



# ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

## FOR MEDIA

2024/25



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# INTRODUCTION

The Football Association (The FA) Media Essentials Guide is produced each year to support print, broadcast and online journalists to understand its Rules and Regulations. It is also intended to help ensure any reporting around these guidelines is accurate for viewers, readers or listeners.

The FA's general on and off-field regulatory and disciplinary processes that apply to football 'participants' during the 2024/25 season are explained in the form of step-by-step guides and timelines where applicable.

Relevant updates from FIFA and the International Football Association Board (IFAB) that could have implications for English football during the current season are also outlined.

If you have questions about any of these topics during the season please contact The FA's Media Relations team in the first instance by using the following email address:

**[Media.Relations@TheFA.com](mailto:Media.Relations@TheFA.com)**

The FA's standard practice is to publish the details of misconduct charges and outcomes involving 'participants' under its jurisdiction, and regular updates can be found on:

**[@FAspokesperson](https://twitter.com/FAspokesperson)** and **[www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/discipline](http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/discipline)**

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

**[www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/lawsandrules](http://www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/lawsandrules)**

***NB:** The 2024/25 Media Essentials Guide does not alter or replace The FA's Rules and Regulations, and they should be referred to for the comprehensive provisions relating to any disciplinary matters.*

# **PARTICIPANTS**

Any affiliated association; competition; club; club official, which for the avoidance of doubt should include a director; agent; 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 in English football are defined as ‘participants’.

Any misconduct or breaches of The FA’s Rules and Regulations by ‘participants’ can lead to disciplinary charges and sanctions where appropriate.

# **THE LAWS OF THE GAME**

The 2024/25 Laws of the Game became effective for all football competitions and friendly matches from 01 July 2024. Key changes and clarifications include:

## **GOAL LINE TECHNOLOGY:**

- The goal line technology indication that a goal has been scored can be communicated via the referee’s earpiece/headset.

## **THE PLAYERS:**

- Competitions now have the option to use additional permanent concussion substitutions;
- Teams must have a captain wearing an armband who can be easily identified by the referee.

## **THE PLAYERS’ EQUIPMENT:**

- Players are responsible for whether their shin guards are the right size and suitability;
- The team captain must wear the armband issued or authorised by the relevant competition organiser, or a single-coloured armband that may also have the word ‘captain’ or the letter ‘C’ or a translation.

## **FOULS AND MISCONDUCT:**

- Non-deliberate handball offences for which penalties are awarded are to be sanctioned in the same way as fouls which are an attempt to play the ball or a challenge for the ball;
- Deliberate handball remains a red-card offence when a penalty kick is awarded, as it is similar to holding, pulling, pushing etc.

## **THE PENALTY KICK:**

- Part of the ball must touch or overhang the centre of the penalty mark;
- Encroachment by players will be penalised only if it has an impact.

## **TEMPORARY DISMISSALS (SIN BINS):**

- The guidelines have been revised, including, most notably, to specify that a temporarily dismissed player can return to the field of play only during a stoppage.

# VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREES

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Video Assistant Referees (VAR) will continue in certain rounds of the Emirates FA Cup and EFL Cup, as well as every game of the Premier League during the 2024/25 season.

VAR involvement will remain limited to the following four match-changing decisions or incidents:

## **GOALS:**

- If 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:**

- If there has been a mistaken identity in awarding a yellow or red card;
- Either a potential case of mistaken identity is noticed and reviewed, or a match official suspects a potential case of mistaken identity has occurred and instructs for a review to be conducted.

## **PENALTIES:**

- If a penalty has been awarded incorrectly or an offence has not been penalised;
- 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 can be reviewed.

## **RED CARDS:**

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

VAR protocols are available in full via: [www.FIFA.com](http://www.FIFA.com) and [www.theIFAB.com](http://www.theIFAB.com)

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

# **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 considered under the 'fast-track' process can be investigated, charged and heard before the relevant 'participant' plays in their next competitive match. An example of cases that would be considered under the 'fast-track' process would be most 'not seen' incidents.

## **CHARGES**

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

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

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 during what is known as a 'paper' hearing.

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

In 'non-standard' cases, The FA doesn't offer a pre-determined sanction 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.

# **REGULATORY COMMISSIONS**

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

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

A Regulatory Commission consists of three Judicial Panel members selected from 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 independent 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).

Judicial Panel members undergo continual training and education, 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.

