



# Accessibility Policy

Plymouth Argyle Football Club

Last reviewed 31 October 2023

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## **1. OUR COMMITMENT**

Plymouth Argyle Football Club fully supports the basic right of equal opportunities and opposes all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of disability. With an Equality Policy in place, the aim is to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and with respect.

The Club is committed to ensuring that the needs of staff, supporters, fans, visitors and volunteers with disabilities are met and as part of this, is committed to making the necessary reasonable adjustments to all services and facilities provided. Access is regularly assessed, both internally and by an independent external audit, and an action plan of measures is in place to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation.

The Club recognises that disadvantage and discrimination does exist in society, but the has adopted this policy as a statement of intent and a framework for action to:

- ensure people with disabilities are treated equally.
- understand that equitable measures can be applied.
- work towards elimination of discrimination and harassment.
- adopt good practice in employment and service delivery.
- inform and educate about access requirements and needs.
- ensure people can continue to fully support the club with limitations.
- ensure people can work in an environment that supports them and understands any requirements they may have.

## **2. SCOPE**

Equality means recognising that everyone is of equal value and should be respected according to their individual needs and abilities. We always want to treat people fairly, with respect and with dignity and to positively value differences. Being equitable ensures that we are being fair and that, sometimes, to be equal it means treating someone differently.

## **3. THE LAW**

### **EQUALITY ACT (2010)**

Disability is one of the nine protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act (2010). This act ensures that those classifications of identity will not be discriminated against either by:

- direct discrimination – treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others.
- indirect discrimination – putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage.



## DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT

As a fundamental principle, the DDA states that people with disabilities should not be treated "less favourably, without justification" and "reasonable adjustments should be made to make goods, facilities and services accessible."

Plymouth Argyle Football Club aims to fully comply with both the spirit and provisions of the of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2010.

The club recognises that not all its facilities are fully accessible to its supporters and fans with disabilities and is committed to making the necessary reasonable adjustments described by the DDA and the Club's Codes of Practice to ensure full compliance with legislation.

### 4. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy the definition of a disabled supporter, staff member, fan, or visitor is:

- Any person who, because of their disability or impairment, is unable to use standard seating without contravening Health and Safety Regulations, Guidelines or Policy or where the Club has provided a reasonable adjustment to enable that individual can attend the venue.
- Any person who, because of their disability or impairment, requires reasonable adjustment(s) from standard business practice, to work devices, access routes and office facilities.

As set out by the Equality Act 2010, a person with a disability is defined as an individual who "has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."

A 'designated area' is any area (including specific seats within the stadium) that the Club shall at its sole discretion determine as being available for those with disabilities at a concessionary price.

A 'reasonable adjustment' in this context shall include, but is not limited to, the need to use a wheelchair space, bring a personal assistant or assistance dog, flexible work hours, accessible office equipment and furniture.

A 'personal assistant' is a person accompanying an individual with a disability and who is fully able to support the needs of the paying ticket holder whilst in attendance at the venue and in the event of an emergency. The Club recognise that many children are young carers to their parent or guardian and will not be treated differently to an adult personal assistant. However, we insist that the young carer is fully able to support their parent/guardian's disability needs and in the event of an emergency. If a young carer is attending as a personal assistant, we request that the Club's Safeguarding Officer is notified via email stating the event(s) they will be at the venue in that capacity:

[safeguarding@paafc.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@paafc.co.uk)



## 5. MATCH DAY AND EVENT TICKETING

The Club operates a specific non-discriminatory ticketing policy for fans with disabilities and will ensure that the scheme does not differentiate between any disability groups.

Where charges are made, the charge will be made to the paying ticket holder. This is in line with current protocol, which maintains that people with disabilities should be treated the same as any person without a disability.

Where health and safety requirements demand that a person with a disability must be accompanied by a personal assistant, that assistant will be given free entry to matches and/or events where the Club allows free admission.

For football matches, please note if the person with the disability cannot attend, their personal assistant will only be allowed access provided they pay for a full price ticket. Opportunities for supporters who are wheelchair users to attend away matches are limited by the allocation of tickets received from the away club. The Disability Liaison Officer or the Club's Ticket Office will carry out the co-ordination of the sale of these tickets, when needed.

