



FOR ALL

GRASSROOTS DISCIPLINARY GUIDE

2024/25 Season

FOR CLUBS



APPLICABLE TO CATEGORY 5 FOOTBALL:

- Teams at Steps 5-7 of the National League System
- A team competing outside the National League System playing in Saturday Football, Sunday Football, Midweek Football, Representative Football, Veterans Football, Education Football
- Teams at Tier 3 and below of the Women's Pyramid



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INTRODUCTION

This guide has been prepared to provide helpful guidance to Clubs and Participants on the disciplinary procedures within Category 5 Football for the 2024/25 Season.

It will cover match-based discipline, regulation changes, hearings, the appeals process, and demonstrate how the Whole Game System can assist Clubs and Leagues with their day to day administration.

In the event of any inconsistency between this guidance and the Rules and Regulations, the Rules and Regulations shall take precedence.

Should you have any questions regarding the Grassroots Disciplinary Guide, please contact your local County FA (for example, Discipline@SussexFA.com) or someone from The FA Grassroots Discipline Team, shown below:

THE FA GRASSROOTS DISCIPLINE TEAM

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REGULATION CHANGES 2024/25

Below provides a brief overview of the key Regulation amendments for 2024/25 Season for all Players, Clubs & Leagues operating within Category 5 Football. Please refer to The FA or County FA Handbook for the Rules and Regulations in their entirety and all other changes that may affect you. This is not intended to replace The FA Handbook.

1. CLAIMS FOR WRONGFUL DISMISSAL & MISTAKEN IDENTITY

- Disciplinary Regulations updated to reflect common practice that these Claims are not subject to appeal, with the decisions of the Disciplinary Commission being final and binding.

2. MATCH-BASED SUSPENSIONS BEING DISPROPORTIONATELY HARSH

- Provision added with the Disciplinary Regulations to allow Players to make an application to The Association for a match-based suspension to be served in relation to one or more addition football categories.

3. PAYMENT OF FINES FOR A PLAYERS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 AND PARTICIPATING IN YOUTH FOOTBALL

- Clarification added that where a Player under the age of 18, who is participating in Youth Football, receives a Caution or Red Card, the relevant Club at the time the offence was committed must pay the fine.

4. MATCH-BASED DISCIPLINE CATEGORIES

- The category “Further Education” has been amended to “Education” and references to “Youth Football” removed.





5. SIN BINS

- C2 (Sin Bins) are now treated the same as any other Caution and will attract the £12 administration fee.

6. RESPECT SANCTIONING SYSTEM

- This has now been removed and incorporated into the Penalty Points system.

7. PENALTY POINTS SYSTEM

- System updated to include offences by Players, Technical Area Occupants, and Clubs. There will be a focus on behavioural offences, rather than technical offences. The following offences will attract penalty points: Caution for Dissent, Send-Off for Spitting/Offensive, insulting, abusive language and/or gestures/Proven misconduct charges. Interventions detailed where a Team within a Club accumulates 25/50/100 Penalty Points.

8. THREATENING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS A MATCH OFFICIAL

- Definition updated to: Threatening a Match Official (whether through words or actions and regardless of whether the Match Official believes that they have been threatened). Examples include but are not limited to: the use of words that imply (directly or indirectly) that the Match Official may be subjected to any form of physical abuse either immediately or later, whether realistic or not; the raising of hands to intimidate the Match Official; pretending to throw or kick an object at the Match Official. A fine of up to £200 with a mandatory minimum of £100. Suspension of between 112-182 days, with an entry point of 147 days.

9. PHYSICAL CONTACT OR ATTEMPTED PHYSICAL CONTACT ON A MATCH OFFICIAL

- A fine of up to £250 with a mandatory minimum of £150. For attempted Physical Contact, a suspension of between 112 days and 1 year, with an entry point of 238 days. For Physical Contact, a suspension of between 182 days and 2 years, with an entry point of 1 year.

10. ASSAULT OR ATTEMPTED ASSAULT ON A MATCH OFFICIAL

- Definition updated to: acting in a manner which causes or attempts to cause injury to the Match Official (whether or not it does in fact cause injury), examples include, but are not limited to, spitting (whether it connects or not), causing and/or attempting to cause injury by striking, or attempting to strike, kicking or attempting to kick, butting or attempting to butt, barging or attempting to barge, kicking or throwing any item directly at the Match Official. For attempted Assault (other than spitting), a suspension of between 3-5 years, with an entry point of 4 years. For Assault (other than spitting), a suspension of between 5-10 years, with an entry point of 7 years. For Assault (spitting), a suspension of between 2-8 years, with an entry point of 4 years.

11. SANCTIONING REDUCTION FOR SERIOUS CASES

- Where the subject of the Charge is a Participant aged between 12 and 15 years old (inclusive) at the time of the alleged offence, the applicable sanction range, recommended entry point and standard minimum suspension shall be reduced by 50% (rounded to the nearest whole number of days).

12. ASSAULTS BY PARTICIPANTS

- Definition updated to: Assaults by Participants - If a Match Official's report indicates that a Participant has perpetrated an assault on another Participant or any other person causing serious injury before, during or after a Match, the Affiliated Association shall without delay investigate the Match Official's report.

13. COSTS

- Disciplinary Regulations updated to reflect that parties are responsible for their own costs.





MATCH BASED DISCIPLINE CATEGORIES

There are seven categories for Match Based Discipline:

- Saturday
- Midweek
- Veterans
- Sunday
- Representative
- Education
- Friendly

Automatic suspensions for dismissals apply to one of these seven categories. If you are dismissed in a game, you are unable to play again in the same category of football until the automatic match-based suspension is served. For example, a Player sent off in Sunday football would still be eligible to play football for a Saturday team as the suspension would apply to Sunday football only.

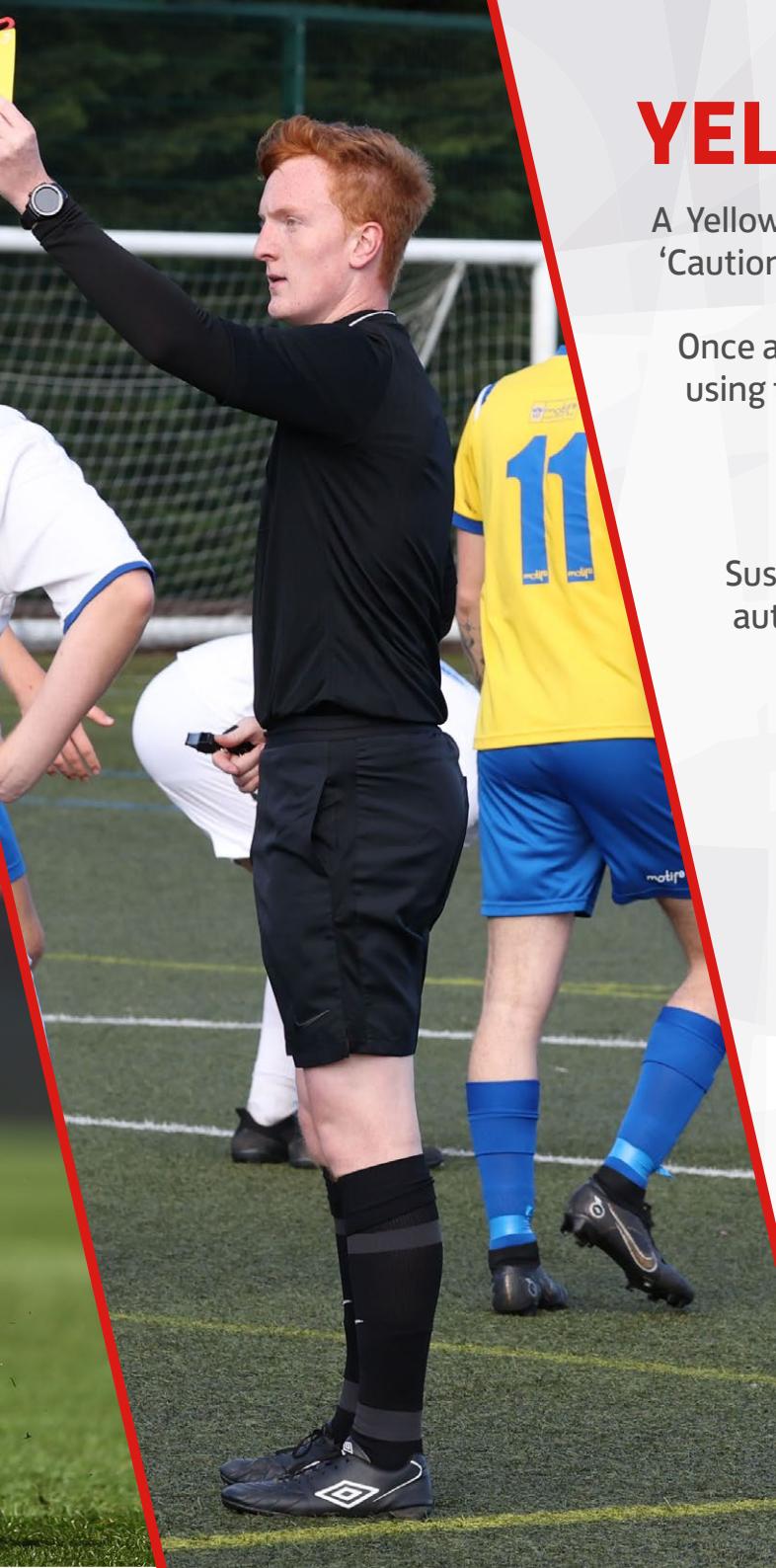
These categories also apply with regards to continuing misconduct, receiving multiple cautions or dismissals in a Season. A Player would need to accumulate 5 cautions before the 31 December in the same category of football to receive an automatic one match suspension. For example, if during the same period, a Player received 3 cautions in Midweek football and 2 cautions in Sunday football, then they would not be subject to the automatic suspension for accumulated cautions.

Please note that suspensions resultant from misconduct cases (charges issued by the County FA) are from ALL football at CFA level (see definition of Category 5 on Page 2), so a Participant will not be able to play until the team they were playing for when the charge was issued serves the appropriate number of games.