## **The Standard of Proof**

The 'standard of proof' is the civil standard. It means that cases will only be proven if the Regulatory Commission in question is satisfied 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. Other National Governing Bodies of sport across the industry also utilise it and it's the most appropriate standard for the tribunal-based forum used to determine The FA's cases.

## **Written Reasons**

'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 case, it is normal practice for them to be published below:

[www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/discipline/written-reasons](http://www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/discipline/written-reasons)

# ON-FIELD MATTERS

## RETROSPECTIVE ACTION

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

### TYPICAL 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 asked whether the incident was reviewed;
- No further action is taken in almost all cases where it is confirmed that the specific act of misconduct was seen or reviewed at the time;
- 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;
- The FA will only issue a charge if the panel is unanimous, and the player in question is 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 had been dismissed subsequently;
- 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 had been dismissed subsequently;
- 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'.

The general timeline for cases such as this is detailed below:

TIMELINE	
<b>Deadline for The FA to issue a charge:</b>	Within two business days of the incident
<b>Deadline for the player's reply and evidence:</b>	By close of play on the business day following the charge
<b>Deadline for a hearing to take place:</b>	Prior to the player's next competitive match



## SUCCESSFUL DECEPTION OF A MATCH OFFICIAL

The FA can take retrospective disciplinary action in situations where a match official may have been deceived by simulation and/or feigning an injury which directly resulted in the offending player's team being awarded a penalty and/or an opposing player being sent off.

From the 2024/25 season, The FA can also now take retrospective disciplinary action when a match official is deceived by a player who directly scores a goal by a handball offence.

This process is not for debatable decisions, but only where there is overwhelming evidence to indicate that a player intentionally deceived a match official.

### TYPICAL PROCESS:

- If The FA believes that there may be a case to answer, the incident is referred to a three-person panel consisting of one ex-match official, one ex-manager and one ex-player;
- Each panel member then reviews the footage independently of the others;
- A charge is only 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 and/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 that is also intended to act as a deterrent;
- If the player contests the charge, the case is heard by a Regulatory Commission, and only written and/or video evidence would be considered;
- The Regulatory Commission would also decide whether to rescind a caution or dismissal which was received by an opposing player if a charge is found proven.

The general timeline for cases such as this is detailed below:

TIMELINE	
<b>Deadline for The FA to issue a charge:</b>	Within two business days of the incident
<b>Deadline for the player's reply and evidence:</b>	By close of play on the business day following the charge
<b>Deadline for a hearing to take place:</b>	Prior to the player's next competitive match

## MASS CONFRONTATIONS

The FA will investigate any incidents where two or more players or club officials are involved in a confrontation with opposing players or club officials.

The offending clubs would be charged and sanctioned instead of their players, and any similar offences within the previous 12 months can also lead to increased penalties.

### TYPICAL PROCESS:

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

## SURROUNDING MATCH OFFICIALS

A participant charter was introduced ahead of the 2023/24 season to improve the image of the game and maintain a positive environment for everyone.

Match officials were empowered to take more robust action, and at least one player now receives a card if match officials are confronted, surrounded or their personal space is invaded by multiple players.

The FA will investigate any incidents where two or more players of a club approach a match official in a 'confrontational manner'.

The offending club would be charged and sanctioned instead of its players, and similar offences within the previous 12 months can also lead to increased penalties.

### TYPICAL PROCESS:

- A match official reports such a 'surrounding' incident to The FA;
- A charge, warning or no further action can follow depending on the seriousness and circumstances of the incident;
- Any charges can be treated as either 'standard' or 'non-standard'.

The general timeline for 'mass confrontations' and 'surrounding match officials' is detailed below:

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

## TECHNICAL AREA MISCONDUCT

A participant charter was introduced ahead of the 2023/24 season to improve the image of the game and maintain a positive environment for everyone.

Match officials were empowered to implement the Laws of the Game by issuing any technical area occupants with yellow and red cards for caution or dismissal offences in the following competitions:

- Emirates FA Cup;
- Premier League;
- English Football League (EFL);
- Adobe Women's FA Cup;
- The FA Women's Continental League Cup;
- Barclays Women's Super League (WSL);
- Barclays Women's Championship;
- The National League;
- The National League System (NLS);
- The EFL Cup;
- The EFL Trophy;
- The Isuzu FA Trophy.

If an offender cannot be identified, a yellow or red card will be given to the respective team's senior manager or coach in the technical area.

