

WALSALL FOOTBALL CLUB



POLICY DOCUMENT FOR SUPPORTERS WITH DISABILITIES

September 2023

POLICY RELATING TO PART III OF THE DISABLED DISCRIMINATION ACT 2004.

Walsall Football Club fully supports the principle of equal opportunities and opposes all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of disability.

The Club operates a ticketing policy for disabled supporters whereby disabled supporters are able to bring their carer free of charge, with their own ticket at the price applicable to their age category and will ensure that the scheme does not discriminate between disabled people with differing impairments.

The Club recognises that not all of its facilities are fully accessible to disabled customers and confirms that it is committed to making the necessary “reasonable adjustments” described in the Disability Discrimination Act and its relevant Codes of Practice to ensure full compliance with the legislation.

Definition of Disability

As a fundamental principle the Disability Discrimination Act states that disabled people should not be treated “less favourably, without justification”, and “reasonable adjustments should be made to make goods, facilities and services accessible”, Walsall Football Club aim to fully comply with both the provisions and spirit of the Act.

For the purposes of this Policy only the definition of a disabled supporter is:

“any person who, because of their disability or impairment, is unable to use ordinary stand seating without contravening Health and Safety Regulations, Guidelines or Policy or where the club has provided “reasonable adjustment” to enable the supporter to attend the venue. Any such person will be considered for use of the designated areas of the stadium in line with the procedures set out in this policy.”

A “reasonable adjustment” in this context shall include (but is not limited to), the need to use a wheelchair platform, the need to bring a “personal assistant” for either personal care or safety reasons.

A “designated area” is any area including specific seats in the stadium that the club shall, in its sole discretion determine as being available for the disabled concessionary ticket price.

A person has a “disability” if he/she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Walsall Football Club reserves the right to request “proof of disability” before issuing a concession. Such proof shall include:

- ◆ Receipt of the middle or higher rate of the Disability Living Allowance (mobility or care component) or PIP equivalent
- ◆ Receipt of either the Severe Disablement Allowance or Attendance Allowance.
- ◆ A personal letter from your General Practitioner.

The Club reserves the right to request the above “proof of disability” on an Annual basis with regards to season tickets, and from any new supporters when first purchasing disabled tickets.

Proof of entitlement will need to be provided by post or email before tickets will be posted out on the customer’s first occasion of buying. Alternatively, proof of entitlement can be provided upon collection of tickets from the Ticket Office.

NB. Receipt of an Orange/Blue disabled parking badge WILL NOT be considered sufficient proof of disability for a free carer ticket to be issued.

Contact with Disabled Supporters

Walsall Football Club has an open dialogue with its disabled supporters and encourages them to contact the club as and when required to discuss facilities and improvements or any grievances they may have. The Club guarantees that any complaints will be dealt with quickly and the complainant informed of the outcome. Any queries should be forwarded to sam.page@walsallfc.co.uk or please call the Ticket Office on 01922-651-416. The Club’s Disability Liaison Officer is Samantha Page.

Stewards are there to assist our supporters whether you have an Assistant or otherwise.

Training

The Club has a training programme to ensure that all Departmental Managers and appropriate “front line” staff, including Stewards are trained in the provisions of the Act. Ongoing training will be included in staff and steward induction programmes.

The Club has advised all staff that any incident of discrimination under the provisions of the Act is a serious matter and will be dealt with under the Club’s disciplinary procedures.

Ticketing Policy for Disabled Supporters

The Club will provide general information to its disabled supporters about ticket availability and pricing. Disabled supporters are able to purchase tickets online, including a Carer free of charge, once registered on our ticketing system. Please contact tickets@walsallfc.co.uk for more information.

The Club currently offers one free Carer ticket with a disabled persons ticket, the cost of which is applicable to the age category of the disabled supporter. Please note if the disabled person is unable to attend, we will only allow a Carer access provided they pay for a full-price seat. Concessions are not based on impairment type but recognise that some disabled supporters have a restricted choice of viewing area in the stadium and/or could not attend a match without personal support. Concessions will apply to:

- ◆ Wheelchair viewing areas.
- ◆ Areas reserved for ambulant disabled supporters.
- ◆ Any other viewing areas set aside by the Club for the exclusive use of disabled supporters.

