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## The safe management of standing at football:

### Emerging findings

**Please note this research will continue until the conclusion of the current football season. Any conclusions at this stage should therefore be considered as emerging and not definitive; however, these findings are consistent with those from the SGSA's regulatory work at football grounds.**

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to the safe management of standing. Strategies to assure the safety of supporters are nuanced to take account of the physical features of the stadium, the behaviour and culture of supporters who occupy those areas, and the match context.

Research so far suggests that, overall, installing barriers (or safety bars) has had a positive impact on spectator safety, particularly in mitigating the risk of crowd collapse. Celebrations are more orderly with limited opportunity for forward or backwards movement compared to observations in seated areas. Further, safety staff feel that the introduction of barriers has not encouraged standing where supporters previously sat.

Other positive impacts include orderly egress, a reduction in the number of supporters leaning on/over perimeter fencing and a decline in conflict that is triggered by persistent standing. However, the risk of injury caused by climbing on infrastructure remains as supporters can climb on unlocked seats, seat backs and barriers. These areas should be monitored closely to identify and manage this behaviour. Areas with barriers can also be popular with supporters and require specific management strategies to control access and migration.

Incorporating wheelchair platforms into areas with barriers allows disabled ticket holders to be part of this experience. This is important for the development of progressive and inclusive approaches that encourage and enable a diverse range of supporters to engage with football.

Away areas remain a challenge to manage for some matches. Persistent standing in away areas is extensive and migration within stands is more prevalent than in home areas. The installation of barriers as a strategy to enhance the safety of fans should not therefore focus solely on home areas, and management strategies specifically for away supporters are required.

Enforcing the all seater policy has been a source of conflict between fans who persistently stand and fans who wish to sit, as well as between fans and stewards, resulting in safety risks. The introduction of barriers appears to have reduced the potential for conflict, and the associated risks. Fans who buy tickets in these areas generally understand and accept that those around them will stand. Ticketing strategies to ensure that supporters are in the right area of the stadium for their standing preferences are crucial and require considerable thought and ongoing management.