For all events, should a ticket holder's circumstances change, they may apply for a transfer to a different seat or location. Where possible, the Club will aim to accommodate the request. If the request is to move into a wheelchair space, and after all possible reasonable adjustments are considered, it is concluded that we're unable to provide a space, then priority consideration will be given when one becomes available.

All ticketing queries can be directed to the Ticket Office via phone 01752 907700 or email [tickets@pafc.co.uk](mailto:tickets@pafc.co.uk)

## 6. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Plymouth Argyle reserves the right to request and review supporting documents before issuing any concession. Such supporting documents include:

- 1) Receipt of Higher Rate of Disability Living Allowance (Mobility or Care Component)
- 2) Receipt of Enhanced Rate P.I.P (Personal Independence Payment)
- 3) A personal letter from your GP explaining that support is required and why.

However, we are happy to consider requests on a case-by-case basis from those who don't meet the strict criteria. Please contact the ticket office for more details. In most cases our Disability Liaison Officer will arrange a personal meeting to discuss any specific needs. Please note the issue and use of personal assistant tickets are closely monitored and may require annual reapplication and the Club may withdraw at any time if they are misused.

It is the responsibility of the supporter to inform the club of any changes in their circumstances.

Supporting documents required may change depending on alterations to current legislation regarding the benefit payments system. Receipt of a Blue Badge will not be considered sufficient supporting documentation for a personal assistant. Please note, it is the responsibility of the supporter to inform the club of any changes in their circumstances.

## **7. WHEELCHAIR USERS ATTENDING EVENTS**

Home Park Stadium has a limited number of spaces for wheelchair dependent fans and their personal assistant in all parts of the ground.

Wherever possible the Club will make suitable alternative arrangements for those wheelchair users wishing to attend matches and/or events with their families.

The Club wishes to make the most appropriate use of these facilities by providing them to those with disabilities who are unable to sit in any other part of the stadium.

Individuals using, or wishing to apply for use of these designated areas must meet the following criteria:

1. Wheelchair using applicants must be largely dependent on a wheelchair for mobility purposes or not capable of walking a distance further than that required to reasonably and safely access any other part of the stadium.
- 2.
3. Wheelchair dependent applicants of either manual or powered wheelchairs are encouraged to be accompanied by a personal assistant who can support their needs in the event of any emergency evacuation, unless said person has an Assistance Dog and in this case the Club's Disability Liaison Officer should be contacted in advance for all relevant information.

The Club will not refuse admittance to those who don't bring a personal assistant; any refusals will only be on the grounds of a contravention of health and safety legislation.

Designated areas for wheelchair users at football matches or events located on the pitch are found in all four stands of the stadium:

### **Devonport End**

#### **Lyndhurst Road**

- A maximum of 80 spaces for wheelchairs which can be used by home fans for a football match. All spaces are at pitch level and uncovered. These spaces can be purchased by way of season-ticket or on a match-by-match basis. To maximise the number of supporters who can access these spaces, the personal assistant ticket is normally issued for a seat immediately behind the wheelchair bay. For those matches where there is sufficient space, PAs are more than welcome to sit next to the individual using the wheelchair bay. Club staff and stewards have been instructed to be as helpful as possible in facilitating this.



### Mayflower Grandstand

- There are 12 spaces for wheelchairs which is available to home fans only for a football match. All spaces are above pitch level, 15 rows above, with an excellent elevated view of the ground and is covered by the roof. For other live events, such as music concerts, this platform is limited to use for hospitality guests, with a general admission ticket wheelchair platform raised on the pitch.

### Barn Park Stand

(Visiting Football Fans)

- There is a maximum of 28 spaces for wheelchairs available for visiting fans. All spaces are at pitch level, uncovered and situated within the away end.
- In most cases for live events, such as music concerts, a dedicated wheelchair platform is specially erected and positioned on the pitch for general admission tickets to provide more suitable wheelchair spaces and viewpoint.

Wheelchair users should also be accompanied by a person who can support the disabled person's needs in the event of an emergency. For this reason, Plymouth Argyle strongly recommend that this person is sixteen years of age or over and not infirm.

## 8. AMBULANT DISABLED FANS

Plymouth Argyle Football Club recognises that there are considerable numbers of people in the community who use wheelchairs mainly for outdoor mobility purposes but are not necessarily always requiring the use of their wheelchair. There are also many people with severe walking difficulties and individuals with learning difficulties or debilitating illnesses who have difficulty walking. For the purposes of this policy, we will use the term 'ambulant disabled'.

