

# Hate crime in sport

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

First published 20 October 2020 Updated 20 October 2020

Written by College of Policing

7 mins read

Sport and sporting events can often be the context within which hate crimes and non-crime hate incidents happen. These may range from racism at football matches to inflammatory comments made by sports people. Hate crime in sport is no less important than hate crime elsewhere. In sport it attracts media interest, and has the potential to escalate individual incidents into [critical incidents](#).

When tackling hate crime in sport, the police service must:

- deliver a robust and effective response, using the appropriate legislation
- work closely with communities affected
- proactively identify and combat incidents of hate crime by using the national intelligence model and tasking and coordination process
- reduce and manage any risk of public disorder

The response must be proportionate, taking into account the different demands and priorities force areas have in relation to hate crime in sport. These will depend on the location of venues, and the range or type of sporting events, whether they are local, national or international events, and the demographics of the local community, spectators and those taking part.

For further information see:

- [Kick It Out](#)
- [Show Racism the Red Card](#)
- [True Vision](#)

## Robust and effective action

It is important to build relationships with key partners, both internally and externally.

This includes:

- establishing and maintaining effective links between event commanders, football intelligence and/or liaison officers, technical support and public order specialists
- building partnership links with official bodies such as football associations, England and Wales Cricket Board and rugby football unions
- building partnerships with local sports clubs, both amateur and professional, and area associations
- developing close working relationships with event stewards

Stewards must be fully integrated into any police operation, not only from a public order perspective but also from a hate crime perspective. Effective use of **intelligence** can help to identify known offenders and target resources to potential trouble spots. Although race has traditionally had the highest profile in relation to hate crime in sport, consideration should also be given to widening campaigns to address the impact on other protected groups.

Where hate crimes do occur during a sporting event, it is important to use sanctions effectively. Early liaison with the CPS will ensure that the most appropriate sanction is used, for example, community protection notice (CPN) or criminal behaviour order (CBO) as punishment for antisocial behaviour, civil injunctions, banning orders or specific hate crime offences under the **Public Order Act 1986** or the **Football (Offences) Act 1991**. Combating hate crime should be included as a standing item for event briefings where such problems exist.

## Practice example

The Metropolitan Police Service has worked with Arsenal Football Club to respond to racism in and around the club's ground. This has included a training package for stewards on hate crime. The club has also developed a text line, which is advertised in match programmes. It allows supporters to report the seat number of fans using racist or other hate language. The club can seat staff near to the person to make an independent assessment prior to any action being taken.

## Building community confidence

To increase reporting of hate crime in sport, victims need to have confidence that the police and authorities will take complaints seriously. A response that meets the specific needs of victims will

help to increase public confidence and improve community engagement.

## Intelligence-led policing operations

In addition to the standard considerations when planning the policing operation for a sporting event, the potential for hate crime should be considered specifically:

- conduct strategic and tactical assessments
- develop a control strategy to meet local demands and issues
- develop intelligence products to reinforce the control strategy, such as subject profiles, problem profiles and case analysis
- identify grounds and venues where hate crime occurs
- identify areas in the vicinity of grounds and venues where hate crime occurs
- use covert and overt methods to gather intelligence and target offenders
- gather open-source intelligence
- recognise different levels of hate crime in sport, for example, local, cross border, national or international

## Football intelligence officers

The appointment and development of football intelligence officers (FIOs) has been central to the effective policing of hate crime in football. They perform a coordination role in intelligence-led operations, working with club officials, stewards and match commanders. The FIO's role is to:

- brief and advise the match commander in line with the tactical assessment before, during and after the event
- ensure that appropriate incident flags are placed on incident logs and all crime reports to ensure trends can be monitored
- ensure all reported hate crime is included in the post-event report
- liaise with the CPS prior to, or at first hearing of, an application for a Football Banning Order in the event of any arrest or summons
- establish from the host football club whether stewards or club officials have received any reports of hate crime or incidents

The results of these enquiries should be recorded in the post-event report following a designated match.

## Match commanders

Overall responsibility for managing the policing response during a sporting event rests with the match commander. They must:

- ensure that officers engaged in policing football events are fully briefed and understand the positive action policy, which must be part of any [operation order](#)
- ensure that incidents of hate crime at designated football matches are recorded by the officer receiving a complaint or witnessing an incident, irrespective of whether suspects are identified or not
- ensure that allegations of hate crime at football events have a focused response, either by appointing a dedicated investigation team or ensuring the enquiry is appropriately supervised and quality assured
- consider the proactive use of evidence-gathering teams or other tactics to identify those responsible for any racist chanting and ensure that effective action is taken, whether it is during the match or as part of a retrospective enquiry

## Tags

Hate crime