# Homophobia in grassroots football on the rise



A troubling report released by the Football Association (FA), indicates a significant surge in allegations of discrimination relating to sexual orientation within grassroots football. The FA’s Grassroots Disciplinary Review for the 2023/2024 season, published on Thursday, highlights that there were 678 serious case allegations related to sexual orientation discrimination. This marks a 19.6% increase compared to the previous season’s figures, which amounted to 398 charges stemming from these allegations, with 333 of those charges proven—reflecting an 11.7% rise.

The report also reveals that the number of proven charges of homophobia now surpasses those for any other type of discrimination. This escalation has prompted alarm from Football v Homophobia (FvH), a campaign group dedicated to combating anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination in football. FvH expressed considerable concern over the findings, stating, “This development is deeply concerning to FvH, which has been operating for 15 years and continues to receive no core funding.” The group highlighted the necessity for a more focused effort to address the increasing instances of anti-LGBTQ+ language and behaviour at the grassroots level of the sport.

FvH emphasised that the metrics highlighted in the Review should serve as a point of significant concern for the FA. They are urging the governing body, alongside clubs, leagues, and county FAs, to commit to more extensive education efforts that combat anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination, fostering an environment where all individuals feel safe and welcome within football contexts. The group stated, “By clearly amplifying the ‘Football v Homophobia’ campaign in its annual Month of Action in February, and supporting the campaign’s training programs, those with a responsibility to halt the rise in proven charges of anti-gay abuse can take decisive steps.”

This report's release follows a period of backlash against the Premier League and FA's flagship Rainbow Laces campaign, which aims to promote inclusivity and support for LGBTQ+ individuals in football. Issues arose when Ipswich Town’s Sam Morsy publicly refused to don a Rainbow armband, citing religious concerns. His decision was met with controversy, particularly in light of his previous willingness to wear shirts sponsored by betting companies. Further complicating matters, Crystal Palace’s Marc Guehi was reprimanded by the FA for inscribing “I love Jesus” on his armband, underscoring ongoing tensions between personal beliefs and inclusivity initiatives.

In another noteworthy incident during this season, Manchester United players collectively opted not to wear Rainbow warm-up jackets, with Sheffield United’s Anel Ahmedhodzic also refusing to wear a Rainbow armband, replying only “Guess” when questioned about his choice.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.cranleighfc.co.uk/2024/12/19/13-rise-in-misconduct-charges-says-fa-annual-grassroots-disciplinary-review/> - Corroborates the FA's Annual Grassroots Disciplinary Review and the increase in misconduct charges, including those related to discrimination.
* <https://www.footballvhomophobia.com/fvh-statement-on-rise-in-reports-of-homophobia-in-grassroots-football/> - Supports the rise in reports of homophobia in grassroots football and the concerns expressed by Football v Homophobia (FvH).
* <https://www.footballvhomophobia.com/fvh-statement-on-rise-in-reports-of-homophobia-in-grassroots-football/> - Highlights FvH's call for education and their concerns over the increasing instances of anti-LGBTQ+ language and behaviour.
* <https://www.cranleighfc.co.uk/2024/12/19/13-rise-in-misconduct-charges-says-fa-annual-grassroots-disciplinary-review/> - Details the FA's strategic priority to tackle serious misconduct, including incidents involving protected characteristics.
* <https://www.footballvhomophobia.com/fvh-statement-on-rise-in-reports-of-homophobia-in-grassroots-football/> - Mentions the necessity for more extensive education efforts to combat anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination as emphasized by FvH.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2024/dec/18/ipswich-town-sam-morsy-rainbow-laces-campaign> - Reports on Ipswich Town’s Sam Morsy refusing to wear a Rainbow armband, citing religious concerns, and the subsequent controversy.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/67212314> - Details the incident involving Crystal Palace’s Marc Guehi being reprimanded by the FA for inscribing ‘I love Jesus’ on his armband.
* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-11874145/Manchester-United-players-refuse-wear-Rainbow-warm-jackets.html> - Reports on Manchester United players opting not to wear Rainbow warm-up jackets and Sheffield United’s Anel Ahmedhodzic refusing to wear a Rainbow armband.
* <https://www.footballvhomophobia.com/fvh-statement-on-rise-in-reports-of-homophobia-in-grassroots-football/> - Highlights the complex landscape within football regarding issues of diversity, belief, and inclusion.