

## Premier League Disability Advisory Group

Meeting held at The Emirates Stadium, Arsenal Football Club - Disabled Supporters Lounge  
18th October 2018

### Guest and Premier League Attendees :-

Sam Cook	Head of Investigations	EHRC
Jeremy Wilson	Football Correspondence	Daily Telegraph
David Ruebain	Equalities Adviser	Premier League

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### DSA Attendees :-

David Butler	DAG Chair	
	DSA Chair	Watford
Chas Banks	DSA Chair	Manchester United
Mark Barber	DSA Secretary	Manchester City
Peter Carr	DSA Chair	Tottenham
David Higham	DSA Chair	Liverpool
Steve Daniels	DSA Chair	Wolves
Andy Mather	DSA Chair	Southampton
David Smith	DSA Chair	Crystal Palace
Cathy Bayford	DSA Co-Chair	West Ham
Trevor Bright	DSA Co-Chair	West Ham
Anthony Joy	DSA Chair	Arsenal
Simon Townley	DSA Chair	Burnley
Sandra Fixter	DSA Chair	Leicester
Stephen Miller	DSA Secretary	Newcastle

### Apologies :-

Richard Scudamore	Chief Executive	Premier League
Bill Bush	Executive Director	Premier League
Katherine Allen	Policy and Supporter Relations	Premier League
Dave Heatherill	DSA Chair	Huddersfield

**Chairman's Report - Please find this at the end of these meeting notes.**

### Summary of Main Topics, Comments and Actions Points

#### 1) Council parking impositions - Restraints outside of the stadium confines

Access to grounds for disabled away supporters varies enormously. "Our disabled away supporters sometimes get dropped off a long way from the stadium, and this may mean a walk of over a mile. Ambulant supporters will often take a wheelchair for that walk, but then the away club has to find somewhere to store a number of wheelchairs during the game. This is probably due to the local police and a vehicle no-go area near the stadium".

Some Councils have prevented disabled drivers from parking on single and double yellow lines within a radius for the stadium. Any extra information to be updated to Sam Cook who will investigate the reasonableness of such actions.

Action: All if affected

## 2) DAG Project Updates

### 2.1) Exercise by questionnaire to assess Away disabled facilities

David Butler said he was disappointed that only a few clubs had embraced this project so far and input their experiences as away fans. Our objective was to identify best practice and highlight inadequacies for improvement and the PL have said that they will consider our findings to make improvements.

All agree they would now publicise this project to their members. See item on ASG Audits below.

David Butler was asked to add the Survey links to the front page of our website.

Action: DB - Completed

### 2.2) Assessment of the adequacy of ticketing communication relating to away disabled supporters.

It is obvious, given the varying responses, that information concerning away seating is either not being produced or if it is it is not getting to the ticket holder in many cases.

Many DSAs surprised that information is produced appears not to be received by away fans.

Wheelchair and ambulant online is not universally available.

Action All DSA's to investigate within their clubs

### 2.3) Personnel Assistants - Safety and Stadium Insurance Issues

A discussion was had about David Ruebain's draft list of capabilities for PAs. There were not any additions except to add that the PA must meet the same behaviour standards as any fan and also to make it abundantly clear that PAs only need to be able to do that which is needed for the particular disabled person (not necessarily the whole list). There was also a discussion about insurance. David Ruebain agreed to amend the list to strengthen the reference to reminding PAs that the same standards of behaviour apply to them PAs as to fans generally.

It was felt that this draft could be utilised as a base for guidance to clubs.

Action David Ruebain

### 2.4) Disabled Supporters Attendance Statistics Utilisation of current facilities

This is a difficult issue as most DSA's do not have access to Ticket Office statistics.

Such information would identify ASG home and away compliance.

More discussion needed internally and with the PL.

Action David Butler

### 3) Any Other Business

#### 3.1) European Away Match Facilities

An issue was raised and supported around the table that there was an appallingly low number of accessible spaces in European stadiums for English disabled away fans visiting. Also, the quality (sightlines, etc) is very poor as are facilities such as the accessible toilets; plus the clubs do not provide free PA spaces. David Ruebain said that there is a CAF meeting next month in Bilbao about access and he said that he would pass the comments on to his colleagues.

