

Best Practice Guide for Club Volunteers Tackling Discrimination and Hate in Sport

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**NO HATE
JUST SPORT**

With Thanks

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ann craft trust

acting against abuse



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Introduction

Sport should be a safe and welcoming community for all.

This best practice guide supports sports club volunteers at all levels to recognise, report, and respond to discrimination and hate crime incidents within sport. We want to:

- Educate and Raise Awareness.
- Encourage prompt and transparent reporting to your National Governing Body (NGB).
- Support reporters and the Affected Communities.
- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone in sport.
- Encourage you to take the appropriate action in your club.
- Tackle the behaviour of those responsible for hate and discrimination, aiming to change hearts and minds.
- Promote a culture of inclusion.

This guide gives you useful tips and best practices to follow the three steps that will help you tackle discrimination and hate in your sports club.

- 1. Recognising Discrimination and Hate in Sport**
- 2. Responding to Discrimination and Hate**
- 3. Reporting Discrimination and Hate.**

Discrimination and hate crimes can and does happen at all levels, and in every sport. It has a serious impact on the wellbeing of the person concerned, the culture of your club/sport, and the wider community. This can seriously impact people's mental health, and in some circumstances, lead them to leave sport altogether. Everyone has a role to play in recognising, responding to, and reporting incidents of discrimination and hate.

This best practice guide is not intended to overrule or supersede existing NGB policies, procedures, guidelines, or guidance documents. These documents take precedent. This guidance is to be used as a tool for clubs to better recognise, respond to, and report discrimination and hate..

Age and Reporting Discrimination or Hate

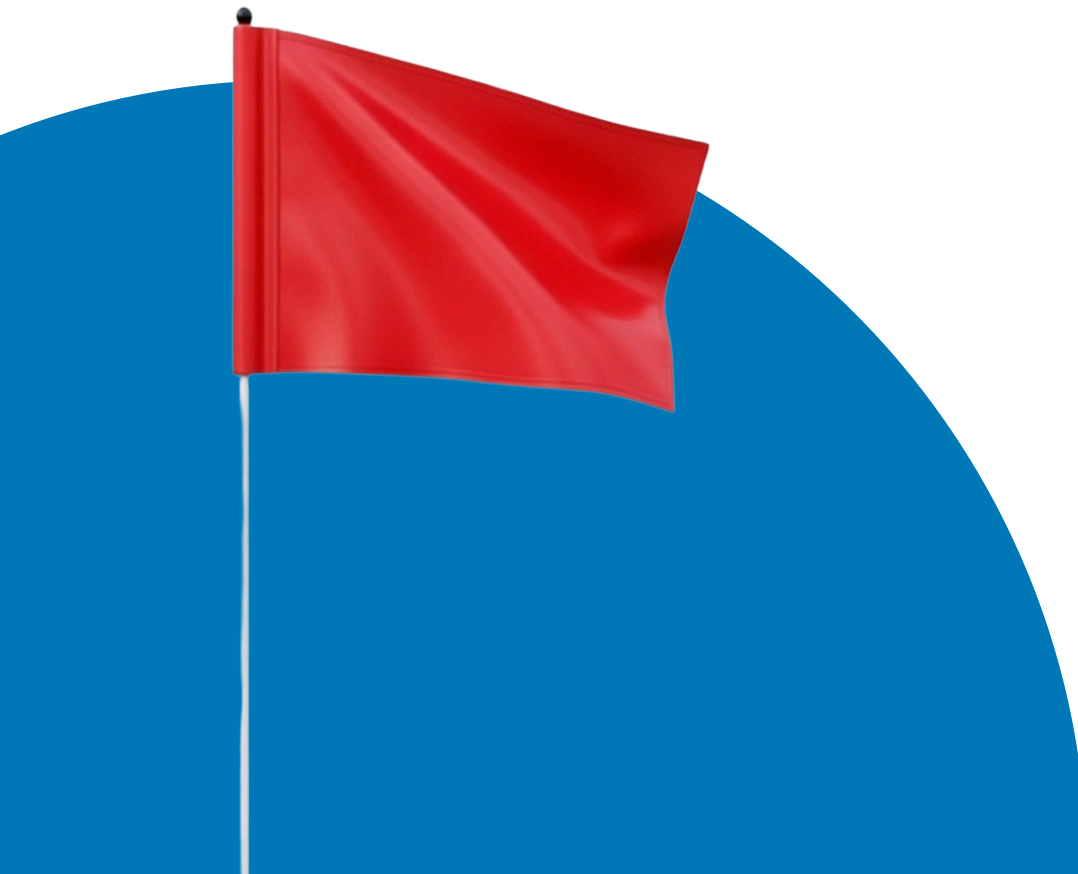
If the person is under 18, make sure you always report what has happened to them to your Safeguarding/Welfare Officer or National Governing Body (NGB), ideally within 24 hours after you find out.

