

# SUPPORTER BEHAVIOUR & SANCTIONS POLICY



## Overview

Cambridge United Football Club (CUFC) will always endeavour to play an active role within the local community and involve our supporters in identifying areas for change and improvement within the Club. The Club aims to deliver to all supporters a friendly and professional service.

The Club is committed to confronting and eliminating discrimination under any of the protected characteristics whether by age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. We welcome support from all irrespective of the above. We will not tolerate abuse based on hate in any form.

We extend a warm welcome to all supporters when they visit the Cledara Abbey Stadium, whether they are our own supporters, supporters of other clubs or individuals who enjoy the game. We are a family-orientated, inclusive Club and our efforts in this regard have been repeatedly recognised by the English Football League.

We value the immense contribution our supporters make to the club, and we want them to encourage the team but at the same time we wish to show respect for our opponents, match officials, opposition fans and our own staff, stewards, and club officials. Supporters can report issues of concern to the Club through a number of methods including in person to club officials and representatives, direct correspondence (letter), e-mail, phones or an anonymous text line.

As a club we fully support the FA and the EFL in all that they do as regards behaviour at football. In this respect we, as a Club will take action to prevent and address instances of unacceptable conduct or behaviour by our supporters, either at the Abbey Stadium or any away venue. Likewise we will always seek to involve visiting Clubs if their supporters engage in unacceptable conduct or behaviour here.

Unacceptable conduct or behaviour is clearly defined within the Ground Regulations and these are prominently displayed in and around the Abbey Stadium and readily available through a host of electronic and social media platforms. The Club also recognises the harm and disrepute that matters away from the Stadium or on social media and other electronic platforms can cause.

Any individual who engages in unacceptable conduct or behaviour may be subject to a host of sanctions by the Club. These include, but are not limited to, ejection from the Stadium, verbal and/ or written warnings, behaviour contracts, educational programmes, restorative justice solutions, and exclusion orders of varying periods, the involvement of other agencies and law enforcement and the involvement of other Clubs through the sharing of information /intelligence concerning such matters.

The Club always seek to be proactive in this area and supporters who have come to notice through unacceptable conduct or behaviour or whom are of concern in this regard may also be invited to engage with the Club and other agencies to modify and change their conduct so as to be able to continue to support the Club with appropriate passion and pride. Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABC's) are the most common method for so doing. ABC's set clear expectations and standards from both sides, the individual concerned and the Club, and highlight what is and is not acceptable. It makes all accountable for their actions and facilitates clear communication between the parties in this regard. ABC's will also, where possible, be supported by other diversionary activity including education.

## **Investigations and Sanctioning**

During an investigation period, the supporters account will be suspended, and until the investigation has concluded and the outcome communicated in writing, they will be unable to attend home fixtures at the Abbey Stadium.

In all cases the Club will undertake an investigation into relevant incidents, this will be led by the Club Secretary who were required will be supported by the Safety Officer and the Supporter Liaison Officer. Save in cases where the supporter is charged and convicted by the Police, where the Club shall reserve the right to sanction in consultation with the Police and without the need for investigation. The Club reserves the right to immediately suspended all supporters under Police investigation or upon charge, in such cases investigations and sanctioning by the Club will not commence until Police proceedings have concluded in full.

The Club Secretary will first establish the facts promptly before recollections fade and, where appropriate, obtain statements from any available witnesses as well as other relevant evidence. Having established the relevant facts, they will decide how to proceed, and should it be deemed suitable to issue sanction(s) the individual will be invited to attend an investigation meeting. During the meeting the Club Secretary who may be accompanied by a Police Officer for Level 2 Offences will set out the potential matter, share evidence and required observations.

The Club will provide the supporter with a minimum of five days written notice of the date, time, and place of the investigation meeting. At the meeting you will be provided, where appropriate, with written copies of any evidence, which may include witness statements, and CCTV footage. You must make every effort to attend any investigation meeting arranged under this procedure. If you fail to attend without good reason or are persistently unable to do so (for example for health reasons), the Club may have to take a decision based on the available evidence.

Before imposing any sanctions, all relevant factors will be considered including the extent to which standards have been breached, the supporter's general behaviour record, and any special circumstances which might make it appropriate to adjust the severity of the sanction.

Each step and action in this procedure will be taken without unreasonable delay and where possible the Club will seek to conclude investigations and provide outcomes within 28 days of the first communication. Discussions and details of any sanctions will be kept confidential as far as reasonably possible.

Any sanction will be communicated to you in writing within 5 working days following the investigation meeting.

### **Sanction Examples**

#### ***Educational Programmes***

Spectators found guilty of discriminatory misconduct will be required to participate in educational programmes designed to raise awareness and understanding of the impact of their actions. These programmes will cover topics such as diversity, inclusion, and the importance of respectful behavior and must be completed before considered to returning to the stadium.

#### ***Restorative Solutions***

Where appropriate, the Club will facilitate restorative solutions that allow the offending individual to understand the harm caused and take steps to make amends. This may include meetings with affected parties and community service within the Club or local community.

#### **Behaviour Contracts**

Spectators may be required to enter into Acceptable Behaviour Contracts that set clear expectations and standards for future conduct. These contracts will outline the consequences of further breaches and provide a framework for ongoing support and monitoring.

