

Gloucestershire FA Equality Policy

Foreword by the Chair

The Gloucestershire Football Association is fully committed to ensuring that everyone can take part of football across the County in an enjoyable, friendly, safe, and inclusive environment. Both the Board of Directors and staff believe that everyone should have the opportunity to be part of the football family, regardless of difference and we are working hard to ensure that this is a reality. Our Equality Policy below confirms our clear commitment to equality and that we will take firm action if required against anyone who behaves in a way that is discriminatory.

Roy Schafer

Chair, Gloucestershire FA

September 2024

Policy Statement

Gloucestershire FA endorse the Principle of sports equality and will strive to ensure that everyone who wishes to be involved in football, whether as participants, team members, volunteers, coaches, referees, office-bearers, or those within the County Football Association. We will ensure that everyone involved in football:

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

Legal obligations

Gloucestershire FA is committed to avoiding and eliminating unfair discrimination of any kind in football and will under no circumstances condone unlawful discriminatory practices. The organisation takes a zero-tolerance approach to harassment. Examples of the relevant legislation and the behaviours in question are given in the Additional Notes of the GFA Handbook.

Positive action

The Principle of equality goes further than simply complying with legislation. It allows the Gloucestershire FA to take positive steps to counteract the effects of physical or cultural barriers - whether real or perceived - that restrict the opportunity for all sections of the community to participate equally and fully in football should they chose to.

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

Implementation

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

- A copy of this document will be published on our website.
- The Gloucestershire FA Chair will take overall responsibility for ensuring that the policy is observed.
- The Board of Gloucestershire FA will take full account of the policy in arriving at all decisions in relation to activities of the County FA.
- Gloucestershire FA will collaborate fully with any surveys or other initiatives designed to assess the level of participation of different sections of the community in football and will take account of the findings in developing measures to promote and enhance equality for all involved in football.
- Gloucestershire FA Board, staff and Council members will undertake equality training and keep up to date with equality legislation.
- It will be a condition of Gloucestershire FA affiliation that member clubs:
 - Formally adopt this policy, or produce their own equality and diversity policy in terms that are consistent with it;
 - Take steps to ensure that their Committees, members, players, coaches and volunteers behave in accordance with the policy, including where appropriate taking disciplinary action under the Club's constitution;
 - Ensure that access to membership is open and inclusive;
 - Support such measures and initiatives that Gloucestershire FA may institute or take part in to advance the aims of this policy.
- It will be a condition of Gloucestershire FA affiliation that individuals and members:
 - Commit to act in accordance with this policy;
 - Support such measures and initiatives that Gloucestershire FA may institute or take part in to advance the aims of this policy.

Responsibility, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Board will be responsible for ensuring the implementation of this policy. The Board will review all Gloucestershire FA activities and initiatives against the aims of the policy on an annual basis, and the Chair will report formally on this issue at the AGM.

The Board, or where appropriate a designated Equality Champion (who will be a Board member and representative of the Inclusion Advisory Group), will review any measures or initiatives that Gloucestershire FA may institute or take part in to promote and equality in football across the County and will report their findings formally to the AGM annually.

The Board will review the policy annually (or more regularly due to changes in legislation) and will report with recommendations to the AGM.

Complaints and Compliance

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

Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against any employee, Board or Council member, player, coach, referee, or volunteer who breaches the County FA Equality Policy.

Any person who believes that he or she has been treated in a way that they consider to be in breach of this policy by a member club, individual, staff, Board or Council member should follow the County FA's complaints procedure. Anyone wishing to make a complaint should first complain to that person, organisation or club. If this does not resolve the matter, or in the case of allegations of discriminatory behaviour against Gloucestershire FA staff, Board or Council members, the person may raise the matter by writing directly to the Chair. Please send all written correspondence to the office address.

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

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

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

If an individual, club or league associated with Gloucestershire FA is subject to allegations of unlawful discrimination in a court or tribunal, Gloucestershire FA will co-operate fully with any investigation carried out by the relevant lawful authorities and, subject to the outcome, may consider taking further action in relation to the matter concerned.

Gloucestershire FA
September 2024