If the reporter is over 18, be sure to include them in the process. If an adult chooses not to report Discrimination/Hate, as a volunteer, you may still need to report an incident if for example:

- There is an immediate danger to the persons affected from/or to other people, including children in your care.
- There are sporting rules/regulations/processes requiring all serious incidents to be reported to the NGB to uphold the integrity of the sport/take a proactive approach to tracking trends

It's important to note that your club/NGB's procedure, values, and the law of the land should not be disregarded if the wishes of the person differ from this. In these cases, your NGB should support you in having a conversation with the person to explain why you need to take action against their wishes.

Recognising Discrimination and Hate Incidents in Sport



Recognising discrimination and hate in your sport is the first step that everyone can take to ensure an inclusive environment.

Discrimination

Discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people or groups based on their protected characteristics. These include such as sex, age, race, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment (which can include someone who is transgender), pregnancy or maternity.

This is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. Part 3 of the Act prohibits discrimination when providing services to the public, and Part 7 prohibits certain clubs and associations from discriminating against members, guests, or applicants. Section 195 of the Act also contains rules about participation in competitive sports based on sex and age.

If you help run a club, you have a legal obligation to treat everyone fairly and provide equal opportunities as far as possible. Some exceptions apply – for example, a women-only football team, or a wheelchair basketball club. To help avoid discrimination, clubs should also adopt equality policies, provide training, and take steps to address inappropriate behaviour. Where in doubt, seek legal advice.

Discrimination can occur at many touchpoints in a club's life. Examples include:

- **Membership and participation:** Refusing or delaying admission of a person because of race, religion, disability, gender, etc. Enforcing rules or fees differently for certain groups (e.g., charging higher fees to gay members). Requiring women to play on restricted days that men don't face.
- **Access to facilities or teams:** Denying someone access to a sports facility (e.g., pool, gym, pitch) or team placement based on a protected characteristic. Imposing dress codes or equipment rules that discriminate (e.g., banning head coverings for religious players without justification).
- **Competition and events:** Running competitions or training that indirectly exclude (such as offering only evening sessions, which affects young working adults or single parents). Scheduling events at inaccessible venues for disabled participants.
- **Social and online behaviour:** Verbal or physical harassment (slurs, jokes, threats) by players, coaches, or spectators during games or in club social spaces (changing rooms, clubhouses). Discriminatory abuse or comments on club forums or social media.

- **Policies and rules:** Club constitutions or by-laws that overtly privilege one group (e.g., "only men may be committee members") or inadvertently disadvantage others (e.g., requiring a degree or gym membership for all coaches, which might exclude disabled candidates).

Hate Crime and Hate Incidents

A hate crime is any criminal act motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone because of their:

- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Transgender identity

A person affected does not have to be a member of the group that the hostility is targeted at. In fact, anyone could experience a hate crime. For example, you could be called a homophobic slur, even if you're heterosexual.

Hate Crime can happen at all levels of sport, in any location and area, e.g., on the field/ court, in the stands, in changing rooms, in training sessions, online, etc. It can take many forms, including:

- Physical attacks – e.g., physical assault.
- Verbal or written abuse or insults – the use of abusive or derogatory language.
- Threats of attack – including offensive or threatening online abuse, texts, gestures, and intimidation.
- Vandalism or criminal damage to your property, including graffiti, or throwing substances on your property.

