



House of Commons  
Culture, Media and Sport  
Committee

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**Safety at major sporting  
events: Government  
Response to the  
Committee's First Report**

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**Fifth Special Report of Session  
2023–24**

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## 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.

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### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Lucy Bishop (Committee Operations Assistant), Andy Boyd (Committee Operations Manager), Dr Conor Durham (Committee Specialist), Ollie Florence (Senior Media and Communications Officer), Natalia Janiec-Janicki (Second Clerk), Lois Jeary (Committee Specialist), Duma Langton (Committee Specialist), Olivia Rose (Media and Communications Officer), 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).

# Fifth Report

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The Culture Media and Sport Committee published its Fourteenth Report of Session 2023–24, [Safety at major sporting events](#) (HC 174), on 29 December 2023. The Government response was received on 29 February 2024 and is appended below.

## Appendix: Government Response

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### Introduction

1. The government welcomes the Culture, Media and Sport (CMS) Select Committee's First Report on Safety at major sporting events and recognises the importance of ensuring all fans can enjoy these events in a safe and inclusive environment. The government is committed to remaining a world leading host of major sporting events and recognises the importance of delivering these events safely and securely.
2. The government shares the Committee's commitment to fostering a positive and safe experience for all, and we agree that collaborative action is crucial to achieving this goal. We value the role of all stakeholders – sporting bodies, law enforcement, event organisers, and, of course, the fans themselves – in upholding high standards of safety and inclusivity.
3. We take seriously the Committee's recommendations and acknowledge the need for robust measures to address challenges such as anti-social behaviour, discrimination, and crowd management. We believe a multifaceted approach is key, and our response will outline, where appropriate, concrete steps we will take to implement many of the Committee's suggestions, while also considering further actions to enhance fan safety across the spectrum of major sporting events.
4. We acknowledge the unique character of different sports and venues, and understand that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be appropriate. We will therefore focus, where possible, on developing principles that can be tailored to the specific needs and contexts of various sporting events and venues.

### Protecting fans abroad

***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)

5. The UK has a long-established National Football Information Point (NFIP) operating within the UK Football Policing Unit (UKFPU). It collates, assesses and distributes information and intelligence to all those that need it, ensuring that appropriate action can be taken within the UK and overseas to prevent football-related crime and disorder. UKFPU works closely with local forces within the UK and also liaises with overseas NFIPs to share vital intelligence relating to international football matches and tournaments as well as other relevant international sporting events.
6. During international tournaments, the Home Office works closely with policing and security stakeholders, as well as other government departments, to ensure the safety and

security of English and Welsh citizens both abroad and domestically. The police regularly deploy policing delegations for overseas tournaments to support the host country's safety and security operation. The Home Office works closely with the UKFPU on UK police planning, and to mitigate the risks of disorder and dangers to England and Wales fans at the tournament.

7. The UK signed the Saint-Denis Convention on 15 May 2019 and has since implemented its articles which are aimed at providing a safe, secure and welcoming environment at football matches and other sports events. The Convention was formally ratified by the UK on 31 October 2023 and entered into force on 1 December 2023. It is an internationally binding instrument and establishes an integrated approach to sporting events based on three interdependent pillars: safety, security and service. It provides measures based on the highest safety, security and service standards developed in Europe. It also promotes co-operation between all public and private stakeholders (including supporters), in order to provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment at football matches and other sports events.

8. The explanatory report of the Convention recognises that governments have a key role to play in ensuring that national sports-related safety and security arrangements are coordinated effectively at both national and local levels. Article 4 of the Convention provides that relevant parties shall ensure that the coordination arrangements involve all key public and private agencies responsible for safety, security and service matters connected with the event.

9. This will build on the relationships that are already in place and the lesson learning the UK does with other hosting nations. For example, between French and British police forces around the Olympic and Paralympic Games, as well as the support provided out in Qatar for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

10. As we look to deliver the UEFA Champions League Final at Wembley this year, we are closely examining how we can learn from both Paris 2021 and Istanbul 2022. Additionally, the government is working closely with German counterparts who are currently delivering the 2024 UEFA European Football Championship. This will help inform our preparations for the 2028 UEFA European Football Championship.

## Policing

***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)

11. The government supported the Unauthorised Entry to Football Matches Bill at its Second Reading in the House of Commons.

