



BRISTOL ROVERS
FOOTBALL CLUB

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Disabled Supporters Policy

Introduction

Bristol Rovers Football Club (BRFC) fully supports the principle of equal opportunities and oppose all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of disability.

The Club operates a specific ticketing policy for disabled supporters and will ensure that the scheme does not discriminate between disabled people with differing impairments.

Our aim is to make the matchday experience as enjoyable and inclusive for all supporters.

Equality Act (2010)

Disability is one of the Nine Protected Characteristics as defined by the Equality Act (2010). This act ensures that those sections of the population covered by the legislation will not be discriminated against as follows:

- **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 as an unfair disadvantage

The matchday experience is important to everyone and we appreciate that disabilities are wide-ranging and that not all are visible. It is Bristol Rovers Football Club's aim to ensure inclusivity and understanding for all and we aim to fully comply with both the spirit and provisions of the Act.

Definition of a Disability

As a fundamental principle, the Disability Discrimination act 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".

Bristol Rovers Football Club aim to fully comply with both the spirit and provisions of the Equality Act.

The Club recognises that not all of its facilities are fully accessible to its supporters with disabilities and confirms that it is committed to making the necessary reasonable adjustments described by the Disability Discrimination Act and its relevant Code of Practice, to ensure full compliance with the legislation.

Definition of a Disabled Supporter

For the purposes of this policy, the definition of a Disabled Supporter is: "any person who, because of their disability or impairment, is unable to use ordinary stand seating without contravening Health and Safety regulations, guidelines or policy. Any such person will be considered for use of the designated areas of the stadium, in line with the procedures set out in this policy."

Disability

A person has a "disability" if they have 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.

Reasonable Adjustment

A reasonable adjustment in the context should include (but is not limited to), the need to use a wheelchair bay, the need to bring a "personal assistant" for either personal care or safety reasons.

Designated Area

A designated area is any area (including specific seats around the stadium) that the club shall, in its sole discretion determine as being available for the disabled ticket price

Bristol Rovers Football Club, reserves the right to request proof of disability before issuing any concession. Such proof shall include:

- Receipt of Higher Rate of Disability Living Allowance (Mobility or Care component)
- Receipt of Enhanced rate PIP (Personal Independence Payment)
- Receipt of either the Employment & Support Allowance or Attendance Allowance
- A personal letter from your GP explaining that support is required and why

NB: Proof required may change depending on alterations to current legislation regarding the benefit payments system. Receipt of a Blue Badge will not be considered sufficient proof of disability.

Please note, it is the responsibility of the supporter to inform the club of any changes in their circumstances. However, we are happy to consider requests on a case by case basis from those who don't meet the strict criteria

Contact with Existing Disabled Supporters

Bristol Rovers Football Club has an open dialogue with its disabled supporters and encourages them to contact the club on a regular basis to discuss facilities and improvements etc.

The Club's Disability Access/Liaison Officer is Clare McDonagh, disabled fans can contact Clare on ClareMcDonagh@bristolrovers.co.uk or call 0117 909 6648. The Club is also a full member of Level Playing Field (LPF) who can be contacted via www.levelplayingfield.org.uk

The Club have also undertaken a review of its equality position, both internally and via LPF and have taken due notice of any suggestions/recommendations.

Bristol Rovers Football Club Disabled Supporters Association

The official Bristol Rovers Football Club Disabled Supporters Association (BRFC DSA) is an independent supporters group formed in May 2017 and it is run by disabled supporters, for disabled supporters.

The role of the BRFC DSA is:

- To represent all disabled supporters of Bristol Rovers FC in their dealing with the club
- To assist with improving the facilities and policies that affect disabled supporters
- To bring together disabled supporters along with their family and friends, by encouraging and organising social events and meetings to air views and gather feedback that can be presented to the Football Club
- The BRFC DSA wants to offer help to all disabled fans on matchdays
- Our representatives will contact visiting clubs (irrespective of whether they have a DSA or not) and offer our assistance to any disabled members of that club concerning their visit to The Memorial Stadium.