- ◆ Supporters who have been identified as having special needs such as persons with learning difficulties or the elderly.

Ambulant supporters (including people with learning difficulties, mental health impairments, visual and hearing impairments) can choose to sit anywhere in the Stadium, subject to safety. Some areas are more suitable than others and we would recommend speaking to a Ticket Office representative for their advice on choosing the most suitable area before buying tickets. There is no allocated seating for visually impaired supporters and they may therefore sit (subject to availability) in their preferred area of Poundland Bescot Stadium. As with any football stadium, the upper tiers of Poundland Bescot Stadium are very steep and we would therefore discourage any supporter who would be unable to exit the Stadium quickly in the event of an emergency, from purchasing tickets in any upper tiers.

The Club shall provide age concessions where these are appropriate. Disabled children shall enjoy the same percentage concessionary rate as provided for non disabled children. All children under the age of 12 should be accompanied by an adult, and therefore the Club is not required to provide a free carer ticket to a supporter under the age of 12 who is also gaining access free of charge (STH under Early Bird Scheme / Swifty's Squad card member.) Instead, a 'family ticket' is available for these supporters, as it is for non-disabled children and their parents.

The Club shall give details of the availability and prices of seating for disabled spectators and their carers. In principle an admission charge will be made for the disabled supporter but not for the carer for Home Matches. Information for Away matches will be given by the Club when the tickets are made available for purchase. Disabled and Carer tickets are usually available out of the standard ticket allocation sent to an away club.

The club will provide information on lounges, bars and refreshment areas that are accessible to disabled supporters on match days.

The Club will facilitate the purchase of season and match day tickets for disabled supporters.

The Club will enable a method of payment for season tickets by instalments at the rates given to able bodied supporters.

The Club will reserve 5% of its total disabled allocation for sale to disabled non-season ticket holders.

The Club shall make available to disabled visiting club supporters tickets equal to 10% of its total designated disabled viewing capacity.

The Club shall not charge admission prices to disabled supporters of a visiting Club which are higher than those charged to its own supporters for comparable accommodation.

The Club recognises that disabled people have families who may wish to attend matches as a family unit. The club will try and accommodate such requests although this may not always be possible. Please contact the Ticket Office for assistance in obtaining tickets as close as possible to the designated areas.

Parking for Disabled Supporters

For the 2023/24 season, we aim to provide 35 disabled car parking spaces at the stadium. 25 of these are to be located adjacent to the disabled viewing area, with a further 5 on the Main Car Park and 5 allocated for Away supporters. The spaces for Home Supporters are currently sold out to season pass holders. However, every effort will be made to accommodate disabled supporters as near as possible to their point of ingress/egress. These spaces are available on a first-come, first served basis at the relevant cost per vehicle.

Disabled Person's Toilets

The Club have provided accessible toilets within the Experienced Energy Solutions (Yellow) Stand, Stadium Suite (Poundland (Green) Stand Upper Tier) and Savoy Lounge (Tile Choice (Red) Stand). Each of these toilets is alarmed.

If you experience any problems with the use of the accessible toilets please contact the nearest Steward on the day or the club safety officer after the match.

Facilities for Wheelchair Disabled Supporters

There are spaces for 36 persons in wheelchairs (and 36 for carers) in the Experienced Energy Solutions (Yellow) Stand. 10 (plus 10) of these can be allocated to away supporters. At present, we are sorry that we are unable to make any adjustments to provide accommodation for away supporters using wheelchairs to be accommodated with their own fans. Supporters seated in this area are reminded that this area is at pitch-level and is exposed to the elements, so please come prepared for all weathers.

There are also 30 spaces in the Stadium Suite (Poundland (Green) Upper Stand) on the concourse viewing area for supporters in wheelchairs with access via a lift.