Technical area occupants can also receive automatic and immediate touchline bans for the accumulation of cautions. The starting point for one-match touchline bans was reduced to three cautions as part of the updated code of conduct. The respective thresholds for further cautions and their corresponding suspensions can be seen below:

NUMBER OF CAUTIONS	SUSPENSION
Three	One match
Six	Two matches
Nine	Three matches
12	Misconduct charge and Regulatory Commission

Any technical area cautions or dismissals will now be added to club's total for that game, which will also include any received by its players. A financial penalty will be imposed where six or more are received.

Play off matches (semi-finals and finals) in the EFL and NLS Steps 1-4, as well as finals of the Emirates FA Cup; EFL Cup; EFL Trophy; Isuzu FA Trophy; Adobe Women's FA Cup; and The FA Women's Continental League Cup are exempt from any automatic touchline ban for the accumulation of cautions by technical area occupants.

### TYPICAL PROCESS:

- If an individual is dismissed from the technical area, they are no longer permitted to observe the remainder of the game; return to the field of play post-match or conduct post-match media interviews or conferences;
- 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';
- 'Standard' charges for any confrontational behaviour towards match officials can now include touchline bans being offered at this stage.

The general timeline for cases such as this is detailed below:

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

**NB:** The FA will issue charges to clubs if technical area policies are persistently or seriously breached.

### TOUCHLINE BANS

As well as automatic touchline bans for the accumulation of yellow cards, misconduct in the technical area can lead to The FA issuing a charge and a Regulatory Commission imposing a touchline ban. The following restrictions apply in these instances:

- The individual may only communicate with those in the dugout by either phone or a 'runner';
- The individual cannot be on the touchline before, during or after the match, and this includes participating in the team's warm-up;
- 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

Misconduct in the technical area and charges being issued can lead to a Regulatory Commission imposing a stadium or ground ban, and the following restrictions would apply in these instances:

- The individual cannot enter a ground or stadium that their team is playing at on a matchday;
- The individual cannot enter or use any facilities on the site of the stadium or ground that their team are playing at on a matchday;
- 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

There are certain incidents that fall outside the jurisdiction of match officials, which can lead to The FA issuing charges. Examples may include:

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

The general timeline for incidents such as these is detailed below:

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

## CLAIMS OF WRONGFUL DISMISSAL

If a club believes that it can prove a player's straight red card was an 'obvious error' by the match official/s, it can submit a claim of 'wrongful dismissal' for consideration by a Regulatory Commission.

### TYPICAL PROCESS:

- The player's club must notify The FA of its intention to submit a claim by 13:00 on the first business day following the game;
- The player's club must submit any evidence to support its claim 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 video and/or written evidence only that the match official/s made an 'obvious error';
- In incidents involving a VAR, the player's club must demonstrate via video and/or written evidence only that the match referee's decision was an 'obvious error' following the involvement of the VAR;
- A Regulatory Commission will decide whether the claim of 'wrongful dismissal' will be upheld, and the player's suspension is withdrawn with immediate effect, or dismissed and the player's suspension would therefore remain;
- The Regulatory Commission would go on to consider whether the player's punishment should be increased if the claim of 'wrongful dismissal' is dismissed;
  - The Regulatory Commission has the discretion to increase the punishment by up to twice the standard amount if it considers that the dismissed 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, with Boxing Day or New Year's Day being key examples, there are further expedited timeframes to ensure the claim of 'wrongful dismissal' is heard before the next applicable fixture.

## CLAIMS OF CLEARLY EXCESSIVE PUNISHMENT

Clubs may also attempt to limit the suspension for a player's straight red card by submitting a claim of 'clearly excessive' punishment for consideration by a Regulatory Commission.

### TYPICAL PROCESS:

- The player's club must notify The FA of its intention to submit a claim by 13:00 on the first business day following the game;
- The player's club must submit any evidence to support its claim by 13:00 on the second business day following the game;
- A Regulatory Commission will consider whether there are exceptional circumstances, and the standard punishment would therefore be excessive. The intention is that the standard punishment will be appropriate in the vast majority of cases and that these provisions to reduce the sanction will only cater for any clear and obvious cases;
- If the club's claim is upheld, the Regulatory Commission would also decide the player's new punishment;
- If the club's claim is upheld, at least a one-game suspension would be enforced as only a claim of 'wrongful dismissal' can withdraw a player's suspension entirely;
- If the club's claim is rejected, the Regulatory Commission would also consider whether the player's punishment should be increased;
  - The Regulatory Commission has the discretion to increase the punishment by up to twice the standard amount if it considers that the rejected claim 'had no prospect of success' and/or 'amounts to an abuse of the process'.