All Bristol Rovers supporters are welcome to join the BRFC DSA, after all, disability affects everyone. Family, friends, PAs are all welcome to join along with our disabled supporters.

If you wish to join the BRFC DSA or for any enquiries/information, please email our Secretary via DSAbristolrovers@outlook.com

Ticketing

All ticketing issues are dealt with by the Ticket Office in the first instance – please contact the Ticket Office on 0117 909 6648 or via email ClareMcDonagh@bristolrovers.co.uk

For ticketing issues or complaints that fall outside the Club's set policy, please contact PeteWeymouth@bristolrovers.co.uk

Facilities

The Club shop, reception, executive boxes, all bars and the ticket office all have disabled access and the only area of the ground not currently accessible is hospitality and the Popular Insulation East Stand.

The Memorial Stadium is accessible to disabled supporters and 19 spaces for Home Supporters and 6 for Away Fans. The home spaces are currently fully booked by season ticket holders, but if Away Fans do not take up their allocation, there may be extra spaces available on a match by match basis. Wheelchair supporters are also able to bring a carer/companion free of charge.

While the stadium has accessible toilet facilities, the stadium doesn't have a changing places facility on site, however there is one located less than a mile away at Southmead Hospital, which is open all day, 7 days a week.

Facilities for Supporters Using Wheelchairs

It is the Club's policy that one helper with any disabled person using a wheelchair receives their admission to the ground free of charge. The wheelchair user is required to pay the normal concession price for that particular game. Season tickets will be available for both the wheelchair user and their personal assistant.

Please note, if the disabled person cannot attend we will only allow a carer access provided they pay for a full price seat.

In conjunction with the proof of disability (as previously mentioned) this concession will only be available to those people who meet the eligibility criteria described below:

- Wheelchair using applicants must be largely confined to a wheelchair, or not capable of walking a distance further than that required to reasonably and safely access any other part of the stadium.
- Wheelchair using applicants should ideally, also be accompanied by a person who is capable of supporting the disabled person's needs in the event of an emergency. For this reason the Club strongly recommend that a person is sixteen years of age or over, and not be infirm, but we do support younger family members who are used to acting as a Carer.

Facilities for Blind and Visually Impaired Supporters

The club accommodates blind and partially sighted supporters and if required, their personal assistants within the stadium. The pricing of tickets will be classed as a disabled concession.

Audio commentary is available on Soccer Sight. Please contact the Disability Access/Liaison Officer (DAO) in advance of attending a fixture to obtain free access to this service.

Eligibility for this concession requires proof of disability as described previously or each person can provide a copy of their registration document which certifies they are Registered Blind or Registered Partially Sighted or provide qualifying documentation from their optician equivalent to registration requirements.

The Club strongly recommends that each blind or partially sighted supporter attending a match should be accompanied by a person who is fully able to support their needs in an emergency.

Guide Dogs are allowed in to the stadium but the club insist that supporters with Guide Dogs contact the DAO before the match so that we can discuss with them, access to the ground, facilities inside the ground and the welfare of the Guide Dog before, during and after the match.

Facilities for Supporters with Limited Mobility

The club recognise that there are considerable numbers of people in the community who use wheelchairs, mainly for outdoor mobility purposes but are not necessarily permanent wheelchair users. There are also many people with limited mobility who may wish to watch a match.

For the purposes of this policy and the administration of the concessionary ticketing policy, both categories of people will be termed “ambulant disabled supporters” and those supporters with limited mobility of a severe nature will qualify for the concessionary treatment and have access to seating nearest the entrances/exits on request.

Eligibility to these areas will be dependent on providing proof of disability as described previously or will be decided on individual merit.

Facilities for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Supporters

The club welcomes deaf and hard of hearing supporters and hearing assistance dogs.

Facilities for Supporters with Infirmities

Supporters with physically restricting medical conditions can sometimes have difficulty in reaching seats in some parts of the stadium.