In the event of non-receipt of paperwork following disciplinary sanctions being administered by the Match Official, the Club are required to contact the County Association and make them aware immediately.

If you have not received paperwork usually within four working days of the game, The FA advises that you must bring this to the attention of your County FA.

Non receipt of paperwork is not an excuse!



YELLOW CARDS

A Yellow card received by a Player will be shown on the paperwork from the County FA as a 'Caution', and we will refer to both terms throughout the booklet.

Once a Referee has reported a Caution, you can find and acknowledge it on Whole Game System using the guide below:

ACKNOWLEDGING YELLOW AND RED CARDS ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM

Suspensions which are imposed for reaching the thresholds below will commence automatically 7 days following the final caution.

Number of Cautions	Cut Off Date (Inclusive)	Automatic Suspension for Number of Cautions
5	31 st December	1 match suspension and £15 Admin Fee
10	Second Sunday in April	2 match suspension and £15 Admin Fee
15	End of Season	3 match suspension and £15 Admin Fee
20+		Every 5 cautions received thereafter will result in continuing misconduct charge

If a Player reaches one of the thresholds after the cut-off date, they will be warned as to their future conduct and no suspension shall be imposed, but an Admin Fee will be payable.

As mentioned previously, match-based discipline categories apply and to reach the threshold you must receive the amount in the same category of football.

Even if you have not received notification of suspension from your County FA you must contact them and inform them that there is information outstanding that has not been received.

For the avoidance of doubt, the accumulation of cautions by a Player in relation to matches in the same Football Category shall include those that are punished by a Sin Bin.

An administration fee will be charged to the Player through their Club for the cost of processing each notification. The applicable administration fee is £12.00 for each notification of a cautionable offence.

Once the administration fee has been invoiced to your Club, you can follow the guide below which details how to pay disciplinary fines on Whole Game System:

PAYING DISCIPLINARY FINES ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM

If you are in doubt, please contact your County FA who will be able to advise further.





COMPETITION SPECIFIC SANCTIONS FOR CAUTIONS

There is Competition Specific Sanctioning for Yellow Cards in the following Competitions:

FA Cup and FA Vase

Therefore, the accumulation of 5/10/15/20 Yellow Cards in all other competitions only applies to League and League Cup matches.

The remaining Competitions will carry suspensions as follows:

COMPETITION IN WHICH CAUTIONS ACCUMULATED	NUMBER OF CAUTIONS ACCUMULATED	CUT OFF POINT (INCLUSIVE)	AUTOMATIC SUSPENSION FOR NUMBER OF CAUTIONS	COMPETITIONS TO WHICH AUTOMATIC SUSPENSION/ SANCTION APPLIES
FA Cup	4 and for every 2 further cautions	Sixth Round (Quarter Finals)	1 Match	FA Cup Only
FA Vase	2 and for every 2 further cautions	Sixth Round (Quarter Finals)	1 Match	FA Vase Only

It should be noted this Regulation is for cautions only and dismissals remain unaffected.



RED CARDS

A Red Card received by a Player will be shown on the paperwork from the County as a ‘Standard Charge’, but throughout the booklet will be referred to as a Red Card.

As with Cautions, once a Referee has reported a Red Card, you can find and acknowledge it on Whole Game System using the guide below:

ACKNOWLEDGING YELLOW AND RED CARDS ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM

Suspensions commence automatically on the 7th day following the match in which the Player was dismissed. The County FA will send you the charge letter and response form via Whole Game System. The standard sanctions are shown below:

Dismissal Offence	Suspension
Serious Foul Play	3 Matches
Violent Conduct	3 Matches
Spitting at an Opponent	6 Matches
Denial of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity	1 Match
Use of offensive, or insulting or abusive language	2 Matches
Receiving a Second Caution in a Match	1 Match

Players dismissed from Saturday football can still play Sunday football and vice versa as these are separate match-based discipline categories.

Qualifying matches for a suspension are based on the team the Player was playing for at the time they were sent off. Should a Player transfer, (i.e. cease to be a member of the original Club),





to the satisfaction of the County FA, to a team at the same level and category as the original Club, then any remaining period of suspension may also be transferred to the new Club.

You can add qualifying matches to the relevant suspension on Whole Game System. A guide to processing can be accessed from the link below:

ADDING SUSPENSION MATCHES ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM

If the team has no more fixtures remaining at the end of a Season, the suspension is lifted and commences when that team's first qualifying fixture takes place in the new Season.

The Player is free from suspension between the last qualifying fixture and the opening qualifying fixture of the new Season to participate for any team they wish to - this applies to Match Based Discipline football only.

An abandoned or postponed match will not count towards clearing a Player of suspension as it is not a completed fixture. Any Misconduct received in the abandoned fixture must still be processed by the County FA. Importantly, this is still the case even if a League decides that the result from the abandoned fixture stands. All matches must be completed for the fixture to count towards the suspension.

Leagues can only deal with status of the fixture once all disciplinary action has been completed by the County FA. Leagues will decide on the status of the game in accordance with the relevant League Rules.

A game that is classed as a 'double header' where teams play each other twice on the same day is classed as two matches. A Player can therefore use both fixtures as qualifying matches.

CONTINUING MISCONDUCT

Players who are dismissed on more than one occasion during the Season will receive an automatic additional match ban.

This only occurs for multiple dismissals that have taken place within the same category of football.

For example, if you have been dismissed in a Sunday football match and are then sent off again in a Sunday football match later in the Season, then you will get an additional match ban. There would be an additional two matches for a 3rd dismissal within that category and so on.

There is no right of appeal against this punishment and it will be imposed automatically. However, if you have been sent off in Sunday football but are then sent off again later in the Season in a Saturday football match, you will not receive any additional suspension other than the standard charge.

SENDING OFF SANCTION INSUFFICIENT

In truly exceptional circumstances, an Affiliated Association may seek to increase the disciplinary consequences of a sending-off offence by making a claim that the standard punishment is clearly insufficient. An Affiliated Association may bring such a claim where it is satisfied that the standard punishment otherwise applicable to the sending-off offence would be clearly insufficient. Such claims may only be made by an Affiliated Association for the following sending-off offences: (a) serious foul play; (b) violent conduct; or (c) spitting at an opponent or any other person.





QUALIFYING MATCHES

The following competitions will qualify for a Player from Step 5 and below to serve the suspension imposed by the County FA:

- FA Competitions (Cup, Trophy, Vase, Women's Cup and FA Sunday Cup)
- League Matches
- League Cup Matches
- All County Cup Matches
- League Cup Competitions
- Any Competition as designated as a qualifying competition by the sanctioning authority

If you are unsure whether a fixture qualifies for a suspension, please contact your County FA who will be able to advise you further.

Suspensions under the Match Based Discipline System automatically commence 7 days from the date of the fixture.

If you have not received correspondence relating to a fixture within 3 working days of the Red Card, you must contact the County FA immediately.

Non-receipt of paperwork is not a valid defence, and a charge is issued for playing whilst under suspension for both the Club and the Player.

FRIENDLY FIXTURE SANCTIONS

A Player shown a Red Card in a Friendly Match will receive an automatic immediate suspension from Friendly Matches until such time as their Club has completed its next Friendly Match, as decided by the relevant Affiliated Association. This is irrespective of the offence committed.

Should the County FA deem that the offence committed warrants further discipline action, they do have the ability to raise a misconduct charge if they feel that the standard punishment is insufficient.

Any Player who is sent off in the last friendly fixture of the Season will automatically have the suspension carried over to the following Season. They will not be suspended from their competitive fixtures in this instance.

ADMINISTRATION FEE

The Administration Fee for non-caution offences (send offs and all misconduct cases) will be £15.00 to account for the additional administration of these cases.

The Administration fee for cautionable offences is £12.00





CLAIMS OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY AND WRONGFUL DISMISSAL

Mistaken Identity claims can be made if the Referee cautions or sends off the wrong Player from the field of play.

A Club should identify the name of the person who was responsible and submit to the County FA any supporting evidence along with the appeal fee, within three working days of the match. If a claim is successful, the claim fee will be returned, and the suspension/fine will be removed from the incorrect Player's record and transferred to the correct Player.

In all cases the claim fee, which must be submitted with details of your claim is £50 (Steps 5-6 & NLS Feeder Leagues). For Clubs outside the National League system the fee is £30.00.

Time limits are strict, claims received late will not be considered

Day of Dismissal	Claim to be submitted 5pm on the third Business Day following the incident
Saturday	Wednesday
Sunday	Wednesday
Monday	Thursday
Tuesday	Friday
Wednesday	Monday
Thursday	Tuesday
Friday	Wednesday

If Bank Holidays fall within this period, the appropriate number of extra days will be made available, but claims will always be heard before any sanction commences.

A full guide to raising a Claim for Mistaken Identity on Whole Game System can be found below:

ADDING A CLAIM FOR MISTAKEN IDENTITY ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM

A claim of Wrongful Dismissal is lodged for on-field offences that result in a straight sending-off only – not for Players dismissed for receiving two bookings or a player dismissed for offensive, insulting, or abusive language/gestures.

A Club wishing to lodge a claim must notify the County FA in writing of its intention to do so by 5pm on the second business day following the game in which the dismissal occurred. By 5pm on the fourth business day any evidence relied upon in support of the claim must be submitted to the County FA.

In all cases the claim fee, which must be submitted with details of your appeal is £50.00 (Steps 5-6 & NLS Feeder Leagues). For Clubs outside the National League system the fee is £30.00.

Time limits are strict, claims received late will not be considered.

Day of Dismissal	Notification of Intention to Submit a Claim by 5pm on the second Business Day following the incident	Claim/Evidence to be submitted by 5pm on the fourth Business Day following the incident
Saturday	Tuesday	Thursday
Sunday	Tuesday	Thursday
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Tuesday	Thursday	Monday
Wednesday	Friday	Tuesday
Thursday	Monday	Wednesday
Friday	Tuesday	Thursday

If Bank Holidays fall within this period, the appropriate number of extra days will be made available, but claims will always be heard before any sanction commences.





Providing video footage of the incident is no longer mandatory at this level but should be made available if it exists. A successful claim will need to demonstrate that the Match Official made an obvious error in dismissing the Player from the field of play.

