

Procedural Guidance for National Governing Bodies dealing with cases of Hate and Discrimination in Sport

October 2025

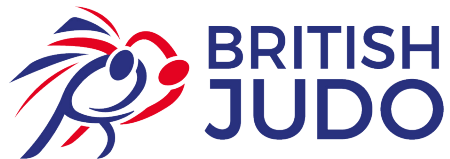
NO HATE
JUST SPORT

With Thanks

Wesport and SARI would like to thank the following organisations for their support and expertise in developing this guidance:

ann craft trust

acting against abuse



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Foreword

“Thank you for taking the time to read this procedural guidance. We are all aware of the immense, transformative power that sport can have on individual lives, the wider community, and societal values in general. As professionals working in the field, we are all too familiar with what can happen when things go wrong.



Discrimination and hate can and does happen in sport at all levels. The sport industry is as varied as it is diverse, mirroring those who take part. This is one of the founding principles behind SARI and Wesport’s No Hate, Just Sport campaign.

SARI and Wesport have collaborated on this procedural guidance to support National Governing Bodies and local County/Regional Associations from those who might be at the beginning of their journey to address discrimination and hate, to those who are some way into their journey and want help to get it right. We also hope this can be used as a valuable “sense-checker” tool for all, to ensure your existing procedures line up with best practice. It is supported by similar documents for club volunteers and witnesses, and one for persons affected by discrimination and hate, to ensure changes can occur for all involved.

Sport is a place that should be free from all forms of discrimination and hate. We can make greater strides towards that goal by working closely together.”

- Alex Raikes MBE DL, Chief Executive, [SARI](#)
- Steve Nelson, CEO, [Wesport](#)

About this Procedural Guidance

This procedural guidance has been drafted by Stand Against Racism & Inequality (SARI) and Wesport to support National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport in responding to issues of hate and discrimination.

SARI is a charitable organisation based in Bristol (working throughout B&NES, Bristol, North Somerset, Somerset, and South Gloucestershire) that supports victims 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 victims 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.

Wesport is the Active Partnership for Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire. Wesport works to tackle the structural inequalities that prevent people from taking part in sport and physical activity.

The purpose of this procedural guidance is to share a clear, consistent, and effective best practice framework for identifying, reporting, and responding to issues of hate and discrimination at the NGB level within sport. As part of the appendices, a checklist is included where your organisation can take stock and illustrate progress made against the advice contained in this document.

This procedural guidance is designed to support all persons in NGB roles who have a responsibility to respond to issues of hate and discrimination in their communities. This includes those local County or Regional associations.

This procedural guidance is complemented by two additional documents:

- Best Practice Guide for Club Volunteers Tackling Discrimination and Hate in Sport
- How do I report discrimination or hate that I've experienced in a sports club? (For persons affected by discrimination and hate)

Specifically, this procedural guidance is written with the following values in mind. To:

1. Educate and Raise Awareness.
2. Encourage prompt and transparent reporting.
3. Support Reporters and Affected Communities.
4. Promote accountability and appropriate action.
5. Ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone in sport.
6. Tackle the behaviour of those responsible for discrimination and hate, aiming to change hearts and minds.
7. Promote a culture of inclusion.

SARI and Wesport acknowledge that the landscape of NGBs is vast. For some NGBs, you may be further along in this journey of addressing hate and discrimination than others. We hope that this procedural guidance will act as another useful benchmark or “sense checker” for all practices. This procedural guidance 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 NGBs to inform their continued learning.

What are Discrimination and Hate Crimes?

Discrimination means treating someone unfairly or prejudicially because of a protected characteristic. These include sex, age, race, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment (which includes people who are transgender), and pregnancy or maternity.

Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful to discriminate based on protected characteristics: sex, age, race, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment (which includes people who are transgender), and pregnancy or maternity.

Part 3 prohibits discrimination in the provision of services to the public. Part 7 prohibits discrimination by certain associations, including many sports clubs, against members, guests, or applicants.

- As an NGB, you have a responsibility to ensure that both your organisation and your affiliated clubs comply with these legal duties. Steps you can take include:
- setting and enforcing equality and inclusion policies
- providing training and support
- monitoring decision-making and behaviour
- acting promptly where discrimination occurs

Equal access and fair treatment should be provided wherever possible. However, the law allows for some exceptions. For example, a club may restrict membership to people who share a particular protected characteristic.

Discrimination can occur at many touchpoints in sport. 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).

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 reporter 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 authorities 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.