**NB:** 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**

If The FA thinks that a dismissal offence is 'truly exceptional', it can seek to increase the associated sanction by submitting a claim of 'clearly insufficient' punishment that would be considered by a Regulatory Commission.

### **TYPICAL PROCESS:**

- The FA must submit a claim and evidence to the player's club by 13:00 on the second business day following the game;
- The club or player has until 18:00 on the second business day following receipt of The FA's claim to submit any evidence supporting their case that the punishment is 'clearly sufficient';
- A Regulatory Commission would hear the case, with its only consideration being whether the standard punishment should not be imposed;
- If The FA's claim is successful, the Regulatory Commission would also decide the player's new punishment;
- If The FA's claim is dismissed by the Regulatory Commission, the player would serve the standard punishment for the dismissal offence.

## **CLAIMS OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY**

Clubs can submit a claim of 'mistaken identity' on a player's behalf if they believe that another player committed a particular offence that they have been cautioned or dismissed for incorrectly.

### **TYPICAL PROCESS:**

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

## CAUTIONS

The following leagues and cups will continue to have 'competition-specific' suspensions for yellow cards accumulated by players during the 2024/25 season:

- Emirates FA Cup;
- Premier League;
- EFL;
- Adobe Women's FA Cup;
- The FA Women's Continental League Cup;
- Barclays WSL;
- Barclays Women's Championship;
- The National League;
- The NLS;
- The EFL Cup;
- The Isuzu FA Trophy;
- The EFL Trophy.

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

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

*\*This applies to the last day of the respective league's season and before any play-off matches.*

If a player is yellow carded 20 times during their league season, then they will be charged with misconduct.

The Barclays WSL and Women's Championship do not have cut-off dates. Players will be suspended automatically at any stage of the season if they accumulate five, 10, 15 or more yellow cards.

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, and a suspension in the Emirates FA Cup and Adobe Women's FA Cup may require four yellow cards, rather than two, depending on the player's point of entry.



## SUSPENSIONS

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

Typical offences and their corresponding suspensions include:

OFFENCE	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 yellow cards within the cut-off date	Two matches
15 yellow cards within the cut-off date	Three matches

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

## CROWD MANAGEMENT

The FA doesn't have jurisdiction over individual spectators at fixtures unless they're 'participants' in football, so 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.

### TYPICAL 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, and dealt with appropriately by the club/s and the criminal courts where appropriate;
- If The FA's investigations conclude that the club/s did not do enough to prevent and/or deal with the misconduct of spectators, it may issue disciplinary charges.

To challenge the totally unacceptable presence of football tragedy abuse, regulation changes and tough new measures were introduced from the 2023/24 season which have seen people who are found to have committed offences face stadium bans and potential criminal prosecution. This issue is focused on offensive chanting, gesturing and displaying offensive messages based on football related tragedies, which causes significant distress to the victims' families, survivors and affected club supporters. Football authorities, supporter groups and law enforcement organisations, including the police and Crown Prosecution Service, have united to crack down on fans who participate in this vile form of abuse.

*\*Further information in relation to discriminatory behaviour by crowds is on the following pages.*

# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The FA stands firmly against all forms of discrimination, and it strives to ensure that our game is safe and welcoming for everyone. One that truly embraces diversity, whilst challenging hateful behaviour both on and off the pitch. Over the past three years, The FA's equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, A Game For All, has focused its efforts across the grassroots and professional game.

Work to tackle discrimination and improve representation during the 2023/24 season included:

**The FA's workforce** – Delivering gender pay gap results which remain well below the national average, while improving the representation of the total workforce;

**Grassroots football** – Launching Enough is Enough, a campaign to raise awareness of discriminatory behaviour and the significant consequences that will face perpetrators of hate, while also introducing of a joint action plan with Kick It Out to tackle serious misconduct across grassroots football and build trust in reporting mechanisms;

**Faith and football** – Bringing faith and football closer together with events to mark Vaisakhi, Ramadan and Chanukah at Wembley Stadium, while also forming an antisemitism working group to focus efforts on tackling this issue across English football;

**South Asian inclusion** – Convening a group of key stakeholders from across English football to help develop The FA's first ever strategy targeted at South Asian communities, to be published during the 2024/25 season;

