



Rotherham United Football Club

Spectator Suspension and Banning Policy

Policy Owner	Rotherham United FC
Version	3
Last Review Date	October 2023
Next Review Date	October 2024

This document has been reviewed for:	
Compliance with Legislation	✓
Equality Impact Assessment	✓
Health and Safety	✓
Risk Management	✓

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 This Spectator Suspension and Banning Policy is compliant with the requirements and principles of The Equality Act 2010.
- 1.2 This Policy must be applied fairly, equally, and consistently to all persons, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or any other unjustifiable grounds.
- 1.3 It also complements, and runs in conjunction with, Information Sharing Agreements held between Rotherham United Football Club and the Police, Football Authorities and other Football Clubs and relevant venues.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The Spectator Suspension and Banning Policy is intended to maximize safety at matches involving Rotherham United Football Club, improve and protect the match experience of people attending such matches, protect the image and reputation of Rotherham United Football Club and, where necessary, safeguard the financial interests of the organisation.
- 2.2 Irrespective of any prohibition on attending football matches imposed by a Court of Law, Rotherham United Football Club requires a separate and transparent framework within which to impose realistic, consistent and proportionate suspensions or bans on individuals attending such matches or other events organized by the Club in order to provide the above safeguards.
- 2.3 Such suspensions or bans can be imposed for a variety of transgressions, but this process will predominantly address:
 - Misconduct deemed to have compromised safety or good order within a football stadium;
 - Conduct that presents a genuine, future risk to safety, or moral demeanor being compromised at matches involving Rotherham United Football Club;
 - Conduct that damages the reputation of Rotherham United Football Club;
 - Actions found to be in breach of the Ground Regulations or the Terms of Conditions of Entry applicable at The Aesseeal New York Stadium, or;
 - Conduct that is deemed contrary to the Core Values of the Club.

3. Underpinning Procedures

- 3.1 A Football Banning Order can be used by a Court of Law to ban a certain individual from attending football matches both home and away abroad for a period of between 3 and 10 years. Additional and more precise conditions can also be imposed on a case-by-case basis. The authority for such an order is provided by The Football (Offences and Disorder) Act 1991.
- 3.2 However, following a breach of Ground Regulations or the Terms and Conditions of Entry, and notwithstanding any ongoing or proposed pursuit of a Football Banning Order by the Police, Rotherham United Football Club reserves the right to suspend or ban specific individuals from attending football matches or events and activities involving, hosted or organised by Rotherham Football Club.
- 3.3 In addition to being suspended or banned from first team matches at The Aesseeal New York Stadium, such a suspension or ban may also prohibit:
- Admission to, or presence at, all levels of Club representative matches, both home and away;
 - Attendance at, or upon, property either owned by or loaned/leased to the Club, including training grounds and retail/ticket outlets;
 - Involvement in any transport activities organised by the Club, and;
 - Attendance at any social functions organised by, or on behalf of, the Club.
- 3.4 Furthermore, such a suspension or ban will usually also incorporate:
- Suspension or cancellation of any Season Card, Membership Card and/or other concessionary privileges, and;
 - Suspension or cancellation of any match-ticket purchasing account.
- 3.5 Any period of suspension or ban involving a Season Card or membership Card will be imposed without recompense, in accordance with the terms and conditions of issue. In the event of such cancellation no refund will be paid in respect of any unexpired portion of the Season Ticket.
- 3.6 Whilst each case will be dealt with on its own particular merits, the implications and scope of any suspension or ban will be outlined in clear terms within correspondence sent to the individual concerned.
- 3.7 Should an incident involve any aggravating features such as, but not confined to, violent, threatening, dangerous, racist, sexist or homophobic behavior, or involve any activity that threatens the safety management operation, Rotherham United Football Club reserves the right to increase the standard suspension or ban to reflect the seriousness of the circumstances.

3.8 A baseline Fan Behavioral Risk Score (4.3) has been developed, and the Club will use this as the starting point for any formal action taken in response to an incident that falls within the scope of this Policy.

4. **Schedule of interventions**

4.1 Rotherham United Football Club reserve the right to eject any person/s from the Stadium failing to comply with the Stadium Regulations, or whose presence within the stadium is, or could reasonably be construed as constituting a source of danger, nuisance or annoyance to any other person.

4.2 Rotherham United Football Club reserve the right to refuse admission, withdraw tickets or ban any person who, through their actions, behaviour, or opinion bring the Club's name or reputation into disrepute.

4.3 Fan Behavioral Risk Score (The following is not conclusive, and other incidents will be categorised accordingly with Rotherham United's Safety Officer and disciplinary panel.)