A hate incident is when someone targets you with hostility or prejudice, but their actions don't break the law. Examples include:

- Offensive gestures and comments
- Microaggressions

Even though these incidents aren't crimes, they can still be reported to your NGB and recorded to monitor patterns of behaviour, as these could escalate into a crime.

Sometimes, what is perceived to be a joke or "banter" can be discrimination, a hate crime, or a hate incident. It is down to the person affected or other witnesses to decide if they consider it to be derogatory.

Everyone involved in sport has a moral and legal duty to tackle discrimination, hate crime, and hate incidents regardless of intent. Everyone must play their part in reporting these incidents, supporting the person(s) affected, and taking the right action to respond to the alleged perpetrator (or "subject of concern").

This best practice is here to help support you in your role.

Responding to Discrimination and Hate



We encourage you to talk to the reporter and make sure you always involve them in the process, understand their views, and possible next steps. It's not your responsibility to investigate any potential discrimination or hate. It is your responsibility to take the appropriate action.

Safety and Support

Firstly, it is important that you remain calm. Try not to catastrophise or overly dramatize your response. Avoid phrases that might make the person more hurt or upset, like "that's awful" or "you must feel awful." Instead, try using language like, "I can't imagine how you must be feeling. How can I support you?"

It's also important not to force a person over 18 into any specific actions. Ask the person what they want to do, which can be aided by offering suggestions, but avoid saying things like "You must speak to our Welfare Officer." Instead, try using language like "I would recommend you speak to our welfare officer."

Try not to make promises you can't keep. It's human nature to want to say things like "I will fix this." However, it's important not to raise expectations. Instead, try using phrases such as "I want to do everything I can to support you."

If you've been told about an incident and the reporter is over the age of 18, it is best practice to gain their consent before informing your NGB, however, you do not need to have this, and you should make a report regardless.

Be sure to keep all notes as detailed as possible and in a secure location, ideally a password-protected email address or similar.

While collecting your notes, it's important to remember not to re-traumatise the person affected or investigate what has happened, but your detailed notes will help others in their investigation. Getting people to retell what has happened to them over and over again can cause people further harm. Try not to use leading questions/statements like "You must feel terrible". Instead, use ones such as "Can you tell/expand/describe to me about what has just happened?"

Your NGB might also provide anonymous reporting routes. It's important to familiarise yourself with these, as if the reporter doesn't want to make an official report, you may choose to use these. Anonymous reports are a vital way for your NGB to gather intelligence and map where potential "hot spots" are to provide you with further proactive support.

Promote a proactive, inclusive culture

Keep up to date with any training for staff/ volunteers on discrimination, hate crime awareness, and inclusion provided by your NGB or other local organisations.

Embed anti-discrimination commitments into your code of conduct, constitution, membership requirements, and disciplinary procedures.

Celebrate diversity visibly on places like your social media throughout the year.

If the incident happens at a game, event or competition

Speak to the referee/umpire/judge/NGB official at the event in the first instance. They should take the appropriate action in the first instance, but make sure to send an additional report directly to your NGB as soon as possible following the event.

Reporting Discrimination and Hate



Clear and Accessible Reporting Mechanisms

It's important that everyone in your club knows who your Welfare Officer is and how they can contact them. Make sure you regularly promote this person during club sessions.

If the Designated Safeguarding/Welfare Officer is the person who has allegedly perpetrated the act, it's still important that people can report what's happened to someone else. Other members of your club's management, committee, or HR departments should be confident in receiving reports of discrimination and hate.

You should have multiple ways that people can report incidents, e.g., in-person with a designated welfare/safeguarding officer and a dedicated safeguarding/welfare officer email address.

Make sure your club familiarises itself with any national or local organisations, like SARI, that might be able to provide appropriate support for reporters. Your NGB may have services they already use.