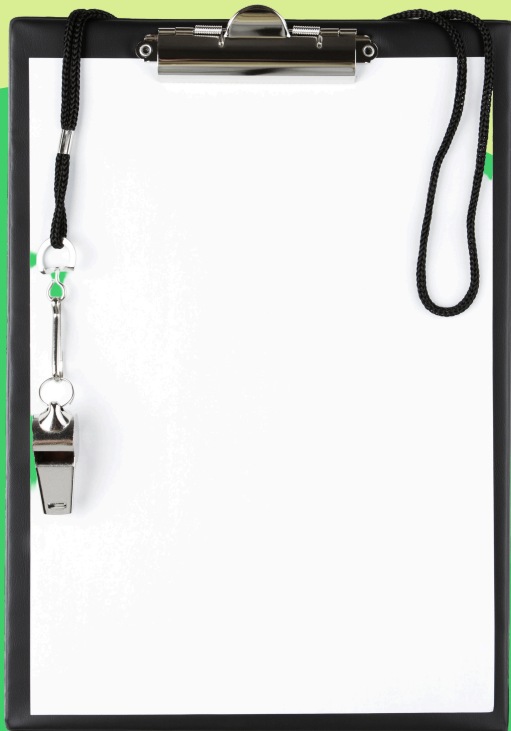
Any improper behaviour, as described above, can all be dealt with as serious incidents within sporting law. We all have a moral and legal duty to investigate and tackle discrimination and hate crime regardless of intent. We must play our part in responding to these incidents and reducing the impact by ensuring effective support is available for persons affected and taking the right actions to respond to the subjects of concern.

As an NGB, your role is vital to act against those who perpetrate discrimination and hate-motivated abuse and to show that these incidents have no place in your sport. People should be able to take part in sport at all levels, free from all forms of abuse, including discrimination and hate.

Discrimination and hate can and does have a serious impact on the wellbeing of the individual concerned. This procedural guidance is here to help support you in your role.

The Guidance

This procedural guidance seeks to provide advice that will build trust, promote inclusion, and ensure safety, adopting a trauma-informed approach. The following guidance outlines an effective pathway to respond to and support all individuals impacted by discrimination and hate across all levels and areas of sport.



Responding

Safety and Support

Ensure all your clubs and venues provide access to a designated safeguarding or welfare officer, including at competitions or events.

Ensure all your staff and volunteers are briefed on respecting the reporter's wishes about how they would like to proceed, ensuring they are not pressured or re-traumatised, whilst also recognising that the NGB's procedures still need to be followed.

- This is a two-way conversation where the wishes of the reporter are to be taken into account, but your procedures should always be followed. It's important to make people aware of what outcomes might be possible that are in conjunction with the person's wishes.

Dealing with the Subject of Concern

Immediate and Proportionate Action

- **Off the "field-of-play":** Use initial facts to establish whether it is appropriate and proportionate to temporarily suspend/remove the alleged perpetrator

- **In the “field-of-play”:** Adhere to game/competition rules, which should support immediate removal of players if officials witness serious acts such as Discrimination and Hate Crime

Act quickly to de-escalate the situation in the moment and prevent further incidents, while ensuring the safety of others.

- NGBs should provide appropriate training to their staff and volunteers to empower them to take these steps.

In some instances, if you are concerned about the immediate safety of yourself or others involved, this will require escalation to the police.

- Depending on your NGB procedures, this report should come from the individual involved (or their parent/carer). NGBs may choose to play a role in encouraging the person(s) involved to make this report to the police; however, this is down to the organisation's discretion.
- Although sometimes necessary, when individuals report instances to the police, it's important that staff/volunteers keep in mind that police presence in some communities may escalate tensions.

Fair and Transparent Investigation

Follow your clear, evidence-based disciplinary procedure.

Ensure the individual understands the nature of the allegation and can respond.

Use impartial investigators where possible to protect the integrity of the process. These do not necessarily need to come from a third-party organisation; however, any conflicts of interest should be explored, and organisations such as Sports Resolutions could be used if necessary.

Sanctions and Disciplinary Outcomes

Any sanction should only be enacted if sufficient evidence exists and as part of a defined and advertised disciplinary procedure.

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

- Formal warnings
- Prescribed education or training on anti-discrimination and hate.
- 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 violates both sport rules and broader societal standards and should not be tolerated in your sport, or at any time, by members of your NGB.

You may wish to convene a Case Management Panel or decision-making panel to discuss the facts of the case and consider any outcomes.

- If appropriate, it is important to invite the reporter/persons affected/subject of concern so they can provide their perspectives. The subject of concern, and the reporter/persons affected, should be kept separate if invited to take part in this process.