**LGBTQ+ inclusion** – Marching in Pride in London for the third successive year, with staff also participating in Manchester Pride for the first time in August 2024, and 10 years of Rainbow Laces;

**Disability football** – Ongoing support for disability football, successfully hosting The FA Disability Cup at St. George's Park for the eighth time, including finals across partially sighted, amputee, blind, cerebral palsy, powerchair and deaf football;

**Coaching** – Continued growth of the Elite Coach Placement Programme, plus ongoing funding of 20% of places on the Introduction to Coaching Football and UEFA C Licence courses to increase participation from historically underrepresented groups and support people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds;

**Online Safety Bill** – Lobbying UK Government on the Online Safety Bill to ensure that social media companies can be held to account for the content on their platforms;

**Football Leadership Diversity Code** – For the third consecutive season, progress was seen across The FA, Premier League and EFL in this area. To help accelerate progress across the wider game, The FA confirmed plans to introduce mandatory diversity reporting across the professional game from the 2024/25 season, which will help to provide greater transparency and maintain the pressure for positive change.

Creating a game free from discrimination remains a strategic priority for The FA, and its new equality, diversity and inclusion strategy will be published in late 2024, outlining the commitment in this area for years to come.

# ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

'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, and all allegations will be investigated thoroughly.

Updated 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.

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.

An incident of discriminatory behaviour by a 'participant' in private or outside of a standard football setting can also result in disciplinary sanctions, as football's stakeholders agreed that such measures are appropriate ahead of the 2020/21 season.

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' as well as mandatory education courses as part of all sanctions for any 'aggravated breaches'.

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.

From the 2023/24 season, The FA introduced point deductions for teams across the grassroots game if their players or coaches commit repeated offences of serious misconduct. This landmark development is part of The FA's commitment to tackle and address incidents of unacceptable behaviour in the game. Point deductions can apply to clubs at Step 7 and below of the men's game, and clubs across Tier 3 and below in the women's pyramid which commit cumulative incidents of serious misconduct such as discrimination, assault or attempted assault, and physical contact or attempted physical contact against a match official.

The FA continues to support any player who wishes to take a stand against discriminatory behaviour in a respectful manner and will always condemn the behaviours of anyone who chooses to actively oppose these values. The FA also continues to work with the appropriate bodies to ensure that supporters are dealt with if they are deemed to behave in an actively discriminatory manner.

# OFF-FIELD MATTERS

## INTEGRITY

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

The FA's dedicated Integrity team supports 'participants' to understand and follow its Rules and Regulations. It is responsible for undertaking investigations into any alleged breaches and providing evidence if 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 Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), leagues and partners in relation to betting, inside information, match-fixing, anti-doping and media activities.

Any 'participants' who: are approached to bet; accept a bribe; share inside information; influence an event; fix the outcome of a game or competition; aware of possible breaches of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Code or our Anti-Doping Regulations are obliged to report it.

Dedicated and anonymous reporting lines are available on 0208 795 9640 or [Integrity@TheFA.com](mailto:Integrity@TheFA.com).

## BETTING

The FA's Rules and Regulations prohibit all 'participants' involved with clubs in the Premier League, EFL, Barclays WSL, Women's Championship and NLS from betting on any football or football-related activity.

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

The FA's Integrity team works closely with statutory bodies and law enforcement agencies, and shares data with betting operators to ensure a bespoke intelligence handling system. In addition, the team ensures that all betting markets on English football are monitored to identify any suspicious activities. Any investigations into unusual betting patterns are also supported by partnerships with the Gambling Commission's Sports Betting Integrity Unit and UK betting operators. The team also has representation on the national Sports Betting Group and the Sports Betting Integrity Forum.

## INSIDE INFORMATION

Inside information is defined as a 'participant' having knowledge about a football matter due to their position in the game that is not publicly available. Examples can include a team selection for a specific fixture, a player's transfer status or the arrival of a new manager.

All 'participants' involved with clubs in the Premier League, EFL, Barclays WSL, Women's Championship and NLS are prohibited from passing any inside information for the purpose of either betting or instructing someone else to bet on their behalf.

Even if a 'participant' is unaware that inside information may be used for betting 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.

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

## **MEDIA COMMENTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY**

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

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 breach involves 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 in relation to an appointed match official, whether they are identified by name or implication, are treated as a breach of FA Rule E3.1.

