

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

**EFL  
SUPPORTER  
SANCTIONING  
GUIDANCE**



**The English Football League (EFL) is recognised as the world's oldest professional league and is hugely admired for displays of pride and passion from the circa 20 million supporters that pass through the turnstiles of our 72 Clubs every season.**

While the vast majority of fans display their devotion to their team in the right way, the behaviour of a minority presents a challenge for Club officials across the country.

Since the resumption of football matches in front of crowds following the Covid pandemic, tackling supporter behaviour has been under the microscope in mainstream media with questions being asked regarding how football authorities deal with incidents where breaches of ticketing terms and conditions or ground regulations have occurred.

The EFL, with its long-standing reputation for successful innovation, has therefore identified an opportunity to proactively produce a new robust set of solutions for tackling supporter behaviour.

# BACKGROUND

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**Across the EFL's 72 Clubs, the approach to dealing with negative spectator behaviour was lacking in structure and uniformity. A number of challenges in respect of this were subsequently identified as follows:**

- Breaches of ground regulations or ticketing terms and conditions have been dealt with in very different ways from one Club to the next and the threshold for referring incidents to the police, and the sanctions relied on, have differed greatly too.
- An over-reliance on heavily punitive measures was also identified.
- Clubs can encounter a range of issues, including persistent standing, anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, running onto the pitch, use of pyrotechnics and drugs,

ticket touting, hate crimes and more.

- Without clear guidance and structure in place around processes, cases were often not fully investigated or dealt with proportionately having considered all circumstances.
- As a result, some of these challenges had a negative effect on the relationship between supporters and Clubs.

As a result of the identified challenges, EFL Head of Security & Safety Operations, Bob Eastwood, commissioned Dr. Ashley J. Lowerson, an Assistant Professor in Law at Northumbria University who specialises in football policing and public order, and Amanda Jacks, Case Worker at The Football Supporters' Association (FSA), to produce a supporter sanctioning guidance document for all EFL Clubs.

# AIMS

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**The broad aims of the EFL Supporter Sanctioning Guidance is:**

- To move towards a fair, just and transparent standardised process across all EFL Clubs.
- To provide clarity at every step of the process for EFL officials, Clubs and supporters.

- To encourage a change in culture; introducing new sanctions and solutions away from the traditional over-reliance on Club bans.
- For those options to include education and restorative justice, solutions that will be given practical and financial support from the EFL.

# PROCESS AND PROCEDURE

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**To ensure EFL Clubs are perceived to be uniformly trustworthy and fair in dealing with breaches of ground regulations or ticketing terms and conditions, the guidance provides Club officials with clarity of procedures to assist them in dealing with a broad number issues, including:**

- Tactics for investigating incidents and collating evidence.
- Effective Communication; including advice on language, tone and terms to be used.
- Acceptable time frames for investigation and Club action
- Sanction Panels; including advice on when a panel is necessary, make-up of panels and location and format of meetings.
- Appeals process – how to both conduct and communicate the stages of any appeals process, who should attend and the relevant framework for meetings
- Considering restorative justice and educational programmes as an alternative to traditional sanctions.
- Temporary sanctions.
- Issuing a safety standards letter.
- Issuing a written warning.
- Issuing an acceptable behaviour contract.
- Issuing bans and suspended bans.
- Cases when a Football Banning Order has been imposed.

# SUPPORTER SANCTIONING

**The resultant guidance document – to be known as the 'EFL Supporter Sanctioning Guide' – encourages each case to be fully investigated and judged on its own merit. It contains a range of information and considerations for Clubs on approach to sanctions and any resultant appeals process. As a brief summary, the breaches of regulation and possible sanctions are summarised below.**

To view the full version of the guidance please [CLICK HERE](#).

Clubs are also able to contact the EFL for any further support and guidance. To do so please see the contact details at the foot of this summary.

LEVEL	BREACH OF REGULATION	POSSIBLE SANCTIONS
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smoking/vaping</li> <li>• Alcohol offences (not involving police)</li> <li>• Persistent standing/standing on seats.</li> <li>• Anti-social behaviour (e.g., persistent use of foul and abusive language, excessive gesturing towards opposition supporters, 'horseplay' impacting others.</li> <li>• Conduct that compromises the safety of spectators and/or others.</li> <li>• Non-co-operation with stewards.</li> <li>• Ejection from home or away stadium (not leading to police involvement).</li> <li>• Refused entry to home or away stadium (not leading to police involvement).</li> <li>• Reckless/intentional damage to club property under the value of £100.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Safety standards letter</b></li> <li>• <b>Written warning</b></li> <li>• <b>Acceptable behaviour contract.</b></li> <li>• <b>Suspended club ban</b></li> <li>• <b>Club ban (maximum three home matches)</b></li> <li>• <b>Five-match ban for breaches away from home</b></li> <li>• <b>Sanction doubled if there is a repeat of the breach within one year</b></li> <li>• <b>Educational and restorative justice options will also be available</b></li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberate damage to property</li> <li>• Missile throwing</li> <li>• Pitch encroachment</li> <li>• Reckless/intentional damage to club property over £100.</li> <li>• Aggressive language/ behaviour</li> <li>• Assault on club premises</li> <li>• Use or possession of pyrotechnics</li> <li>• Use or possession of illegal drugs</li> <li>• Use of prohibited items as per ground regulations</li> <li>• Serious public disorder/anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Hate crime/discrimination (including online)</li> <li>• Breach of existing club ban</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Written warning</b></li> <li>• <b>Lengthy ban</b></li> <li>• <b>Indefinite club ban subject to two-year review</b></li> <li>• <b>Educational and restorative justice options will also be available</b></li> </ul>

# FURTHER INFORMATION

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For further information and advice  
please contact:

**Bob Eastwood**  
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