Respect Confidentiality and Privacy

Protect the reporter's identity. Make sure only those who need to know what has happened are aware in your club. It is also important that you are confident in the identity of the perpetrator before acting. For example, the club coaches may need to be aware if they need to support keeping the reporter, persons affected, and alleged perpetrator apart in sessions. You must always ensure the reporter is comfortable with these disclosures and understands why they help them.

Avoid exposing reporters to perpetrators during ongoing involvement in sport, where possible. If proportionate, you can temporarily suspend the alleged perpetrator in line with your club's disciplinary procedures. Any immediate action taken by the club may be considered by NGB decision-making panels when considering any final sanctions.

Fair and Transparent Investigation

Follow a clear, evidence-based disciplinary procedure that is publicised to your members and is in line with your NGB.

Ensure the alleged perpetrator understands the allegation made against them and can respond.

Keep Communication Clear, Transparent, and Timely

It's important to make any reports to NGB as soon as possible. Make sure to include all the necessary details you can.

Keep up to date with any actions taken by your NGB and be sure to respond to any further requests for information.

When it is appropriate, make sure you systematically report progress back to both the reporter and the perpetrator all the way through any investigations.

- Do not share any confidential information about those people involved.
- Don't share any information you do not know as a fact e.g., if you are still ongoing with your investigations, avoid sharing incomplete findings. Instead, say that investigations are ongoing and you will be in touch with more news shortly.
- If there is an ongoing criminal investigation by the police, be sure to take the lead of the police officer and/or your NGB staff member about what is acceptable to share with those involved.
- Any reporting of progress must be agreed with the lead body who is investigating/handling the concern – i.e., the police or NGB.

Take robust and proportionate action

Your club can apply sanctions or disciplinary measures in line with your existing codes of conduct and disciplinary procedures, including temporary suspension or full expulsion. Some NGBs may decide to take on this responsibility themselves.

Where appropriate and proportionate, report incidents to police or relevant local safeguarding authorities as well as your NGB, always keeping the wishes of the reporter in consideration.

You may also be required to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), or the Charity Commission if you are a registered charity.

For lower-level concerns and behaviours, restorative approaches are a positive alternative to suspensions. This can involve facilitating apologies between the parties involved or training for those responsible. These conversations can be difficult, and many organisations and charities can support you in upskilling in this area.

Sanctions and Disciplinary Outcomes

Apply sanctions proportionate to the severity of the incident. These may include:

- Formal warnings
- Suspensions or bans (temporary or permanent)
- Removal from team leadership, coaching, or officiating roles
- Referral to police or legal authorities (in the case of criminal hate crime)

Make clear that discrimination and hate conduct violate both your club rules and broader societal standards and will not be tolerated.

- Make sure you go back and inform the reporter at every stage about what actions you've taken, including when you have submitted the report to the NGB and what they can expect next.

Be sure you know where you need to report incidents to your NGB. Some have dedicated anti-discrimination teams, and others require you to submit these through safeguarding mechanisms. You can find the online reporting links [here](#).

Follow-Up and Ongoing Engagement

Use incidents as opportunities for learning and improvement, not just punishment. Appendix 3 contains a 'Learning Log' that can support you in this process.

Check in with the reporter after the case is closed to ensure they feel safe and supported.

Conclusion

- Sports clubs must adopt an active, consistent, appropriate, and proportionate approach to all forms of hate crime or incidents and be trauma-informed.
- Always take opportunities to be restorative, not punitive in your response, where possible.
- You should aim for a positive outcome, e.g., the reporter feels satisfied with the result and the perpetrator is deterred from future offending and learns more appropriate behaviours.



Definitions

For the 'No Hate, Just Sport' pilot, the following definitions/terms apply.