If a claim is successful, the claim fee will be returned, and the suspension/fine will be removed from the Player's record. However, the details of the dismissal will remain on the record as it is fact that the Player was sent off.

Should a player be dismissed for denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity because of a challenge outside of the Penalty area, a claim will only be considered as to whether the foul committed was an obvious error. The Commission will not consider whether the offence took place inside or outside of the penalty area, this is not an opportunity to re-referee the game and the Commission must only consider whether the Red Card for denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity was an obvious error.

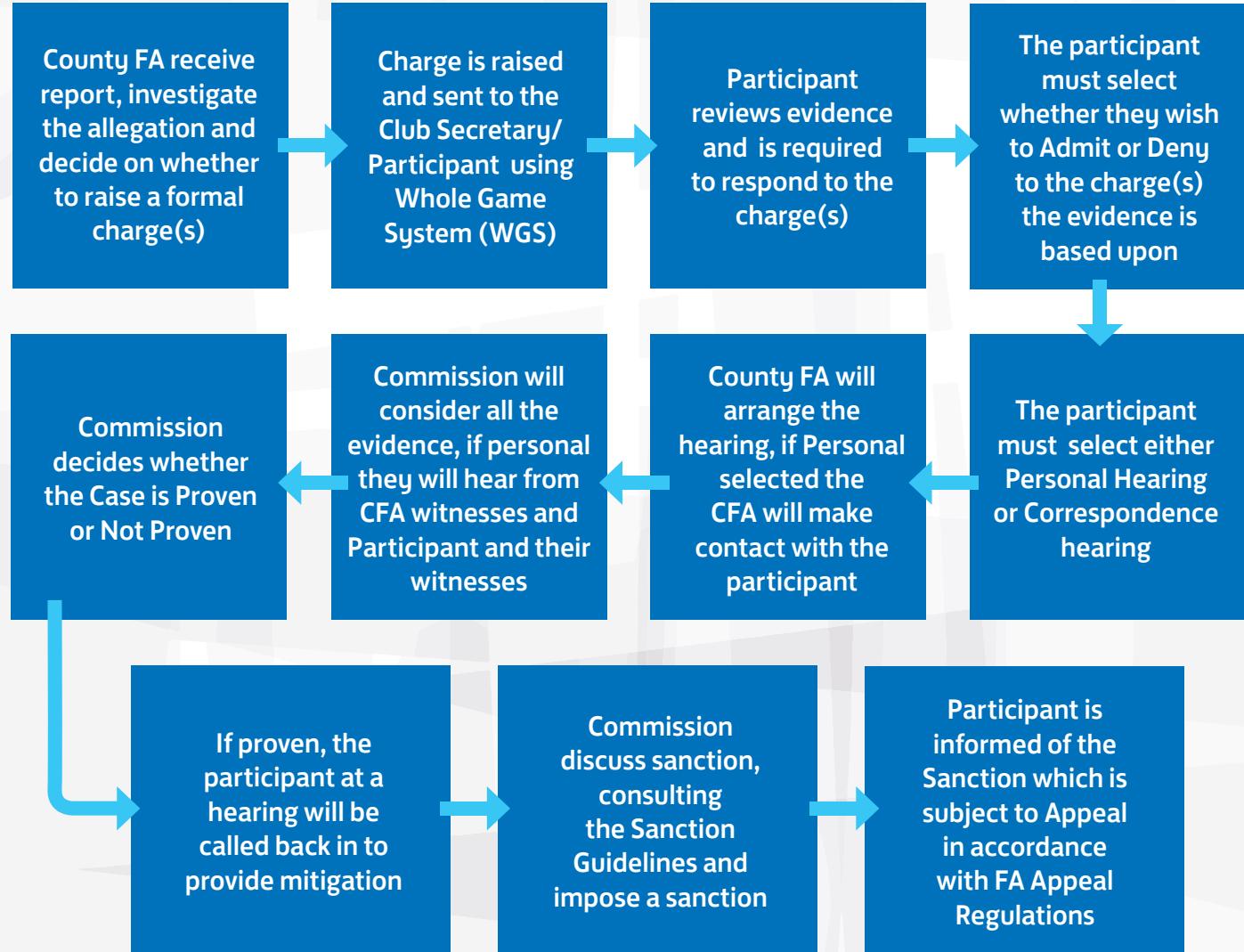
Claims for wrongful dismissal will always be dealt with before any suspension commences. The onus will be on the County FA to ensure they have arranged a Commission to consider the claim prior to any suspension.

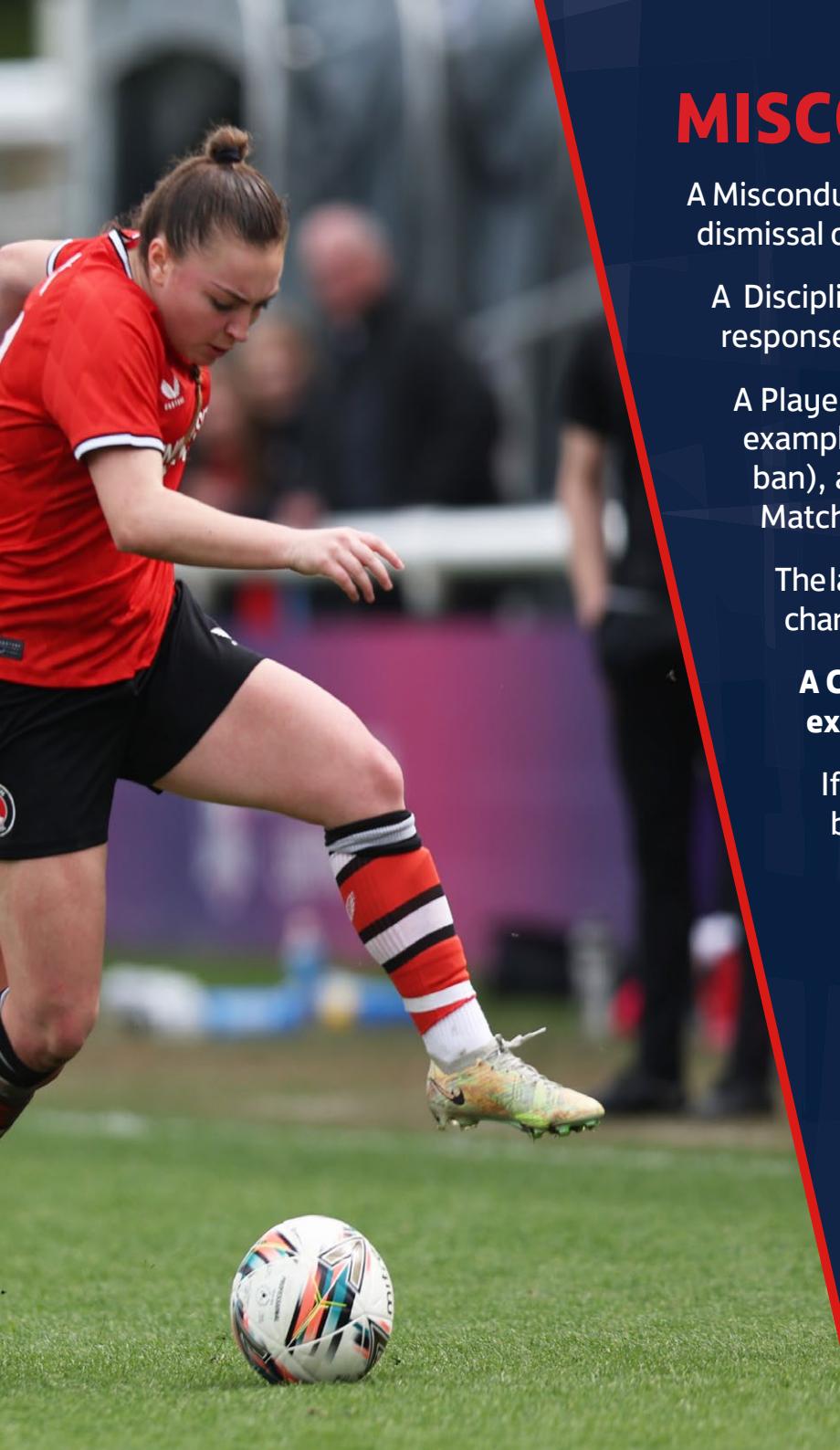
A full guide to raising a Claim for Wrongful Dismissal on Whole Game System can be found below:

ADDING A CLAIM FOR WRONGFUL DISMISSAL ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM

All disciplinary commission decisions for Wrongful Dismissal or Mistaken Identity cases are final and binding on all parties and there is no further right to challenge.

DISCIPLINE FLOWCHART - MISCONDUCT CHARGES





MISCONDUCT CHARGES

A Misconduct Charge will be issued for a reported incident which does not fall under standard dismissal offences or is a serious offence.

A Disciplinary Commission will convene to consider all Misconduct Cases, whether the response to the charge is accepted or denied.

A Player can be charged with Misconduct following being sent from the field of play. For example, a Player is sent off for violent conduct (will receive the standard three match ban), and before leaving the field of play used abusive/insulting comments towards a Match Official.

The latter would be dealt with as Misconduct and subsequently the Player will have a second charge that they need to respond to, having the options to accept or deny the charge.

A Club, League or any Participant in football can be charged with Misconduct (for example, Manager, Coach, Physio, Club Secretary, Chairperson).

If you receive a Misconduct Charge and it is found Proven, any suspension will be from ALL Football at Category 5 with a start date at the discretion of the Disciplinary Commission.

If you are issued with a Misconduct Charge you will receive a charge letter, response form and any evidence that the County have based their charge upon. You must ensure you respond to the charge within 14 days, or within 7 days where the Misconduct arises from an Abandoned Match, relates to playing whilst suspended, or where an Interim Suspension Order is imposed.

A guide to responding to a Misconduct Charge in Whole Game System can be found below:

RESPONDING TO A MISCONDUCT CHARGE ON WHOLE GAME SYSTEM

NON-RESPONSE TO A MISCONDUCT CHARGE

When a County FA raises a Misconduct charge, paperwork is generated to the Club and on some occasions will be sent directly to the Participant. Where it is sent to the Club, the Secretary must make the Participant aware of the charge and ask for their response. For each charge the Participant is invited to respond, selecting whether they accept or deny the charge and how they wish for the case to be heard (e.g. Personal or Non-Personal Hearing).

