ethical standards', and they are being developed into formal regulations.


The FA's **Regulations on Working with Intermediaries** (The Regulations) already go beyond the minimum criteria set within FIFA's current **Regulations on Working with Intermediaries**. For example, there are additional provisions for anyone that wishes to represent minors (under 18s) that include:

- They must provide an authorised DBS Check;
- They are not permitted to make any approach to, or enter into any agreement with, a player before the 1 January in the year of their sixteenth birthday.

The FA also operates a 'clearing house' system, which mandates that every payment made by a club to an 'intermediary' or an overseas club in relation to a player transfer is made via The FA. It is the first and only National Association in the world to currently do so.

NB: This guidance does not alter or replace The Regulations, which should be referred to in all cases for the comprehensive provisions in relation to working with 'intermediaries' in England.





Clubs are required to declare every 'intermediary' involved in a transaction to The FA and checks on this information form part of the player registration process. All representation contracts between 'intermediaries' and players or clubs are also required to be lodged with The FA inside 10 days.

The FA publishes the total fees paid by each club to 'intermediaries' and the details of each transaction involving an 'intermediary' that each club has entered into on an annual basis. The latest list of payments and transactions is available [here](#).

An up-to-date list of all registered 'intermediaries' and any disciplinary sanctions against them from The FA are also available [here](#).

GOVERNING BODY ENDORSEMENTS

Football players and managers from the European Union (EU) do not have the right to work in the United Kingdom (UK) following the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. As a result, football clubs in England are unable to sign them freely.

The FA, Premier League, EFL, Barclays FA WSL and The FA Women's Championship proposed Governing Body Endorsement (GBE) systems for men's and women's football to the UK Government, which were subsequently approved by the Home Office, to agree a number of entry requirements.

Male and female football players from the EU are now required to meet a requisite number of points across the following areas to obtain a GBE automatically:

- Number of international appearances;
- Number of domestic minutes played;
- Number of continental minutes played;
- Final league position of their last club;
- Continental progression of their last club;
- League quality of their last club.

Male and female nationals from outside the UK or Republic of Ireland who do not meet the requisite number of points can also be considered by an Exceptions Panel. Applicants must be able to evidence that there is an exceptional circumstance which prevented them achieving the pass mark. If they are a youth player in the men's game, the club may apply for a GBE to be awarded if the Exceptions Panel can assess that the youth player shows significant potential and is of sufficient quality to enhance the development of the game in England. Please note, the Exceptions Panels will only be available for the summer transfer window in 2021.





The full men's and women's criteria, including points required for football players from outside the UK during the summer transfer window in 2021, are available [here](#).

Men's and women's criteria for GBE applications after the summer transfer window in 2021 will be announced in due course.

REGULATORY COMMISSIONS

If a misconduct charge leads to a Regulatory Commission, The FA's Regulatory Legal department acts as prosecutors at a hearing against the 'participant' in question.

The appointment of a Regulatory Commission to hear a disciplinary case is the responsibility of the Judicial Panel Chair (or nominee) in collaboration with The FA's Judicial Services department.

The Regulatory Commission is made up of three Judicial Panel members who are selected from five distinct pools (with at least one member always being from the Football Panel):

- The Chairs Panel – consisting of suitable personnel from the Council Panel and the Football Panel;
- The Council Panel – consisting of members on The FA Council with appropriate experience;
- The Football Panel – consisting of former players, managers or other independent football people with appropriate experience in the sport that can provide expert opinion;
- The Legal Panel – consisting of junior barristers and solicitors with expertise in sport and/or regulatory matters (all of whom may also sit as a Chairperson);
- The Specialist Panel – generally reserved for complex or unusual cases but consisting of independent barristers or solicitors with seven or more years' standing (all of whom may also sit as a Chairperson).

All Judicial Panel members undergo continual training, education and assessment and anyone with a conflict of interest in a particular case will not be selected. The Judicial Panel Members will assess all the evidence in a case and decide a relevant sanction where necessary.





WHAT DOES THE 'STANDARD OF PROOF' MEAN?

The 'standard of proof' is the civil standard. This means that cases will only be proven if the Regulatory Commission in question is satisfied that the event in question occurred on the 'balance of probabilities'. This civil standard of proof is widely used in civil and regulatory forums, including the civil courts, family courts and professional regulatory bodies. It is applied industry-wide by other National Governing Bodies of sport and is the most appropriate standard for the tribunal-based forum that The FA's cases are determined.

WHAT ARE 'WRITTEN REASONS' AND WHEN ARE THEY PUBLISHED?

'Written reasons' are a detailed record of how a Regulatory Commission reached a particular decision. They are generally produced by the Chair and agreed with relevant 'wing members'. Subject to the facts of the particular case, it is normal practice for 'written reasons' to be published, when produced, via: www.TheFA.com

SAFEGUARDING

Football takes the safety and welfare of children and adults at risk extremely seriously. For many years, English football's leadership authorities have worked collaboratively on safeguarding. The shared and unequivocal goal has always been to ensure the game is safe, fun and inclusive for all. However, the allegations of non-recent child sexual abuse that came to light from November 2016 onwards saw football re-double its efforts to drive a culture of safer working practices to support every child, young person and adult at risk to have a safe and fun experience when playing or participating in the world's most popular team game.

