



House of Commons  
Culture, Media and Sport  
Committee

---

**Safety at major  
sporting events**

---

**First Report of Session 2023–24**

*Report, together with formal minutes relating  
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 12 December 2023*

**HC 174**

Published on 29 December 2023  
by authority of the House of Commons

## The Culture, Media and Sport Committee

The Culture, Media and Sport Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and its associated public bodies.

### Current membership

[Dame Caroline Dinenage MP](#) (*Conservative, Gosport*) (Chair)

[Kevin Brennan MP](#) (*Labour, Cardiff West*)

[Steve Brine MP](#) (*Conservative, Winchester*)

[Clive Efford MP](#) (*Labour, Eltham*)

[Julie Elliott MP](#) (*Labour, Sunderland Central*)

[Damian Green MP](#) (*Conservative, Ashford*)

[Dr Rupa Huq MP](#) (*Labour, Ealing Central and Acton*)

[Simon Jupp MP](#) (*Conservative, East Devon*)

[John Nicolson MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, Ochil and South Perthshire*)

[Jane Stevenson MP](#) (*Conservative, Wolverhampton North East*)

[Giles Watling MP](#) (*Conservative, Clacton*)

### Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publication

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Commons 2023. This publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament Licence, which is published at [www.parliament.uk/copyright](http://www.parliament.uk/copyright).

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/378/culture-media-and-sport-committee/> and in print by Order of the House.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Rosie Akeroyd (Committee Specialist), Andy Boyd (Committee Operations Manager), Dr Conor Durham (Committee Specialist), Ollie Florence (Senior Media and Communications Officer), Natalia Janiec-Janicki (Assistant Clerk), Lois Jeary (Committee Specialist), Olivia Rose (Media and Communications Officer), Joe Ryan (Committee Specialist) and Ben Sneddon (Clerk).

### Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 6188; the Committee's email address is [CommonsCMS@parliament.uk](mailto:CommonsCMS@parliament.uk).

You can follow the Committee on X (formerly Twitter) using [@CommonsCMS](https://twitter.com/CommonsCMS).

# Contents

---

<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
The Taylor Report	5
The Casey Review	6
Our work	6
<b>2 Protecting fans abroad</b>	<b>8</b>
Paris 2022	8
<b>3 Policing</b>	<b>11</b>
Unauthorised entry	12
Zone Ex	13
Discrimination and anti-social behaviour	14
<b>4 Alcohol and drug use at sporting events</b>	<b>16</b>
Alcohol consumption at football matches	16
Drug use at sporting events	19
<b>5 Stewarding</b>	<b>22</b>
The role of stewards	22
Training	24
<b>6 Stadium management</b>	<b>26</b>
Safety Advisory Groups	26
Safe standing	27
Stadium design	29
<b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Formal minutes</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Witnesses</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Published written evidence</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament</b>	<b>39</b>



## Summary

Disorder at football matches following the post-pandemic resumption of spectator football has seen supposed fans attempt to break through gates for the Euro 2020 finals at Wembley and assault stewards at domestic games. Liverpool fans travelling abroad faced disturbing scenes at the 2022 UEFA Champions League final in Paris and once again found themselves unjustly blamed for policing failings. While sporting bodies have learned the lessons of past disasters and established stadia that are now safer and matches that are better policed, sporting events are still not environments that ensure all fans are able to attend.

Our report, which follows Baroness Casey of Blackstock's review into the events at Wembley in 2021, considers how sporting events can be made inclusive, ensuring that they are well policed and welcoming environments. We recommend the extension of trialling of 'safe standing' and call for Safety Advisory Groups to be made more accessible to fan groups as a mean of improving the fan experience. Discrimination and antisocial behaviour continue at football matches, and so we propose better collection of data to ensure targeted action against offenders.

We also consider the costs of policing of sporting events, including proposals for a more appropriate distribution of the costs between the public and clubs and the need for stronger action on the growth of cocaine use by fans. Following the work of the fan-led review into football and the Government's proposals, we call for more work on alcohol consumption at football matches to balance the economic benefits and societal harms that any changes could have, as well as considering the impact of alcohol on other sporting events. On the ground, we know that stewards often face the brunt of antisocial behaviour during matches, and so we consider the current state of stewarding at matches and propose improvements to training and conditions that will make events better for stewards, clubs and fans alike.

While much of this report is focused on football, as the UK's most popular and most regulated sport, a rise in antisocial behaviour in and around other major sporting events shows that this is not an isolated problem. Our recommendations are for the Government and its arms-length bodies, but there are lessons here too for all major sporting bodies in ensuring that genuine fans continue to enjoy the thrill of live sport.

# 1 Introduction

---

1. In recent years, football matches have once again been marred by serious disorder. Internationally, at the final of the 2020 UEFA European Football Championship (the 2020 Euro Final), held at Wembley on 11 July 2021,<sup>1</sup> and at the UEFA Champions League Final, held at the Stade de France in Paris on 28 May 2022,<sup>2</sup> the safety of football fans was once again brought to the forefront. As recently as November 2023, more than 40 men were charged after attacking police in Birmingham during a Europa Conference League match at Villa Park between Aston Villa and Legia Warszawa.<sup>3</sup> In domestic matches, individual spectators have been responsible for violence against stewards,<sup>4</sup> and the British Transport Police have been required to step up their presence ahead of certain matches.<sup>5</sup>

2. Safety at major events is managed by several organisations across government departments, non-departmental public bodies and police forces. The three major bodies specifically responsible for safety at events are:

- a) The Sports Ground Safety Authority (SGSA), established by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority Act 2011,<sup>6</sup> succeeding the Football Licensing Authority, established following the Hillsborough disaster. The SGSA acts as the safety regulator for football grounds in England and Wales, as well as the Government's independent adviser on safety at sports grounds, providing safety advice and support to other sports both in the UK and internationally.
- b) The United Kingdom Football Policing Unit (UKFPU), which aims to reduce violence, antisocial behaviour and disorder at football events involving UK football teams. The UKFPU gives advice, assistance and training to all police forces in England and Wales and provides the football arrest figures released by the Home Office. The Football Banning Orders Authority is part of the UKFPU and deals with all football banning orders issued by courts in England and Wales, including the surrender of passports for football matches involving UK domestic and international teams when playing outside the UK.
- c) The Security Industry Authority (SIA), an executive non-departmental public body of the Home Office established by the Private Security Industry Act 2001.<sup>7</sup> It principally licenses individuals to work in certain sectors of the private security industry and, under voluntary arrangements, approving suppliers of private security services. Section 4(6) of the 2001 Act, commonly referred to as the 'sports ground exemption', removes some roles in sporting stadia from SIA licensing and applies only when individuals are directly employed at and by ground management at certified sports grounds, or where a certified sports stand is present and there is a general safety certificate in effect.<sup>8</sup>

---

1 ["Euro 2020 final disorder: Timeline and witness accounts of those at the game"](#), BBC Sport, 3 December 2021

2 ["Uefa Liverpool final: Fans blamed unfairly for litany of errors, says report"](#), BBC News, 13 July 2022

3 ["Police charge 46 Legia Warsaw fans after violence at Villa Park"](#), The Guardian, 2 December 2023

4 ["Albion fan banned for punching steward after goal against Palace"](#), The Argus, 13 May 2022; ["Leeds United fan strangled steward at Elland Road"](#), The York Press, 3 November 2022

5 ["BTP issues stark warning to anti-social football fans after match day violence - Bolton"](#), British Transport Police press release, 27 November 2022

6 [Sports Grounds Safety Authority Act 2011](#)

7 [Private Security Industry Act 2001](#)

8 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, ["Safety Certificate"](#), accessed 6 December 2023

3. Safety at football stadia has been significantly shaped by the disasters that took place in the 1980s. The Bradford City fire on 11 May 1985 took the lives of 56 spectators and injured at least 265 others, leading to an inquiry by Sir Oliver Popplewell and the banning of wooden grandstands at UK sports grounds.<sup>9</sup> Sir Oliver's work was also informed by the Heysel disaster later the same month, which saw 39 fans killed and more than 600 injured in a crush before the European Cup final match between Liverpool and Juventus in Brussels.<sup>10</sup> The Heysel disaster also led to the beginning of legal powers in the UK to prevent disruptive fans from attending matches.<sup>11</sup>

### The Taylor Report

4. While Bradford and Heysel increased the impetus to modernise stadia, with terraces—large standing sections with no fixed seats—beginning to decline, it was the tragedy at Hillsborough on 15 April 1989 that marked a sea change in fan safety.

5. During the FA Cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest, 97 Liverpool fans were killed and 760 injured in a crush on the terrace after police opened an exit gate for fans to enter the already packed terrace, in a bid to relieve pressure in a bottleneck outside the stadium.<sup>12</sup> The crush was initially, wrongly, blamed on Liverpool fans who were unfairly characterised as hooligans but has since been accepted as resulting from a catastrophic failure by police at the event.<sup>13</sup> In the aftermath of the disaster, the then Government asked Lord Justice Taylor to examine the events that led to the tragedy and to make recommendations on crowd control and safety at sports events.<sup>14</sup>

6. Lord Taylor produced two reports into the disaster. An interim report, published in August 1989, focused on the circumstances surrounding the tragedy, criticising police failures and absolving Liverpool supporters of culpability.<sup>15</sup> The second report, published in January 1990, included a wider analysis of football as a whole and laid out a series of recommendations, including the introduction of all-seated grounds.<sup>16</sup> Prior to Hillsborough, there was already a growing trend towards all-seater stadia in Britain and across Europe,<sup>17</sup> meaning the final Taylor report chimed with a broader drive towards modernisation and the growing acceptance among the game's authorities of the new market realities that football faced. The second report dovetailed with the FA's "Blueprint for the Future of Football", which encouraged clubs to become more commercially minded, by enhancing the matchday experience and to maximise revenues to ensure their ongoing financial viability.<sup>18</sup>

7. In 2009, then Culture, Media and Sport Secretary Andy Burnham ordered the waiving of the 30-year rule on withholding public records in order to enable the disclosure

9 University of Bradford, 'The Papers of the Popplewell Inquiry into Crowd Safety at Sports Grounds',

10 "Heysel disaster: English football's forgotten tragedy?", BBC News, 29 May 2015

11 "How Heysel's lost lives saved a sport", The Guardian, 3 April 2005

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Home Office, *The Hillsborough Stadium Disaster, 15 April 1989: Inquiry by the Rt Hon Lord Justice Taylor: Final report*, Cm 962, January 1990

15 Home Office, *The Hillsborough Stadium Disaster: Inquiry by the Rt Hon Lord Justice Taylor: Interim report*, Cm 765, August 1989

16 Home Office, *The Hillsborough Stadium Disaster, 15 April 1989: Inquiry by the Rt Hon Lord Justice Taylor: Final report*, Cm 962, January 1990

17 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, 'All-seated football stadia', accessed 6 December 2023

18 Football Association, *The Blueprint for the Future of Football* (June 1991)

of all documents relating to the disaster.<sup>19</sup> In parallel, then Home Secretary Alan Johnson appointed the Hillsborough Independent Panel to oversee full public disclosure of relevant government and local information relating to the disaster, in consultation with the Hillsborough families, and ultimately to “illustrate how the information disclosed adds to public understanding of the tragedy and its aftermath”.<sup>20</sup> After sitting for two years, the Panel published a damning report that was highly critical of the emergency response from organisations and particularly blamed senior police officers for opening exit gates without thinking about the effects this would have on the fans already inside the stadium.<sup>21</sup>

## The Casey Review

8. More recently, the disorder surrounding the Euro 2020 final in July 2021 led to the Football Association (FA) commissioning Baroness Casey of Blackstock DBE CB to undertake an independent review into the facts and circumstances of the event.<sup>22</sup> Baroness Casey’s subsequent report, published in December 2021, recommended that the Government consider a new category for football matches of national significance, which should include:

- a) a maximalist police (and other agencies with enforcement powers) resourcing and deployment plan;
- b) the establishment of a sterile area within Zone Ex which is restricted to ticketholders;
- c) more robust governance arrangements including an independent checkpoint as part of the process;
- d) enhanced enforcement of bans on alcohol consumption on public transport and in other designated public spaces.<sup>23</sup>

Baroness Casey also recommended that the SGSA should undertake a review of the stewarding industry and the challenges faced by live sporting events in securing sufficient numbers of trained stewards, following the acknowledgement by Wembley that stewarding at the event was inadequate.<sup>24</sup> We consider the issue of stewarding in Chapter 5 of this report.