Action: David Ruebain

#### 3.2) ASG Audits

Two points were raised in discussions. The audits should not just be a box ticking exercise as to ASG compliance. They need to be undertaken during a live match where crowd conditions, flow of fans, site lines etc can change the accessible dynamics for disabled fans.

Secondly from our away audit replies it is essential that the ASG requirements be calculated separately with reference to the number of home and away facilities rather than an overall figure for the stadium. Currently away fans are often short changed by that methodology.

Typical comments from recent surveys - "I was midway between centre circle and pen box the toilets for away fans was close to exit in medical room and only one holier so big half time queue."

"Only one accessible toilet, not very good, spent all half time queuing"

"as an ambulant I need accessible entry and front row seats as I can't stand for long periods and increasingly we are dumped into the middle of the crowd"

David Butler to request that the PL change their ASG reporting model. EHRC should review their criterion and separate home and away compliance within a stadium.

Action: David Butler

#### 3.3) DSAs and DLOs (DAO)

It was felt that all PL clubs should have a DSA and according to the PL rule book each club must have a DAO.

Some clubs appear not to adhere to this rule.

David Butler to take this up with the PL

#### 3.4) Funding Grants –

##### 3.4.1) "Awards for All"

Website – [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-england](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-england)

"A quick and simple way to get small National Lottery grants of between £300 and £10,000.

Suitable for Voluntary or community organisations

Funding size £300 to £10,000

Application deadline Ongoing"

Steve Daniels explained that DSA's could apply for a grant of up to 10k from "Awards For All" a lottery funded scheme. Visit their website and all the information on what you need to do is on there. You have to submit a good application on what the funds are needed for, Wolves use our grant for away travel for our members, plus other activities such as, pantomime, racing, fishing, ten pin bowling etc but there are many other activities you can apply for. You do not have to be a registered charity, all you need is a written constitution. Steve said It is a very time consuming to put your project together, and like with anything else, such as a business plan, the more meat you put on the bone the stronger the application.

If you need anything more on this then please feel free to contact Steve.

### 3.4.2) Football Foundation

As mentioned in the Chair's report David will follow up the Small Grants Programme and ascertain when the next grant window becomes available.

Action: David Butler

Lastly a huge thank you to Anthony for organising the venue and also to Arsenal Football Club for hosting our meeting.

Meeting ended at 4pm

### **Chairman's Report**

Creation of the PL DAG and internal promotion within the Premier League has increased both our profile and credibility with the clubs who, I am told, are much more inclined now to involve us in a dialogue.

I think we have assisted that process by being absolutely transparent, publishing our minutes and details of our Projects. We will continue to do that.

I regret that 4 clubs still do not have DSA's

Brighton - Not interested - "Have no need or desire"

Bournemouth has a Cherries Trust with a disabled member - invited

Cardiff & Fulham are forming DSAs, and I am in touch with both and offered our assistance

Chelsea and Everton are not very active and are not represented today although I copy all our Group correspondence to them.

We have made progress on some of our Projects but not all, however we will look at those in more detail later today in the program.

### **Football Foundation**

At my last meeting with Bill Bush I raised the fact that the Football Foundation, funded partly by the PL, did not support organisations such as the DSA's who very directly represent and assist disabled

supporters. After numerous correspondence on how to apply for grants I received the following response

*"Currently the small grants scheme is over subscribed for the next couple application windows, however as discussed it would be good to meet you to discuss any potential proposal."*

However I will follow up for future opportunities.

SGSA – Sports Ground Safety Authority – Green Guide update required

Subsequent to the first DAG meeting where we discussed the inadequacies and omissions within the Accessible Stadia Guidelines, and after discussions with Prof Derek Fraser (Independent Football Ombudsman), he suggested that I wrote to Alan Coppin SGSA Chair –

Dear Alan,

I was pleased to receive the email from Derek and happy to be able to pass on my comments concerning stadia accessibility.