Those fans and visitors with ambulatory disabilities of a severe nature will be able to have access to seating nearest the entrances/exits and no more than 6 steps up or down a stairwell in a block of seats. If a fan wishes to sit beyond our advised 6 step rule (as per Level Playing Field guidance) they may do so and the club respects that they understand and know what is best and comfortable for them.

It will be necessary for an ambulant fan to provide supporting documentation relating to their needs to qualify for a personal assistant ticket, if a personal assistant is required.

## 9. NOT ALL DISABILITIES ARE VISIBLE

The match day and live music experience is important to everyone. We appreciate that disabilities are wide-ranging and that not all are visible. Should you wish to accompany a fan who has a disability that is less obvious such as autism, dementia, anxiety or severe learning difficulties, Plymouth Argyle will strive to offer help specific to the needs of the individual.

Sensory packs for any persons with autism or neurodiverse sensitivity, which include a drawstring bag, ear defenders, fidget spinners, a sensory ball, an awareness card and lanyard, as well as further match-day information, and are free to use and keep.



## **10. BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED SUPPORTERS**

The Club can accommodate visitors who are blind and partially sighted in all parts of the stadium. The Club recommends that the blind or partially sighted person attending a match or live event at Home Park Stadium be accompanied by a personal assistant who is fully able to support their needs in the event of an emergency. If the person has an Assistance Dog, a PA is not essential, and the Club's Disability Liaison Officer should be contacted in advance for all relevant information.

Due care will be given to all aspects of safety and guidance from Guide Dogs for the Blind to ensure safety in the ground. Measures will also be taken to ensure that the welfare of the Assistance Dog is preserved.

On match days, information will be carried via the public-address system.

The club has a dedicated audio described commentary service, called Soccer Sight, for blind and visually impaired football fans. This service is available to home and visiting supporters.

The club has 10 headsets available, and these can be pre-booked by contacting the DLO or requested on the day of a match and collected from the Match Day Information Booth located in the Milehouse Park & Ride car park.

Headsets can access the dedicated commentary from every part of the ground and the commentary will commence approximately 15 minutes before kick-off. There is no charge for this service, and we ask that at the end of the game, the equipment is returned to the information booth, which will be open for 15 minutes after the full-time whistle.

Please note that you are liable for the safe handling and return of any Soccer Sight equipment loaned to you. The club reserves the right to charge for any equipment lost or damaged while in your possession, or for any equipment not returned.

The club strongly recommends that a person who is fully able to support their needs in the event of an emergency should accompany each visually impaired supporter attending a match.

## **11. DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING SUPPORTERS**

Supporters who are deaf or hard of hearing can be accommodated in the stadium by various means. The Club has a portable induction loop system that is used within the club shop and reception. It is strongly recommended that a person with a severe hearing loss attending a match at Home Park Stadium is accompanied by a personal assistant who is fully able to support their needs in the event of an emergency.

If the individual has an Assistance Dog, a PA is not essential, and the Club's Disability Liaison Officer should be contacted in advance for all relevant information.



## 12. STEWARDS AND SECURITY

Any person bringing a bag will have it checked and you will be searched on entry to the stadium. This is for everyone's safety, and we ask that you remain patient and co-operate with security staff. We search everyone entering the venue and employ a range of other security measures in and around the site, some of which may not be visible. If you have any concerns or know that you may require assistance in this area, our Disability Liaison Officer and Disability Ambassadors can be on hand to help you enter the stadium.

Each member of staff is here to ensure your comfort and safety. They have all been briefed to keep an eye open for anything unusual. Please arrive in good time as our enhanced security measures may mean that it might take a little longer to get into the venue.

All stewards are trained to NVQ Level 2 in Spectator Safety with Supervisors trained to the Level 3 award. As part of the Club's Inclusion Strategy and Equality Policy, all staff, stewards and volunteers are required to complete additional Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training. The EDI training allows staff to obtain greater understanding of different disabilities and ensure that they treat everyone with the same care, respect and dignity, no matter their ability.

When it comes to carrying out any searches upon entry to the stadium, stewards have been trained and are regularly advised on how best to search a medical bag and equipment, if necessary.

Every match day or live event the stewarding team are briefed by the venue's Safety Officer, receive an event specific handbook with all protocols and procedures as well as guidance around inclusion and accessibility. On occasion the Club's dedicated Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager is invited to speak to the stewards to provide awareness training and/or inform staff of key information surrounding dedicated awareness days and campaigns.