## Our work

9. While the high-profile disorder in 2021–22 occurred almost exclusively at football matches, the events raise issues across major sporting events. We therefore launched our inquiry into what steps can be taken to protect British supporters at major events

19 Research Excellence Framework 2014, [‘The Hillsborough Project 1990–2003: discovery of institutional failure and cover-up makes a key contribution to the exposure and official recognition of injustice’](#), accessed 6 December 2023

20 Report of the Hillsborough Independent Panel, *Hillsborough*, HC (2012–13) 581, p 4

21 Ibid.

22 [“Euro 2020 final: FA commissions independent review into ‘disgraceful’ scenes when fans stormed Wembley”](#), i, 19 July 2021

23 Football Association, [The Baroness Casey Review: An Independent Review of events surrounding the UEFA Euro 2020 Final ‘Euro Sunday’ at Wembley](#) (December 2021)

24 Ibid., p 96



abroad and consider whether policies and policing at stadiums in the UK are sufficient to maintain spectator safety. Looking specifically at football, we also sought to examine the effectiveness of legislation, including safe standing and alcohol consumption at matches, and whether other sporting events required similar regulation.

10. We launched a call for evidence on 8 July 2022, from which we received 25 pieces of written evidence. We subsequently took oral evidence from stakeholders including supporter groups and campaigning organisations, academics, organisations responsible for safety at sporting events, sporting bodies and finally from the Minister for Sport, Rt Hon Stuart Andrew MP and Adam Conant, Head of Sport at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. We are grateful to all those who contributed to this inquiry.

## 2 Protecting fans abroad

### Paris 2022

11. The 2022 UEFA Champions League Final between Liverpool and Real Madrid, held in Paris on 28 May 2022, saw thousands of Liverpool fans trapped in congested entrances to the Stade de France in the hours prior to kick-off. A larger than expected number of fans, unequal distribution due to public transport strikes and failures in planning led to stewards quickly becoming overwhelmed at some entrances, causing delays, overcrowding and tension as fans waited to enter the stadium, with some fans reporting pickpocketing and theft of match tickets.<sup>25</sup> Kick-off for the match was delayed and, at one point, gates to the stadium were closed entirely with many fans still waiting outside. French police used riot control tactics including tear gas and pepper spray on fans who had been left in overcrowded areas and bottlenecks outside the stadium.<sup>26</sup> After the match, as fans left the stadium, large groups strategically attacked, mugged and robbed supporters of both teams, further adding to the chaos. In total, around 238 people were injured, with police making 68 arrests.<sup>27</sup>

12. In the aftermath of the match, French Sports minister Amélie Oudéa-Castéra and Minister of the Interior Gerald Darmanin both blamed the problems on the behaviour of Liverpool supporters, citing reports of a large number of Liverpool fans attempting to enter the stadium without tickets or with fake tickets.<sup>28</sup> This was disputed by Liverpool FC, Real Madrid, supporters' groups, media on the ground and politicians from both the UK and France.<sup>29</sup> Two official reports, including from the French Senate, subsequently criticised the police operation.<sup>30</sup>

13. UEFA commissioned an independent review panel into the events, chaired by Portuguese Parliamentarian Dr Tiago Brandão Rodrigues. The panel's report, published in February 2023, held UEFA responsible for the organisational and safety failures prior to the match and also criticised the French police.<sup>31</sup> The report held there was insufficient evidence to blame ticketless Liverpool fans and that these claims were "a reprehensible attempt to avoid responsibility" by both UEFA and French authorities.<sup>32</sup> The panel's report also criticised UEFA's lack of focus on its own safety and security unit, and for statements made during and after the match.<sup>33</sup> The French police were blamed for unjustified use

25 UEFA, [UCLF22: Independent Review](#) (February 2023) pp 9–10

26 Ibid.

27 "[Champions League final chaos shows France in bad light, say opposition leaders](#)", The Guardian, 29 May 2022

28 "[French minister blames Liverpool fans with fake tickets for causing Champions League final chaos](#)", The Independent, 30 May 2022

29 See for example: [Liverpool FC statement on UCL final entry issues](#), Liverpool FC press release, 28 May 2022; [OFFICIAL: Real Madrid publish statement about events at the Stade de France during Champions League Final](#), Managing Madrid, 3 June 2022; [Joint statement from Spirit of Shankly and Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association re UEFA statement](#), 6 March 2023; The Guardian, [How the Champions League final descended into chaos – visual investigation](#), 21 September 2022; France 24, [Champions League final chaos caused by 'string of dysfunctions'](#), French Senate says, 13 July 2022; Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association, 6 March 2023; [How the Champions League final descended into chaos – visual investigation](#), The Guardian, 21 September 2022; [Champions League final chaos caused by 'string of dysfunctions'](#), French Senate says, France 24, 13 July 2022.

30 UEFA, [UCLF22: Independent Review](#) (February 2023)

31 Ibid.

32 "[Uefa had 'primary responsibility' for Champions League final chaos, damning report finds](#)", The Guardian, 13 February 2023

33 UEFA, [UCLF22: Independent Review](#) (February 2023)

of tear gas and pepper sprays on fans, failing to prevent congestion outside the stadium and not acting against the gangs who attacked supporters after the match.<sup>34</sup> The panel asserted that the actions of the police amounted to criminal assault and concluded that these combined failures could have caused a mass-fatality crowd disaster that was avoided only because of preventive action from fans.<sup>35</sup>

14. Professor Clifford Stott, Social Psychology Professor at Keele University and a member of the UEFA panel,<sup>36</sup> told us that “we were in the territory of what many in the industry call a near miss and we were lucky to emerge from that situation without seeing deaths.”<sup>37</sup> Professor Geoff Pearson, Law Professor at the University of Manchester, told us that the French police often struggle to manage large football events and “tend to have only have one response [to a public order risk]: coercive policing, which typically makes things worse and causes safety issues.”<sup>38</sup> He added that the deployment of riot police at the event may have been inappropriate as “there was not an ongoing riot.”<sup>39</sup> Chief Constable Mark Roberts from the UKFPU agreed with concerns about French policing of the match, telling us that when the police perceive that their “tipping point” has been reached “there is a relatively indiscriminate use of CS gas and water cannon.”<sup>40</sup>

15. UEFA subsequently announced a refund scheme that included all Liverpool and some Real Madrid fans. UEFA general secretary Theodore Theodoridis has called this scheme “comprehensive and fair,” and Liverpool Supporters Group, Spirit of Shankly, have said this goes “some way to acknowledging their part in the fiasco.”<sup>41</sup> However, lawyers representing fans at the match believe that a refund does not reflect “the true harm suffered by those at an event that should have been safe for all to attend.”<sup>42</sup>

16. That there is seemingly such a wide disparity between football policing strategies internationally is concerning. Kevin Miles told the Committee that he was surprised that the Council of Europe’s existing protocol<sup>43</sup> on the organisation of international matches is not being followed: “It lays out a full process there of pre-visits, pre-meetings, the planning of the operations, the integration of the police in the planning, ensuring that the visiting clubs or visiting sides all have input into those processes. It is all laid out there and it is not implemented.”<sup>44</sup>

17. Although work has been done to ensure that there is international police co-operation for football matches and while English police forces seem willing to co-operate with foreign forces, there remains some institutional resistance to this co-operation abroad. Chief Constable Mark Roberts recounted an instance during a Champions League game

---

34 Ibid.

35 *“Champions League final chaos caused by ‘string of dysfunctions’, French Senate says”*, France 24, 13 July 2022

36 *“Report finds supporters were not to blame for Champions League final fiasco”*, Keele University press release, 17 February 2023

37 [Q59](#)

38 [Q63](#)

39 [Q64](#)

40 [Q160](#)

41 Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association, *‘Joint Statement from Spirit of Shankly and Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association re UEFA statement 7th March 2023’*, 6 March 2023

42 *“Liverpool fans’ lawyers say Uefa’s Champions League refund not enough”*, The Guardian, 7 March 2023

43 Council Resolution (EC) [2016/C 444/01](#) concerning an updated handbook with recommendations for international police cooperation and measures to prevent and control violence and disturbances in connection with football matches with an international dimension, in which at least one Member State is involved (‘EU Football Handbook’)

44 [Q54](#)

in Europe where he “was thrown out of the control room because I was asking questions about the way the fans were being dealt with.”<sup>45</sup> He also highlighted that English police try to balance challenging decisions they disagree with alongside maintaining effective relationships with host countries. For instance, although officers from Merseyside Police were sent to Paris to advise local police, Chief Constable Roberts insisted that “we are there as guests, we have no power. We seek to influence; we seek to control [...] but we are really beholden to the host country, and sometimes there is only so far you can push it.”<sup>46</sup>

18. The Minister told us that, after the incident in Paris, his predecessor “did have extensive engagement and the Department had regular engagement with all authorities and counterparts in France.”<sup>47</sup> Adam Conant, Deputy Director of Sport at DCMS, elaborated that:

[s]traight after the events we went through our embassy out in Paris and there was very regular dialogue between them and French counterparts. We have then had extensive conversations since around how lessons are being learned for future events. Obviously, we have the rugby world cup there as well as the Olympics and Paralympics next year.<sup>48</sup>

**19. The treatment of Liverpool fans by French authorities at the 2022 UEFA Champions League final was disgraceful, worsened by the attempts of authorities and UEFA to blame Liverpool fans. Evidence we have received suggests that the attitude of foreign police forces to UK football fans heavily contributed to the chaos seen in Paris last year. This chaos suggests that current approaches to ensuring UK fan safety at these high-profile events are not working.**

***20. We recommend that the Government should work to foster improved relationships with other governments on policing sporting events, in order to bolster the role of British police travelling with UK teams and their collaboration with local forces.***

---

45 [Q160](#)

46 [Q160](#)

47 [Q286](#)

48 [Q288](#)

### 3 Policing

21. The 2021–22 football season saw incursions on to the field of play by supporters, including players and stewards being attacked.<sup>49</sup> In response to this and other behaviour, the Premier League, EFL and FA introduced the “Love Football. Protect the Game” campaign, which significantly increased punishments for transgressions.<sup>50</sup> The 2021–22 football season also saw a rise in football-related arrests for the first time almost a decade.<sup>51</sup>