Category	Response	Action
<p>Category A (Low)</p> <p>Gesturing, Migration in Stand (Wrong area), Cans in ground (non-alcoholic), No Ticket (proof of purchase), Personal Assistant guest without disabled, Ticket touting (suspected only – individual resale), Adult on junior/concession ticket, urinating in public place, another ejected on ticket holders card.</p>	<p>Issue a letter requesting a meeting to discuss the incident.</p> <p>Letter will outline that the subject is suspended from all associated Club activities and property until such time as a meeting has been held.</p>	<p>a) 6 week Restorative Education Programme as appropriate.</p> <p>b) Suspension for a period that encompasses a <u>minimum</u> of 3 'home' first team matches following date of decision.</p> <p>c) Notify Ticket Office to suspend any Season Card or purchasing capability for duration of the suspension.</p> <p>d) Advise South Yorkshire Police Football Intelligence Unit in line with the principles of the Information Sharing Agreement.</p>

<p>Category B (Medium)</p> <p>Smoking (including e-cigarettes), Standing, Drunk, Underage drinking within the stadium, Ticket touting (confirmed) Alcohol brought into the stadium (in view of pitch) Altercation between home and away fans, Lewd conduct, Alleged assault, accumulation of Category A offences.</p>	<p>Issue a letter requesting a meeting to discuss the incident.</p> <p>Letter will outline that the subject is suspended from all associated Club activities and property until such time as a meeting has been held.</p>	<p>Suspension for a period that encompasses a <u>minimum</u> of 10 'home' first team matches following date of decision (which may run consecutive to those already imposed).</p> <p>a) b) and c) as above.</p> <p>Consider any additional and necessary exclusions.</p>
<p>Category C (High)</p> <p>Drunk and disorderly, inciting crowd to stand, theft, serving and existing ban, possession of and offensive weapon, affray, foul/abusive/threatening behaviour (staff or visitor), discriminatory chants, illegal substance related or an accumulation of 'category B' offenses, Pitch Invasions.</p>	<p>If appropriate pass fan details onto the police to be further investigated.</p> <p>Consider a meeting to discuss the incident.</p> <p>If a meeting is deemed to be appropriate, issue a letter to the subject requesting a meeting but also outlining that the subject is suspended from all associated Club activities and property until such time as a meeting has been held.</p>	<p>Suspension for a period that encompasses a <u>minimum</u> of one calendar year from the date of the decision (which may run concurrent to any existing suspension already imposed).</p> <p>a) b) and c) as above.</p> <p>Consider any additional and necessary exclusions.</p> <p>Depending upon the frequency and relative seriousness of the incidents in question, a formal ban for a significantly longer period may be considered.</p>
<p>Category D (High+)</p> <p>Assault (GBH/ABH) of visitors and/or staff,</p>	<p>If appropriate pass fan details onto the police to be further investigated.</p>	<p>a) b) and c) as above.</p>

<p>Throwing missiles, , Flares, Smoke bombs, Fireworks.</p>	<p>Consider a meeting to discuss the incident.</p> <p>If a meeting is deemed to be appropriate, issue a letter to the subject requesting a meeting but also outlining that the subject is suspended from all associated Club activities and property until such time as a meeting has been held.</p> <p>If appropriate pass fan details onto the police to be further investigated.</p>	<p>Behavior classified as being 'category D behavior' will result in a lifetime ban from the stadium and all its activities.</p>
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Note: On occasions when a person ejected cannot be identified, the person obtaining the ticket or allowing use of their Season Card, will be held responsible for that person's actions and may be sanctioned accordingly.

4.4 Following on from a penalty/banning, any category offences A through to D, may result in a lifetime ban.

4.5 Following any court decisions, the club may revisit individual cases and lift penalties if appropriate.

5. Restorative Education Programme

5.1 The person facing disciplinary action will be required to participate in a Restorative Education Programme by the Club. The aim of this is to give both those responsible for harm and those harmed by their actions the opportunity to come together and repair the damage done. This is done through community volunteer work, education and discussion, and is supported by Rotherham

United Community Trust. Successful completion of the programme may lead to the person investigated being allowed re-entry to club activities. (see Appendix 1)

6. Banning Process

6.1 On completion of the club's post-match investigation, anyone alleged to have breached Rotherham United's rules and/or regulations shall be informed through a letter (or if necessary other appropriate communication) of such allegation. Their season ticket and ability to buy home/away tickets, shall be blocked ..