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

12. The government understands that police forces are not able to recover the full cost of policing football matches. Even before the Ipswich ruling<sup>1</sup>, (which established the scope

<sup>1</sup> Ipswich Town FC v Chief Constable of Suffolk Constabulary (EFL intervening) [2017] EWCA Civ 1484

of policing costs for which football clubs may be charged), the police could only recover a portion of their costs. Cost recovery is governed by the provisions of Section 25 of the Police Act 1996 and as such, a return to pre-Ipswich cost recovery levels would require changes to primary legislation, impacting a number of sectors outside football.

13. For the 2020 UEFA European Football Championship final covered by Baroness Casey's review, the additional costs of policing outside the stadium were reimbursed in full by central government in an agreement made prior to the event, so was therefore unaffected by the Ipswich ruling. This also applied to the Women's European Championship tournament and we would expect this to be the case for any such event in the future. As part of the preparations for the 2024 UEFA Champions League, the government has included policing costs in the event budget and undertakes regular assurance of these costs in the lead up to event delivery.

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

14. We recognise the importance of collecting and analysing data on safety incidents at sporting events to inform effective interventions. A subgroup of the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) Safety Committee met to discuss these issues in 2023 and a Working Group was established which met for the second time in January 2024.

15. Notably, the government already funds a centralised online system for users to report hate crime to the police, called True Vision. This online hate crime reporting portal is maintained by the police and funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. It is designed so that victims of hate crime do not have to visit a police station in person to make a report. Reports can be made about hate crimes that occur at sporting events.

16. The government also funds the National Online Hate Crime Hub, which is a central capability designed to support individual local police forces in dealing with online hate crime. This may include online hate crimes that are linked to sporting events. The Hub provides expert advice to police forces to support them in investigating these abhorrent offences.

17. The government takes tackling anti-social behaviour seriously and encourages all forms to be reported. Existing reporting tools, such as police.uk, allow the public to report anti-social behaviour incidents at sporting events to the police. The government is developing a digital one-stop-shop portal that will allow the public to report anti-social behaviour to the right local responders wherever it may take place.

18. Ahead of the UEFA Women's European Championships, the then Minister for Sport wrote to media companies to outline the importance of monitoring misogynistic and discriminatory language against players during the tournament. This sat alongside a strategy implemented by The Football Association (The FA) and the UKFPU which enabled this type of behaviour to be swiftly reported.

19. In January, the Minister for Sport, Gambling and Civil Society wrote to X and Meta on the topic of recent abuse towards women in sport. Both have now responded, setting

out the action they are taking including enforcement, reporting processes and safety settings. We will also be writing on this issue to the CMS Select Committee Inquiry into Women's Sport.

## Alcohol and drug use at sporting events

*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)

*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)

*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)

20. We will continue to engage stakeholders on this issue, particularly in light of strong representations made to the government by policing authorities about the increase in football-related arrests and disorder post-COVID.

21. There is a clear need to balance the potential commercial benefits of alcohol sales in the lower leagues with concerns around safety and disorder, the mitigations of which would incur additional costs. The government will continue to keep alcohol controls under review, taking into account football disorder issues and trends with relevant bodies including the UK Football Policing Unit, the Sports Grounds Safety Authority, and The FA.

*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)

*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)

22. In November 2022, the government added the possession or supply of Class A drugs at football matches to the Football Banning Order (FBO) regime. FBOs are civil orders lasting between three and five years (six to ten if a custodial sentence is also imposed) which are used to prevent football disorder, either following conviction for a football-related offence (unless the court believes that the circumstances would make it unjust to impose an order), or on application from the police or CPS (if the court reasonably believes that making an order would help to prevent violence or disorder at or in connection with any regulated football matches).