The FA may also take disciplinary action against managers, players, clubs or club officials in relation to the following types of post-match comments in public:

- Implication of bias – any comment which implies or appears to allege bias on the part of a match official;
- Questioning integrity – any comment that questions the integrity of a match official. Examples can include, but are not limited to, suggestions of cheating, calling a match official a 'cheat' or commenting upon a match official's purported allegiance to another club;
- Personal/offensive – comments that are capable of being personally offensive, particularly in relation to match officials. This may include, but not be limited to, repeated negative and/or inflammatory comments in respect of a match official's performance;
- Threatening/abusive/insulting/indecent – comments that fall into these categories, whether intended or not, may be subject to disciplinary action;
- Discriminatory – any comments that are improper, indecent, abusive or insulting and include a reference to ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or disability;
- Detriment to the game – the concepts of 'disrepute' and 'best interests of the game' are inherently broad and cannot be precisely defined. Charges may be brought where comments cause, and/or may cause, damage to the wider interests of football and/or to the image of the game.

The test to be applied to the above type of public comments is an objective one i.e. The FA may take disciplinary action even in circumstances when the comments were not intended to imply bias, question the integrity, be personal/offensive, be threatening/abusive/insulting/indecent or be discriminatory. Whilst disagreements with, or criticisms of, decisions of a match official are permitted, they should be done so in a respectful manner.

### **TYPICAL PROCESS:**

- The FA may contact a 'participant' to seek their written observations or issue a charge within three business days of being made aware of comments in the media or on social media;
- If observations are requested, the 'participant' would have three business days to respond;
- The FA would then have three further business days to decide whether to: issue a charge; issue a formal warning; remind them of their responsibilities or take no further action;
- If a charge is issued, the 'participant' would have three further business days to reply;
- A Regulatory Commission hearing would take place within 10 business days of the reply by the 'participant';
- There are no set sanctions for FA Rule E3.1 breaches in relation to media comments or social media activity, so any penalty ultimately imposed for proven or admitted charges would be solely at the Regulatory Commission's discretion.

**NB:** Any cases involving discriminatory comments are not subject to the above timelines, and any posting that remains on the social media account of a 'participant' which is in breach of The FA's Rules can be subject to disciplinary action irrespective of when it was made.

### **ANTI-DOPING**

The FA is fully compliant with the National Anti-Doping Policy of the UK Government's Department for Culture, Media & Sport.

Players are strictly liable for any breaches of The FA's Anti-Doping Regulations, which align with the WADA Code, and they are educated regularly about their responsibilities.

The FA also funds one of sport's most comprehensive anti-doping programmes, which is world-leading and constantly reviewed to make improvements where possible, and it inputs into testing that is directed by UK Anti-Doping (UKAD). Key features of the programme 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 WSL and Women's Championship.

Both 'in-competition' and 'out-of-competition' drug testing are carried out on matchdays immediately after games and on non-matchdays respectively. Examples of 'out-of-competition' drug testing can include at a club's training ground or at a player's home address.

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. They can also be subject to blood and urine drug testing, including an Athlete Biological Passport programme.

While some banned substances on WADA's Prohibited List might not be detectable in blood, most are detectable in urine. The FA works closely with UKAD to ensure the drug-testing programme is as effective as possible and the split between blood and urine tests is reviewed each year. UKAD employs a flexible approach to decide testing at each event depending upon any doping risk.

### **WHEREABOUTS**

If a player isn't 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 for testing. 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.

Clubs must also inform The FA of their training schedules; any changes to their timings or the location/s that players are attending, and a list of addresses where each player regularly resides. Clubs that fail to adhere to these requirements on three occasions within a 12-month rolling period will be charged under The FA's Anti-Doping Regulations.

### **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' (ADRVs) and a suspension.

### **SUSPENSIONS**

If one or more of the below ADRVs is committed by a 'participant' it can 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 – the use or attempted use by an athlete of a prohibited substance or 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 i.e. 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 method;
- Trafficking – trafficking or attempted trafficking of any prohibited substance or method;
- Administering or Attempted Administration – administration or attempted administration to any player of any prohibited substance or method;
- Complicity or Attempted Complicity – complicity in helping someone to commit an ADRV 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.

### **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. If an athlete can demonstrate that their use was out-of-competition and unrelated to sport performance following an in-competition 'adverse analytical finding', any suspension will just be for three months, and it may also be reduced to one if they complete a treatment programme.