If the County FA fail to receive a response to the charge the matter will be passed to a Disciplinary Commission for them to consider at their discretion. No late fine or reminder will be sent to Participants who fail to respond to a Misconduct charge however the Participant forfeits the right for a Personal Hearing.

FOR ALL





RESPONSE TO CHARGE

On the response sheet Participants will be offered four options, one of which must be chosen:

- A.** I am pleading guilty to the charge and I wish the case to be dealt with in my absence. I request any correspondence that I have submitted to be considered and I await the decision of the Disciplinary Commission as to my punishment.

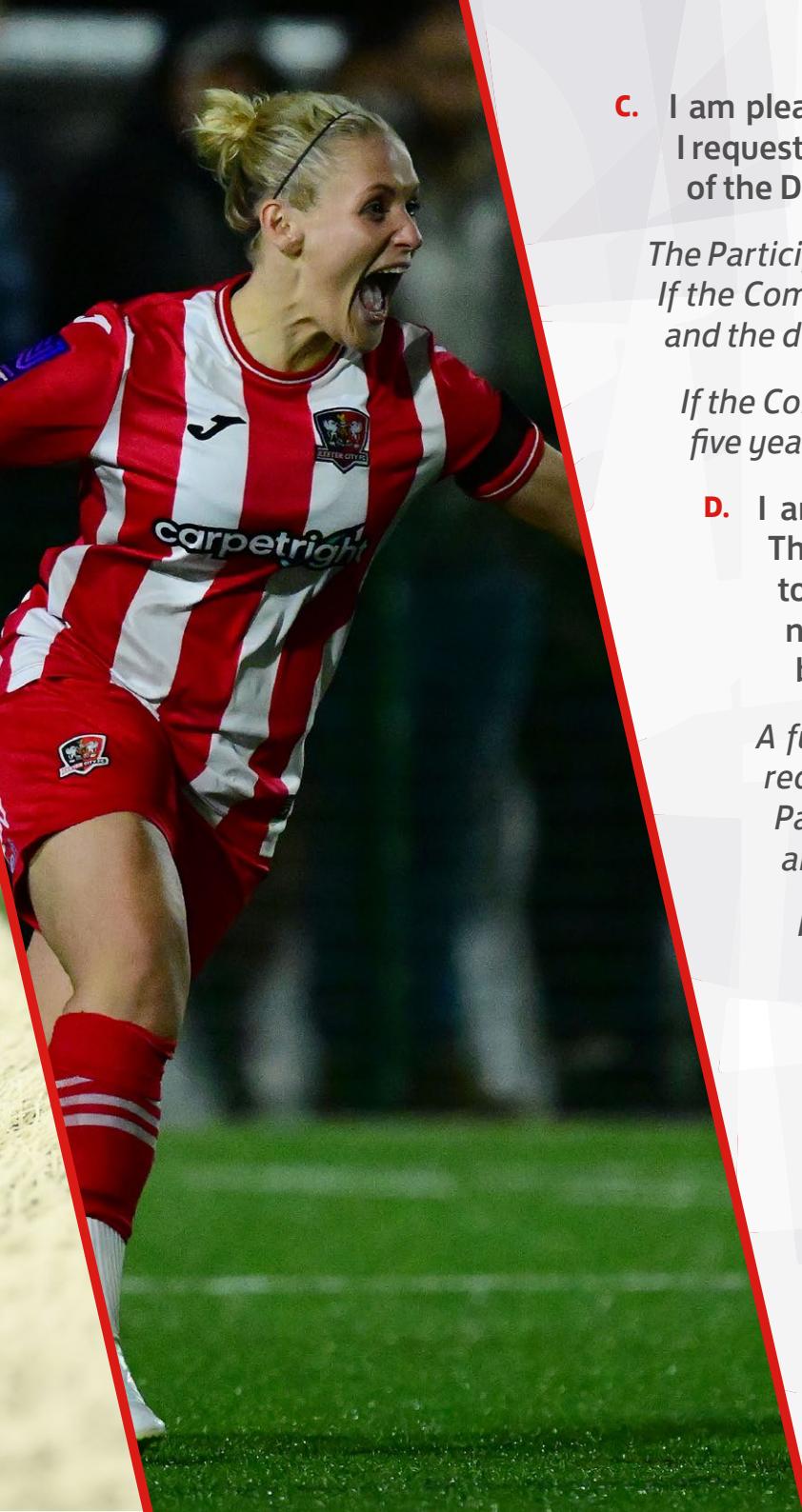
A Disciplinary Commission will consider the case, taking into consideration the Participant's/Club's disciplinary record from the previous five years and all documentation that has been sent to them in relation to the case. The Commission will come to a decision and the Participant(s) will be notified in writing by the County FA.

- B.** I am pleading guilty to the charge and I wish to attend a Discipline Hearing to enter a verbal plea for leniency. The hearing fee in addition to the administration fee is enclosed where applicable. I am aware that I am accepting the charge and I will not be able to question the basis of the charge and that the match officials will not be in attendance.

The participant, having already accepted the charge, will put forward verbal mitigation in relation to the case, which could include reference to the participants previous disciplinary history. A Commission will consider the participants submission and impose a sanction that they deem appropriate.

The charge has already been accepted so the Match Officials report will not be able to be contested and neither will the Match Official/s be in attendance.





- C.** I am pleading not guilty to the charge, and I wish the case to be dealt with in my absence. I request any correspondence that I have submitted be considered and I will await the decision of the Disciplinary Commission.

The Participant/Club must submit the documentation that they wish the Commission to consider. If the Commission find the case not proven the case is concluded, with no further action taken and the details being removed from the Participant's record.

If the Commission decide the case is proven, they will consider the Participant/Club's previous five year history and decide on an appropriate sanction.

- D.** I am pleading not guilty to the charge, and I wish to attend a Disciplinary Hearing. The personal hearing fee and the administration fee are enclosed where applicable, together with written reasons as to why I am requesting a personal hearing and the number of witnesses I intend to represent me, along with any other documentation to be considered.

A full list of witnesses who will be attending and the reason why the hearing has been requested needs to be submitted to the County FA (and any other documentation the Participant wishes the Commission to consider at the hearing). The County FA will arrange the hearing.

If the Participant denies any aspect of the charge and report on which it is based, they must select option C or D.

Should the Misconduct charge be found proven, Participants are permitted to lodge an appeal against a decision of the County FA. They are required to adhere to FA Regulations for Appeals.

A Participant who receives a match suspension as a result of a Misconduct charge is unable to participate in any football within Category 5, including refereeing, until the team they were playing for when charged serves the qualifying number of fixtures, as imposed by a Disciplinary Commission.

APPEALING A COUNTY FA DECISION

A Participant charged can lodge an appeal against the decision of a County FA concerning their own case. Any Participant seeking to appeal their decision should contact Judicial Services (JudicialServices@TheFA.com) – the department who facilitate the appeal process – at the earliest opportunity for the relevant information regarding how to formally appeal.

An intention to Appeal must be submitted within 7 days of the written decision.

The full written submissions are required within 14 days of the written decision and should be sent to JudicialServices@thefa.com

Further details on the Appeals process can be found here:

[FURTHER DETAILS ON THE APPEALS PROCESS](#)

SANCTION GUIDELINES

The Disciplinary Sanction Guidelines have been produced to improve consistency in the application of sanctions for Misconduct charges across all County FA.

In an ever-changing world of football, it is important that the processes of The Football Association and County Associations evolve to provide a safe, enjoyable environment for Players, Referees and Participants alike, whilst maintaining the need for a fair and transparent disciplinary process for all involved.

As well as sporting sanctions and fines, a Commission is also able to order Participants to attend various workshops or seminars to help improve poor behaviour. Discipline is not a matter of just issuing match bans and financial sanctions but is also a process to help educate people and encourage best practice.





EDUCATION SANCTIONS

There are several alternatives to the traditional sanctions that may be used if a Disciplinary Commission considers they will be of benefit to the Participant.

Educational sanctions are a great tool when dealing with younger Players and the Club Welfare Officer can play a key role by discussing the ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ with the Participant during or following a disciplinary hearing. Only a Disciplinary Commission can enforce such an order on a Participant.

There are a variety of education sanctions that are available, and they are:

- RESPECT Courses
- Safeguarding Children Workshop
- Laws of the game course/presentation
- Mandatory Equality Education (Online & Face to Face)



GROUND BAN

What is a ground ban? In simple terms, it is a ban from attending the ground during any match that a particular team participates.

