

Referee Advisory Group

Meeting held on Wednesday 26 June 2024
At Birmingham County FA Offices (Upstairs)

Present:

Nicola Belcher (NB), Andrew Cartwright (AC), Scott Chalkley (SC), Ashley Clarke (AshC), Barry Cooke (BC), Keiran Forrest (KF), Yuen Fai Lam (YL), Gerry Larkin (GL), Will Maddern (WM), Mike Penn (MP) via Teams, Katrina Pritchard (KP), Adam Siniarski (AS).

1. Notice of Meeting

MP opened the meeting, and introduced himself to the group. MP requested that before the meeting started, that a moments silence was held in memory of Joel Richards, as it is the anniversary of his passing.

2. Apologies

Apologies from Luke Bowles and Lewis Smith.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

KF checked that everyone had received the minutes of the last meeting. They were agreed as a true record.

4. Actions

Information was shared regards the actions from the last meeting.

5. Referee Progression Pathway

KF asked the group members to read through the RPP Data Pack provided and to say if they had any queries or issues. One of the comments of the survey was questioned and answered. The Data Pack shows that some areas have fewer observers than others. Recruiting new observers was suggested to help with this.

We currently have 146 promotion applications. The number of observations required at each level were advised to the group.

The match official's needs should be taken into consideration first, and if there isn't an observer near to their game, current observers should be asked if they are willing to travel further. RefSec MUST be used in it's fullest capacity.

Splitting the levels of officials was discussed following on from the previous meeting - one person to appoint 5-4s, one 6-5s, and two to deal with 7-6s. The group agreed to this process, but it would mean we would need to recruit two more appointers.

A suggestion was to trial this in August and review in September. Due to recruitment policies, we may not be able to trial in August, but this would not be a problem as a later trial (possibly in September/October) would fit in with the meetings that are being held with promotion candidates.

It was agreed to do a mini review at the end of Oct, and then a formal review at the end of Dec to give the process a longer period of time.

6. Long Service Awards

KF advised that BCFA have not held a Referee recognition awards night since 2019 (impacted by COVID). Long Service certificates are currently awarded at 21 years by County FA, and then 25, 40 and 50 years from The FA.

A suggestion would be to recognise those match officials who have achieved 10 years, but we would also need to do a catch-up for those who may have missed out on their 21 years...

KF asked the group how these achievements could be recognised; suggestions included a shirt with a '10-year badge' embroidered, or a personalised whistle or watch. NOT a medal, as these are associated with officiating a Cup Final.

Notifications should be sent out when officials reach 9 years, to advise that they are reaching their 10-year anniversary – and they can choose from a variety of options as their award (also gives time for us to prepare!).

It was asked if the 21-year award has any significance, but MP said that it was probably chosen randomly. 10 years, 15 years were suggested and agreed. Only continuous service to BCFA can be considered for these awards, but we could also look at individual circumstances if, for example, they took a year or two out for specific reasons. Consideration is to be given to those who have registered continuously since 2015.

2025 is 150 years of BCFA, so it could be linked in with that anniversary.

Action point - First step is to work out the numbers, but it was agreed that whatever is decided, we need to publicise on social media the achievements of our referees.

7. Appointing Platforms

KF advised that previously appointments to County Cup games were made via Full-Time and that the level of match officials didn't always match the level of the game.

We have previously asked The FA for the use of MOAS to help with appointments, but we have not been allowed to use it. In the future, a Referee Platform is being developed, but it is not known when it will be available.

We currently use a system name Pitchside, in conjunction with Full-Time, to appoint to county cup games. In the first season, match officials did not use the system correctly. The second season improved but is still not perfect. Any platform relies on match officials' own administration.

Two big leagues in our area do not use technology in the way we would like them to do, so this also impacts on what we do.

The group felt that Pitchside should be 'taught' to all promotion candidates to increase correct usage, and that it should be mandatory for them to use Pitchside as part of their promotion requirements. It was asked whether we could use RefSec for appointments, but KF explained that the data captured from Full-Time does not always pull through to RefSec in the way we need it to.

KF explained how the in-service training events work.

Action point – contact MFL to discuss appointment platforms.

A meeting has been arranged with a new system called Centre Circle.

The two systems currently in use were discussed further, and also how some referees refuse county cup appointments. We will have to continue using both for the forthcoming season due to time restrictions, but we will look into the integration of full-time information into RefSec, which is the biggest issue at present.

Action point – to email ALL referees about the county cups and how they are prestigious County Cup referee evening, and also from the finals held at Aston Villa, Walsall and Burton Albion to show what our referees can achieve.

8. Any Raised Business

No issues raised.

9. Any Other Business

No issues raised.

10. Date of Next Meeting

To be sent out by KF – most likely end of Sept/beginning of Oct.

MP thanked everyone for attending. Meeting closed at 8:53pm.