22. The policing of sporting events is handled by police forces that are local to the area where the event is taking place. However, the nationwide UK Football Policing Unit (UKFPU) has ultimate responsibility for policing football events. The unit aims to tackle violence, antisocial behaviour and disorder at events involving UK football teams and coordinates national football policing policy on behalf of the National Police Chiefs’ Council lead for football policing.<sup>52</sup> The unit is responsible for advice, assistance and training for all police forces in England and Wales and provides the football arrest figures released by the Home Office.<sup>53</sup> It is also the National Football Information Point, the UK’s designated body for coordination and information sharing with European partners, in order to develop European-wide measures for preventing and tackling football-related violence and disorder.<sup>54</sup>

23. In the criminal justice system, football is subject to specific legislation intended to tackle disorder, primarily by the Football Spectators Act 1989, which introduced football banning orders (FBOs) alongside traditional sanctions. FBOs are imposed, other than in exceptional circumstances, following any conviction for an offence of violence or disorder at football and for certain other offences set out in the legislation.<sup>55</sup> Individuals subject to FBOs are prevented, for between three and ten years, from attending any premises to attend a football match and may, if necessary, be subject to further requirements including the surrender of passports to prevent attendance at specific football matches outside the UK.<sup>56</sup> From a high of around 3,500 FBOs in operation, around 1,300 are in force at any one time.<sup>57</sup>

24. Evidence from Professors Geoff Pearson, Mark James and Clifford Stott stated that both fans who have previously been involved in football violence and specialised officers responsible for football policing recognised that FBOs “have played an important role in helping to keep football violence at manageable levels and helping to break up some of the ‘firms’ involved with orchestrating football-related disorder.”<sup>58</sup> The Crown Prosecution

49 See, for example: [“Football fan arrested after punching Nottingham Forest players during match”](#), The Independent, 6 February 2022; [“Pitch invasions ‘cannot continue’, warns EFL chief as talks on sanctions loom”](#), The Guardian, 30 May 2022

50 Football Association, [“Football unites to improve participant and fan behaviour for the 2023–24 season”](#), 31 July 2023

51 Home Office, [Football-related arrests and banning orders, England and Wales: 2021 to 2022 season](#), 22 September 2022

52 Currently, Chief Constable of Cheshire Constabulary Mark Roberts.

53 See, for example: Home Office, [Football-related arrests and banning orders, England and Wales: 2022 to 2023 season](#), 9 November 2023

54 GOV.UK, [“United Kingdom Football Policing Unit”](#), accessed 6 December 2023; National Football Information Point, [“National Football Information Point Network”](#), accessed 6 December 2023

55 [Football Spectators Act 1989](#); Crown Prosecution Service, [“Football Related Offences and Football Banning Orders”](#), accessed 6 December 2023

56 GOV.UK, [“United Kingdom Football Policing Unit”](#), accessed 6 December 2023

57 [Qq40, 101](#)

58 Professor Geoff Pearson; Professor Mark James; Professor Clifford Stott ([SAF0007](#))

Service notes that FBOs can have a deterrent effect “significantly greater” than sentences imposed on conviction.<sup>59</sup>

## Unauthorised entry

25. The disorder at the Euro 2020 final included instances of ticketless individuals attempting to enter Wembley through means including: the use of knowingly fake tickets and accreditation, “dozens, if not hundreds”<sup>60</sup> of attempts to ‘tailgate’ legitimate ticketholders,<sup>61</sup> and through force.<sup>62</sup> Baroness Casey’s review into the events describes a case of “an England fan in a high-viz jacket that was literally hijacking a wheelchair to get into the stadium”, separating a child from his father to enter the match.<sup>63</sup> As with the events in Paris a year later,<sup>64</sup> the events at Wembley were close to disaster. The risk of crowd collapse, barrier collapse and crushing, all contributed to by excess crowds, led to safety expert Eric Stuart QPM telling the Casey Review that:

[t]here is no doubt in my mind that a series of incidents occurred that were a sequence of very near misses and any one of these could have led to significant injuries or death(s) occurring.<sup>65</sup>

26. The Casey Review found that many of the attempts for unauthorised entry were pre-planned, with intelligence that tailgating had occurred at previous Euro 2020 matches<sup>66</sup> While the scenes of disorder from the Euro 2020 final were an extreme representation of the impact of this behaviour, there is evidence of the practice of unauthorised entry across the game. Contemporary reports of the disorder at Wembley highlighted Facebook groups as organising tools.<sup>67</sup> A subsequent report by SignifyAI found that social media was not used to organise unauthorised entry to a significant extent in the case of the Euro 2020 final but noted that it was used by an existing community with a “prior interest”.<sup>68</sup>

27. The practice of unauthorised entry to matches has its own slang term—jibbing<sup>69</sup>—with forums and books providing advice and experience on the subject.<sup>70</sup> We have been told that unauthorised entry is an increasing problem, not just at the Euro 2020 final, but as a regular occurrence at all high-profile matches, international and domestic, for which tickets are sold out. The impact of this on fans includes health and safety risks linked to overcrowding and an increased risk of conflict and disorder between fans with tickets and those without.<sup>71</sup>

59 Crown Prosecution Service, ‘[Football Related Offences and Football Banning Orders](#)’, accessed 6 December 2023

60 Football Association, [The Baroness Casey Review](#), December 2021, p41

61 Attempting to enter the gates immediately behind a legitimate ticketholder, either with or without the complicity of the ticketholder. Evidence to the Casey Review noted that some attempting to enter the ground had offered money to ticketholders to enable them to tailgate.

62 Football Association, [The Baroness Casey Review](#), December 2021, pp 35–36

63 Football Association, [The Baroness Casey Review](#), December 2021, p42

64 See Chapter 2.

65 Football Association, [The Baroness Casey Review](#), December 2021, p54

66 Football Association, [The Baroness Casey Review](#), December 2021, p35, pp 85–86.

67 The Telegraph, [Cocaine, jibbing and no regrets: anatomy of a thoroughly modern football job](#), 15 July 2021 (accessed 6 December 2023)

68 Football Association, [The Baroness Casey Review](#), December 2021, pp 87–88

69 The Athletic, [Why everyone hates Wembley \(sort of\)](#), 3 June 2023 (accessed 6 December 2023)

70 See for example, Hob Nob Anyone? Forum, [Hardest London ground to jib](#) (accessed 6 December 2023) and Robert Davro, No Ticket Required: 30 years jibbing with Manchester United (Manchester, 2018)

71 Unpublished background briefing on Unauthorised Entry to Football Matches Bill

28. At Wembley in July 2021 anyone found tailgating was “simply ejected from the stadium via a pass gate with no prospect of arrest since there is no specific criminal offence relating to tailgating.”<sup>72</sup> This contributed to what Baroness Casey described as “a far greater sense of entitlement than of responsibility, and [a belief] there will be no consequences to their actions.”<sup>73</sup> While the Government has set out that “disorder associated with attempting to gain unauthorised entry may indeed be a criminal offence, and criminal punishment can follow,”<sup>74</sup> barrister and former Parliamentary Counsel Daniel Greenberg CB found that:

Unauthorised entry to football grounds does not attract specific enforcement measures and is unlikely to have long-term consequences sufficient to deter repetition or emulation.<sup>75</sup>

29. Baroness Casey’s recommendations included a call for the Government to “consider strengthening the penalties for football-related disorder, particularly behaviours which recklessly endanger lives” and specified that tailgating should become a specific criminal offence.<sup>76</sup> Such an offence in primary legislation could then be included within the Football Banning Order regime.<sup>77</sup> The Government has to date not, to date, introduced such an offence. However, the Unauthorised Entry to Football Matches Bill, a Private Member’s Bill covering England and Wales, was introduced by Kevin Brennan MP and supported by all English and Welsh Members of this Committee, provides the opportunity to legislate on this issue.<sup>78</sup>

**30. The unauthorised entry of ticketless individuals at football matches creates a risk to their safety and the safety of legitimate, paying fans. While such acts are likely already illegal, the lack of a distinct criminal penalty that includes the use of the proven deterrent of Football Banning Orders, is allowing this practice to continue seemingly unchallenged. We welcome the introduction of the Unauthorised Entry to Football Matches Bill and recommend that the Government takes all steps possible to ensure its passage during this session of Parliament.**

## Zone Ex

31. Event organisers have no statutory responsibility for areas directly outside the ground. The external zone, known as “Zone Ex”, which encompasses the main pedestrian and vehicle routes leading from events to public car parks, transport hubs etc., is within the remit of the police.<sup>79</sup> The 2018 judgment in Ipswich Town Football Club v. Chief Constable of Suffolk Constabulary (the “Ipswich ruling”) confirmed that the cost of special police services—discretionary services requested by an event organiser and outside core policing requirements—for policing the Zone Ex area should be met wholly by the police, overturning the previous position that the police could recover these costs from clubs. Responsibility for funding the policing of Zone Ex continues to be debated, but the current legal position holds that the police must foot the bill.<sup>80</sup>

72 Football Association, [The Baroness Casey Review](#), December 2021, p116

73 Ibid.

74 HL Deb, 1 February 2023, [col 651](#)

75 Football Association, [The Baroness Casey Review](#), December 2021, p118

76 Football Association, [The Baroness Casey Review](#), December 2021, p124

77 Football Spectators Act 1989, [section 14](#)

78 UK Parliament, [Unauthorised Entry to Football Matches Bill](#)

79 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, [‘Zone Ex’](#), accessed 6 December 2023

80 [Ipswich Town FC v Chief Constable of Suffolk Constabulary \(EFL intervening\) \[2017\] EWCA Civ 1484](#)

32. During our inquiry, Chief Constable Mark Roberts estimated that the cost of policing football matches at £47 million per year. He claimed that, as a result of the Ipswich ruling, the police were only able to reclaim £7 million.<sup>81</sup> However, Bob Eastwood from the EFL suggested that the true figures are lower and that they could be reduced, as police currently put too many resources into football matches:

If I was to bring in the 72 chief execs of our football clubs, quite a number of them would agree with that, and so would the safety officers. We need to look at policing apportioning police resources to risk, and not because—this does happen—a particular set of football fans has a reputation going back 30 or 40 years. We need to be a lot more sophisticated in some of these decisions.<sup>82</sup>

33. The National Police Chiefs Council and the Casey Review both called for the extension of the Sports Grounds Safety Authority's definition of safety to include people outside the stadium, which would place some responsibility for their safety on event organisers.<sup>83</sup>

34. Revenues from the Premier League are set to reach a record high of £5.8 billion in the 2023/24 season.<sup>84</sup> Clubs also have great spending power and access to wealth for their own expenditure. For example, since summer 2022, Chelsea FC has spent around £600 million on new players.<sup>85</sup> This spending power extends to clubs recently relegated from the Premier League and still in receipt of parachute payments to enable them to adapt to lower revenues, which can equate to around £45m in year one, £40m in year two and £17m in year three.<sup>86</sup>

**35. We echo calls for sporting bodies to increase their contribution to the safety of fans outside of the stadium. While direct responsibility, in line with the recommendations of the Casey Review, would require significant changes in policing and event management, increased financial contributions would not. Clubs that benefit from matchday attendance and broadcasting rights should be prepared to contribute more fairly to the costs associated with them.**