- **Active Partnerships:** Active Partnerships works to transform the lives of local people through movement, physical activity, and sport. There are 40 Active Partnerships across England.
- **Affected Communities:** Any group of people who have been impacted as a result of discrimination and hate.
- **County or Regional Associations:** County or regional associations are the local organisations that have a role in governing sport in the UK. Regional or county associations in sports like football and cricket are the first port of call for people reporting discrimination and hate. County or Regional Associations can be voluntary committees or organisations with paid staff members. This is sport dependent. Some other sports have no county or regional associations. In sports that do have county or regional associations, they remain accountable to their National Governing Body.
- **Safeguarding/Welfare Officer:** Any individual who has taken on safeguarding and welfare responsibilities for your organisation or member clubs.
- **Discrimination:** Discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people or groups based on their protected characteristics such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- **Hate Crime:** A hate crime is any criminal act motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone because of their race or ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability, or transgender identity.
- **Hate Incidents:** A hate incident is when someone targets you with hostility or prejudice, but their actions don't break the law.
- **Inclusion:** Inclusion means creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and valued, regardless of who they are or their protected characteristics.
- **Microaggression:** A comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group.
- **Reporting Mechanisms:** Any way that a person can inform an NGB or local County/Regional Association of a perceived incident of discrimination or hate e.g., email addresses, in-person designated safeguarding/welfare officers, online reporting forms, phone numbers.

- **Stand Against Racism & Inequality (SARI):** SARI is a charitable organisation based in Bristol (working throughout B&NES, Bristol, North Somerset, Somerset, and South Gloucestershire) that supports reporters of hate within the community. They also aim to promote equality and good relations between people with protected characteristics, as defined by law. SARI lead on casework, supporting reporters of hate crime. They also work with children, young people, and schools, and other educational establishments, providing support to pupils facing racist and other hate incidents. SARI also delivers anti-hate, equality, diversity, and inclusion, and cultural awareness sessions.
- **Trauma-informed Approach:** When a person's actions are informed by the learning and insights from those who have previously experienced discrimination and hate crimes.
- **Reporter:** Any person or persons who have experienced an alleged act of discrimination or hate.
- **Wesport:** Wesport is the Active Partnership for Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire.



Club Checklist

The following checklist can be used by your club to ensure you are implementing best practice as defined by the 'No Hate, Just Sport' campaign.

✓ Essential		Notes and evidence
	Anti-discrimination commitments are embedded throughout our club's constitution, codes of conduct, disciplinary procedures, safeguarding policies, and all other appropriate documents.	
	Our volunteer workforce receives regular training on recognising, responding to, and reporting issues of discrimination and hate from our NGB alongside existing safeguarding training.	
	Our club has a designated and named Safeguarding/Welfare Officer.	
	We make members aware of the ways to report serious incidents to the NGB and their club.	
	We offer multiple, publicly accessible ways for people to report concerns, e.g., club safeguarding or welfare officers, a phone number, or an email address.	

✓	Essential	Notes and evidence
	Our reporting mechanisms, disciplinary policy, and sanctions are regularly and routinely publicised to all participants, supporters, volunteers, and parents/guardians through social media, in-person campaigns, etc.	
	We make sure all incidents of discrimination and hate are promptly recorded and reported through the appropriate channels, ensuring that all parties involved are kept informed throughout.	
	All communications, evidence, and investigation materials are appropriately and securely stored on a specific Welfare/ Safeguarding email address, the club email address, or similar.	
	We check in with the reporter regularly to ensure they feel safe and supported.	
	We take steps to support the reporter's ongoing participation in the club if they wish, whilst being mindful to ensure they are not exposed to the perpetrator where possible.	

✓	Essential	Notes and evidence
	Our club takes defensible and proportionate action against individuals who have been found to commit acts of discrimination in line with existing disciplinary procedures and codes of conduct.	
✓	Desirable	Notes and evidence
	Our club is aware of organisations, including our NGB, that we can signpost members to: • Mental health and wellbeing support, • Legal or advocacy support, • Peer support, or liaison officers familiar with their role in sport.	
	Our club publicly highlights our commitment to being anti-discriminatory throughout the year, utilising good news stories and personal experiences of our members.	

Learning Log

NGBs and clubs can use this template to log learning and development opportunities following the conclusion of discrimination/hate investigations.

Incident/ case ref	What went well?	Opportunities for learning and development	Persons responsible	Review date

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Hate hurts. Silence harms. Speak out.