6.2 The person under investigation if appropriate, will then be invited into a meeting with the safety officer and a disciplinary panel of at least 2 other persons. The person under investigation, has the right to bring an appropriate representative with them to this meeting.

6.3 Anyone under the age of 18 years old, must be accompanied by an adult and a member of the Club's Safeguarding Team will also be present.

6.4 In the meeting;

- Introductions
- Allegations will be put to the person under investigation.
- They will then receive a chance to reply to the allegation.
- If appropriate any evidence will be shown to the person under investigation.
- The disciplinary panel will then be allowed to question the person under investigation.
- Finally, the Safety Officer will give a summary of the incident.

6.5 A letter will then be sent, informing the person under investigation, of the disciplinary panel's decision.

7. APPEAL PROCESS

7.1 Appeal against any suspension or ban

7.2 Should any person appeal against a suspension or ban, then this appeal must be submitted in writing for the attention of the Chief Executive at Rotherham United Football Club within 21 days of the date of the notification letter. No appeals received beyond this period will be considered.

7.3 The Chief Executive will then ensure that a senior member of the Club Management considers the facts of the case and determines whether:

- The terms of the existing suspension or ban will stand;
- The terms of the existing suspension or ban will be reduced or amended;
- The existing suspension or ban will be wholly rescinded.

7.4 The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing to the appellant.

7.5 Any appeal against the final Club decision should be made to the relevant football authority - Premier League, Football League or Football Association.

7.6 If having reverted to the relevant football authority, the appellant still feels aggrieved at the outcome they have recourse to the Independent Football Ombudsman (IFO).

7.7 The IFO has been established by the three English football authorities (The Football Association, The Premier League and The Football League) to receive and adjudicate upon complaints which have not been resolved at an earlier stage.

7.8 The IFO has been designated as the final stage for the adjudication of complaints which have not been resolved within football's complaints procedure. The IFO operates a system of non-binding arbitration.

7.9 In exercising its jurisdiction, the IFO does not seek to question the merits of judgements made by properly constituted Regulatory Commissions and Appeal Boards, unless there were shortcomings in the administrative processes which led to those judgements.

7.10 It is not the role of the IFO to retry cases, but it is its role to explore and review the procedures under which complaints have been dealt with and whether the outcomes were reasonable for all parties concerned.

7.11 Under the procedure agreed by the Football Governing Bodies, the adjudication of the IFO is final and there is no right of appeal against IFO decisions.

7. **Acceptable Behavior Contract**

7.1 At the conclusion of any period of suspension or ban, the subject may be required to enter into a new and separate Acceptable Behavior Contract for an additional period of up to 12 months.

7.2 In all applicable cases, this requirement will be contained within the original correspondence sent to the subject at the outset of the ban.

7.3 The Acceptable Behavior Contract must be signed by the subject before any prohibitions are finally lifted.

7.4 Once a Contract is signed, all existing prohibitions will be lifted with immediate effect and confirmed to the subject in writing.

7.5 Any breach of an Acceptable Behavior Contract will be dealt with as per (4.2) of the schedule of intervention.

8. **Version Control**

8.1 This policy will be reviewed and updated annually by the owner, and more frequently if necessary.

8.2 The following identifies all version changes.

Version	Date	Reason for Update	Author
2	Oct 2021	Yearly Review	EMH
3	Oct 2022	Yearly Review	FG
4	Oct 2023	Addition of Restorative Education Programme information	PD/JS

APPENDIX 1



RESTORATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Rotherham United Football Club

In some minor cases of infringement the person facing disciplinary action may be offered the following programme as an alternative to a suspension or ban.

6 week restorative programme designed to educate and inform the spectator of the effects their behaviour has on all stakeholders involved.

Step 1: Pre-meet – with an RUCT and a club representative to outline the expectations of the programme and book in programme start date. (30-45mins)

Step 2: Workshop - Educational workshop on the effects of their behaviour, education on discrimination/anti-social behaviour followed by the ramifications on the club and its supporters. (1-2 hours long)

Step 3: Community service – Voluntary work with the RUCT. Agreed number of hours to be completed dependent on the severity of the incident.

Step 4: Referral – Following an assessment of the individuals understanding of the situation, showing signs of empathy, remorse and engagement, a referral may be made to Kick It Out who will deliver a further 1-1 educational programme.

Step 5: Report – On completion of the programme a report and recommendation will be provided to the club outlining their recommendation on next steps which will include feedback from the individual about how they feel the programme has gone and the impact it has had.

Step 6: Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) – If the outcome of the report leads to the spectator being allowed to return to club activities an ABC will be issued outlining the terms of the return and signed as agreed by both a Club representative and the individual.