*36. We recommend that the Government work with football authorities on fairer distribution the cost of policing Zone Ex. This should include consideration of mandatory contributions from leagues or clubs.*

## Discrimination and anti-social behaviour

37. Hate crime and discrimination at sporting events remains a serious problem, with suggestions that instances of hate crime could be increasing. Racism in football charity Kick It Out reported a record 1,007 incidents of discriminatory behaviour in the game for the 2022/23 season, with 484 of these coming from the professional game (including 254 in the Premier League).<sup>87</sup> Almost half of these reports relate to racial discrimination, but faith,

81 [Q95](#)

82 [Q242](#)

83 Football Association, *The Baroness Casey Review: An independent Review of events surrounding the UEFA Euro 2020 Final 'Euro Sunday' at Wembley*, December 2021, p 14

84 Statista, 'Revenue of clubs in the Premier League in England from 2011/12 to 2021/22, with a forecast to 2023/24, by stream', accessed 6 December 2023

85 "[Chelsea has spent over \\$600 million on new signings. Here's why that's significant](#)", CNN, 19 April 2023

86 Sport Quotes and Facts, '[Southampton Parachute Payments: How Much Will the Saints Get?](#)', accessed 6 December 2023

87 Kick It Out, [2022/23 Season: Kick It Out: reporting stats](#) (July 2023) p 2



sex, sexual orientation, disability and age discrimination were also included. Similarly, the recent Independent Commission on Equity in Cricket (ICEC), which reported at the end of June 2023, found that racism, sexism, elitism and class-based discrimination have a long history within the culture and institutions of English and Welsh cricket and that this discrimination continue to exist across the game.<sup>88</sup>

38. There is no uniform data collection system for reports of discrimination and anti-social behaviour at sporting events. Nor is there an obligation for any data collected to be shared, making it difficult to spot trends in behaviour and to compare the performance of police forces. This was particularly highlighted by Tony Burnett, Chief Executive of Kick It Out, who argued for creating a uniform system would lead to a standard methodology for gathering and publishing data that could allow a broader, systemic approach to tackling hate crime.<sup>89</sup> Professor Stacey Pope, Associate Professor in the Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences at Durham University told us many female fans choose not to attend men's football matches because they are not confident in avoiding or receiving protection from antisocial behaviour.<sup>90</sup>

**39. We have repeatedly heard of the discrimination, anti-social behaviour and hate crime that occur at sporting events, particularly football. However, the lack of reported data on this topic makes it difficult to assess the scale of the problem, and for police and sporting bodies to tackle issues where they arise and assess the effectiveness of policing strategies deployed. Until this changes, the safety and welfare of fans, players and staff continues to be a largely unknown risk.**

**40. We recommend that the Government work with police and sporting bodies to introduce on a centralised system to report and record discrimination and antisocial behaviour at sporting events.**

---

88 Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket, [Holding Up A Mirror to Cricket: A Report by the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket](#) (June 2023)

89 [Q9](#)

90 [Ibid.](#)

## 4 Alcohol and drug use at sporting events

---

### Alcohol consumption at football matches

41. The Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc) Act 1985 was introduced following high-profile incidents of violence in the 1984–85 football season.<sup>91</sup> It prohibits the consumption of alcohol within view of the pitch during a restricted period—15 minutes before the start of the event to 15 minutes after the end of the event—at football matches in the top five leagues of English football, the Scottish Professional Football League, Welsh Premier League, international matches and the FA Cup.<sup>92</sup> The Act also prohibits being drunk in a designated sports ground or seeking entry while drunk<sup>93</sup> and the carrying of alcohol on coaches and trains specifically for travel to matches covered by the Act, known as “football specials”.<sup>94</sup>

42. Critics of the legislation, have suggested that there is little evidence that the Act has reduced alcohol consumption around football matches, and that it creates problems for public order and public safety, especially at older grounds with tighter concourses. Professors Pearson, James and Stott claim in written evidence that the prohibition:

- a) Is likely to have increased the consumption of alcohol pre-match, incentivising ‘binge-drinking’ and ‘pre-loading’ before entering the stadium.
- b) Leads directly to fans arriving late at stadiums, causing congestion and crushes at turnstiles and on radial stairways inside the stands.
- c) Encourages fans to consume beer in the concourse quickly pre-match and at half-time, increasing levels of intoxication.
- d) Causes congestion and crushing in concourses pre-match and at half time, as fans squeeze together to drink beer.
- e) Encourages fans to drink in pubs and public spaces rather than in stadiums.<sup>95</sup>

43. Professor Stott also criticised the ban on alcohol on ‘football specials’, highlighting evidence that it makes fans likely to travel in private vehicles or on timetabled trains used by the public. This, in turn, creates planning difficulties for the police and makes it more likely that fans will arrive in city centres instead of travelling directly to the match, increasing the chance of conflict with home fans.<sup>96</sup>

44. The Fan-Led Review of Football Governance, chaired by Tracey Crouch MP, considered proposals to lift the alcohol restriction as a means of generating revenue at lower league football matches. The review set out evidence received from the FSA and the EFL alongside arrest statistics from the UKFPU, concluding that:

---

91 [Sporting Events \(Control of Alcohol etc.\) Act 1985](#)

92 The Sports Grounds and Sporting Events (Designation) Order 2005, [schedule 2](#)

93 Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985, [section 2](#)

94 *Ibid.*, [section 1](#)

95 Professor Geoff Pearson; Professor Mark James; Professor Clifford Stott ([SAF0007](#))

96 [Q74](#)

there is a strong argument that The Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985 should at least be reviewed to consider if it is fit for purpose. It is nearly 40 years old, has not previously been reviewed and the commercial benefits to lower league clubs could go some way to helping ensure their sustainability for their communities.<sup>97</sup>

45. In its response to the Fan-Led Review, the Government accepted recommendations that a review of the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985 is necessary.<sup>98</sup> This was reiterated in the Football Governance White Paper which “acknowledges the case for pilots in the lower leagues made in the Review, and recognises the many viewpoints on this complex issue.”<sup>99</sup> While the Government has committed to reviewing the 1985 Act, it has not yet published any timescale for this, nor details of an alcohol sale pilot scheme in the lower leagues.

46. Tony Burnett, CEO of Kick It Out, and Kevin Miles, Chief Executive of the Football Supporters Association (FSA), were both categorical in calling the football alcohol ban unfair while alcohol consumption at other sporting events was legal.<sup>100</sup> Kevin Miles cited that some smaller clubs, which currently fall outside of the restrictions, rely on alcohol sales as an important source of revenue. He cited Dulwich Hamlet FC which gave evidence to the Fan-Led Review that:

it could not afford to get promoted from its league because that would take it to a league where there were restrictions on drinking alcohol in sight of the pitch. Seventy per cent of its revenue came from the bar takings and it would have an impact on its ability to survive economically as a club if it gets promoted.<sup>101</sup>

47. Mark Roberts, the National Police Chief Council’s lead for football policing, disagreed with calls for repeal and warned that arguments to end the alcohol ban are “really dangerous” and that the “risks massively outweigh it.”<sup>102</sup>

If anyone doubts the influence of alcohol and drugs on people’s behaviour, go to any town, city or village on a weekend and see the impact of alcohol.<sup>103</sup>

48. The Casey Review found that alcohol had a major presence throughout the whole day of the Euro 2020 final, acknowledging the availability of alcohol as a factor that could encourage disorderly behaviour.<sup>104</sup> In contrast to those in favour of repealing or weakening the existing regulations, the review argued that football matches of “national significance”<sup>105</sup> should come with enhanced enforcement of existing alcohol bans, particularly on public transport and in other designated public spaces.<sup>106</sup>

97 Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, [Fan-Led Review of Football Governance: securing the game's future](#), 24 November 2021

98 Ibid, recommendations 42 and 43

99 Department for Culture, Media & Sport, *A sustainable future - reforming club football governance*, [CP 799, 23 February 2023](#)

100 [Q41](#)

101 [Q42](#)

102 [Q156](#)

103 [Q97](#)

104 Football Association, [The Baroness Casey Review: An independent Review of events surrounding the UEFA Euro 2020 Final 'Euro Sunday' at Wembley](#) (December 2021)

105 See paragraph 8 of this report.

106 Football Association, [The Baroness Casey Review: An independent Review of events surrounding the UEFA Euro 2020 Final 'Euro Sunday' at Wembley](#) (December 2021) p 13

49. Peter Houghton from the FSOA and Michelle Russell from the SIA told us that problems with alcohol are not specific to football but are now being seen across other sports.<sup>107</sup> David Armstrong, Chief Executive of the Racecourse Association highlighted that the “enjoyment of alcohol at racing has been part of the sport for a very long time.”<sup>108</sup> While noting concerns that alcohol could be increasingly contributing to antisocial behaviour at racecourses, Mr Armstrong told us that he saw no need for a change in the current regulation of alcohol at racing events, highlighting current mitigations:

On most racecourses, you will have water stations, where you can pick up a bottle of water or get tap water at any point during the day, and we actively encourage people to mix in a soft drink or a glass of water between alcoholic beverages. We also have certain parts of the racecourse which are alcohol-free, a little bit like in the cricket environment. Of course, we have family enclosures as well, where there is no alcohol. It has been a part of our sport for a long time.<sup>109</sup>

50. Phil Davies, Head of Security and Safety at the ECB, was similarly largely positive regarding alcohol consumption at cricket events. He noted that crowd behaviour had deteriorated in 2021, which led to “a great deal of work around stewarding, management and alcohol management to reduce those problems.”<sup>110</sup> This includes measures that directly combat alcohol including alcohol-free areas and family areas which allow alcohol but only at levels “consistent with a family environment.”<sup>111</sup>

**51. The evidence available on the impact of alcohol on disorder at football matches and for fans travelling on chartered services does not provide a compelling case either for the status quo or for a significant relaxation of the current legislation. We acknowledge football’s historic problems with alcohol consumption and anti-social behaviour, but we are also aware that this behaviour at sporting events is not unique to football and there are legitimate concerns that other sporting events are at risk of becoming unwelcoming environments as a result. We welcome that the Government has accepted a need for the review of the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985, which, alongside a responsible alcohol sale pilot scheme, provides an opportunity for comprehensive evidence gathering.**

*52. We recommend that, in its response to this report, the Government confirm the timing of its review of the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc) Act 1985 and its plans for an alcohol sale pilot scheme.*

*53. As part of its review into the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc) Act 1985, we recommend that the Government should consult with representatives of other major sporting bodies and fan groups beyond football to examine the role of alcohol at all major sporting events.*

*54. The Government’s alcohol sale pilots should be undertaken alongside our recommended improved reporting of hate crime and antisocial behaviour at matches to ensure that the impacts are fully understood before any further decisions are taken on*

---

107 [Q108](#)

108 [Q235](#)

109 [Q235](#)

110 [Q200](#)

111 [Q233](#)

*alcohol sales. It should take note of the reduced risk of alcohol-related disorder at events with smaller crowds such as non-League football matches.*

## Drug use at sporting events

55. Unlike the inconclusive evidence on alcohol use, witnesses agreed that drug use in society has increased, and that this is reflected in increased use at sporting events, including football, rugby, horseracing and cricket.<sup>112</sup> This was confirmed by Peter Houghton of the SGSA, who told the Committee that “all aspects of sport” have seen an increase in cocaine use from fans.<sup>113</sup> Chief Constable Mark Roberts told us that cocaine use has been a significant factor in the increase in disorder at football matches<sup>114</sup> amid an increase in use of drugs:

[t]here is ample evidence of pretty heavy use at most stadiums. That is through exercises where we swab toilets before, to make sure that they are clean, then swab them after and get an almost 100% hit on them. When we have passive drug dog operations, we find an awful lot of bags discarded.<sup>115</sup>

56. While the rise in drug use is not disputed, it was suggested to us that there remains a lack of hard evidence to demonstrate this increase is specifically related to sport. Phil Davies from the ECB acknowledged that they had received “some anecdotal evidence” but currently “do not feel that we actually have hard evidence that there are significant problems.” Rather than accept that any increase is connected to sport, he suggested that it is “probably more consistent with the wider use of cocaine in particular across society.”<sup>116</sup>

57. Chief Constable Roberts told us that “cocaine is certainly a contributory factor to violence in the night-time economy, and football is a reflection of wider society.”<sup>117</sup> David Armstrong from the Racecourse Association agreed that there is a concerning level of cocaine use at racecourses that need addressing. He expressed concern that “where drugs and alcohol are mixed, we feel there is a direct correlation to the level of antisocial behaviour.”<sup>118</sup>

58. However, the possible link between drug use and anti-social or violent behaviour is contested. Professors Stott and Pearson told us that, according to their research, neither drugs nor alcohol play any significant role in affecting “the factors that escalate and undermine the potentiality for disorder,”<sup>119</sup> Professor Pearson added that although he thought it was clear that cocaine use at football has gone up, “we need to know [...] how this has changed football fan behaviour.”<sup>120</sup> He explained that although there is an assumption that an increase in cocaine use in particular has led to an increase in violence and disorder:

Recreational cocaine use in this country has quadrupled from the 1990s, while at the same time, by all the measures that we have, football violence

---

112 [Qq221](#), [106](#)

113 [Q106](#)

114 [Q97](#)

115 [Q108](#)

116 [Q221](#)

117 [Q97](#)

118 [Q222](#)

119 [Q84](#)

120 [Q83](#)

and disorder has gone down by about the same amount. I am not saying people taking cocaine makes football disorder go away, but we need to be very careful about suggesting that one causes the other.<sup>121</sup>

59. Witnesses proposed a variety of solutions to tackling drug use at matches, including increased criminal penalties, the wider use of Football Banning Orders and changes to stadium design that make drug use more difficult.<sup>122</sup> However, witnesses also highlighted difficulties and the potential for some proposed solutions to be ineffective. Kevin Miles was critical of the effectiveness of increasing the penalty for drug possession as “nobody ever gets arrested for it”.<sup>123</sup> Bob Eastwood, from the EFL, highlighted that “sniffer dogs for targeting drugs are useful when there is good intelligence or good information that there is a drugs problem” but expressed concerns that routine deployment of sniffer dogs at football matches could be disproportionate to the scale of the problem.<sup>124</sup> Mr Eastwood told us that he doubted that the cost and resourcing of these measures could be justified at this point given the lack of information available and indicated that a “heavy-handed” approach would likely be interpreted as the over-policing of matches by law-abiding fans, who may be put off by the message it sends.”<sup>125</sup>

60. Beyond football, we heard that wider use of sniffer dogs may be appropriate for other sports. David Armstrong told us that horseracing already make extensive use of sniffer dogs which “work around the site during the day as well, going into known problem areas.”<sup>126</sup> Horseracing itself foots the bill for its anti-drug policies, spending over £1 million on sniffer dogs in 2022 alone. They combine heavy policing like this with other, less intrusive, policies such as “honesty bins” for those carrying drugs to deposit them before being caught in possession which, according to Mr Armstrong, “surprisingly do end up quite full.”<sup>127</sup>

61. On 10 November 2022, possession or supply of Class A drugs when entering, attempting to enter, or being inside a stadium was added to Schedule 1 of the Football Spectators Act 1989.<sup>128</sup> This ensures such arrests are included in match statistics and ensures that those convicted can be subject to a Football Banning Order. The first arrest that resulted in a FBO took place on 12 November 2022. In the remainder of the 2022–23 season, 200 drug-related arrests, around 9% of all football-related arrests.<sup>129</sup>

62. There is no guidance on tackling drug-taking in the current edition of the SGSA’s Green Guide.<sup>130</sup> However, Mark Roberts said that leagues were beginning to think about this and “as focus and awareness of this problem has come to the fore, they are now applying their minds to what you can do to target-harden in the same way that nightclubs do.”<sup>131</sup> This is necessary, Mr Roberts explained, so that football grounds do not become places “where people can openly take drugs, because what we need is more families, mixed

---

121 [Q83](#)

122 [Qq83–86](#) [Q126](#), [Q120](#), [Qq218–220](#)

123 [Q23](#)

124 [Q220](#)

125 [Q220](#)

126 [Q222](#)

127 [Q222](#)

128 The Football Spectators (Relevant Offences) Regulations 2022, [section 2](#)

129 Home Office, [Football-related arrests and banning orders, England and Wales: 2022 to 2023 season](#), 9 November 2023

130 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, [‘Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds ‘Green Guide’](#), accessed 6 December 2023

131 [Q117](#)

crowds and more female participation in the sport.”<sup>132</sup>

63. **The increasing use of Class A drugs at sporting events is something that police and clubs should both be taking more seriously. Although a direct link between drug use and violence has not been proven, widespread drug taking is anti-social and undermines football’s accessibility. We welcome the use of Football Banning Orders for Class A drug related offences, but it is as yet unclear whether they provide an adequate deterrent against drug use, nor do they protect law-abiding fans, particularly families, from exposure to repeated and flagrant drug use.**

64. *We recommend that further work is undertaken by the police to understand the prevalence of drug supply and possession at sporting events. Such work should take account of the arrest and Football Banning Order data following the conclusion of the 2023–24 football season and consider the effectiveness of the Football Spectators (Relevant Offences) Regulations 2022 in deterring drug use at matches.*

65. *Alongside legal deterrents to drug taking at sporting events, we recommend that the Sports Ground Safety Authority includes guidance in the next edition of its Green Guide on measures to discourage drug use at sporting events.*

## 5 Stewarding

66. Major sporting events would be impossible to manage without the work provided by stewards in and around the stadium. Indeed, Baroness Casey’s review into the Euro 2020 final highlighted the “courage and determination” of some stewards during the disorder.<sup>133</sup> While no centralised data is available on the number of stewards involved in live events, the Sport Ground Safety Authority estimates that there are between 12,000 and 25,000 stewards across English football, including the Premier League.<sup>134</sup> The SGSA’s recent research into stewarding identified five motivating factors for stewards: companionship, variety, passion for the sport, a sense of service and the terms of employment.<sup>135</sup> However, the research also found areas of concern that has led to barriers to entry and retention:

- job security;
- worsening attendee behaviour;
- employee work expectations increasing, including on pay; and
- the ability of stewards to ensure a safe, managed environment becoming more difficult.<sup>136</sup>

### The role of stewards

67. The role of stewards at sporting events has changed since the 1980s alongside other changes to football safety in response to the increasing demands of football clubs and spectators.<sup>137</sup> They are currently generally tasked with providing a safe and secure environment around the ground as stewards are the first point of contact between fans and stadium management. As such, the responsibilities of stewards can be varied and may change from game-to-game, however they are focused on assisting with the circulation of spectators, preventing overcrowding, and reducing the occurrence of disorder.<sup>138</sup>

68. Stewards are increasingly considered responsible for the safety of fans, as someone to step in to situations to reduce the likelihood of disorder and the first point-of-call for the reporting, investigation and response to a serious incident.<sup>139</sup> However, these higher standards and responsibilities have not come with any uplift in pay and conditions for stewards.<sup>140</sup> As summarised by Professor Pearson, Law Professor at the University of Manchester, football has “started to demand minimum qualifications for stewards” but ultimately “they are not being paid enough to set aside the time to gain whatever qualifications are the minimum required.”<sup>141</sup>

69. The SGSA research found that a wide range of factors, including the pandemic and global supply chain challenges, alongside poor pay and the threat of violence have

133 Football Association, *The Baroness Casey Review: An independent Review of events surrounding the UEFA Euro 2020 Final ‘Euro Sunday’ at Wembley* (December 2021) p 101

134 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, *Evaluation of Systematic Stewarding Challenges* (October 2022) p 9

135 Ibid., p 15

136 Ibid., p 20

137 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, *Stewarding Role and Duties* (May 2023)

138 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, ‘*Stewarding*’, accessed 6 December 2023

139 Ibid.

140 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, *Evaluation of Systematic Stewarding Challenges* (October 2022)

141 [Q69](#)



contributed to significant workforce challenges for the stewarding sector.<sup>142</sup> Professor Stott, Social Psychology Professor at Keele University, told us that a skills deficit among stewards has been exacerbated by new stewards lacking familiarity “because we did not host football matches for a couple of years” which has correlated with a major uplift in policing, at cost to the public.<sup>143</sup> This is compounded by the use of security agency staff “who do not have any capacity to build up localised relationships” and can “amplify problems and lead to deficits in the ability of the club stewards to problem solve and de-escalate.”<sup>144</sup>

70. Tony Burnett of Kick It Out told us that “many times I see people put in vulnerable situations that are not safe within a football environment because of the lack of respect for dignity at work.” He cited instances where:

stewards are black or Asian and they are expected to stop people being racially abusive. They probably have very little training to do that and probably receive very little support for their emotional wellbeing after the event.<sup>145</sup>

The SGSA’s stewarding research found that only 30% of BAME stewards were ‘very satisfied’ with their role, against an overall average of 60%.<sup>146</sup>

71. Martyn Henderson of the SGSA told the Committee that a survey of stewards they have conducted found that people were motivated to be stewards “because they love the sport, they love their club, and they love being part of the operation” but they are demotivated if they felt unable to do a good job, if the event is unsafe or “that people alongside them are not suitably motivated, experienced and qualified to deal with crowd problems.”<sup>147</sup> The sector also often offers only minimum wage to applicants which, combined with the stressful nature of the job, makes such positions unappealing.<sup>148</sup> Kevin Miles cited instances such as the Euro 2020 final where “some of the challenges that were being put in front of [stewards], they were thinking, “I’m not getting paid enough to put myself in that position”.”<sup>149</sup>

72. Witnesses from sports other than football told us that this was less of an issue for them. Phil Davies from the ECB cited the model adopted at Trent Bridge, where stewards are retained in-house, as particularly successful. He highlighted that stewarding is “scalable” at cricket events given the huge discrepancies in fan attendance which mean the agency staff is required for bigger matches, working alongside local or in-house stewards.<sup>150</sup> Similarly, David Armstrong from the Racecourse Association told the Committee that supply of stewards had reduced for horseracing events, and that they had increased wages for stewards as a result, recognising that stewards are “a vital part of our operation”.<sup>151</sup>

---

142 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, [Evaluation of Systematic Stewarding Challenges](#) (October 2022)

143 [Q68](#)

144 [Q69](#)

145 [Q11](#)

146 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, [Evaluation of Systematic Stewarding Challenges](#) (October 2022) p 18

147 [Q113](#)

148 [Q113](#)

149 [Q31](#)

150 [Q227](#)

