

Sports Grounds Safety Authority Guidance

Frequently Asked Questions

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

Guidance is available from the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) on preventing crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour at sports grounds.

The questions and answers below are intended to help clarify issues that might be raised when considering the guidance.

1. Sports Grounds

Q.1. Does this guidance mean that we will need to have a police presence at events at our sports ground?

Not at all. As explained in the guidance, this is a risk assessed process. If you have not previously required police to attend your events to deal with disorder or anti-social behaviour you will not need them to attend in future unless circumstances change or a particular event raises concerns.

Q.2. Isn't this just a football problem?

No, it is not. There have been many examples of anti-social behaviour at other sporting events. Sports ground management, hosting whichever sport, have a responsibility for the safety of people at the ground. This includes preventing them from being harmed by the consequences of crowd disorder or anti-social behaviour.

Q.3. Where does our responsibility begin and end?

Sports grounds, in line with owners/occupiers of other private properties are only responsible for keeping people safe on their property. In the public domain, the responsibility for the protection of the public rests with the police.

Q.4. We have a safety certificate and sometimes have disputes with the police over whether police should attend or how many should attend. Will the local authority be able to force us to have police even if we think their presence is unnecessary?

The decision making process on whether police should attend is based on risk assessment. There should be no changes to tried and tested local procedures; if anything, the basis for police attendance begins with an assumption that they are not required until a risk assessment of an event demonstrates a need. If there is disagreement between the sports ground management and police at a ground which has a safety certificate then the local SAG will be the best place to resolve the matter. Generally, agreement by negotiation should be possible. However, if agreement is not possible, the local authority may consider conditioning the safety certificate for the event requiring that police should be requested to attend. Once the request for police has been made, whether the police agree to attend and the numbers of police attending is a matter for the chief officer of police. SAGs cannot

condition the certificate for matters that are of risk outside the boundary of the certificate (the red line).

Q.5. If we produce a crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour plan, either generally or for a specific event, and there is disorder, what action should we take?

Following every event, you should review your control measures and either maintain or improve upon them. If disorder has occurred, you should ensure that this process of risk assessment review and possible improvement has taken place. If you have a safety certificate, you should share the findings of the review process and any new mitigation measures with the certifying authority.

2. Certifying Authorities

Q.6. If we believe that police are required at a particular event how should we progress this?

Firstly, you should ensure that a risk assessment process has taken place and that the police requirement is as a mitigating action for identified risks. It would then be good practice to let the ground and police know your thoughts. Don't forget it is the ground's responsibility to implement measures to ensure they comply with the safety certificate. Only in extreme circumstances where there is no agreement between police and ground should consideration be given to inserting a condition in the safety certificate.

Q.7. There is no identified risk at the ground but there are concerns about some spectators' behaviour in the surrounding areas and the town centre. Can these be discussed at the SAG?

SAGs have always been a valuable forum for discussing community matters outside of the ground. There is no reason why the SAG cannot discuss matters regarding the event but away from the ground. The SAG chair must though make it clear which matters are outside the remit of the safety certificate.

Q.8. Does this new advice mean that a local authority will be taking more positive action against sports grounds?

It should not significantly change the way in which local relationships previously operated. Ideally, the approach should be evidence-based, proportionate and reasonable, as well as targeted and specific to each ground and event. Broadly speaking, the approach should be aimed at maintaining business as usual where possible, recognising that management of risk is a more desirable outcome than significant changes to the event, which should be a last resort.

Q.9. If the ground produce a crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour plan, either generally or for a specific event, and there is disorder, what action should the LA take?

There should be no difference to how the LA deal with other identified risks where the mitigating actions have not dealt with the risk. The ground is expected to produce a match specific risk assessment, with control measures to mitigate the risk. Following every event, the control measures should be reviewed and either

maintained or improved upon. If disorder has occurred, then the LA should ensure that this process of risk assessment review and possible improvement has taken place. The LA needs to be satisfied the new mitigation measures are suitable and sufficient.