Where possible, ensure that there is diverse representation and/or individuals with lived experience on decision-making and case management panels who have completed all necessary training.

Practical and Emotional Support

NGBs have a role to play in supporting all individuals involved with:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing support
- [Legal or advocacy support](#) (e.g., SARI, Victim Support)
- Any police investigation or court proceedings.
- Peer support or liaison officer's familiar with their role in sport.

It is important to offer flexibility to the person(s) affected for their continued participation within the sport. NGBs should not be seen to force or expedite any person's return to their club or the sport.

Take robust and proportionate action

Any incidents at club level should be referred at the outset to the region/county/NGB, to ensure the most appropriate course of action is followed. Where possible, clubs to be empowered to investigate matters and handle lower-level concerns - particularly where the alleged subject of concern is a minor or is a member under the jurisdiction of the club, e.g., a parent spectator.

- Any decisions taken at club level should be subject to NGB review, and that person's wider participation in the sport is a decision that must be taken at NGB level.
- Best practice is also to convene a Case Management Group panel at NGB level, to consider all decisions made within the sport to inform any changes to disciplinary procedures and sanction guidelines.

Always ensure you follow your club and/or NGBs safeguarding, EDI, and disciplinary policies.

You should continue to investigate all incidents promptly and fairly, following your policy and procedures.

Organisations must apply any sanctions or disciplinary measures in line with your existing codes of conduct, team selection policy, disciplinary policies, safeguarding policies, or similar.

Ensure you (the NGB) speak regularly with the reporter/persons affected to see what outcome they would like to see to their case where appropriate.

Where appropriate, NGB staff have a role to play in reporting incidents to police or relevant safeguarding authorities, ensuring you continue to consider the wishes of the person affected. There will be some circumstances where this will be overridden, for example, if a person is under the age of 18, or if an adult is at an ongoing risk of harm to themselves or others.

Promote a proactive, inclusive culture

As an NGB, ensure you provide regular training to all staff, volunteers, and affiliated clubs at all levels of your sport on discrimination and hate crime awareness.

Make sure you have embedded anti-discrimination commitments into your codes of conduct, membership requirements, and disciplinary procedures.

Your NGB should continue to celebrate diversity visibly through inclusive campaigns, role models, and safe spaces. Aim to have this occur throughout the year, not just during awareness-raising days or campaigns, to avoid falling into perceived tokenism. Make sure to include the voices of participants to understand what a safe and inclusive environment looks like.

Reporting

Clear and Accessible Reporting Mechanisms

As an NGB, offering multiple, accessible ways to report (online reporting forms, in-person to the Welfare Officer or another volunteer/member of staff, anonymous options) allows reporters to choose an avenue that they are comfortable with.

Online reporting pages on your NGB's website should be as clear and simple as possible to access.

- This procedural guidance recommends that NGBs create separate reporting pages on your website for safeguarding reporting and for discrimination/hate reporting. Both reporting pages can then filter reports into the same internal investigation process; however, this gives reporters multiple avenues to report their experiences. A public, separate page for discrimination and hate reporting also gives a clear indication to your community and wider society that hate, and discrimination are not tolerated in your sport. Ideally, this page should be no more than one click away from your homepage, to allow for ease of access for reporters.

- If you choose to host all forms of reporting on the same page, it's important that you inform your members that reports of discrimination and hate can be made through this method.

NGBs should explore the potential for anonymous reporting mechanisms in this area. Although this limits the ability to provide recourse and investigations, this can allow for intelligence mapping and can focus your proactive response in potential "hot spot" areas.

All NGBs should publicise reporting routes widely to players, officials, supporters, volunteers, and parents/guardians on a regular and ongoing basis through social media, in-person advertising at events and competitions, and ongoing webinars and awareness-raising campaigns, including their whistleblowing and bullying/harassment policies.

NGBs are encouraged to "triage" incoming reports, to ensure that discrimination and hate crime investigations are assigned to the correct department. This process should involve legal, disciplinary, safeguarding, and EDI department representatives.

NGBs should look to ensure that culturally appropriate support is available for people of diverse backgrounds.

Timely and Transparent Communication

Ensure you acknowledge reports promptly and keep reporters and persons affected informed throughout the process as appropriate.

Always communicate what steps are being taken, expected timelines, and outcomes to the persons affected, the reporter, the subject of concern, and any other relevant parties (e.g., the Welfare or Safeguarding Officer). Whilst respecting the confidentiality of ongoing investigations, updates to the affected parties should not wait until a conclusion has been reached.

Always ensure to take a person-centric, trauma-informed response, being sensitive in language and tone, and avoiding bureaucratic or dismissive responses.