151 [Q200](#)

73. **Stewards should not be seen merely as volunteers or fans who get to see the game for free. They are crucial to the safety of all sporting events and their responsibilities have grown over the years. The resources available to all major UK sports should allow for the better treatment of stewards, including an appropriate wage for the demanding and often stressful job it can be, both as a reward for the work they do and to encourage recruitment and retention of experience stewards. We welcome that some sports, such as cricket and horseracing appear to be recognising this need.**

74. *Stewards, employers and fans would all benefit from clarity on the roles, responsibilities and standards for stewards. We recommend that the Sports Ground Safety Authority should develop and publish minimum expectations for stewarding standards in consultation with all those involved in major sporting events.*

## Training

75. The Security Industry Authority (SIA), the regulator for the UK’s private security industry, operates a Sports Ground exemption as provided for under the Private Security Industry Act 2001, meaning stewards at sporting events are not required to undertake the training that licenced security officers receive.<sup>152</sup> Michelle Russell of the SIA explained that security officers, rather than stewards have “baseline entry training” which includes “detecting suspicious behaviour or people who are vulnerable, both in terms of drugs and alcohol.”<sup>153</sup>

76. The Sports Ground Safety Authority requires that stewards receive appropriate training and qualifications to fulfil their roles and establishes a minimum requirement of Level 2 Certificate in Spectator Safety (or previous equivalent).<sup>154</sup> Responsibility for checking whether stewards are appropriately trained is for individual ground management, regardless of whether they are directly employed or contracted.<sup>155</sup>

77. 79% of stewards cited provision of training/development opportunities as an important aspect of working as a steward;<sup>156</sup> however, research on behalf of SGSA found “uncoordinated training delivery” and “scope for inconsistent quality of training” alongside a lack of quality checks on training providers.<sup>157</sup> This research also found adverts for stewarding roles that did not demand relevant qualifications or experience, instead focusing on transferable soft skills.<sup>158</sup> The reliance on agency workers and a lack of oversight of qualifications by ground management was evident following the disorder at the Euro 2020 Final, with a contracted company subsequently accused by Liam Boylan, Stadium Director at Wembley, of having “cut corners” on training.<sup>159</sup>

78. Sports bodies are already providing or working on training programmes for their stewards. The Premier League and EFL are developing a new training standard for stewards, which is being piloted,<sup>160</sup> while cricket and horseracing already have training

152 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, ‘[SIA Sports Ground Exemption – Policy Guidance](#)’, accessed 6 December 2023

153 [Q108](#)

154 Department for Culture, Media & Sport, [SGSA stewarding factsheet 4: Qualifications](#) (August 2023)

155 Ibid.

156 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, [Evaluation of Systematic Stewarding Challenges](#) (October 2022) p 16

157 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, [Stewarding Labour Market](#) (February 2022) p 4

158 Ibid.

159 [Q197](#)

160 [Q193](#)

standards for their stewards.<sup>161</sup> Peter Houghton of the SGSA highlighted to us that the industry has no central training fund and there is “an ongoing renewal process where you might recruit 50 new stewards, and three or four months down the line, you maybe only have 30 of them.”<sup>162</sup> As a result, Mr Houghton noted that paying for training with turnover this high is leading to clubs deciding to rely solely on agency trained staff.<sup>163</sup>

79. Vast turnover in the sector, as well as the constant supply of undertrained staff, has knock-on effects for the safety of fans. Tony Burnett, CEO of Kick It Out, told us that clubs and leagues can spend a lot of time and money training staff to handle situations involving disability, misogyny, racism or other forms of discrimination when they might then “lose them two weeks down the line and they might not be trained then for another period.”<sup>164</sup> Owain Davies, Chief Executive of Level Playing Field, told the Committee that there is a requirement for “an absolute minimum standard of delivery of disability inclusion etiquette training so that stewards can have a baseline level”, alongside more advanced training for “specialised, qualified stewards—disability liaison officers—who can come round and support in specific areas and specific pinch points.”<sup>165</sup>

**80. Despite efforts at self-regulation, clubs and governing bodies have failed to set and enforce coherent minimum stewarding standards, to the detriment of the experiences of stewards and the safety of attendees. We recommend that the Government and SGSA should work with sporting bodies to establish a central training fund for stewards at all levels of their sport, with contributions from sporting leagues being tied to their revenue.**

---

161 [Qq180–181](#)

162 [Q113](#)

163 [Q113](#)

164 [Q31](#)

165 [Q17](#)

## 6 Stadium management

---

### Safety Advisory Groups

81. Responsibility for safety within a stadium is for ground management, with operations regulated by the safety certificate issued by a local authority's Safety Advisory Group (SAG), in line with the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975.<sup>166</sup> The Groups are chaired by the relevant local authority and incorporate the event organiser, emergency services and other appropriate bodies to provide advice to the local authority on the safe running of an event, including recommendations on the safe capacity of the venue. There is no requirement for SAGs to engage with fans, although some do.<sup>167</sup>

82. Many SAGs are held during traditional office working hours. This was highlighted by Kevin Miles, who called for greater fan inclusion in groups, while recognising that many fan representatives are volunteers with working lives that preclude them from attending SAG meetings held during normal working hours. Being unable to engage with the SAG process prevents supporter organisations from gaining the necessary experience to effectively contribute to the work of a SAG.<sup>168</sup> Mr Miles also indicated that decision making often lacks transparency in some SAGs, which have a “chummy atmosphere” leading to some stakeholders having an “excessive amount of sway” and a lack of accountability.<sup>169</sup> He summarised it with a hypothetical example:

[w]e don't particularly want this match to go ahead at this time. We don't want to be seen as responsible for taking that decision, but if the safety advisory group takes the decision that the kick-off has to be moved, we can all hide behind that collective decision, and nobody takes responsibility for it.<sup>170</sup>

83. Owain Davies told the Committee that disability inclusion and the viewpoints of disabled fans have not always been considered or understood at the planning stages of an event, resulting in failings in the wellness and safety of disabled fans. He stressed the need for insight from the disabled fans' perspective at the planning stage and review stage to ensure that disabilities ranging from the physical to the non-visible can be mapped out and planned for in the run-up to an event. He told us that SAGs must ensure “somebody from a specific area who understands the barriers” is present at their meetings.<sup>171</sup>

84. The lack of female fan voices in the planning process for major events was also criticised as leading to a football culture and stadium environment that remains hostile to women and girls, particularly in the men's game. Professor Pope told us that “men's football is not a safe, welcoming and inclusive space for women”<sup>172</sup> and that football was lagging behind other sports in terms of including fan voices, meaning potentially “women also feel safer to go to some of those events in a way that they would not if it was a football match.”<sup>173</sup>

---

166 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, '[Safety Advisory Groups](#)', accessed 6 December 2023

167 Ibid.

168 [Q9](#)

169 Ibid.

170 Ibid.

171 [Q8](#)

172 [Q4](#)

173 [Q7](#)

85. Sports Minister Stuart Andrew told us that all relevant perspectives ought to be included in a SAG and that the mechanisms exist for them to be run effectively. With these mechanisms in place, the Minister placed any responsibility for a lack of diverse perspectives with the local authorities who run SAGs. If they were experiencing problems with representation, “it is really up to those local authorities to ensure that these advisory groups have all the representatives they need there.”<sup>174</sup>

**86. Safety Advisory Groups are the one major opportunity for sport stakeholders to voice their priorities and concerns for safety at events. It is wrong that any group should have its input restricted, but this too often seems to be the case. SAGs have, at best, a mixed record on seeking out and considering the necessary perspectives to inform better decision making. Although we accept the Government’s position that local authorities should continue to run SAGs in their areas, there is a role for the Government to play in mandating that local authorities include a full array of perspectives at SAGs.**

*87. We recommend that the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 be updated to require local authorities to include a wider variety of perspectives in Safety Advisory Groups. This should include requirements to assess the needs to existing fan groups in local areas, as well as efforts to reach demographic groups that have been previously disregarded.*

## Safe standing

88. ‘Safe standing’ describes a method of stadium design that allows spectators to stand at sporting events with measures in place that protect against progressive crowd collapse through crowds moving out of place or forming crushes. Each attendee is given a specific ticketed spot that corresponds with an individual seat, which can be folded up or down, alongside barriers erected at each level to prevent fans moving or falling between rows.<sup>175</sup>

89. The Government committed to introducing safe standing at football matches in its 2019 manifesto.<sup>176</sup> In response, the SGSA researched commissioned research on the policy in 2019 which found that installing barriers or rails improved spectator safety in areas where fans were allowed to stand, particularly in mitigating the risk of a progressive crowd collapse.<sup>177</sup> The barriers almost completely eliminated the possibility of movement both forwards and backwards along the rows throughout the match, such as during goal celebrations, lowering the risk of a surge that could cause a crush and injury to those in front.<sup>178</sup>

90. The SGSA has published licenced standing criteria for clubs to meet when reintroducing standing at their ground. These 16 criteria outline the areas that grounds must consider when putting provision in place for a safe standing area, including:

- Having the necessary infrastructure—such as seats with barriers/independent barriers—which must be in both home and away sections;

174 [Q250](#)

175 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, [‘Licensed standing in seated areas’](#), accessed 6 December 2023

176 Conservative and Unionist Party, [Our Plan | Conservative Manifesto 2019](#) (November 2019) p 26

177 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, [The Safe Management of Persistent Standing in Seated Areas at Football Stadia](#) (June 2021)

178 *Ibid.*, p 4

- Ensuring fans can sit or stand in the licensed areas – the seats cannot be locked in the ‘up’ or ‘down’ position;
- Allocating one seat/space per person;
- Ensuring the licensed standing areas does not impact the viewing standards of other fans, including disabled fans;
- Having a Code of Conduct in place for fans in the licensed standing area;
- Putting briefing and training in place for staff and stewards to ensure only relevant ticketholders are admitted to the licensed standing areas;
- Providing CCTV with full coverage of the licensed standing areas;
- Consulting with the ground’s Safety Advisory Group about plans for the licensed standing areas.<sup>179</sup>

91. Although the Government stated that it was not reintroducing terraces, standing areas have been permitted from the 2022–23 football season in a pilot across five Premier League and Championship Teams: Cardiff City; Chelsea; Manchester City; Manchester United; and Tottenham Hotspur.<sup>180</sup> Initial findings of the safe standing trials at football matches have been positive, with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s evidence to the inquiry noting an independent evaluation of safe standing trials found that:

celebrations are more orderly; the risk of injury has been severely reduced; egress is more uniform; barriers make it harder for spectators to move towards segregation lines.<sup>181</sup>

92. However, safe standing has not been universally welcomed. The National Police Chiefs’ Council raised concerns about the design of rail seating and the possibility that those seeking trouble will use standing “to mask their activities”, with football policing lead Chief Constable Mark Roberts maintaining that he is “not convinced all the risks have been properly considered and mitigated.”<sup>182</sup> In addition to evidence to us, Chief Constable Roberts raised concerns in an interview with the BBC that:

If crowds are stood up, it’s easier to throw missiles; engage in hate-chanting, racism; sneak alcohol in; take cocaine, which is a growing issue and a problem. Also, with many of the modern stadiums, the bowls, you can actually migrate all the way round the stadium, so the concern is that they get overloaded, you then get crushing issues.<sup>183</sup>

