



This fact sheet has been put together by Deighton Guedalla solicitors who regularly work with the Football Supporters' Federation (FSF) defending the rights of fans across England and Wales. For more information on the FSF visit: [www.fsf.org.uk](http://www.fsf.org.uk)

I have been treated badly by the police and/or stewards, what can I do?

### The Police

It's not uncommon for innocent football supporters to be treated badly by the police. This might involve police officers using excessive force, using abusive and threatening language or supporters being arrested for no good reason.

For too long football supporters have just shrugged this off. Whilst we recognise that the police have a difficult job to do and whilst we fully support them in their efforts to ensure that the match day experience is a safe one for all concerned, we believe that where police officers abuse their powers then something should be done about it.

So what can be done? Broadly, there are two things you can do if you are mistreated by the police. Firstly, you can do a formal police complaint. If you do this, the complaint can be investigated and, if it is upheld, the officers in question can be disciplined – this can mean anything from a warning to being sacked from the police. In some cases, officers can even be prosecuted in the criminal courts.

Secondly, the police can be sued for compensation. This involves taking them to a civil court and, potentially, having a trial which, if you win, means you would be awarded compensation. However, not all such cases go to trial – it is quite common for the police to agree to pay compensation before a trial.

We know that a lot of people are worried if they are seen to be "taking on" the police. Don't be! The police are just as much subject to the law as the rest of us. If they break the law then they can be taken to court, just as anyone else can.

The FSF has an arrangement with solicitors in London who specialise in police misconduct cases. If you think you have been mistreated by the police, contact the FSF and we can put you in touch with them. They will be happy to discuss your case with you over the phone and give you initial advice without charge and without obligation. In some circumstances you might be able to get legal aid for a case against the police and they will advise you about that as well.

So, if you a victim of police misconduct, don't just forget about it; let us know. It's only by standing up for ourselves that we can make sure we are all treated better in future.

### Stewards

In a similar way, sometimes stewards overstep the mark and treat supporters poorly – being threatening or using unnecessary or excessive force, for example.

If this happens whoever employs the stewards is legally responsible. It may be the club who employ them or they may be employed by a separate company, but whoever the employer is, like the police, they can be sued in the civil courts for compensation if stewards employed by them behave badly.

Again, if you are treated badly by stewards let the FSF know and we can put you in touch with solicitors who can give you initial advice, without fee or obligation.

For more information on how the FSF can help you email [Amanda.jacks@fsf.org.uk](mailto:Amanda.jacks@fsf.org.uk) or call 0330 44 000 44.