

POLICY FOR SEARCHING

READING FOOTBALL CLUB STADIUM

JUNCTION 11, M4

READING

RG2 0FL

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The rationale behind searching is to discourage fans from attempting to bring prohibited articles into the SCL Stadium and also identifying such items if fans attempt to bring them in. These items are included in the Ground Regulations and also other items deemed illegal by legislation.

Searching and screening procedures are in place for all people entering the venue. Full searches do slow down the entry flow on occasions depending on the crowd volume and the make up of it. In an effort to ease such congestion that can be caused we regularly for popular matches encourage fans to arrive early and for all matches if the Purple Turtle Stage has a popular band we place a walkway through it to enable a flow of foot traffic but also insist on the band finishing 45 minutes before kick off. We also make regular announcements advising fans to enter if there is congestion outside and it appears that not all staff will manage to get in prior to kick off. Flow rates are monitored on the 2 entry turnstile systems and also by match day supervisors plus by the Safety Officer on the CCTV system.

All persons seeking to enter Club 1871 and all away supporters are searched as are any bags that are brought with them. RFC discourages bags being brought to the stadium as it slows down the searching regime and we have no storage facilities, however, it recognizes that sometimes bags need to be brought for example to carry medication. It is advertised on the RFC website and circulated on social media that such bags should be no bigger than A4 in size and of clear

plastic so that again the search regime is not impeded too much. Club 1871 is where the more boisterous RFC fans frequent and is also where traditionally most of the arrests and ejections result from. Away fans are an unknown quantity hence why they are all searched as the threat level posed cannot be assessed confidently. Across the rest of the SCL Stadium which is where other home fans sit a random searching is carried out (minimum 1:20 ratio but if intelligence changes or the threat level rises then it would revert to 100% searching).

Searching entails the small of the back plus arms and legs being patted down. The rationale is that currently the favoured attack methodology for terrorists is using edged weapons (knives and blades) and these are the areas most likely to be secreted in the vicinity of according to CT MOTO. Pyrotechnics, flares and smoke are also items that fans do on occasions attempt to smuggle into football stadia. These are very dangerous due to the high temperature that they can burn at, the issues they can cause to those with respiratory ailments and those suffering from conditions such as PTSD.

Bags should be squeezed feeling for bumps or hard items. The searcher should visually be looking inside the bag and use a probe to move items and a torch to illuminate the inside of the bag. Large items should be removed from the bag if necessary. Search tables are provided outside each turnstile to make the search process of bags easier.

All staff deployed to search are aware of the law especially in relation to children, young persons and vulnerable adults. If someone refuses to be searched then, as it is a condition of entry, or their assistant/appropriate adult refuses they are refused entry and the police informed in case they may wish to undertake further checks. To prevent the build-up of queues social media and other forms of communication, such as PA and loudspeaker announcements, are used to encourage fans to arrive in plenty of time at the entry gates.

If a prohibited item is discovered, then the person is to be detained as well as the prohibited item and the Control Room updated by radio or emergency phone. The Safety Officer will ensure that a supervisor attends if not already there. The police would then be informed to attend and decide on how they wish for the matter to be progressed. If the person makes off, then CCTV operators will take a screen shot of the alleged offender which would be passed over to the police with any discarded prohibited item plus a statement from anyone who witnessed the incident. The description of the alleged offender would be circulated for observations by other staff and the police.

Reading FC employ fire wardens who have the correct PPE (gloves, goggles and fire cage) to deal with flares, pyros and smoke due to the danger that they can pose. The local Fire Service dispose of these items if they have not been discharged or the police will remove them as part of the evidential chain

The policy in relation to transgender members of staff conducting searches?

(i) Those members of staff who identify as transsexual, (transgender being an overarching term) can go through a process of transitioning and be granted a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC). If a member of staff holds a GRC she or he can clearly conduct searches in the way that colleagues can, it is encouraged for them to do so as the club seeks to be inclusive and normality should prevail.

(ii) If a person identifies as transsexual but hasn't started the processes of transitioning or is on their journey, but has not yet been granted a GRC, then they can apply for an exemption certificate which will preclude them from carrying out searches.

(iii) Members of staff who identify as bi-gender or non-binary or gender fluid can only conduct a search on those who have the same gender assigned at birth (same sex).

The 2025 High Court decision on sex is to be considered and EFL guidance is awaited.