93. The Chief Constable’s claims were disputed by other witnesses, including Bob Eastwood, Head of Security & Safety Operations at the EFL, who told us that “there is absolutely zero evidence that that would take place, that that has taken place, and that that would increase.”<sup>184</sup> He instead suggested that safe standing contributes to improving the safety of terraces where:

---

179 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, ‘[Licensed standing in seated areas](#)’, accessed 6 December 2023

180 Ibid.

181 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport ([SAF0024](#))

182 Cheshire Constabulary, National Police Chiefs’ Council ([SAF0008](#))

183 Accessed via YouTube, ‘[Police chief warns of safe standing](#)’, accessed 6 December 2023

184 [Q186](#)

if there were no safe-standing mechanisms in place, there would be a risk of a crowd collapse, because when fans celebrate a goal or object to something... they may surge forward. Having a safe-standing environment ensures that they can do that in safety, reducing and removing the risk of a crowd collapse.<sup>185</sup>

94. Other witnesses focussed on the positives of improving the options available to fans who want to experience matches in different ways. Kevin Miles, Chief Executive of the Football Supporters Association, welcomed safe standing but cautioned that clubs need to:

make sure that the potential for a choice is translated into customer choice so that you can choose whether you go to a standing area or a seated area.<sup>186</sup>

95. Similarly, Owain Davies told the Committee that, while “there is obviously a line” in the extent to which some disabled people may be able to access safe standing areas, they should still be designed as inclusive from the start as, for example, “if you are ambulant disabled, you should have the space and it should be considered in that” and also that wheelchair users may still wish to engage in “that more raucous, different type of experience.”<sup>187</sup>

96. **Safe standing pilots have, to date, been successful with no significant evidence of the kind of dangerous behaviour that some safe standing sceptics have warned of. However, the pilots have been limited and it is prudent to expand them and gather information on the policy’s effect on larger audiences before any significant expansion. Further pilots and expansion should only go ahead with the continued consultation and cooperation with the SGSA, who may wish to amend the implementation criteria for safe-standing at larger-scale events. Mindful of the potential risks of safe standing, any expansion requires comprehensive stewarding plan for stadia staff to understand their role in managing the behaviour of crowds who may be more ‘raucous’ in a standing area.**

97. *As long as football clubs can prove that they have a comprehensive stewarding plan for safe standing and follow the licenced standing criteria from the SGSA, we recommend that further pilots by willing clubs should be encouraged.*

## Stadium design

98. Under the provisions of the Football Spectators Act 1989, the Sports Ground Safety Authority has two regulatory responsibilities:

- a) to keep under review the discharge by local authorities of their functions under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 in relation to grounds at which designated football matches are played which includes the issuing and monitoring of conditions within the general safety certificate.
- b) to issue licences to admit spectators to any premises for the purpose of watching any designated football match played at those premises. Licences are renewed annually, informed by SGSA’s matchday inspections and with direct oversight

185 [Q182](#)

186 [Q38](#)

187 [Q30](#)

from the SGSA board, for a fee of £100 per club, which the SGSA gathers on behalf of the Exchequer.<sup>188</sup>

99. The design of sport stadia in the UK is overseen by the Sports Ground Safety Authority. Its guidance, including the “Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds” (Green Guide),<sup>189</sup> is recognised across the live sport and events industry as best practice in the safe management of events. Although not a legally binding document in isolation, it becomes so if its provisions are included in a safety certificate granted to organisers of major sporting events.<sup>190</sup> The Green Guide is updated on a roughly 10-year cycle,<sup>191</sup> with the next edition due for publication in or after 2028.<sup>192</sup> Martin Henderson, Chief Executive of the SGSA, told us that “the systems and arrangements we have in place here are seen internationally as best practice and looked at around the world as an exemplar.”<sup>193</sup>

100. Despite the positive reputation of the SGSA, witnesses highlighted poor stadium design as a risk to the safety of individuals at major sporting events. Owain Davies of Level Playing Field highlighted poor provision of disability seating in many stadiums, often with disabled away fans forced to sit among home fans, separating them from supporters of their team and placing them in a potentially hostile situation.<sup>194</sup> He also highlighted that disabled seating is often segregated from other areas of the stadium, disabled fans congregated together and preventing them from feeling integrated with the rest of the crowd.<sup>195</sup>

the annual fans survey that we run—we had about 1,400 fans take part—15% of disabled fans stated that attitudes of others were a barrier to going to watch live sport, 24.5% stated that anxiety or lack of confidence were a barrier... 30% of fans indicated that they are unable to access some venues because of the lack of accessible facilities. That goes back to my point that away areas need to be provided so that away fans can sit with their own fans. That needs to be considered because it is a source of abuse that fans are facing.

101. Professor Stacey Pope, Associate Professor in the Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences at Durham University, told us that the safety of female fans is undermined by the lack of provision of facilities for women in football stadia, identifying that “football stadia and many sport stadiums have been designed by and for men.”<sup>196</sup> As an example, she highlighted a frequent lack of women’s toilets available and, where they are available, often being in poor condition; with no sanitary bins, mirrors, hangers on toilet doors or no locks on the doors at all. Furthermore, these issues often remain unsolved where they are reported, as the stadium is not obliged to take any action.<sup>197</sup> Professor Pope also cited an unwillingness to raise such issues:

[Women] are prepared to accept the poor stadium design, which would not be encountered elsewhere, and part of the reason for that is because

188 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, ‘[Football Spectators Act 1989](#)’, accessed 6 December 2023

189 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, ‘[Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds ‘Green Guide’](#)’, accessed 6 December 2023

190 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, ‘[Safety Certificate](#)’, accessed 6 December 2023

191 Sports Grounds Safety Authority, ‘[Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds ‘Green Guide’](#)’, accessed 6 December 2023

192 [Q115](#)

193 [Q121](#)

194 [Q34](#)

195 [Q29](#)

196 [Q5](#)

197 *ibid.*



it is extremely difficult to challenge that in this male-dominated space. If women were to try to challenge this alone, it would draw attention to their gender and raise questions about their authenticity as a fan, and they would be more likely to receive backlash from men supporters. This is not something that women can resolve on their own.<sup>198</sup>

102. Professor Pope argued that the perceived unwelcoming atmosphere contributes to women often not returning to attend matches after taking “fan breaks” upon having children as they do not wish to return and have to tolerate the poor facilities. This then results in lost revenue for the clubs concerned, particularly lower league clubs who do not regularly play to sell-out crowds.<sup>199</sup>

**103. Poor stadium design raises fundamental issues around equality, diversity and inclusion that are not being fulfilled to an acceptable level by the design of spaces intended for use by fans. Being unable to accommodate women and disabled fans in an appropriate way sends the message that they are not welcome and undermines their safety, security and dignity when attending matches. In turn, it means valuable income is lost by clubs from people who are unwilling or unable to attend.**

**104. The Sports Ground Safety Authority, as the safety regulator of sports grounds in the UK, must do more promote the widening of accessibility and inclusion in stadium design. The SGSA’s current Green Guide, does not fairly promote accessibility and inclusion for all sports fans and the fundamental changes required should not be delayed until the next scheduled update of the Green Guide in 2028. *The Sports Ground Safety Authority should bring forward an update to its Green Guide, including a requirement for new and redeveloped stadia to better accommodate all fans, including women and disabled people.***

---

198 Ibid.

199 Ibid.

# Conclusions and recommendations

---

## Protecting fans abroad

1. The treatment of Liverpool fans by French authorities at the 2022 UEFA Champions League final was disgraceful, worsened by the attempts of authorities and UEFA to blame Liverpool fans. Evidence we have received suggests that the attitude of foreign police forces to UK football fans heavily contributed to the chaos seen in Paris last year. This chaos suggests that current approaches to ensuring UK fan safety at these high-profile events are not working. (Paragraph 19)
2. *We recommend that the Government should work to foster improved relationships with other governments on policing sporting events, in order to bolster the role of British police travelling with UK teams and their collaboration with local forces.* (Paragraph 20)

## Policing

3. The unauthorised entry of ticketless individuals at football matches creates a risk to their safety and the safety of legitimate, paying fans. While such acts are likely already illegal, the lack of a distinct criminal penalty that includes the use of the proven deterrent of Football Banning Orders, is allowing this practice to continue seemingly unchallenged. *We welcome the introduction of the Unauthorised Entry to Football Matches Bill and recommend that the Government takes all steps possible to ensure its passage during this session of Parliament.* (Paragraph 30)
4. We echo calls for sporting bodies to increase their contribution to the safety of fans outside of the stadium. While direct responsibility, in line with the recommendations of the Casey Review, would require significant changes in policing and event management, increased financial contributions would not. Clubs that benefit from matchday attendance and broadcasting rights should be prepared to contribute more fairly to the costs associated with them. (Paragraph 35)
5. *We recommend that the Government work with football authorities on fairer distribution the cost of policing Zone Ex. This should include consideration of mandatory contributions from leagues or clubs.* (Paragraph 36)
6. We have repeatedly heard of the discrimination, anti-social behaviour and hate crime that occur at sporting events, particularly football. However, the lack of reported data on this topic makes it difficult to assess the scale of the problem, and for police and sporting bodies to tackle issues where they arise and assess the effectiveness of policing strategies deployed. Until this changes, the safety and welfare of fans, players and staff continues to be a largely unknown risk. (Paragraph 39)
7. *We recommend that the Government work with police and sporting bodies to introduce on a centralised system to report and record discrimination and antisocial behaviour at sporting events.* (Paragraph 40)

## Alcohol and drug use at sporting events

8. The evidence available on the impact of alcohol on disorder at football matches and for fans travelling on chartered services does not provide a compelling case either for the status quo or for a significant relaxation of the current legislation. We acknowledge football's historic problems with alcohol consumption and anti-social behaviour, but we are also aware that this behaviour at sporting events is not unique to football and there are legitimate concerns that other sporting events are at risk of becoming unwelcoming environments as a result. We welcome that the Government has accepted a need for the review of the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985, which, alongside a responsible alcohol sale pilot scheme, provides an opportunity for comprehensive evidence gathering. (Paragraph 51)
9. *We recommend that, in its response to this report, the Government confirm the timing of its review of the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc) Act 1985 and its plans for an alcohol sale pilot scheme.* (Paragraph 52)
10. *As part of its review into the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc) Act 1985, we recommend that the Government should consult with representatives of other major sporting bodies and fan groups beyond football to examine the role of alcohol at all major sporting events.* (Paragraph 53)
11. *The Government's alcohol sale pilots should be undertaken alongside our recommended improved reporting of hate crime and antisocial behaviour at matches to ensure that the impacts are fully understood before any further decisions are taken on alcohol sales. It should take note of the reduced risk of alcohol-related disorder at events with smaller crowds such as non-League football matches.* (Paragraph 54)
12. The increasing use of Class A drugs at sporting events is something that police and clubs should both be taking more seriously. Although a direct link between drug use and violence has not been proven, widespread drug taking is anti-social and undermines football's accessibility. We welcome the use of Football Banning Orders for Class A drug related offences, but it is as yet unclear whether they provide an adequate deterrent against drug use, nor do they protect law-abiding fans, particularly families, from exposure to repeated and flagrant drug use. (Paragraph 63)
13. *We recommend that further work is undertaken by the police to understand the prevalence of drug supply and possession at sporting events. Such work should take account of the arrest and Football Banning Order data following the conclusion of the 2023–24 football season and consider the effectiveness of the Football Spectators (Relevant Offences) Regulations 2022 in deterring drug use at matches.* (Paragraph 64)
14. *Alongside legal deterrents to drug taking at sporting events, we recommend that the Sports Ground Safety Authority includes guidance in the next edition of its Green Guide on measures to discourage drug use at sporting events.* (Paragraph 65)