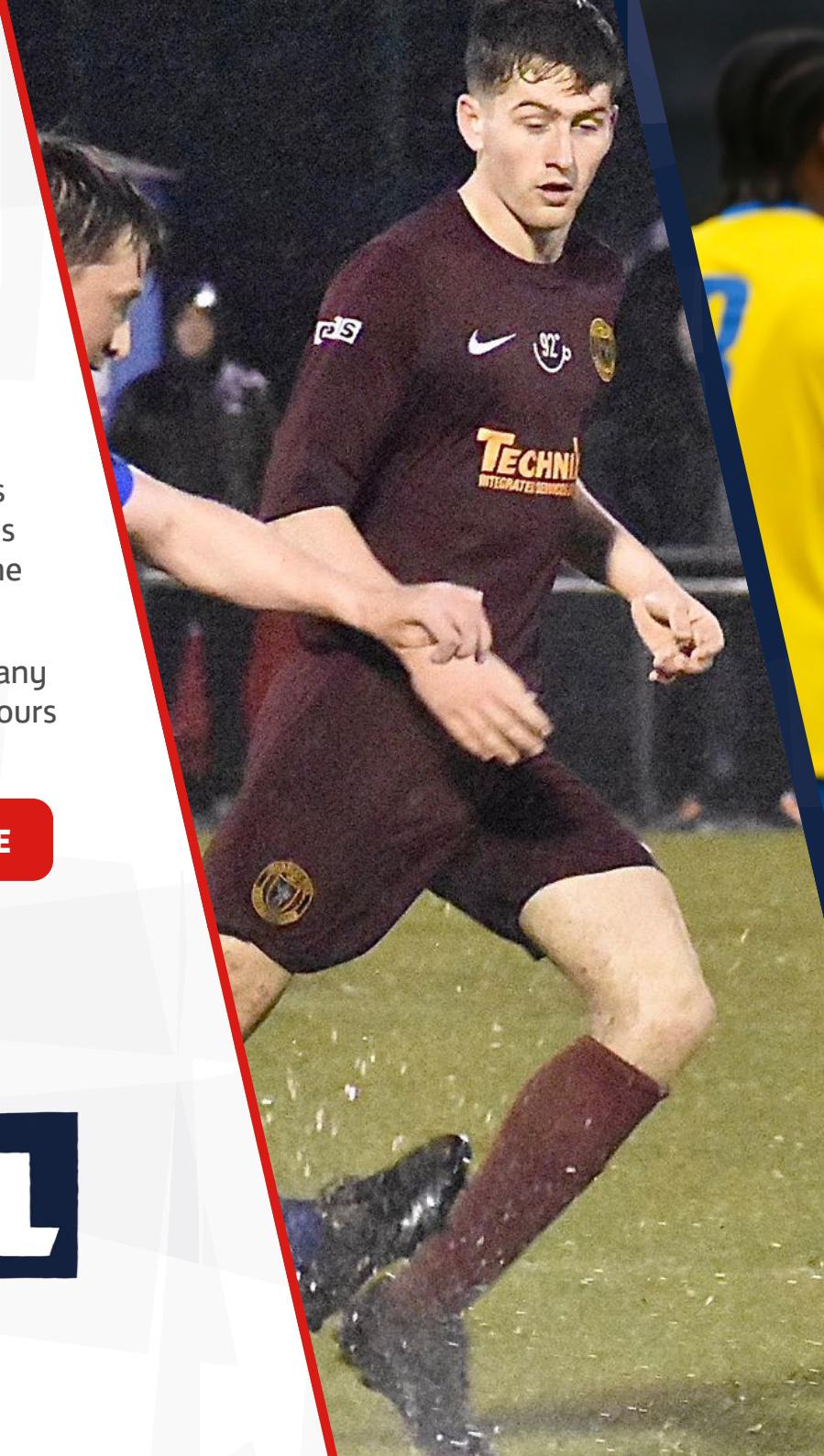
This can also be applied to teams playing on public playing fields as the Participant charged agrees by their very participation to abide by the Rules and Regulations of The Football Association and therefore to any orders made by a Disciplinary Commission.

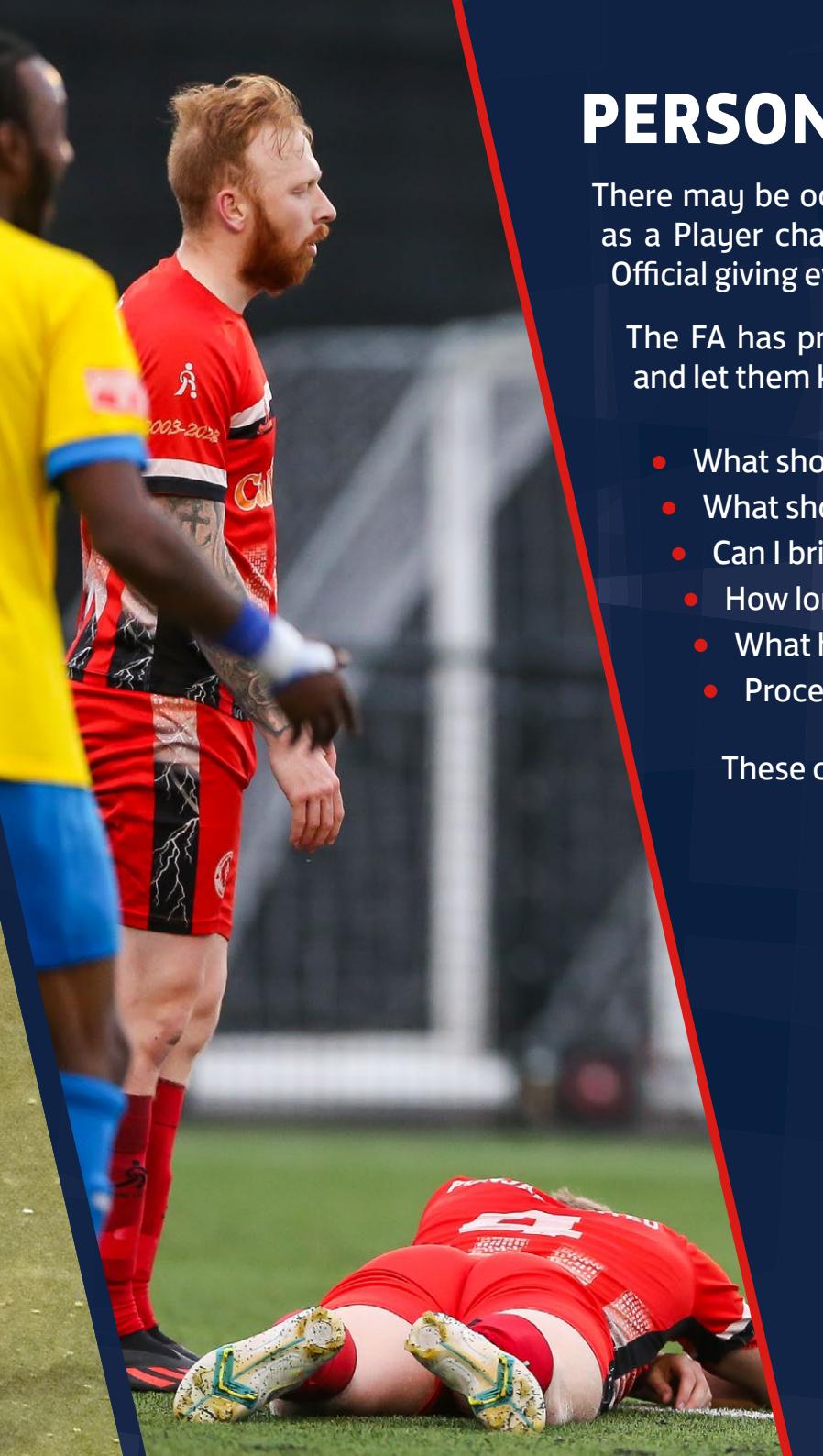
It is The FA's Policy that all County FAs issue ground bans instead of touchline bans as at grassroots level a touchline ban can be difficult to enforce given that games may be played on public playing fields. There can also be uncertainty regarding the distance required to be away from the touchline.

The FA has guidance to Participants who are serving a Ground Ban is to not have any involvement with the match from at least 2 hours before kick-off until at least 2 hours after full-time.

[TO VIEW THE FULL SANCTION GUIDELINES DOCUMENT PLEASE CLICK HERE](#)

FOR ALL





PERSONAL HEARINGS

There may be occasions when Participants are asked to attend to a Disciplinary Hearing – either as a Player charged with Misconduct, or attending as a witness to Misconduct, or as a Match Official giving evidence.

The FA has produced a series of guides to help Participants prepare for the Personal Hearing and let them know what to expect covering topics such as:

- What should I bring with to the hearing?
- What should I wear?
- Can I bring witnesses with me?
- How long do Personal Hearings normally last?
- What happens if I am not happy with the result of my hearing?
- Procedures for young people

These can be downloaded from the links below:

[**PERSONAL HEARING SUPPORT GUIDE**](#)

[**PERSONAL HEARING GUIDANCE FOR UNDER 18S**](#)

MULTIPLE/ALTERNATE CHARGES

A County Association may raise a multiple or an alternate charge against a Participant where required. A multiple charge is raised when there are several charges relating to a Participant on the same day. An alternate charge occurs when a Participant is charged, and there is also an alternate charge which is within a lower threshold than the original charge that was issued.

MULTIPLE CHARGE

A multiple charge occurs when an individual has been reported for more than one offence in a game which constitutes Misconduct. For example, this could be whereby a Player is reported for refusing to give a name but also will be charged with playing whilst suspended. This would be raised as a multiple charge as both incidents arise from the same game. Each charge is dealt with on its own merit and therefore two responses are required and are both separate cases. For example, a Participant could admit the first charge, but deny the second charge.

ALTERNATE CHARGE

An alternate charge is where an individual has been reported for a matter of Misconduct and the County can raise an alternate charge (second charge) which is a lesser charge.

For example, if a Player was charged for Assault or Attempted Assault against a Match Official, the County would have the opportunity to raise an alternate charge which would be for Physical Contact or Attempted Physical Contact against a Match Official. The Participant would be required to respond to the higher charge (first named charge) and if pleading guilty the lesser charge is not considered.

If the higher charge is denied the individual must respond in writing or attend a hearing. If the higher charges are successfully denied, the alternate charge (lesser) is then considered and depending on the Participant's response, the outcome is decided. The alternate charge will only be considered however if a Commission find that the main charge is not proven.



MULTI PLAYER MISCONDUCT CHARGE

Any Club who has six or more individual Players cautioned or dismissed from the field of play in the same match will be automatically fined as per the table below. Please note that the team must be playing at the level detailed below to be subject to the fines.

For each time you have more than half of your Team disciplined in a game the fine will increase.

	1 st Occasion	2 nd Occasion	3 rd Occasion	4 th Occasion
Step 5 & 6	£150	£300	£450	£600
Outside National League System	Warned as to future conduct	£25	£50	£75

EXAMPLE

Players 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are cautioned and Player 6 is sent from the field of play.

The Club (depending on the level) will be dealt with as detailed above for 1st Occasion in a Season.

Players 1, 2, 3 and 4 are cautioned and Players 2 and 3 are then sent off for persistent Misconduct.

The Club would not be fined as only four Players have been disciplined during the match. For the above fines to be enforced you must have six different individuals disciplined in the game.

There is no appeal process against a Multi-Player Misconduct charge. However, in exceptional circumstances a plea of mitigation can be put forward to a Disciplinary Commission who will consider the evidence before them.