## 13. MATCH DAY AMBASSADORS

We have a team of Here to Help volunteers and within the team there are dedicated ambassadors whose specific role is to enhance the safety and enjoyment of our disabled fans. The dedicated ambassadors are available to offer general assistance, can provide a wheelchair transfer from the car park to your seat as well as help facilitate any further assistance you may need. If you require help before or during the match or live event, contact the Disability Liaison Officer via: [disability@pafc.co.uk](mailto:disability@pafc.co.uk) or call 01752 562 561.





## 14. PROVISION OF FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

### i) CAR PARKING

There is parking available just off Outland Road in the Milehouse Park & Ride car park, which is situated directly in front of the stadium and run by Plymouth City Council. Spaces are available to both home and visiting supporters on a first come, first served basis. The car park is free to use on match days and has a mixture of standard, disabled and electric vehicle spaces, but will begin to fill up very early for many fixtures, especially for high-profile matches.

### ii) DROP OFF POINT

If you are unable to secure parking in the Outland Road car park, please contact the Disability Liaison Officer to assist and accompany a disabled passenger but unfortunately not a disabled driver from our drop off point.

### iii) ACCESSIBLE ENTRY LANES

For non-football live events, dedicated accessible entry lanes are available to any person who cannot queue. We ask that you approach and talk to a member of staff at the venue if you have a disability or medical requirement that means you cannot queue, and they will assist you. These lanes are available as soon as the doors open for events.

### iv) ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCES

There are six large gates that act as accessible entrances around the stadium. These entrances are available to anyone who chooses not to use a turnstile entrance, this can include but not limited to, wheelchair users, ambulant disabled, a pregnant person, a bariatric person, a person with anxiety, or a person with dementia etc.

Mayflower	30 & 31	Devonport	4
Lyndhurst	8 & 16	Barn Park	21

### v) ACCESSIBLE TOILETS

There are specially adapted toilets located in all the football stands as well as in the Club's hospitality and office areas. Each of these toilets is alarmed and can be accessed with radar keys, with stewards holding a spare key if required.

These toilets are available to anyone who needs them, remembering that, not all disabilities are visible. Facilities to help accommodate a person with a stoma bag has recently been installed. In many cases, baby changing facilities are also made available in these spaces.

The nearest Changing Places toilet is located off-site in an adjacent venue, the Life - Centre.

If you experience any problems with an accessible toilet, please contact the nearest steward on the day of the football or event, or the Club's Disability Liaison Officer after the match.



#### vii) MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

Should you need to bring medicines or medical equipment this will be fine. If, for your peace of mind you'd like to inform the venue and check any details, please contact [disability@pafc.co.uk](mailto:disability@pafc.co.uk) stating which event you are attending.

#### viii) CATERING AND HOSPITALITY

Match day and live event catering is provided at kiosks based in the stadium concourses as well as vendors in the Mayflower Stand Fan Zone. In some cases, due to the number of people using the concourses pre-match and at half time, the club Ambassadors can help in getting refreshments if needed.

There are low level counters at all concourse kiosks around the stadium and in the Club Superstore.

Food and drink are not permitted to be brought into the venue. If you have a medical condition such as diabetes, then a doctor's note will permit diet-specific food and drink only.

Hospitality packages are available to everyone, and adjustments can be made should you require any, such as audio descriptions, table risers and anything else when discussed with the booking team via: [hospitality@pafc.co.uk](mailto:hospitality@pafc.co.uk)

#### ix) TRANSPORT TO AWAY FOOTBALL MATCHES

Opportunities for disabled supporters to attend away matches on the Club's official coaches are limited due to the facilities available on the coach. It will be the responsibility of the disabled person travelling to ensure that they are accompanied by someone who is fully capable of supporting their needs.

The club cannot undertake to provide 'personal care' or 'moving and handling' assistance to people travelling because of the Health and Safety implications but will endeavour to assist in whatever way possible.

#### x) ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

Steps have been taken to put procedures in place to provide information in formats that are more easily accessible to people with disabilities. Information leaflets are available in large print, electronic format and audio versions are available on request.



## **15. SPECIAL EFFECTS**

Some events involve pyrotechnics, flashing lights and other special effects.

