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TO: ALL CHIEF CONSTABLES

Dear Colleagues

Football Disorder End of Season Threat Escalation and Ipswich Ruling

I am writing to highlight that as the domestic football season reaches its conclusion it is likely that we will see an increase in the threat of disorder at matches. This reflects the trend for events on the pitch to precipitate a hostile response from some supporters.

You will have seen recent incidents that emphasise the point and the various ways disorder can be sparked;

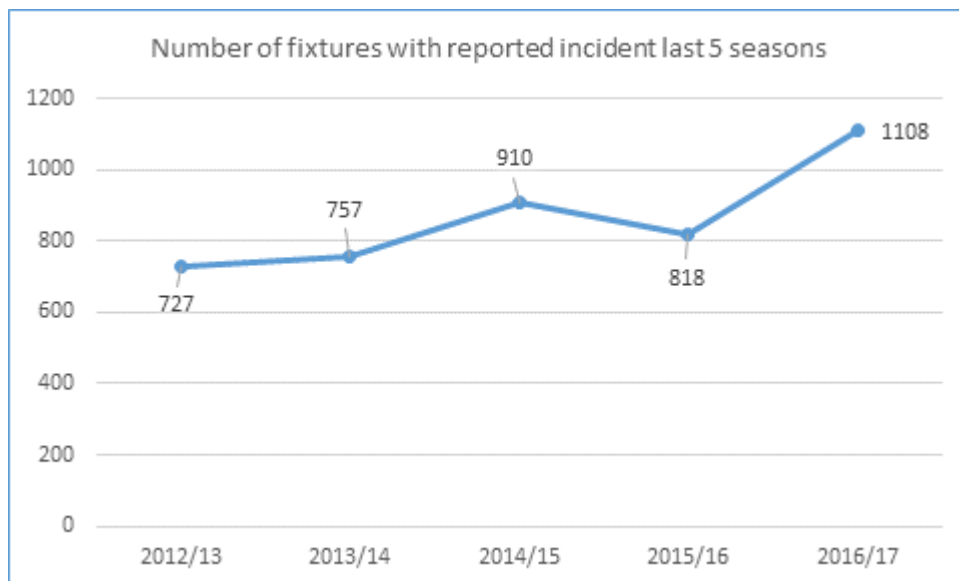
Wigan v Manchester City - Atmosphere became hostile after contentious decisions on the pitch. "Celebratory" pitch invasion then led to opposing players being threatened and abused and a confrontation with away supporters on the pitch

West Ham v Burnley - Poor performance on the pitch and dissatisfaction with club directors led to pitch invasions, assaults, confrontations between players and their own supporters and missile throwing

Grimsby v Port Vale – Disorder between home and away supporters at police free fixture

Each of these required police resources being deployed to deal with an issue the club had failed to manage and where those resources were off the agreed SPS footprint, we cannot retrospectively charge.

This is against an existing backdrop of increasing disorder generally and specifically inside the stadiums as clubs seek to reduce policing costs.



Disorder inside stadiums (excluding pyrotechnics)

In 2016/17 season there were 853 fixtures with an incident compared to 587 the previous year (2015/16).

- Attacks on stadium staff – 154 incidents compared to 112 .
- Pitch encroachment –265 incidents compared to 160

The table below shows the steady increase in incidents of disorder inside stadiums since 2011/12.

Season	No. of Reported Incidents
2011/12	181
2012/13	427
2013/14	476
2014/15	662
2015/16	587
2016/17	853

The end of season will see numerous matches which will decide promotion, relegation and League titles. The heightened emotions of such events can lead to disorder and it is important that forces seek to take pre-emptive action to counter balance this with appropriate mitigation. This must also take cognisance of the recent Ipswich ruling v Suffolk Constabulary which curtailed our ability to charge Special Police Services for officers deployed on land controlled by the clubs but on public land. As previously advised, it is essential forces reflect the most current case law from the Ipswich case in their deployments and SPS agreements. In consultation with the Home Office, DCC Harrington (who leads on non-football sporting events) and myself, new guidance will be circulated regarding SPS to reflect the current position.

The SGSA have recently issued guidance making it clear that Safety Advisory Groups should properly consider the prevention of crime and disorder in reviewing safety certificates. The SAG can impose various conditions on an event including variations on kick off times, attendance limits (total and away fans), police presence, alcohol restrictions up to playing an event behind closed doors. It is inevitable that forces will get requests to vary kick off times for broadcasting. Given that more than ever post Ipswich, forces are subsidising football as an industry with non-chargeable resources to facilitate their events, I would request forces consider taking a robust stance when conducting threat assessments as part of the planning process for the remaining fixtures to ensure that, principally, we seek to reduce the threat to the public wherever possible with suitable conditions, which will also have the positive impact of minimising the financial and resourcing impact on the service of simply acquiescing to football's demands. End of season fixtures in which the clubs may have no rivalry or history of disorder should be reviewed and if merited re categorised if there is particular importance in the fixture. In particular the following should be considered;

- Kick off times - There is a clear link between later kick off times, alcohol consumption and the negative impact on supporter behaviour. The scheduling of high risk matches for later kick offs at the weekend should be resisted. There are examples from around the country whereby an evidenced and a firm position objecting to a kick off time has been supported by the relevant SAG who have agreed to police requests. Information and supporting evidence for such an objection is available from the UKFPU who can also direct forces to those who have successfully engaged in the process.

- Alcohol restrictions/ bans
- Insistence on an appropriate Police presence at a stadium. It is not acceptable for a club to expect the police to attend on the outbreak of disorder if it is reasonably foreseeable.
- Sufficient levels (and trained) stewarding – the club should take responsibility for preventing pitch invasions. Encroachment on the pitch is a criminal offence which frequently leads to threatening behaviour, provokes a response from opposing fans and is often the precursor to disorder. Forces should ensure clubs have appropriate plans in place to prevent this without re-course to the police or the expectation that once their plan fails we will have to turn up. Such a strategy exposes players, stewards and supporters to an unacceptable risk.

I am aware of instances that in order to meet broadcaster's wishes, clubs have offered to cover policing costs over and above SPS and in effect ignoring the Ipswich case. I would caution forces against such agreements on the basis that it is open for the club to seek repayment of any "overpayments" for several years after the event. A change of management or mind set could prompt clubs to seek recover of all such costs and it is unlikely a force could resist such a claim. In addition to that, where forces take such a short term financial benefit, it serves to undermine the Service's position nationally to negotiate with the Leagues and with Government in relation to a review of the funding arrangements. In terms of officers deployed in the stadium, or on other land owned or leased by the club the Ipswich case has no impact.

We are at a crucial point in time in football policing both in terms of a rising trend of disorder and seeking a review of the financial arrangements for charging and would ask that forces adopt a robust and collective approach in line with the above observations for the remainder of the season. Should you require any further detail or to discuss specific cases I would be keen to support you.

Yours sincerely



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