CUMULATIVE MISCONDUCT

E1.2 charges will be issued to Clubs with a poor disciplinary record based upon the number of disciplinary cases and repetition of particular offences. To ensure an appropriate process is in place, each offence will have an automatic standard penalty point attributed to it.

The penalty points for each offence are set out below:

CAUTIONS

- C2 (Sin Bin), C2 Dissent, SOW04 Dissent – 4 points

SEND OFFS

- S2 Violent Conduct – 7 points
- S3 Spitting – 10 points
- S6 Use of offensive, or insulting or abusive language – 7 points
- S7 Receiving a Second Caution in a Match (where both Cautions are for Dissent) – 6 points

MISCONDUCT CHARGES

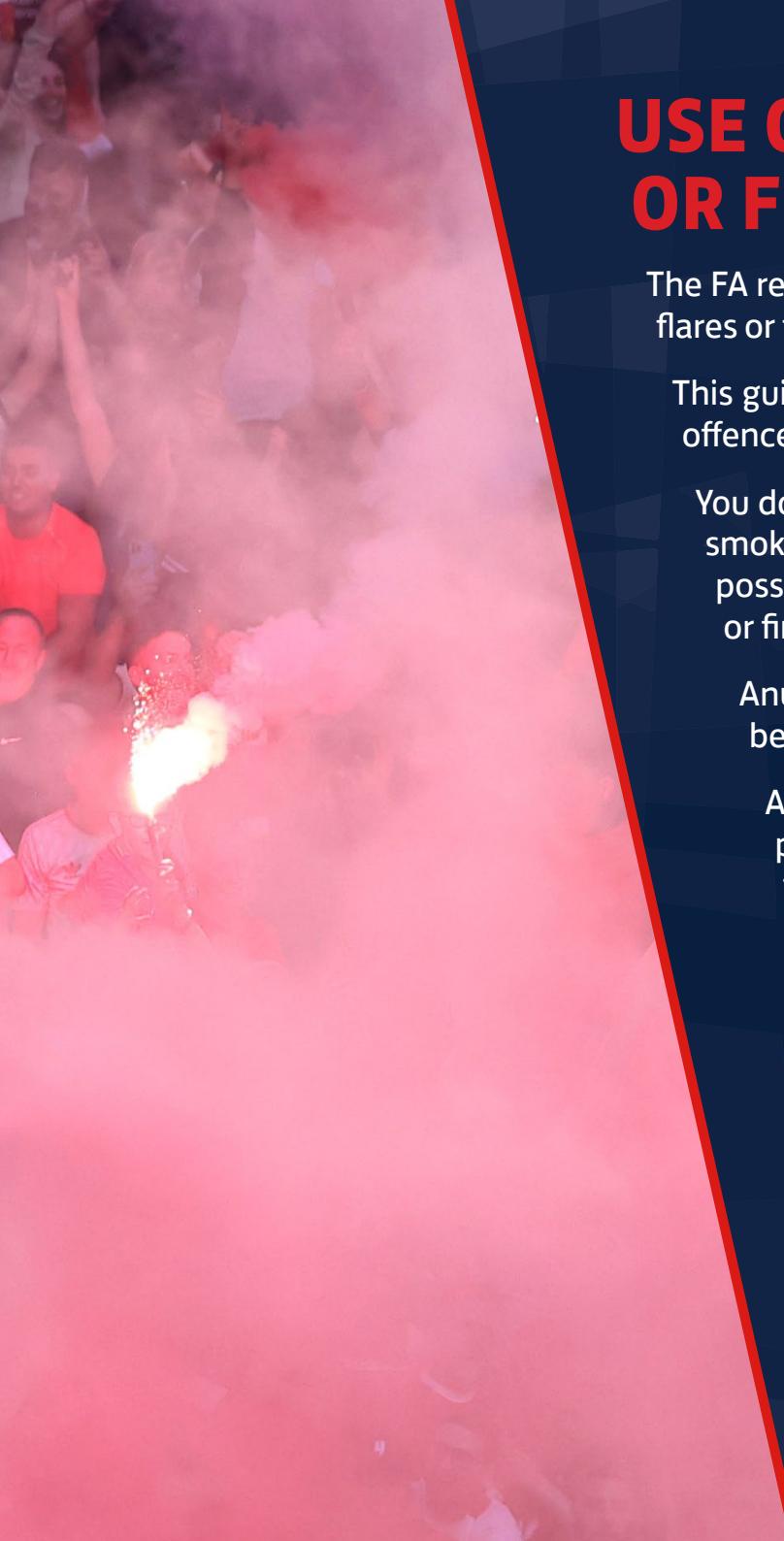
- 5-10 points at the discretion of the Disciplinary Commission or 7-10 points where the charge is dealt with by the National Serious Case Panel

A CHARGE UNDER FA RULE E1.2 WOULD BE RAISED AGAINST A CLUB IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CIRCUMSTANCES:

- Any Team's points tally reached 50/100.
- A Club has four or more incidents of violent conduct in a playing season.







USE OF SMOKE BOMBS, FLARES OR FIREWORKS

The FA recognises a worrying recent trend regarding the possession and/or use of smoke bombs, flares or fireworks at Grassroots Football matches.

This guidance serves as reminder that possession and/or use of such items could be a criminal offence in addition to a breach of disciplinary regulations.

You don't have to let off a flare inside a stadium for it to be a criminal offence. Possession of a smoke bomb or flare is itself a crime if you even attempt to enter a stadium, and that can include possession en-route to the match. The law does not distinguish between smoke bombs, flares or fireworks either.

Anyone found guilty of a criminal offence relating to smoke bombs, flares or fireworks could be subject to a custodial sentence as well as a football banning order.

A club could also be charged with a breach of FA Rule E21 if disciplinary charges are pursued by a County FA. This could result in a sizeable fine in addition to other orders at the discretion of the Disciplinary Commission.

The dangers of using these items are widespread, and include:

- Serious injuries, such as loss of limb or fingers
- Severe burns, due to temperatures of up to 2,000°C
- Breathing problems, due to smoke inhalation
- Loss of hearing or sight, because of the explosive power

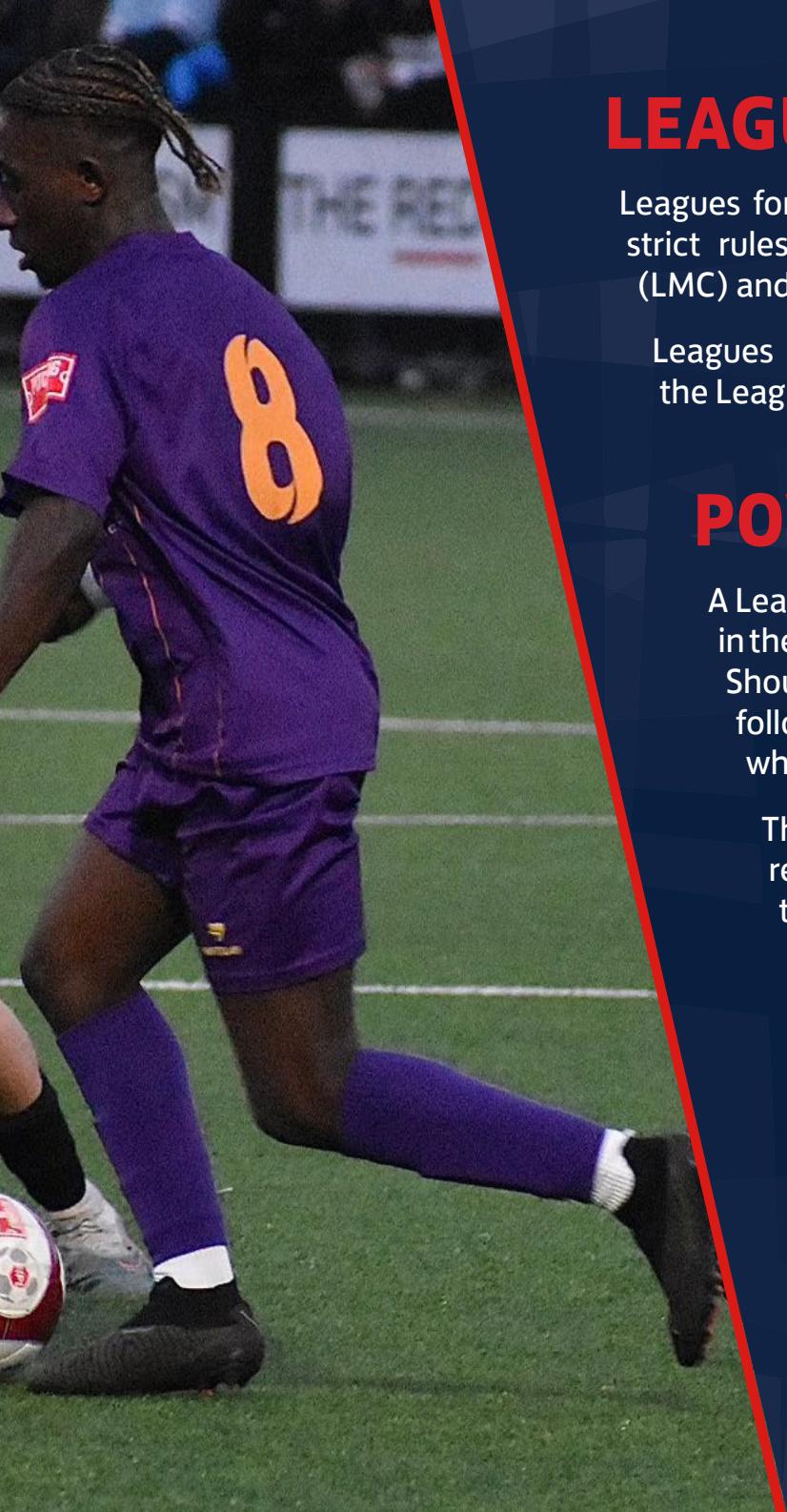
The FA acknowledges these dangers and will look to work with County FAs to actively address the issue using both criminal proceedings and disciplinary regulations.