In conjunction with the proof of disability (as previously mentioned) this concession will only be available to those people who meet the eligibility criteria described below:

- Wheelchair using applicants must be largely confined to a wheelchair, or not capable of walking a distance further than that required to reasonably and safely access any other part of the stadium.
- Wheelchair using applicants should ideally, also be accompanied by a person who is capable of supporting the disabled person's needs in the event of an emergency. For this reason, the Club strongly recommends that a person is sixteen years of age or over and not be infirm, but we do support younger family members who are used to acting as a Carer.

The Club appreciates that those areas at the front of the Experienced Energy Solutions (Yellow) Stand can on occasions have obstructed views due to the passage of supporters, and this area is uncovered.

We would like to remind supporters to consider the needs of those disabled supporters in wheelchairs and ensure their view is not obstructed.

Facilities for Blind and Partially Sighted Supporters & Deaf and Hard of Hearing Supporters

The Club accommodates blind and partially sighted supporters & deaf and hard of hearing supporters, and if required, their carer within the Stadium.

The Club strongly recommends that each blind or partially sighted supporter attending a match should be accompanied by a person who is fully able to support their needs in an emergency.

Guide Dogs and hearing assistance dogs are allowed into the Stadium but the Club insists that supporters with Guide or Assistance Dogs contact the club before a match so that we can discuss with them access to the ground, facilities inside the ground and the welfare of the guide dog before, during and after the match.

Ticket Office staff will usually offer tickets on the end of a row and/or on the front row. We kindly request that supporters do not block the access for other supporters on their row.

Facilities for Supporters with Infirmities

Supporters with physically restricting medical conditions can sometimes have difficulty reaching seats in some parts of the stadium. The Club are conscious that these fans, as well as some elderly people, may have difficulty climbing a large number of steps and therefore are happy to offer an alternative seating when required, on request at the Ticket Office prior to the game.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Stewards in the Experienced Energy Solutions (Yellow) Stand with specific responsibility for spectators confined to wheelchairs will advise them to remain in their respective areas until the Stewards escort them and their helpers to a safe area.

Visually impaired supporters will be evacuated with the assistance of Stewards.

Stewards should pay particular notice to the elderly or persons with impaired movement who may require assistance.

Evacuation of supporters in the Experienced Energy Solutions (Yellow) Stand will result in a large number of persons in the area where there are car parking spaces for disabled supporters. All supporters with disabilities will be moved to the Park Inn Hotel Car Park so that they can be accounted for and re-united with their carers.

Supporters who are in the viewing areas in the Poundland (Green) Stand will be evacuated to the secure concourse areas at either end of the stand where the signs "Refuge Point" are displayed. Those supporters in wheelchairs will remain in situ until a decision has been made on their evacuation. The stairwells at either end of the stand are of concrete construction with no flammable materials. They will provide respite from fire and smoke for over 30 minutes.

Supporters in the Bonser Suite (Main (Red) Stand) area will be evacuated to the end stairwell of the Executive Boxes – marked "Refuge Point" or through the ramp access to the Poundland (Green) Stand refuge area as described above. Again stewards allocated to those persons will await evacuation instructions.

Conclusion

If you require any further information or clarification, please contact our Disability Liaison Officer, Samantha Page on 01922-651-416 or sam.page@walsallfc.co.uk.

Whilst a number of facilities are currently accessible, the club accepts that some areas do present a problem to disabled supporters. The age and structure of the stadium does prevent improvement in some areas. Should a disabled supporter require specific assistance at a game, please inform the Ticket Office or DLO on booking tickets and we will endeavour to provide appropriate help.

The Club has an electronic big screen scoreboard at matches which greatly assists the hearing impaired; particularly at times of player substitutions, stadium announcements etc.

The Club is taking steps to provide accessible information in alternative formats. Please contact sam.page@walsallfc.co.uk if you require assistance with this and we will endeavour to help wherever possible.

It is recommended that wherever possible, disabled supporters bring along a personal assistant / carer who will be able to help with personal care / refreshment needs if required, as well as in case of an emergency.