### **PUBLICATION**

The FA doesn't discuss or disclose the details of its testing programmes and any 'adverse analytical findings', and will only publish the outcomes of specific cases once they are fully concluded.

## **SOCIAL DRUGS**

The FA also operates its own dedicated social drugs programme to safeguard the physical and mental wellbeing of footballers, uphold the values and ethics of the sport and protect its image.

The FA's Social Drugs Regulations are in place voluntarily and separately from the WADA Code, and recreational drugs are always prohibited.

The FA's social drugs programme is run independently from the anti-doping programme. It focuses on education and rehabilitation with key features including:

### **TESTING**

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

### **SANCTIONS**

- For a first offence, a player would receive a warning, fine and must 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. This mirrors the WADA Code's 'substances of abuse' provision;
- For refusing to be tested or evading sample collection, a suspension in the range of four to 12 months would be imposed.



# AGENTS

From 01 January 2024, The FA's Football Agent Regulations replaced its Regulations on Working with Intermediaries which provide the regulatory framework for governing the activity of football agents within The FA's jurisdiction. International transactions involving football agents are governed by FIFA under its own Football Agent Regulations.

An individual wishing to perform football agent services on behalf of a player, coach or club must be registered with The FA. To register with The FA, they are also required to be a Licensed Football Agent with FIFA. This can be achieved by either attaining legacy agent status (applications now closed) or passing the FIFA Football Agent Exam. The FA is required to host this exam in England, with the dates and questions set by FIFA.

An FA Registered Football Agent who wishes to represent minors must first receive authorisation by providing an up-to-date, role-specific criminal record check that is reviewed by The FA.

English clubs are required to declare every football agent involved in a transaction to The FA and checks on this information form part of the registration process for every player registering with one of them. All representation agreements between football agents and players, coaches or clubs are also required to be lodged with The FA within 14 days of being signed.

The FA publishes a list of every Registered Football Agent in England as well as a list of all disciplinary sanctions imposed against them, and both can be seen below:

[www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/policies/player-status-agents/fa-registered-football-agents](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/policies/player-status-agents/fa-registered-football-agents)

The FA also publishes the total fees paid to football agents by each club and details of transactions involving a football agent annually, and the latest lists are available below:

[www.thefa.com/news/2024/apr/12/payments-and-transactions](https://www.thefa.com/news/2024/apr/12/payments-and-transactions)

# GOVERNING BODY ENDORSEMENTS

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Players and non-playing staff who require the right to work in England must obtain a Governing Body Endorsement (GBE) from The FA. Once a GBE has been provided, the club must also complete the Home Office visa application process for the individual to be able to participate in English football.

In 2024, The FA proposed updated GBE criteria for men's and women's football to the UK Government alongside the Premier League, EFL, Barclays WSL and Women's Championship, which were approved subsequently by the Home Office.

Male and female players without the right to work freely in England must meet certain requirements to obtain a GBE automatically, and some specific examples from the criteria of how they can achieve points are detailed below:

- 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.

Players who fall short of the automatic threshold within the men's game have the ability to apply via the Elite Significant Contribution (ESC) Criteria. Clubs in the Premier League and EFL Championship are eligible for up to four ESC Places, and the EFL League One and Two are eligible for up to two. These depend on the percentage of minutes played by their English Qualified Players (EQP) over the reporting period, and clubs who fail to reach the maximum of ESC Places through EQP minutes can receive additional places if they contribute players to the England Men's Seniors, Under 21 or Under 20 teams.

Clubs in the women's game can apply for an Exceptions Panel to review applications for players under 21 who do not meet the automatic points criteria. This panel is chaired by a legal qualified individual and contains subject experts (e.g. former players). Clubs must evidence that a player shows significant potential and are of elite quality to enhance the English game's development.

For non-playing staff there are specific experience and qualification requirements that must be met in order to achieve a GBE automatically.

Should an individual not meet the automatic requirements set out in the criteria for players or non-playing staff, there is the potential for their club to request an Exceptions Panel.

The full men's and women's criteria are available below:

[www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/policies/player-registration/points-based-system](http://www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/policies/player-registration/points-based-system)

# SAFEGUARDING

Football takes the safety and welfare of children, young people, 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.