The current guidance concentrates heavily on wheelchair users and albeit I fully recognise that these are the most problematic group of supporters to accommodate and are also the most deserving of our consideration however I believe there is now a requirement for a more balanced approach towards making provision for the wider spectrum of disability.

Given the ageing population much more emphasis and clarity over this groups requirements is needed. I understand that the average age of a Manchester United supporter is now 55 and their use of the lifts for ambulant disabled has increased dramatically.

At Watford Football Club they agreed with my submission and have significantly exceeded the ASG number of seats for ambulant fans. As there was no specification of “more leg room” I agreed with WFC that in addition to extra leg room it was essential that there was sufficient room for people to pass without the disabled person having to stand and be disturbed.

Also where steps were involved to access ambulant seating there should be a requirement for Hand or “P” rails to be in place – there is no point in having ambulant seats that are not accessible! These are in place at WFC.

WFC also agreed that ambulant seats (in line with wheelchair requirements) could not be classified as such if a standing person could block the view or inhibit the sight lines.

There is a sensible requirement for 75% of the positions for both wheelchair and ambulant seating to be elevated but there appears to be no specification by which a position is qualified as “elevated”.

We have agreed a definition that a position is counted as elevated if it is high enough that standing fans in front do not block the view or compromise sightlines.

Because they have no physical impairments, I feel those with hearing and visual problems are somewhat forgotten.

From a safety point of view I feel that continuity of stewarding be highly recommended to recognise and understand the vulnerability of both types of disability in an emergency evacuation following an incident.

*"Many thanks for your e mail which has been passed to me for response. Apologies also for the delay in getting a response to you.*

*SGSA recognises that the current version of the Accessible Stadia Guidance document and supporting Supplementary Guidance is in need of review and update.*

*SGSA is however going through a rewrite of the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (Green Guide) at the moment and all resources are pointed towards that document and its publication. On completion of that Guide a discussion is planned to take place with interested groups over the ASG document and in particular over which organisation would take the lead in moving forward on the project.*

*At this point in time it is not possible to give any indication of timescales but please rest assured that the need for review is fully accepted."*

As newly promoted PL clubs and aspiring Championship clubs are utilising the current Green Guide and attempting to comply with it – perhaps a bit more urgency might be appropriate!

I have offered that DAG be involved with any future review.

I have also had correspondence with Martin Glenn Chief Executive Officer at the FA (copied to Greg Clarke Chairman) regarding two opposing ASG issues facing the EFL clubs -

Firstly – concerning PL Aspiring clubs in the Championship - Pointing out that it easier when stadiums are not full to make the ASG changes i.e. removing seats, adding ramps, lifts, rails etc rather than wait for promotion and face a sold out stadium at which point making the changes is very difficult, unpopular and more expensive.

Secondly – the issue of compliance by lower division clubs with high capacity grounds and low numbers of supporters – I worked examples for Championship Barnsley, League One Blackburn Rovers and League two Coventry =

Coventry City - Ground Capacity = 32,609

Average home attendance 2017 / 2018 = 7,589

ASG requirements - Wheelchair positions = 186 Ambulant positions = 186 Accessible toilets = 12

Both wheelchair and ambulant positions require 75% to be elevated

In such cases I believe there needs to be an agreed compromise regarding meeting the ASGs - the alternative is to completely close down parts of the ground!

Martin wrote back to say that the FA understood the problem.

Major strides have been made with upgrading disabled facilities at PL stadiums – yes there is still work to be done– but it is happening.

I would however like to press for a change of focus on to stadiums of other major sports by the EHRC & Level Playing Fields - Perhaps LTA at Wimbledon?

I am really making a call to be more even handed across all sports stadia.

Finally I would like to thank all of you for your tremendous help and support you have given me since the Group was formed. Much appreciated.

David

David J Butler FCA MBE  
Chair Premier League Disability Advisory Group