The FA has led this work as the sport's governing body in England. Alongside the Premier League, EFL, PFA, LMA, PGMOL, County FAs, leagues and clubs, the united strategy has been – and continues to be – to:

- Implement preventative safeguarding measures and create fun, safe, welcoming football environments via policies, standards, vetting, raising awareness, guidance and educating at all levels;
- Make the reporting of concerns as easy as possible and ensure concerns are investigated at the appropriate level and where thresholds are met, escalated to The FA and dealt with swiftly and thoroughly in conjunction with statutory agencies.

The FA employs a significant number of full-time safeguarding professionals to do this. Some of this team drive preventative measures via policy, procedures, standards, vetting, education and sharing good practice. They also:

- Support the national network of those in designated safeguarding roles that work across professional and grassroots football;
- Oversee safeguarding at The FA's venues and events;
- Support safeguarding work in the National League System, Barclays FA WSL, The FA Women's Championship and The FA Women's National League.

Another part of The FA's Safeguarding team manages referrals and reported concerns. It comprises safeguarding professionals with significant experience in social work, policing, the probation service and legal and child protection in sport. They also work with statutory agencies and the relevant club or County FA in relation to investigations where appropriate. They assess people who pose, or may pose, a risk of harm and put safeguards in place, including suspensions from football and making referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service where necessary.

All DSOs are DBS-checked, trained and their role includes taking preventative safeguarding measures, promoting safer working practice and helping their organisation to maintain standards, as well as making referrals to the appropriate authorities.





The Premier League and EFL, as well as their respective charitable arms, undertake vital roles in setting and supporting their clubs and club community organisations to meet the safeguarding standards. They also oversee and guide club safeguarding provisions.

The FA's proactive activities includes working directly with victims, survivors and those with 'lived experience', via a Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group that offers essential learnings to this often complex landscape. The FA also supports access to counselling via Sporting Chance and provides practical assistance via The FA Benevolent Fund.

WHY DOESN'T THE FA COMMENT PUBLICLY ON SAFEGUARDING CASES?

The FA does not ordinarily comment publicly about individual safeguarding cases. The reasons for this and a brief explanation of The FA's safeguarding process are as follows:

The FA has the power to investigate safeguarding concerns. Following a risk assessment process, The FA may refer a case to an independent Safeguarding Review Panel, which is composed of independent safeguarding experts, for them to consider the matter. The function of the Safeguarding Review Panel is to assess risk and determine whether the risk assessment process has shown that the individual may present a risk of harm to children or adults at risk. Safeguarding measures, which can include suspensions from football, will be imposed on an individual where necessary to prevent potential future risk of harm.

It is important to note that safeguarding measures may be amended and can change in response to changing levels of risk. This means that safeguarding cases are treated differently from disciplinary cases that result in the final determination of a matter. For example, if a suspension is initially imposed in a safeguarding case due to a failure to provide information, that suspension may be lifted once the information is received.

Safeguarding measures can be imposed for a wide range of reasons and publication of details can have serious consequences. This includes re-traumatising victims and/or causing them to re-live harmful abusive experiences. In addition, vigilantism can have harmful effects on innocent people connected to those involved in safeguarding cases. It is important to remember that a safeguarding suspension doesn't always mean sexual or serious abuse has taken place, but the public stigma is such that people often immediately link the two things.

COUNTY FOOTBALL ASSOCIATIONS

The County Football Association (FA) network consists of individual devolved organisations across England that are detailed below:

- Amateur Football Alliance
- Army FA
- Bedfordshire FA
- Berks & Bucks FA
- Birmingham FA
- Cambridgeshire FA
- Cheshire FA
- Cornwall FA
- Cumberland FA
- Derbyshire FA
- Devon FA
- Dorset FA
- Durham FA
- East Riding FA
- Essex FA
- Gloucestershire FA
- Guernsey FA
- Hampshire FA
- Herefordshire FA
- Hertfordshire FA
- Huntingdonshire FA
- Isle of Man FA
- Jersey FA
- Kent FA
- Lancashire FA
- Leicestershire & Rutland FA
- Lincolnshire FA
- Liverpool FA
- London FA
- Manchester FA
- Middlesex FA
- Norfolk FA
- Northamptonshire FA
- North Riding FA
- Northumberland FA
- Nottinghamshire FA
- Oxfordshire FA
- RAF FA
- Royal Navy FA
- Sheffield & Hallamshire FA
- Shropshire FA
- Somerset FA
- Staffordshire FA
- Suffolk FA
- Surrey FA
- Sussex FA
- Westmorland FA
- West Riding FA
- Wiltshire FA
- Worcestershire FA



Cambridgeshire FA





Each County FA is responsible for local football delivery in its respective area and this can include promoting participation; ensuring accessible opportunities across all formats; growing diversity and inclusion; ensuring equal opportunities to play and ensuring a fun and safe environment for all. County FAs, like The FA, are not-for-profit and all money is reinvested back into football.

County FAs are in charge of implementing The FA's Rules and Regulations within the local area, including administering yellow and red cards; investigating, charging, and hearing more serious cases of misconduct. They are also responsible for recruiting disciplinary commission members who possess the correct attributes to maintain the integrity and perception of the disciplinary process.

In 2020, having identified the diversity of County FA boards as an area requiring focus, The FA became the first national governing body in English sport to introduce a Regional Code of Governance. Tier 3 of Sport England's Code of Governance is the current gold standard for National Governing Bodies across England but the Regional Code of Governance both builds upon it and sets a higher precedent. It lays out several diversity and inclusion requirements, including gender and ethnic diversity of County FA boards, to ensure that those leading and working at these organisations better reflect the communities they serve.

Numerous County FAs have dedicated marketing and communications functions, which are either in-house or outsourced, and their respective contact details can be found [here](#).



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