23. FBOs are not just about preventing troublemakers from attending matches at home and abroad involving a team from or representing England or Wales. They demonstrate that the UK has taken action to ensure that individuals involved in football-related violence and disorder can be stopped and prevented from attending football matches.
24. The addition of Class A drug offences to the FBO regime followed concerns raised by the police that cocaine use was a driving factor for the increased football-related disorder seen following the relaxation of COVID restrictions. In the 2022–23 football season there were 200 arrests for the possession of Class A drugs at football matches in England and Wales.
25. Following the addition, there was an increased willingness amongst the police to make arrests at football matches for Class A drug offences. Whilst it is for courts to decide on a case-by-case basis if the imposition of a FBO is proportionate, this addition to Schedule 1 of the Football Spectators Act 1989 will likely see an increase in FBOs imposed.
26. The Home Office keeps disorder trends and drugs misuse at football matches under review with policing and other stakeholders to determine the effectiveness of the change in legislation.
27. We also encourage police to use all available tools at their disposal, including the Drug Testing on Arrest powers to test for the presence of cocaine following an arrest at a sporting event.
28. More broadly, the ten-year Drug Strategy to combat illicit drugs sets out a whole-system approach to how the government is doing more than ever to cut off the supply of drugs by criminal gangs, give people with a drug addiction a route to a productive and drug-free life, and reduce the recreational use of drugs. Underpinned by £300 million investment, we will reduce drug-related crimes, deaths, harms and overall drug use. Through the strategy, we are implementing an end-to-end plan to disrupt the supply of all drugs, at every stage of the supply chain, from source to street.
29. Regarding the specific recommendation for the SGSA, the government can confirm the SGSA already publishes guidance on measures to deter drug use within its Supplementary Guidance 03: Event Safety Management.

## Stewarding

*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)

*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)

30. We welcome the Committee's emphasis on steward training and agree that this is crucial for ensuring spectator safety. The National Occupational Standards for spectator safety were reviewed with industry and updated in 2019; there are provisions on stewarding in the Green Guide published by SGSA; and in 2023, we published a set of factsheets produced by SGSA which set out in clear terms the key issues for sports venues in relation to stewarding, including guidance on roles and responsibilities.

31. The SGSA's Working Group has developed a comprehensive plan to raise standards of stewarding in football - the Premier League and English Football League have subsequently agreed to fund a multipronged reform package at c. £1.5 million over a three year period to: improve the quality and consistency of training; ensure stewards have access to continuing professional development; develop a national register of event stewards working within football; and to improve the strategic relationship between football and the supply industry. Ministers will continue to engage with industry in this space as the project develops.

## Stadium management

***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 of existing fan groups in local areas, as well as efforts to reach demographic groups that have been previously disregarded.*** (Paragraph 87)

32. The Emergency Planning College (EPC) has guidance for the participants of Safety Advisory Groups (SAGs). This is designed to standardise the approach to SAGs across the UK for members, event organisers and others in the industry. Supplementing this, the EPC also runs a 'working in SAGs' course which is catered for those who work in local authorities, emergency services, and event organisation.

33. The absence of legislation on SAGs creates a core advantage as it means that SAGs have no limitation as to what event they consider. A key principle is that a SAG should consider any event that presents a significant public safety risk and therefore their focus is often much wider than just sporting events. SAGs are already used as a mechanism for local authorities to advise on a range of other events happening within their demographic areas.

34. Within the guidance, there is a recommended stakeholder attendance list which includes a variety of stakeholders to be invited depending on the event. This includes, but is not limited to, community representatives, fan representatives, housing associations, religious groups, and more. Organisers must consider the relevant partners invited to SAGs to allow for a suitable and sufficient review of the event proposals to take place.

35. The government believes this strikes a balance between encouraging a breadth of expert advice, and allowing adequate flexibility for the wide variety of events for which local authorities may convene a SAG.

***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)



36. The Football Spectators (Seating) Order 2021 allowed clubs in the top two tiers of English football to pilot safe standing areas under strict licensing conditions. Five clubs were granted the first licences in January 2022.

37. The Football Spectators (Seating) Order 2022 came into effect on 25 July 2022, ending the mandatory all-seating policy in the Premier League and the Championship. Standing is now permitted at all football clubs in England and Wales, subject to meeting the SGSA's licensing criteria. This means clubs need to demonstrate their standing areas meet safety standards regarding crowd management, seat design, and emergency procedures. There are, to date, 14 grounds which have licensed, safe standing sections. These are Wembley Stadium, as well as the home grounds of Birmingham City FC, Brentford FC, Cardiff City FC, Chelsea FC, Derby County FC, Liverpool FC, Manchester City FC, Manchester United FC, Newcastle United FC, Portsmouth FC, Queens Park Rangers FC, Tottenham Hotspur FC, and Wolverhampton Wanderers FC.

***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)

38. The Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (Green Guide) is the industry's expert-led guidance on spectator safety at sports grounds. Any changes to scheduled updates to this guidance would in the first instance be a matter for the SGSA.