Always give due consideration to what would be the most appropriate method of communication for the reporter in question, considering their individual needs, and cultural or language considerations.

Respect Confidentiality and Privacy

It is important to protect the identity of the person affected unless they consent to disclosure. However:

- **If the reporter/person affected is under 18**, you need to take the appropriate steps to inform the individual's parents, social services, the local LADO, or similar.

- **If the person affected is over the age of 18 and at immediate risk of harm**, then you need to take appropriate steps in accordance with your procedures. This could include contacting the emergency services or the Safeguarding Adult Team, for example.

Ensure all investigations are done discreetly, with only essential personnel informed.

Avoid exposing the persons affected to the subject of concern during ongoing involvement in sport, where possible. To this end, it is important to keep local parties informed of the facts, whilst respecting your ongoing investigations, so they can support with managing this.

Follow-Up and Ongoing Engagement

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

Use incidents as opportunities for learning and improvement, not just punishment. Ensure this learning is shared with other departments in your NGB, such as coaching development, clubs, legal, and those with responsibility for volunteers. This is also valuable learning that should be shared at Board level. Appendix 3 contains an 'Action and Learning Log' that can support you in this process.

Involve members, and those with lived experience of discrimination and hate crime, in reviews and consultation about disciplinary sanction guidelines/rules.

Conclusion

- Always adopt a zero-tolerance approach as an NGB to all forms of discrimination and hate, ensuring you are trauma-informed.
- Include restorative approaches wherever possible. Educational responses can prove to be just as valuable as punitive responses, such as suspension.
- Involve members, and those with lived experience of discrimination and hate crime, in reviews and consultation about disciplinary sanction guidelines/rules.
- National Governing Bodies should always aim towards a positive outcome e.g., the reporter/persons affected feels satisfied with the result and the subject of concern is deterred from future offending and learns more appropriate behaviours. A positive outcome can look different to everyone.



AB 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.



NGB Checklist

This checklist can be used by National Governing Bodies to ensure they are implementing the best practice as defined by the 'No Hate, Just Sport' campaign.

✓	Notes and evidence
Anti-discrimination commitments are embedded throughout our organisation's constitution, codes of conduct, disciplinary procedures, safeguarding policies, and all other appropriate documents.	
Our NGB staff and volunteer workforce receive regular training on recognising, responding to, and reporting issues of discrimination and hate alongside existing safeguarding training.	
Any affiliated clubs have a designated and named Safeguarding/Welfare Officer.	
Our organisation's disciplinary procedures refer to incidents of discrimination and hate, and this is widely publicised on our website.	
We publicise proportionate sanctions that can be applied to a wide array of cases.	



Notes and evidence

	<p>Our staff work with clubs to empower them to make decisions on issues at a local level in line with their own constitutions and disciplinary procedures.</p>	
	<p>Access to our online reporting methods (including wider safeguarding reporting) is no more than one click away from our organisation's home webpage.</p>	
	<p>Our reporting mechanisms are regularly and routinely publicised to all players, staff, officials, supporters, volunteers, and parents/guardians through social media, in-person campaigns, direct email marketing, and ongoing webinars/awareness raising campaigns.</p>	
	<p>We adopt and apply the principles of a trauma-informed approach to managing incidents of discrimination and hate in our sport.</p>	



Notes and evidence

	<p>Our staff are aware of organisations that we can signpost members to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental health and wellbeing support,• Legal or advocacy support,• Peer support, or Liaison officer's familiar with their role in sport.	
	<p>We investigate all incidents of discrimination and hate promptly and fairly, ensuring that all parties involved are kept informed of any progress or barriers with their case throughout.</p>	
	<p>We take defensible, proportionate action against individuals who have been found to commit acts of discrimination in line with existing disciplinary procedures and codes of conduct.</p>	
	<p>We take steps to support the reporter's ongoing participation in the sport if they so wish, whilst being mindful to ensure they are not exposed to the subject of concern where possible.</p>	



Notes and evidence

	<p>Once a case is closed, we check in with the reporter/persons affected to ensure they feel safe and supported.</p>	
	<p>Case information and outcomes are stored securely and routinely reviewed/audited to ensure outcomes are consistent and learnings are shared across departments.</p>	
	<p>We utilise case data to identify “hot spots” where proactive work may be needed to tackle systemic issues.</p>	
	<p>We publicly highlight our commitment to being an anti-discriminatory sport throughout the year, utilising good news stories, local best practice, and personal experiences of its members.</p>	



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

NO HATE JUST SPORT

Hate hurts. Silence harms. Speak out.