We encourage Clubs to be vigilant and proactive to protect themselves against a possible charge. Such steps could include:

- Clear communication to Supporters that smoke bombs, flares or fireworks are prohibited at football matches
- Detail that anyone found in possession of such an item could be subject to criminal and disciplinary proceedings
- Highlight the dangers of using the items
- Clubs to issue their own banning orders against Supporters found in possession

FOR ALL





LEAGUES

Leagues form an integral part of the football family, which allows Clubs to play football under strict rules and regulations. All Leagues are formed by a League Management Committee (LMC) and the members are voted in at the AGM by the Member Clubs.

Leagues are governed by their County Association or The Football Association, who affiliate the Leagues each season and sanction the rules for their competition.

POWERS & DUTIES OF A LEAGUE

A League's responsibility is to enforce their competition rules and allow Players to participate in the correct environment and ensure that it is fair and equal for all involved within the League. Should a Club breach a competition rule the League may charge the Club and hear the case following their response. The League is not permitted to deal with matters of misconduct, which are the responsibility of the County Association or The Football Association.

The LMC can make an application to refuse or cancel a registration of a Player if they have received suspensions in excess of 10 matches/112 days in a period of 2 years or less from the date of the first offence. The punishment must be across at least two offences.

WHAT ACTION CAN LEAGUES TAKE AGAINST POORLY BEHAVED CLUBS AND INDIVIDUALS?

The League can take several steps to assist Clubs/Individuals with improving their behaviour in football. Working with Clubs/Individuals is crucial in addressing what the problem is and working together in rectifying the problem.

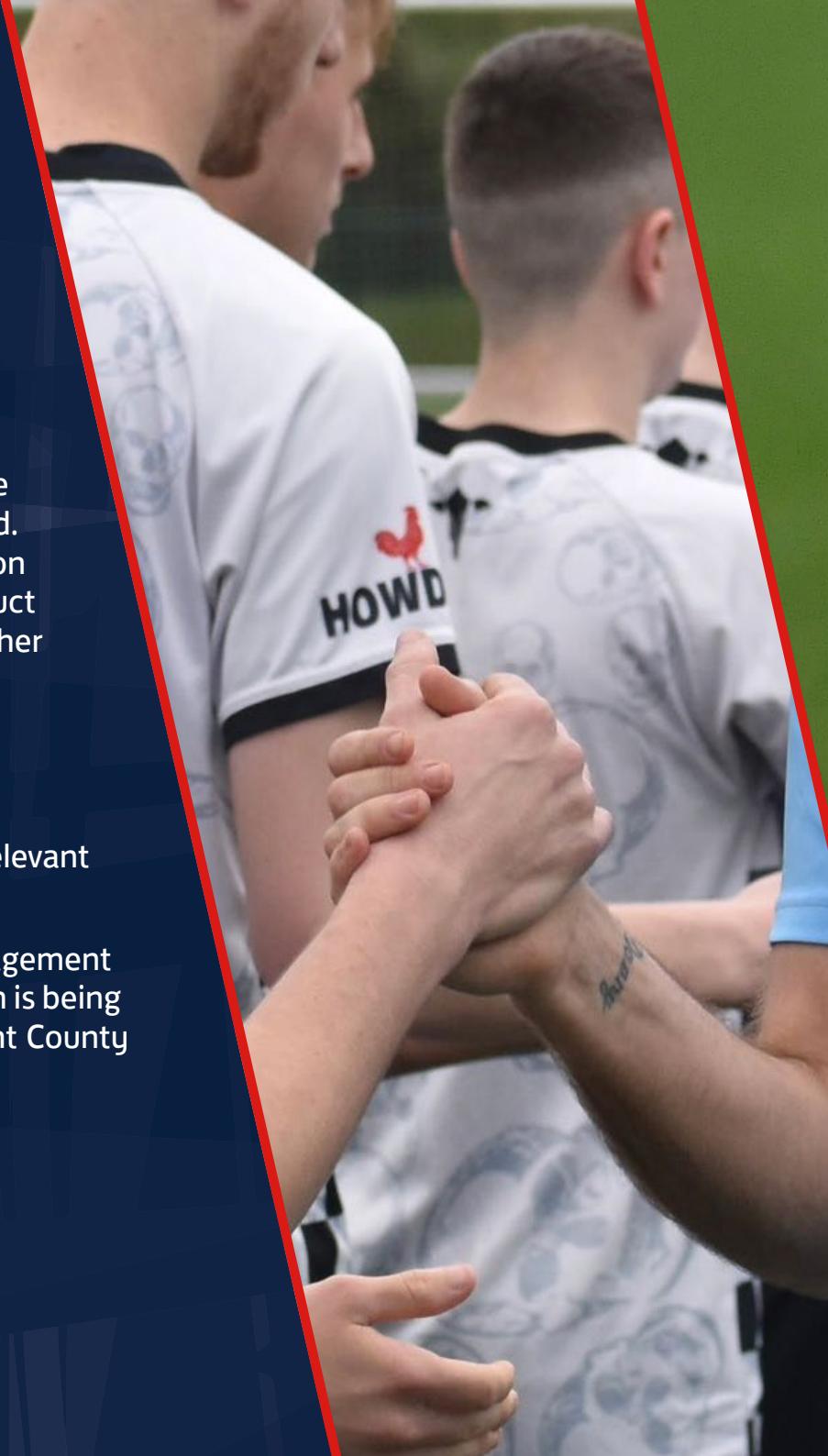
A Player who has previously had their registration removed is permitted to compete within the League again upon completion of the punishment the League imposed. However, the Player is only registered to compete within the League under probation period of 12 months, and should the Player receive further act of proven Misconduct (excluding Standard dismissals) the League are empowered to consider a further charge of bringing the Competition into disrepute.

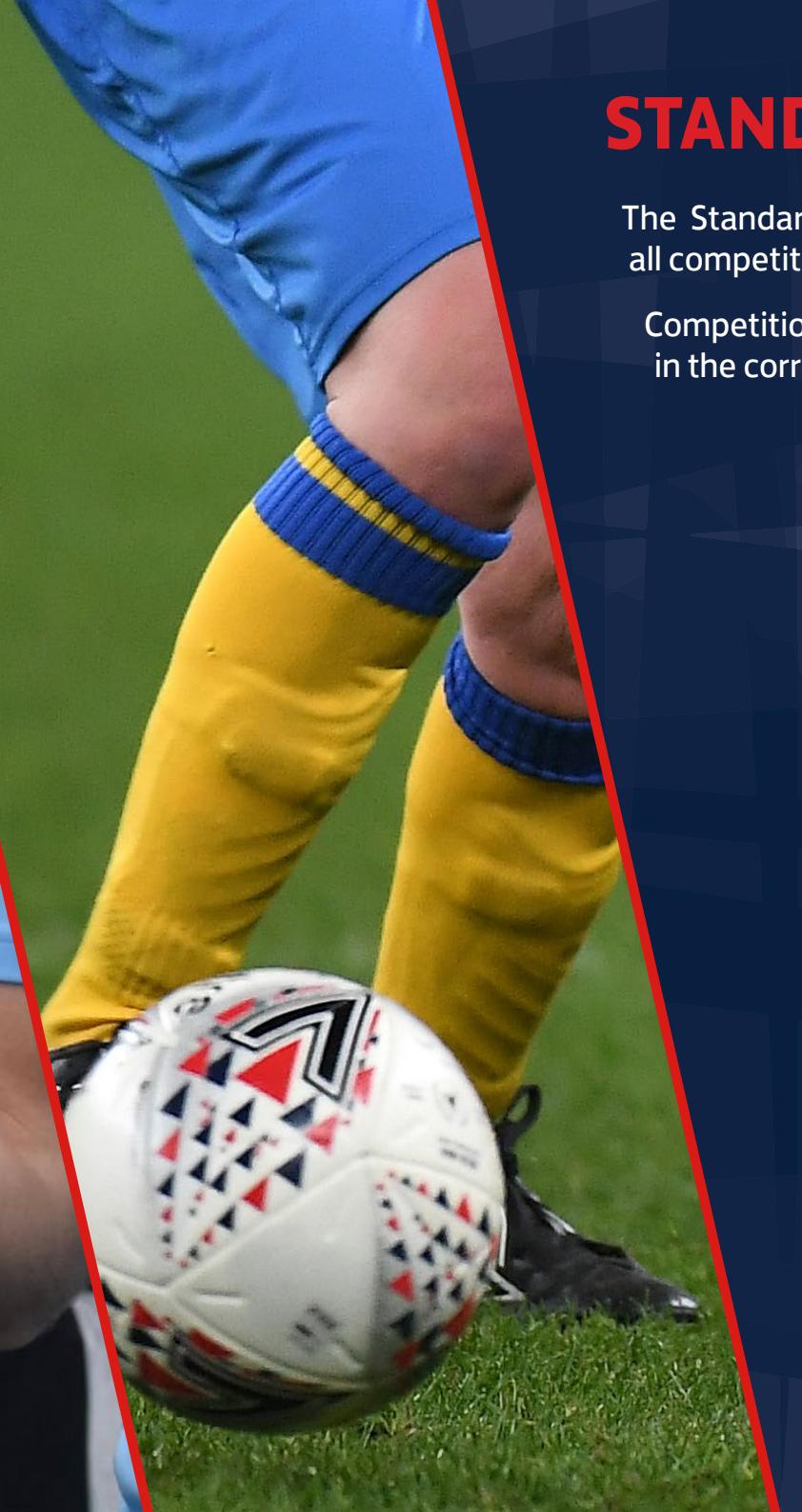
APPEAL

Clubs, Officials, or Players have a right of appeal against a League's decision to the relevant sanctioning authority (The FA or County FA).

Within 14 days of the posting of written notification of any decision by the Management Committee or the Competition, a Club, Official, or Player against whom such action is being taken must appeal against such decision by lodging particulars with their relevant County FA, along with any required fee, for the adjudication of a Board of Appeal.

The grounds of appeal shall be in accordance with FA Rules.





STANDARD CODE OF RULES TEMPLATE

The Standard Code of Rules are provided by The Football Association and are mandatory for all competitions outside the National League System and for Regional NLS Feeder Leagues.

Competitions seeking sanction must draft their rules in conformity with this code, putting them in the correctly numbered rule and showing standard headings.