The Club makes every effort to ensure all information about the performance is shared in advance with fans and with customer-facing staff. Notices about flash and strobe lighting for those with photosensitive epilepsy is clearly stated on the event information page and when booking tickets, as well as signs outside the venue.

We ask that you contact the venue's dedicated Disability Liaison Officer for details of any special effects expected at your event.

## **16. STAFF TRAINING**

Under the guidance of the Club's Inclusion Strategy, a series of training modules and awareness workshops are available to all staff – some are mandatory, whilst others are encouraged for specific areas of the business to help improve customer service and delivery of goods.

Training that relates to 'disability awareness' and 'disability etiquette' has been identified and a training programme is in place to ensure that the learnings are observed and practiced. This training programme will be ongoing with annual reviews and updates.

Inclusion and anti-discrimination staff training is also undertaken under the banner of 'Playing for Inclusion' provided by the English Football League (EFL) as part of the Club's Code of Practice.

Where possible, and often in conjunction with an awareness day, workshops are held with external speakers and/or specialists to share lived experiences and training to help raise awareness surrounding a topic, such as:

- Neurodiversity
- Stomas
- Visual Impairments
- Plus many more

## **17. ACCESS TO WORKSPACES AND FACILITIES**

When a new employee joins Plymouth Argyle Football Club, as part of their induction, a DSE workstation assessment is carried out to ensure that they receive equipment suitable for their needs. Health and Safety training is also received along with a series of induction training sessions that cover an array of topics.

### **i) MAYFLOWER GRANDSTAND OFFICE**

The main staff office is situated in the Mayflower Grandstand and is on the first floor.

Access is via two flights of stairs or via the building's lift located at main reception.

In the office space, it is all level access, and a lowered countertop has been installed in the staff kitchen.

Individual accessible toilets are available on both the ground and first floor of the Mayflower Grandstand, with at least one accessible cubicle in every toilet block.

## ii) TICKET OFFICE AND SHOP

Ground floor access with a shared kitchen space for both the Retail and Ticket Office teams. An accessible toilet is in place for all staff to use.

A low-level counter is in place in the Shop, as well as a low-level window at the Ticket Office. A hearing loop is in place in both locations.

## 18. SANITARY ITEMS

The Club offers free sanitary items in both staff and visitor toilets as we believe you shouldn't have to pay for essential items.

## 19. PLAYERS' GYM

The Club has a standalone gym on site and is only available for football players and coaching staff to use who have no additional needs or requirements.

No Club staff outside of the Football Department are permitted to use the gym and it is not for public use either.

Entrance to the facility is ground level with a stepped entrance. In the instance that an external user or injured player cannot enter via the steps, they are able to use a temporary ramp if it is needed.

The Club has a qualified Club Doctor and Physiotherapist on site.

## 20. REPRESENTATION

### i) DEDICATED CLUB STAFF

The Club has a dedicated Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager who is responsible for leading on all aspects of DEI across the whole business and ensuring that Home Park Stadium is as inclusive as possible.

A significant part of the role is working with governing bodies to share best practice, follow compliance as well as promote and develop training and wellbeing programmes to enhance employee understanding on inclusion issues as well as incorporate awareness campaigns alongside football match day activities.

The role is a key enabler in ensuring the Club's "Respect, Diversity and Inclusion" value is fully satisfied and is supported by the Disability Liaison Officer who advises the Club on issues which are of particular concern to supporters with disabilities.

The Club's Disability Liaison Officer can be contacted via email: [disability@pafc.co.uk](mailto:disability@pafc.co.uk)

The Club's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager can be contacted via: [supporters@pafc.co.uk](mailto:supporters@pafc.co.uk)



## ii) COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

Argyle Community Trust delivers regular coaching sessions for young people and adults with disabilities across a range of footballing provisions:

[Disability Football - Argyle Community Trust](#)

[Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Schools - Argyle Community Trust](#)

## iii) PADSA

Plymouth Argyle Disabled Supporters Association is an organisation dedicated to improving the match day experience and enjoyment of all disabled supporters.

PADSA can be emailed at [info.padsa@gmail.com](mailto:info.padsa@gmail.com) or visit their website [www.padsa.co.uk](http://www.padsa.co.uk).

Other useful websites [www.levelplayingfield.org.uk](http://www.levelplayingfield.org.uk) and [www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)

Plymouth Argyle Football Club openly welcomes any comments on this policy and would encourage any person to contact the Disability Liaison Officer with their comments or queries.