

# Sports Grounds Safety Authority Guidance

## Prevention of Crowd Disorder and Anti-Social Behaviour at Sports Grounds

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Context

Providing a safe environment for people at a sports ground is a wide ranging responsibility for sports ground management which includes the management of crowd disorder and other anti-social behaviour by groups or individuals which could cause physical harm or injury to people at the ground. The prevention of, and response to, such activity should be considered within the ground's event plans and form part of an Operations Manual, where one is in existence. Where the ground is subject to a safety certificate, the certifying authority will need to satisfy itself that appropriate, proportionate and reasonable arrangements are in place to deal with these matters within the area covered by the certificate.

#### 1.2 Scope of Guidance

This guidance will address the following:

- The respective responsibilities (including the statement of intent with regard to primacy) of the ground management and police for dealing with matters of crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour that could cause physical harm
- The implications for sports grounds' management, including the production of a written crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour plan
- The implications for those regulating safety at sports grounds.

### 2. Responsibility for Dealing with Crowd Disorder and Anti-Social Behaviour

The levels and types of crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour which can cause harm or injury at a sports ground will vary widely from ground to ground, sport to sport and often event to event. Whatever ground or sport is involved, the risks need to be appropriately addressed by the sports ground in a proportionate and practical manner. Specific consideration should also be given to police free fixtures or events.

As is the case with all other private premises to which the public are admitted, sports grounds are responsible for taking reasonable steps to try and ensure that the people at their ground remain physically unharmed by crowd disorder or anti-social behaviour.

This responsibility for dealing with crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour does not extend beyond the boundary of the sports ground's land. Similar matters in the public areas outside the ground are the primary responsibility of the police. For those grounds which hold a safety certificate, the geographical area of that responsibility in relation to crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour which can be conditioned under the safety certificate is generally identified by the boundary described in the certificate.

Each ground should risk assess their events in relation to crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour and decide whether any additional measures need to be put in place.

In most cases the risk of crowd disorder or anti-social behaviour will be so low that normal event day planning, which includes supplying an appropriate number of stewards or other staff, may be all that is needed. However, the risk assessment for some events may suggest a raised level of risk. It may still be within the ability of the ground to provide sufficient staff or other measures to mitigate the risk.

However, where the risk assessment indicates that the most effective and appropriate way to mitigate the risk is for police to be in attendance at the event to support the ground's own staff, arrangements should be made by the ground to request the attendance of the local police in accordance with the Special Police Services agreement between the two. In these circumstances, where a request for police services has been made, the extent of the provision of police services is reserved for the determination of the chief officer of the force. However, it is long standing good practice that these numbers are arrived at following consultation with the sports ground.

On the rare occasions that agreement cannot be reached between the sports ground and the police, the matter should be determined through the safety certification process. This may include inserting a condition requiring the ground to request the attendance of police.

Ultimately the decision to attend following a request from the ground is one for the police. Should police decline the request to attend, and the ground be unable to provide alternative and acceptable mitigating proposals, the certifying authority may consider a reduction in the 'S' factor for the ground, or parts of the ground.

### **3. Guidance for Sports Ground Management**

#### **3.1 Event Safety Policy Statement**

Sports ground management should have in place a written Event Safety Policy Statement which outlines the ground's operational safety policy and its commitment to managing, assessing, preventing and reducing the risk of harm or injury to those present at the ground during an event. The policy should identify the need for the ground to have in place a plan to mitigate any risks of physical harm or injury through crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour. The SGSA has provided a template Event Safety Policy Statement as an example [here](#).

#### **3.2 Crowd Disorder and Anti-Social Behaviour Plan**

The crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour plan may be either a bespoke document or incorporated across a number of documents within the club's approach to planning. The plan should provide the basis for a proportionate risk based approach to be adopted.

In relation to the plan:

- Crowd disorder means the breakdown of peaceful and law abiding behaviour
- Anti-social behaviour means acting in a manner which has caused or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to another

When preparing such a plan it is advisable for the sports ground management to seek early engagement with the local police to ensure roles and responsibilities are clearly defined (which will generally be achieved by a mutually agreed Statement of Intent) and the plan is proportionate, practical and enforceable.

The crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour plan should:

- a. Identify the types of crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour likely to result in physical harm or injury to those present at that particular ground
- b. Explain the ground's objectives and the means of achieving them. Those objectives could include a commitment to continually reduce the likelihood of such incidents occurring and identify the ways in which the prevalence and impact of such incidents will be monitored
- c. Identify who from the ground management has responsibility for dealing with matters of crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour at the ground
- d. Identify who will be actioning the ground's plan
- e. Outline the chain of command in relation to these matters
- f. Clarify matters of primacy when police are at the ground during an event
- g. Describe how perpetrators are identified and reported or handed over to the police
- h. Describe the collection and preservation of evidence and witness identification
- i. Describe how and when police are to be contacted for any of these matters when they are not on site
- j. Outline responses to particular types of crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour
- k. With some sports grounds (such as football, cricket or rugby) who host regular supporters, include a sliding scale of proportionate sanctions available to the ground's management when dealing with the supporters for misdemeanours or poor behaviour.

At football grounds in England or Wales where football matches are being played involving members of the Premier League, Football League, National League, Welsh Premier, Scottish Football League or international teams specific football offences apply under the Football (Offences) Act 1991 (as amended) and Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Act), 1985. The prevention and management of these particular offences should be included within the plan developed by those sports ground affected.

## **4. Guidance for Certifying Authorities**

Detailed information on the issuing, monitoring and oversight of sports ground safety certificates can be found in the SGSA publication *Safety Certification*.

Action under the safety certificate can only be taken for matters within the boundary described in the safety certificate and which impact during the period of an event.

Safety Advisory Groups (SAGs) have always been a valuable forum for discussing not only areas within scope of legislation but also those external factors relevant to the safe operation of the sports ground. There is no reason why the SAG cannot discuss matters

away from the ground, although the SAG chair must make it clear which matters are outside the remit of the safety certificate.

It is considered important that any response to issues from those present at SAG will be targeted at specific risk assessed issues; evidence-based; proportionate and reasonable.

In relation to arrangements for dealing with crowd disorder or anti-social behaviour by sports grounds which are subject to a safety certificate under either the Safety of Sports Grounds Act, 1975 or the Fire Safety and Safety of Sports Act 1987, certifying authorities may wish to consider:

- Ensuring that the relevant SAG Terms of Reference identify that representatives from the police are present who are able to report on crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour
- Deciding whether it would be useful to receive advice at the SAG from the authority's staff with responsibility for community safety
- Including crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour as an agenda item at each SAG meeting
- If necessary, inserting an appropriate condition in the safety certificate
- Considering whether there is a requirement for statistical information to be provided to the local authority which could assist decision making on these issues
- Developing a local protocol through which disputes between police and sports ground management over the attendance of police may be resolved.