## Stewarding

15. Stewards should not be seen merely as volunteers or fans who get to see the game for free. They are crucial to the safety of all sporting events and their responsibilities have grown over the years. The resources available to all major UK sports should

allow for the better treatment of stewards, including an appropriate wage for the demanding and often stressful job it can be, both as a reward for the work they do and to encourage recruitment and retention of experience stewards. We welcome that some sports, such as cricket and horseracing appear to be recognising this need. (Paragraph 73)

16. *Stewards, employers and fans would all benefit from clarity on the roles, responsibilities and standards for stewards. We recommend that the Sports Ground Safety Authority should develop and publish minimum expectations for stewarding standards in consultation with all those involved in major sporting events.* (Paragraph 74)
17. *Despite efforts at self-regulation, clubs and governing bodies have failed to set and enforce coherent minimum stewarding standards, to the detriment of the experiences of stewards and the safety of attendees. We recommend that the Government and SGSA should work with sporting bodies to establish a central training fund for stewards at all levels of their sport, with contributions from sporting leagues being tied to their revenue.* (Paragraph 80)

### Stadium management

18. Safety Advisory Groups are the one major opportunity for sport stakeholders to voice their priorities and concerns for safety at events. It is wrong that any group should have its input restricted, but this too often seems to be the case. SAGs have, at best, a mixed record on seeking out and considering the necessary perspectives to inform better decision making. Although we accept the Government's position that local authorities should continue to run SAGs in their areas, there is a role for the Government to play in mandating that local authorities include a full array of perspectives at SAGs. (Paragraph 86)
19. *We recommend that the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 be updated to require local authorities to include a wider variety of perspectives in Safety Advisory Groups. This should include requirements to assess the needs to existing fan groups in local areas, as well as efforts to reach demographic groups that have been previously disregarded.* (Paragraph 87)
20. Safe standing pilots have, to date, been successful with no significant evidence of the kind of dangerous behaviour that some safe standing sceptics have warned of. However, the pilots have been limited and it is prudent to expand them and gather information on the policy's effect on larger audiences before any significant expansion. Further pilots and expansion should only go ahead with the continued consultation and cooperation with the SGSA, who may wish to amend the implementation criteria for safe-standing at larger-scale events. Mindful of the potential risks of safe standing, any expansion requires comprehensive stewarding plan for stadia staff to understand their role in managing the behaviour of crowds who may be more 'raucous' in a standing area. (Paragraph 96)
21. *As long as football clubs can prove that they have a comprehensive stewarding plan for safe standing and follow the licenced standing criteria from the SGSA, we recommend that further pilots by willing clubs should be encouraged.* (Paragraph 97)

22. Poor stadium design raises fundamental issues around equality, diversity and inclusion that are not being fulfilled to an acceptable level by the design of spaces intended for use by fans. Being unable to accommodate women and disabled fans in an appropriate way sends the message that they are not welcome and undermines their safety, security and dignity when attending matches. In turn, it means valuable income is lost by clubs from people who are unwilling or unable to attend. (Paragraph 103)
23. The Sports Ground Safety Authority, as the safety regulator of sports grounds in the UK, must do more promote the widening of accessibility and inclusion in stadium design. The SGSA's current Green Guide, does not fairly promote accessibility and inclusion for all sports fans and the fundamental changes required should not be delayed until the next scheduled update of the Green Guide in 2028. *The Sports Ground Safety Authority should bring forward an update to its Green Guide, including a requirement for new and redeveloped stadia to better accommodate all fans, including women and disabled people.* (Paragraph 104)

# Formal minutes

---

**Tuesday 12 December 2023**

**Members present:**

Dame Caroline Dinenage, in the Chair

Kevin Brennan

Julie Elliott

Rt Hon Damian Green

Dr Rupa Huq

John Nicolson

Jane Stevenson

Draft Report (*Safety at major sporting events*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 104 read and agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No.134.

**Adjournment**

Adjourned till Wednesday 13 December at 9.30 am.

## Witnesses

---

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Tuesday 25 October 2022

**Tony Burnett**, Chief Executive, Kick It Out; **Owain Davies**, Chief Executive, Level Playing Field; **Kevin Miles**, Chief Executive, Football Supporters Association; **Dr Stacey Pope**, Associate Professor, University of Durham

[Q1–58](#)

**Professor Geoff Pearson**, Professor of Law, University of Manchester; **Professor Clifford Stott MBE**, Professor of Social Psychology, Keele University

[Q59–91](#)

### Tuesday 8 November 2022

**Martyn Henderson OBE**, Chief Executive, Sports Grounds Safety Authority; **Peter Houghton**, Director of Operations, Football Safety Officers Association; **Chief Constable Mark Roberts**, Lead for Football Policing, National Police Chiefs' Council; **Michelle Russell**, Chief Executive, Security Industry Authority

[Q92–175](#)

### Thursday 19 January 2023

**David Armstrong**, Chief Executive, Racecourse Association; **Liam Boylan**, Stadium Director, Wembley Stadium; **Phil Davies**, Head of Safety and Security, England and Wales Cricket Board; **Bob Eastwood**, Head of Security and Safety Operations, English Football League

[Q176–246](#)

### Tuesday 14 March 2023

**Rt Hon Stuart Andrew MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport; **Adam Conant**, Head of Sport, Department for Culture, Media and Sport

[Q247–307](#)

## Published written evidence

---

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

SAF numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Cheshire Constabulary; and National Police Chiefs' Council ([SAF0008](#))
- 2 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport ([SAF0024](#))
- 3 England and Wales Cricket Board ([SAF0013](#))
- 4 English Football League ([SAF0012](#))
- 5 Fitzpatrick, Dr Daniel; and Turner, Dr Mark ([SAF0020](#))
- 6 Football Safety Officers Association ([SAF0006](#))
- 7 Institute for Social Marketing and Health ([SAF0010](#))
- 8 Iridium Consultancy ([SAF0025](#))
- 9 Leicester City Independent Supporters Association - The Foxes Trust ([SAF0015](#))
- 10 Level Playing Field ([SAF0011](#))
- 11 Manchester United Supporters Trust (MUST) ([SAF0018](#))
- 12 Pearson, Professor Geoff; James, Professor Mark; and Stott, Professor Clifford ([SAF0007](#))
- 13 Pope, Dr Stacey ([SAF0014](#))
- 14 Premier League ([SAF0023](#))
- 15 Premier League Disability Advisory Group ([SAF0001](#))
- 16 Racecourse Association ([SAF0004](#))
- 17 Security Industry Authority ([SAF0021](#))
- 18 Sports Grounds Safety Authority ([SAF0009](#))
- 19 Sweeney, P ([SAF0003](#))
- 20 The Football Association ([SAF0022](#))
- 21 The Football Supporters' Association ([SAF0017](#))
- 22 Tottenham Hotspur Supporters' Trust ([SAF0002](#))
- 23 Webber, Dr David; and Turner, Dr Mark ([SAF0019](#))
- 24 West Ham United Supporters' Trust ([SAF0005](#))
- 25 Whiteside, Ian ([SAF0016](#))



# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

## Session 2022–23

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Amending the Online Safety Bill	HC 271
2nd	Promoting Britain abroad	HC 156
3rd	Reimagining where we live: cultural placemaking and the levelling up agenda	HC 155
4th	What next for the National Lottery?	HC 154
5th	Economics of music streaming: follow-up	HC 874
6th	Current issues in rugby union	HC 1018
7th	Sustainability of local journalism	HC 153
8th	Appointment of Richard Sharp as Chair of the BBC	HC 1147
9th	Football governance	HC 1288
10th	Connected tech: smart or sinister?	HC 157
11th	Connected tech: AI and creative technology	HC 1643
12th	Draft Media Bill: Radio Measures	HC 1287
13th	Draft Media Bill: Final Report	HC 1807
14th	NFTs and the Blockchain: the risks to sport and culture	HC 598
1st Special	Major cultural and sporting events: Government Response to Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2021–22	HC 452
2nd Special	Influencer Culture: Lights, camera, inaction?: ASA System and CMA Responses to the Committee's Twelfth Report of Session 2021–22	HC 610
3rd Special	Influencer Culture: Lights, camera, inaction?: Government Response to the Committee's Twelfth Report of Session 2021–22	HC 687
4th Special	Rt Hon Nadine Dorries MP	HC 801
5th Special	Promoting Britain abroad	HC 1103
6th Special	Reimagining where we live: cultural placemaking and the levelling up agenda	HC 1104
7th Special	What next for the National Lottery?: Government and Gambling Commission Responses to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 1208
8th Special	Economics of music streaming: follow-up: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report	HC 1245

Number	Title	Reference
9th Special	The sustainability of local journalism: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report	HC 1378
10th Special	Appointment of Richard Sharp as Chair of the BBC: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report	HC 1641
11th Special	Football Governance: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report	HC 1850
12th	What next for the National Lottery?: National Lottery Distributors' Response to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 1913

### Session 2021–22

Number	Title	Reference
1st	The future of UK music festivals	HC 49
2nd	Economics of music streaming	HC 50
3rd	Concussion in sport	HC 46
4th	Sport in our communities	HC 45
5th	Pre-appointment hearing for Information Commissioner	HC 260
6th	Pre-appointment hearing for Chair of the Charity Commission	HC 261
7th	Racism in cricket	HC 1001
8th	The Draft Online Safety Bill and the legal but harmful debate	HC 1039
9th	Major cultural and sporting events	HC 259
10th	Another pre-appointment hearing for Chair of the Charity Commission	HC 1200
11th	Pre-appointment hearing for Chair of Ofcom	HC 48
12th	Influencer culture: Lights, camera, inaction?	HC 258
1st Special Report	The future of public service broadcasting: Government Response to Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 273
2nd Special Report	Economics of music streaming: Government and Competition and Markets Authority Responses to Committee's Second Report	HC 719
3rd Special Report	Sport in our communities: Government Response to Committee's Fourth Report	HC 761
4th Special Report	The future of public service broadcasting: Ofcom Response to Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 832
5th Special Report	The Draft Online Safety Bill and the legal but harmful debate: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report	HC 1039

**Session 2019–21**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
1st	The Covid-19 crisis and charities	HC 281
2nd	Misinformation in the COVID-19 Infodemic	HC 234
3rd	Impact of COVID-19 on DCMS sectors: First Report	HC 291
4th	Broadband and the road to 5G	HC 153
5th	Pre-appointment hearing for Chair of the BBC	HC 1119
6th	The future of public service broadcasting	HC 156
1st Special Report	BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2018–19: TV licences for over 75s Government and the BBC's Responses to the Committee's Sixteenth Report of Session 2017–19	HC 98
2nd Special Report	The Covid-19 crisis and charities: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2019–21	HC 438
3rd Special Report	Impact of Covid-19 on DCMS sectors: First Report: Government Response to Committee's Third Report of Session 2019–21	HC 885
4th Special Report	Misinformation in the COVID-19 Infodemic: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 894