

Spectator Conduct and Banning Policy

1. Policy Statement

1. This Policy must be applied fairly, equally, and consistently to all persons, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or any other unjustifiable grounds.
2. It also complements, and runs in conjunction with any agreements held between Ballymena United Football Club, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Irish Football Association, Northern Ireland Football League and Mid and East Antrim Council.

2. Purpose

1. The Spectator Conduct and Banning Policy is intended to maximize safety at matches involving Ballymena United Football Club, improve and protect the match experience of people attending such matches, protect the image and reputation of Ballymena United Football Club and, where necessary, safeguard the financial interests of the organisation.
2. Irrespective of any prohibition on attending football matches imposed by a Court of Law, Ballymena United Football Club requires a separate and transparent framework within which to impose realistic, consistent and proportionate suspensions or bans on individuals attending such matches or other events organized by the Club in order to provide the above safeguards.
3. Such suspensions or bans can be imposed for a variety of transgressions, but this process will predominantly address:
 - Misconduct deemed to have compromised safety or good order within a football stadium;

- Conduct that presents a genuine, future risk to safety, or moral demeanor being compromised at matches involving Ballymena United Football Club;
- Conduct that damages the reputation of Ballymena United Football Club;
- Actions found to be in breach of the Ground Regulations or the Terms of Conditions of Entry applicable at The Ballymena Showgrounds Stadium,
- Conduct that is deemed contrary to the Core Values of the Club.

3. Underpinning Procedures

1. A Football Banning Order can be used by a Court of Law to ban a certain individual from attending football matches both home and abroad for a period of between 3 and 10 years. Additional and more precise conditions can also be imposed on a case-by-case basis. The authority for such an order is provided by The Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
2. However, following a breach of Ground Regulations or the Terms and Conditions of Entry, and notwithstanding any ongoing or proposed pursuit of a Football Banning Order by the Police, Ballymena United Football Club reserves the right to suspend or ban specific individuals from attending football matches or events and activities involving, hosted or organized by Ballymena United Football Club.
3. In addition to being suspended or banned from first team matches at The Ballymena Showgrounds Stadium, such a suspension or ban may also prohibit:
 - Admission to, or presence at, all levels of Club representative matches, both home and neutral venues;

- Attendance at any social functions organized by, or on behalf of, the Club.
4. Furthermore, such a suspension or ban will usually also incorporate:
 - Suspension or cancellation of any Season Ticket, and/or other concessionary privileges,
 - Suspension or cancellation of any match-ticket purchasing account.
 5. Any period of suspension or ban involving a Season Ticket will be imposed without recompense, in accordance with the terms and conditions of issue. In the event of such cancellation no refund will be paid in respect of any unexpired portion of the Season Ticket.
 6. Whilst each case will be dealt with on its own particular merits, the implications and scope of any suspension or ban will be outlined in clear terms within correspondence sent to the individual concerned.
 7. Should an incident involve any aggravating features such as, but not confined to, violent, threatening, dangerous, racist, sexist or homophobic behaviour, or involve any activity that threatens the safety management operation, Ballymena United Football Club reserves the right to increase the standard suspension or ban to reflect the seriousness of the circumstances.

4. Schedule of interventions

1. Ballymena United Football Club reserve the right to eject any person/s from the Stadium failing to comply with the Stadium Regulations, or whose presence within the stadium is, or could reasonably be construed as constituting a source of danger, nuisance or annoyance

to any other person.

2. Ballymena United Football Club reserve the right to refuse admission, withdraw tickets or ban any person who, through their actions, behaviour, or opinion bring the Club's name or reputation into dispute.
3. Fan Behavioral Risk Score (The following is not conclusive, and other incidents will be categorised accordingly with Ballymena United's Safety Officer and disciplinary panel);

Category A (Low)

E.g. inappropriate gesturing, persistent disregard for steward's directions, no ticket (proof of purchase), adult's attempting to enter on junior/concession ticket, urinating in public place, attempting to gain entry for free.

Category B (Medium)

E.g. Smoking (including e-cigarettes), persistent standing, altercation between home and away fans, lewd conduct, accumulation of Category A offences.

Category C (High)

E.g. Drunk and disorderly, theft, breach of an existing ban, possession of and offensive weapon, affray, foul/abusive/threatening behaviour (staff or visitor), illegal substance related or an accumulation of Category B offences.

Category D (High+)

E.g. Assault (GBH/ABH) of visitors and/or staff, throwing missiles, breach of playing area boundaries, Flares, Smoke bombs, Fireworks, racist/sectarian language

Response to spectator misconduct

Meeting convened with no less than three members of the club's management committee.

Letter to be sent to outline that the subject is suspended from all associated Club activities and property until such time as a meeting has been held.

If appropriate pass fan details onto the police to be further investigated.

Action

The committee will discuss the incident along with any observations from the Mid and East Antrim Safety Officer, Irish Football Association match observer report, CCTV/match footage as appropriate and witness statements.

The committee will consider any necessary exclusions or other actions to be taken.

Depending upon the frequency and relative seriousness of the incidents in question, a formal ban for a significantly longer period may be considered.

Note: On occasions when a person ejected cannot be identified, the person obtaining the ticket or allowing use of their Season Card, will be held responsible for that person's actions and may be sanctioned accordingly.

4. Following any court decisions, the club may revisit individual cases and lift or increase penalties if appropriate.

5. Banning Process

1. On completion of the club's post-match investigation, anyone alleged to have breached Ballymena United's rules and/or regulations shall be informed through a letter (or if necessary other appropriate communication) of such allegation. Their season ticket and ability to buy home/away tickets, shall be switched off.
2. The disciplinary committee will consider,
 - The alleged actions
 - The evidence available as outlined above
 - Any representation from the offender, if deemed appropriate
 - Reports from the Safety Officer, Irish FA observer, PSNI and Mid and East Antrim as appropriate
3. A letter will then be sent, informing the person under investigation, of the disciplinary panel's decision.

6. **Appeal Process**

1. Should any person appeal against a suspension or ban, then this appeal must be submitted in writing for the attention of the club secretary at Ballymena United Football Club within 21 days of the date of the notification letter. No appeals received beyond this period will be considered.
2. The Board of Directors will then ensure that a senior member of the Club Management considers the facts of the case and determines whether:
 - The terms of the existing suspension or ban will stand;
 - The terms of the existing suspension or ban will be amended;

- The existing suspension or ban will be wholly rescinded.
3. The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing to the appellant.
 4. The decision following the appeal will be final.

7. Acceptable Behaviour Agreement

1. At the conclusion of any period of suspension or ban, the subject may be required to enter into a new and separate Acceptable Behaviour Agreement for an additional period of up to 12 months.
2. In all applicable cases, this requirement will be contained within the original correspondence sent to the subject at the outset of the ban.
3. The Acceptable Behavior Agreement must be signed by the subject before any prohibitions are finally lifted.
4. Once an Agreement is signed, all existing prohibitions will be lifted with immediate effect and confirmed to the subject in writing.
5. Any breach of an Acceptable Behavior Agreement will be dealt with as per (4.2) of the schedule of intervention.