The FA's safeguarding strategy, *Building an Ever-Safer Culture*, outlines the ongoing work to drive safeguarding culture and practice across the game. It works alongside the Premier League, EFL, PFA, LMA, PGMOL, County FAs, leagues, and clubs, 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, ensure concerns are investigated at the appropriate level, and escalated to The FA where thresholds are met to be dealt with swiftly and thoroughly in conjunction with statutory agencies.

The FA employs a significant number of full-time safeguarding professionals. Some of these personnel drive preventative measures via policy, procedures, standards, vetting, education and sharing guidance on safer working practice. These individuals also:

- Support the national network of those in designated safeguarding roles who work across the grassroots game, as well as working with the Premier League and EFL to support their respective designated safeguarding officer (DSOs);
- Oversee safeguarding at The FA's venues and events, across England teams and talent pathways, and all programmes and activities;
- Support safeguarding work in the NLS, Barclays WSL, 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 to children and/or adults at risk, and put safeguards in place, including any suspensions from football and making referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) where necessary.

All County FAs operate to The FA's Safeguarding 365 Standard, which is independently assessed. The County FAs also drive preventative safeguarding measures across the grassroots game; undertake safeguarding visits to clubs; make referrals to the appropriate authorities; and manage low-level concerns.

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 92 professional clubs and County FAs are independently assessed against the respective safeguarding standards.

The FA's proactive activities include 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 provide practical assistance via its Benevolent Fund.

### **Why does The FA not publish details on safeguarding cases?**

The FA has the power to investigate any safeguarding concerns or allegations that take place within a football environment, or where there may be a transferrable potential risk of harm to children and/or adults at risk in football. However, safeguarding cases are treated differently from The FA's football disciplinary cases and, as a result, it does not ordinarily comment publicly about individual safeguarding cases or investigations.

This policy is in place because safeguarding measures can be imposed for a wide range of reasons, and the publication of details can have serious consequences. This includes re-traumatising victims and/or causing them to re-live harmful abusive experiences. Vigilantism can also have harmful effects on innocent people connected to those involved in safeguarding cases.

The burden of proof required in The FA's safeguarding cases is based on the balance of probabilities, as opposed to the criminal requirement of beyond reasonable doubt. Therefore, publishing details of safeguarding cases involving an individual who may not have been charged or convicted in a criminal case could lead to negative consequences. It is also important to remember that safeguarding suspensions do not always mean that sexual or serious abuse has taken place, but the public stigma is such that people often immediately link the two things.

Whilst The FA does not comment on individual safeguarding cases or investigations, it does ensure that the required action is taken in all cases, and applies proportionate safeguards within its jurisdiction and in accordance with The FA's Safeguarding Regulations.

The FA's priority is always to support and protect children and adults at risk across English football, and the dedicated Safeguarding team at The FA works tirelessly to ensure that it has stringent and robust safeguarding measures in place to support its processes, which are independently reviewed by the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit.

The FA's safeguarding strategy, Building an Ever-Safer Culture, and more information is available at:

[www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding](http://www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding)

# COUNTY FOOTBALL ASSOCIATIONS

There are 50 County Football Associations (FAs), and they are shown 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

46 of these County FAs are geographically based, including three islands (Isle of Man FA, Guernsey FA, and Jersey FA), and four are non-geographically based (Amateur Football Alliance, Army FA, Royal Navy FA, and RAF FA).

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

County FAs govern the game by affiliating clubs, sanctioning leagues, running local cup competitions, and implementing The FA's Rules and Regulations within their local area. This includes administering yellow and red cards; and investigating, charging, and appointing a disciplinary panel to hear misconduct cases. They are also responsible for recruiting disciplinary commission members who possess the correct attributes to maintain the integrity and perception of the disciplinary process.

From the start of the 2023/24 season, The FA introduced points deductions for teams across the grassroots game if their players or coaches commit repeated offences of serious misconduct. Points deductions can apply to clubs at Step 7 and below of the men's game, and clubs across Tier 3 and below in the women's pyramid. Incidents of serious misconduct may include acts of discrimination and assault or attempted assault, physical contact or attempted physical contact against a match official. Deductions will range from three to 12 points depending on the number of breaches within 12 months of the team's first offence and severity of the case(s).

The FA was also 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 FA's Regional Code of Governance 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 those leading and working at these organisations better reflect the communities they serve. The Code of Governance for County FAs will be mandated from the 2025/26 season.

The respective County FA contact details can be accessed at:

[www.EnglandFootball.com/explore/county-football-associations](http://www.EnglandFootball.com/explore/county-football-associations)