

## The Chairman

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**The Referees' Association**

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Dear All

It is that time of the year to give an account of some of the work The RA has been undertaking quietly in the background during the past season.

The Association has supported a number of referees charged by their County Football Association for aggravated comments made. Whilst many times we have been successful, we must remind Members to **always** seek a Personal Hearing if charged. Defending our Members is difficult and time-consuming work. It is ironic that all those who are found guilty have to undertake additional education, but this is not provided as basic pre-training for all match officials - a situation that does not make too much sense.

We are, therefore, trying to address this matter with The FA and others, the aspiration being to provide appropriate materials for all LRAs to be able to hold a training event by the end of this year, so that all Members can better understand the 9 protective characteristics and what behaviours to avoid. We need everyone to be curious - as it is the curiosity that will aid prevention - so let's start the conversation. The training will include how to record and report incidents.

It should be made known even more widely that if a referee is abused or assaulted, or is subjected to poor practice, our Welfare Team work very closely with the victim - providing, of course, that we are advised in the first place. We will fully respect the wishes of each Member, whilst offering to include help with the following areas:

- Impact & Witness Statements
- Media support
- Mental health support
- Legal support
- Post-case follow-up

Please ensure that **ALL** your colleagues are fully informed about this crucial message. Equally, make yourself aware of the procedures to follow which will enable us to give you or them maximum help.

The RA has been asked to make presentations to Police Football Liaison Officers at their forthcoming workshops. The Association has championed this initiative, and we have invited both The FA and the PGMOL to join us in this important opportunity. Too many times, the statutory bodies fail referees when a colleague suffers from a poor experience, such as assault and/or abuse. It is extremely disappointing that the police fail to treat on-field issues in a sufficiently serious manner - it is not always solely a football matter, hence why we feel that the current attitude is simply not good enough.

We are making some political headway in gathering support from the Government. This also takes a considerable amount of both time and effort. We are indeed heartened by the support received from a number of MPs, including Nick Hurd, Rachel Maclean, Mims Davies and Tracey Crouch. We have further meetings planned with a number of other MPs, and we call on all CRAs and LRAs to contact their own local MPs in order to gain further support for this vital initiative. This will be an important aide to boosting the success of our work, as described in the next paragraph.

Over the last number of months, The RA has been pushing for much tougher sentences from the courts for those convicted of offences against referees - frankly, at present it is a total postcode lottery. The RA has been encouraged to make representations to the appropriate body, and we are working very closely with The FA External Affairs Team to achieve our goals. To bolster our case, The RA has also contacted, and gained strong support from, the country's other major sporting governing bodies, thereby encouraging a united approach.

We are preparing a detailed pack written by legal professionals, as all too often crimes which are committed against match officials in all sports are dealt with at the lower end of the sentencing threshold. This is a complex area and will take time, but the effort will be worthwhile. Should we be successful in our initiative, this will indeed make a material difference to the sentencing of those who abuse match officials.

**ALL** referees are being represented by The RA, as we are now part of various government working groups dealing with abuse in all its forms within football. This is due to the relentless effort put in by a number of people with a coherent view and a desire to improve our status within the game. There are many vested interests involved - whilst racism and homophobia are subjects which are frequently discussed by those around the table, participants are having to be persuaded that abuse to a match official is equally not acceptable under any circumstances. We are making this point with some force, accompanied by plenty of testimony and evidence.

As with all discussions of this nature, we do not intend to provide a running commentary, otherwise we will lose the confidence of those with whom we are in dialogue - but, over the coming months and years, we will not stop in our quest to improve the overall 'lot' of referees. I will therefore ensure that updates are provided as and when appropriate.

With kind regards  
The RA Chairman



Chairman of the Referees' Association