**[PLEASE CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD A COPY OF
THE STANDARD CODE OF RULES TEMPLATE.](#)**

**[PLEASE CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD A COPY OF
THE STANDARD CODE OF RULES FOR YOUTH TEMPLATE.](#)**



LEAGUES

The League can:

- Call the Club/individual in for a meeting to account for their behaviour and outline how to improve
- Refuse the Club entry into invitational Cups
- Refuse to offer fixtures to the teams or Club If there are outstanding debts with the League or there has been a failure to reply.
- Require multiple adult teams to operate with fewer teams if they encounter continued poor administration
- Vote on future membership with the league at an EGM or AGM, but the League must ensure it is a fair process
- Draw the attention of lenient sanctions by CFA's to the attention of The FA

Leagues should always be willing to work with teams and individuals in order to improve behaviour on and off the field, and if they believe that further training or help is required they should address this to their County Association who could assist.





DELIVERING A GAME FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION

HANDLING DISCRIMINATION AND SERIOUS CASES

For any individual or group to suffer discrimination is just not acceptable. We cannot solve a societal issue on our own but as the national governing body we promise to bring the full weight of our influence to deliver a game free of discrimination.

The positive steps demonstrated through our In Pursuit of Progress initiative since 2018 and creating the Football Leadership Diversity Code, are just the start and we will build on this momentum.

To achieve this ambition by 2024 we will ensure everyone in the game can be confident of reporting abuse irrespective of where it takes place (on or off the pitch) while our updated sanctions framework will give us the ability to accurately reflect the severity of each incident.

Further information can be found below:

TIME FOR CHANGE- THE FA STRATEGY 2020-2024





As part of The FA's commitment to deliver a game free from discrimination, we have enhanced the way in which discriminatory and serious cases are investigated and heard at grassroots level.

County FAs are responsible for all cases arising from Steps 5 and below and the details of Serious Cases will also be reported centrally to The FA.

This is part of a wider project within The FA whereby Discipline is now housed within the Grassroots Division. This is led by the following Team:

- Alan Darfi – Senior Discipline Manager
- Ali Hayes – Regional Discipline Manager – East
- Alex Francis – Regional Discipline Manager – South
- Craig Lee – Regional Discipline Manager – North
- Ollie Powell – Regional Discipline Manager – West

Investigations will be managed by the relevant County FA and, where appropriate, charges will be raised upon completion of a thorough investigation. The Regional Discipline Managers will assist and advise the County FAs during this process.

This process is summarised in the:

SERIOUS CASE FLOWCHART

The FA has also established a diverse Serious Case Panel who will be selected to hear grassroots Serious Cases. All members of the Panel undertake annual training and assessment to ensure the highest standards.

The FA will appoint all members of the Panel to hear cases concerning Assault or attempted Assault on a Match Official, Physical Contact or attempted Physical Contact on a Match Official, Threatening behaviour towards a Match Official, Assault by Participant on Participant, Aggravated Breaches of FA Rules E3 and E20, and FA Rule E4.

SANCTIONS FOR AGGRAVATED BREACHES

Discriminatory behaviour is unacceptable and there is a Sanction Range of between 6 and 12 matches for a first offence, plus a mandatory education programme where an “Aggravated Breach” of FA Rule E3 is found proven.

RULE E GENERAL BEHAVIOUR

3.1 A Participant shall at all times act in the best interests of the game and shall 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 breach of Rule E3.1 is an “Aggravated Breach” where it includes a reference whether direct or indirect to any one or more of the following: - ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or disability.

For a first offence of discriminatory abuse the sanction will be within the Sanction Range between 6 and 12 matches. The lowest end of the Sanction Range, i.e. 6 matches, will operate as the Standard Minimum punishment. This sanction may be increased depending on the specific facts of any case and any further such offence will carry a mandatory minimum suspension of no fewer than 7 matches.

A Regulatory Commission may only consider imposing a suspension below the Standard Minimum where the following specific (and exhaustive) circumstances arise such that the Regulatory Commission determines that the Standard Minimum would be excessive:

Where the offence was committed in writing only or via the use of any communication device and:

- Where the Regulatory Commission is satisfied that there was no genuine intent on the part of the Participant Charged to be discriminatory or offensive in any way and could not reasonably have known that any such offence would be caused; or
- The age of the Participant at time of the offence (e.g. where the Participant was a minor at the time the offence was committed); or
- The age of the offence (e.g. a social media post made a considerable time ago)

Club will be liable to be sanctioned if two or more of its Participants commit an act of discriminatory abuse in any twelve-month period.

In all cases the Participant may be fined as well as suspended and will be required to undergo an education programme.



HOW DO I REPORT?

We recognise that there may be under-reporting of incidents of discrimination in the game and we encourage those who feel that they have been discriminated against to report their concerns.

We hope that the changes outlined above will help increase confidence in reporting discrimination cases.

Should Participants wish to report an incident of discrimination then they can do so using the link below:

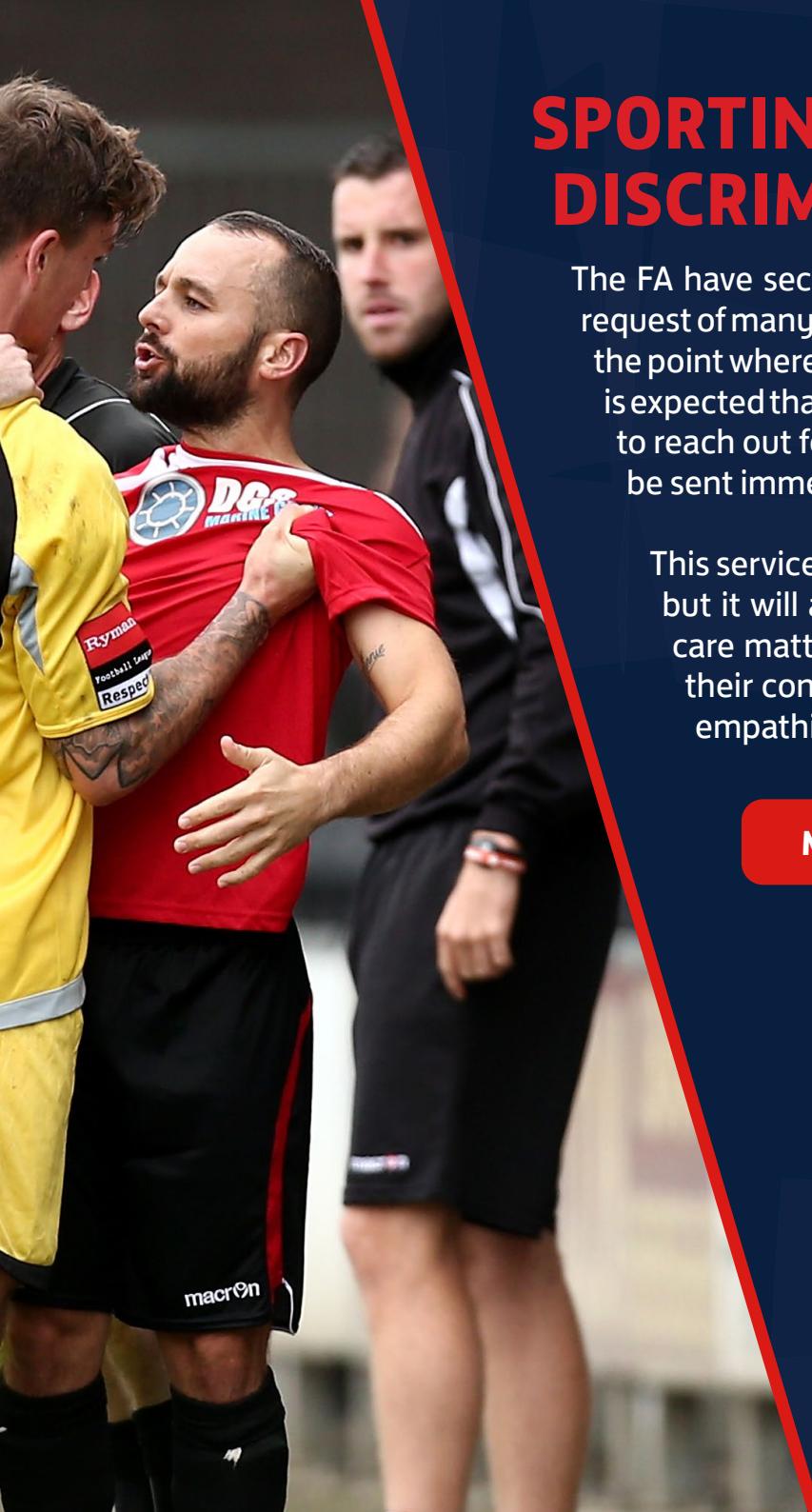
GRASSROOTS DISCIPLINE DISCRIMINATION REPORTING FORM

Incidents can also be reported to Kick it Out via their reporting app or email:
info@kickitout.org



The FA has launched the Reporting Discrimination videos - a series of short films to show Pla





SPORTING CHANCE SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF DISCRIMINATORY ABUSE

The FA have secured dedicated and specialist support for all victims of discrimination, following the request of many stakeholders. Sporting Chance now offer free support to victims of discrimination from the point where the allegation is made. When a County FA respond to an allegation of discrimination, it is expected that a letter will be included in the correspondence to ensure all victims get the opportunity to reach out for support if needed. As this support is available from the point of allegation it should be sent immediately and must not be withheld until an investigation is underway.

This service agreement with Sporting Chance will not only provide high quality support to victims but it will also reduce much of the time County Football Associations currently spend on after care matters with victims of discrimination. However, it is important this runs in tandem with their continued contact with victims to keep them updated, ensuring they are listened to and empathised with throughout the process.

[MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND HERE](#)

GRASSROOTS DISCIPLINE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The FA Grassroots Discipline Team have implemented a new Grassroots Discipline Complaints Process for the 2024/25 season. Full details are available from the link below:

GRASSROOTS DISCIPLINE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The document outlines The FA's commitment to dealing with disciplinary complaints and provides information on how the process will be managed, responded to and how we will reflect upon complaints when reviewing disciplinary procedures.

FOR ALL







FOR ALL