### Counseling and Support Services

The Club will offer direction to counseling and support services for individuals who may benefit from professional help in addressing underlying issues contributing to their behavior.

By implementing these measures, the club aims to promote positive change and ensure that all supporters can enjoy a safe and inclusive environment at the Cledara Abbey Stadium.

### Sanctions – Level One

The following table sets out the Club's Level One Supporter Sanctions.

<b>Level One Sanctions</b>		
<b>Breach of Regulation</b>	<b>First Offence Sanction</b>	<b>Second Offence Sanction (Same Season)</b>
<b>Smoking/vaping</b>	<b>Acceptable Behaviour Contract</b>	<b>Club Ban (Max 3 home games)</b>
<b>Alcohol offences (not involving police)</b>	<b>Acceptable Behaviour Contract</b>	<b>Club Ban (Max 3 home games)</b>
<b>Persistent standing/standing on seats.</b>	<b>Acceptable Behaviour Contract</b>	<b>Club Ban (Max 3 home games)</b>
<b>Anti-social behaviour (e.g., persistent use of foul and abusive language, excessive gesturing towards opposition supporters, 'horseplay' impacting others.</b>	<b>Acceptable Behaviour Contract</b>	<b>Club Ban (Max 3 home games)</b>
<b>Conduct that compromises the safety of spectators and/or others.</b>	<b>Acceptable Behaviour Contract + Club Ban (Max 3 home games)</b>	<b>Club Ban (Min 4 – Max 6 home games).</b>
<b>Non-co-operation with stewards.</b>	<b>Acceptable Behaviour Contract</b>	<b>Club Ban (Max 3 home games)</b>
<b>Ejection from home or away stadium (not leading to police involvement).</b>	<b>Acceptable Behaviour Contract + Club Ban (Max 3 home games)</b>	<b>Club Ban (Min 4 – Max 6 home games).</b>
<b>Refused entry to home or away stadium (not leading to police involvement).</b>	<b>Acceptable Behaviour Contract</b>	<b>Club Ban (Max 3 home games)</b>
<b>Reckless/intentional damage to club property under the value of £100.</b>	<b>Acceptable Behaviour Contract + Restorative Justice</b>	<b>Club Ban (Max 3 home games) + Restorative Justice</b>

All sanctions detailed are a guide and club employees reserve the right to increase sanctions where appropriate. Educational courses may also be prescribed in permissible circumstances, including by non-limited to discriminatory related offences.

### Sanctions – Level Two

The following table sets out the Club's Level One Supporter Sanctions.

<b>Level Two Sanctions</b>
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Breach of Regulation	First Offence Sanction	Second Offence Sanction (Same Season)
Missile throwing	Club Ban (Min 7 – Max 12 home games)	Club Ban (Min 13 – Max 24 home games)
Pitch encroachment	Club Ban (Min 7 – Max 12 home games)	Club Ban (Min 13 – Max 24 home games)
Reckless/intentional damage to club property over £100.	Club Ban (Min 4 – Max 6 home games) + Restorative Justice	Club Ban (Min 7 – Max 12 home games) + Restorative Justice
Aggressive language/ behaviour	Club Ban (Min 4 – Max 6 home games)	Club Ban (Min 7 – Max 12 home games)
Assault on club premises	Indefinite Club Ban With 2 Year Review	N/A
Use or possession of pyrotechnics	Indefinite Club Ban With 2 Year Review	N/A
Use or possession of illegal drugs	Indefinite Club Ban With 2 Year Review	N/A
Use of prohibited items as per ground regulations	Club Ban (Min 4 – Max home 6 games)	Club Ban (Min 7 – Max 12 home games)
Serious public disorder/anti-social behaviour	Club Ban (Min 13 – Max home 24 games)	Indefinite Club Ban With 2 Year Review
Hate crime/discrimination (including online)	Club Ban (Min 13 – Max home 24 games) + Educational Programmes	Indefinite Club Ban With 2 Year Review + Educational Programmes
Breach of existing club ban	Indefinite Club Ban With 2 Year Review	N/A

All sanctions detailed are a guide and club employees reserve the right to increase sanctions where appropriate. Educational courses may also be prescribed in permissible circumstances, including by non-limited to discriminatory related offences.

## Appeals

All supporters have the right to appeal against any sanction decision made by the Club. Any appeal should be put in writing, stating the reason for the appeal, and submitted to the CEO via the Club Secretary ([matcl@cambridgeunited.com](mailto:matcl@cambridgeunited.com)) within five working days of receipt of the sanction.

Where possible, the Club will arrange for the appeal to be heard by a more senior employee who has had no previous involvement in the process and where appropriate with a Police Officer.

The Club will seek to hold an appeal hearing within fourteen working days upon receipt of the appeal request. At the appeal hearing which will, unless the individual agrees otherwise, take place face to face and any sanction imposed will be reviewed, but it cannot be increased.

The decision of the appeal will be communicated to you within five working days of the appeal hearing and shall be final: there is no further right of appeal.

## Complaints

The Independent Football Ombudsman (IFO) is the final stage in the complaints process established by the English Professional Football Authorities (the Football Association [FA], the Premier League [PL] and the English Football League [EFL]). [Complaints Procedure - Independent Football Ombudsman \(theifo.co.uk\)](https://theifo.co.uk)

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