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The level of abuse in English football has "reached crisis point", says the head of anti-discrimination body Kick It Out. The comments come after Manchester City's Khadija 'Bunny' Shaw became the latest player to be subjected to racist and misogynistic messages, following a recent Women's Super League match.

Shaw pulled out of her club's League Cup semi-final to protect her mental health stemming from what Manchester City described as "disgusting treatment" after a defeat by Arsenal.

"It is absolutely shocking, and that's just one of a number of examples we see both online and in stadiums," said Kick It Out (KIO) chief executive Samuel Okafor. "We're seeing those reports coming into us every single week."

Newcastle United recently urged social media companies to do more after midfielder Joe Willock received "appalling" racist abuse on Instagram. Tamworth forward Chris Wreh was also racially abused online last month.

However, Okafor hopes new online safety rules will help to tackle the issue in what he sees as "a pivotal year for driving real change across the game", in terms of both discrimination and under-representation.

The Football Governance Bill - which will force clubs to show what action they are taking on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) - is expected to come into law in the next few months. The Football Association has also made it mandatory for clubs to publish workforce data for the first time this summer, "a really big step towards transparency in the game," according to Okafor.

"If football can really use this moment, it can change," he added. "It's a huge opportunity to make it a more welcoming and inclusive place where people can feel that they can belong and thrive."

KIO received a record number of reports of discrimination in a single season for 2023-24, with levels of sexism, misogyny and racism all on the rise. Across all levels of English football, there were 1,332 incidents reported by the organisation - a 32% increase. Racism remained the most reported form of discrimination, with a 47% rise in abuse across all levels.

"These are footballers, but they're [also] real human beings, and when you see the abuse that they face, it's just totally unacceptable," said Okafor.