The club are conscious that these fans, as well as some elderly people, may have difficulty climbing large numbers of steps and therefore are happy to offer alternative seating when required, on request via the DAO prior to the game.

Facilities for Supporters with an Intellectual or Learning Disability

Supporters with an intellectual or learning disability can normally be accompanied in any part of the stadium in normal seating. However, if for whatever reason any such supporter feels that ordinary seating would be unsuitable for them, they will be entitled to sit in the disabled concessionary areas and receive the appropriate concession. Tickets should be arranged in advanced through the DAO.

Processing everyday sensory information can be extremely difficult for children with Autism and ADHD, any of their sense can become over or under stimulated by the environment around them. This is why we have created sensory packs that are specifically designed to support children with Autism and ADHD.

Family Seating

The Club recognise that disabled people have families who may wish to attend matches as a family unit. The club will try and accommodate such requests although this may not always be possible.

Please contact the DAO for assistance in obtaining tickets as close as possible to the designated areas.

Away Ambulant Supporters

Ambulant/Carer tickets are normally available out of the standard ticket allocation set to the away club. Fans who may find seating difficult or require specific help or advice are welcome to contact the DAO.

There is an area with the South Stand, set aside for Home and Away ambulant disabled fans, however they may choose to sit or stand elsewhere within the Stadium. The South Stand is undercover and sheltered, plus it has easy access to the nearby disabled toilets.

Travel

Parking

The Memorial Stadium, sadly, has extremely limited match day parking due to our residential location. There may be street parking available in the roads close to the stadium, but please do check local road signs before parking, as the Club has a good relationship with its neighbours which it wishes to cultivate. We would encourage all supporters travelling to the ground, to use public transport wherever possible. The service is good, and it helps to promote our environmentally friendly image.

The club has 30 disabled bays which are currently fully booked by home season ticket holders. However, if you wish to be added to the waiting list please do contact the Club as spaces on occasions become available, even mid season. The Club does provide 3 accessible parking bays for away disabled supporters, which can be booked via

the DAO. The available numbers do vary between matches for both home and away fans depending on anticipated crowd sizes.

Drop Off/Set Down Point

The recommended point of drop off is Filton Avenue as this is the only access point to the ground.

Bus

All local buses are now wheelchair accessible and many have low floor access and all recognised assistance animals can travel for free. The closest bus stop to the Memorial Stadium is Filton Avenue which is off the Gloucester Road at one end and Muller Road at the other end.

Taxi

Uber and Private Hire Services operate in Bristol and many are wheelchair accessible and can provide a suitable alternative to the bus or car. The recommended point of drop off is Filton Avenue as this is the only access point to the ground.

Accessible Toilets

While the stadium has accessible toilet facilities, the stadium doesn't have a changing places facility on site, however there is one located less than a mile away at Southmead Hospital, which is open all day, 7 days a week.

The accessible toilets are located at the Thatchers Bar, FanZone, either end of the East Stand, either end of the South Stand, either end of the West Stand, all of which are on the ground floor.

If you experience any problems with the use of the accessible toilets, please contact the nearest steward on the day, or any Club Safety Officer after the match.

Development of the Stadium

Any future redevelopment of the stadium/new stadium will always be planned taking into account the needs and requirements of the disabled. The Club will also liaise with its disabled supporters to ensure their views are taken in to account.

Roles and Responsibilities

The **Safety Officer** is James Hillier JamesHillier@bristolrovers.co.uk and the **Senior Safeguarding Manager** is Louise Smith LouiseSmith@bristolrovers.co.uk 07766 022731, who can assist you with safeguarding on matchdays.

On a match day, all stewards and club officials will be more than happy to offer guidance and support to all disabled fans. All non matchday queries can be posed to Clare McDonagh ClareMcDonagh@bristolrovers.co.uk 0117 952 4001.

Conclusion

Every reasonable adjustment is being made to all the services provided by the different departments at the Club in order to comply with the provisions of the Equality Act. The Club's dedicated DAO has responsibility for overseeing and pushing through disability related issues.