

The Safe Management of Persistent Standing in Seated Areas at Football Stadia

Interim report for the SGSA by CFE
Research with Dr Geoff Pearson

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1. Introduction

In response to the recommendations of the Taylor report into the 1989 Hillsborough Disaster, all clubs in the top two tiers of English football have been required to provide all-seated spectator accommodation since 1st August 1994. A small but increasing number of supporters still choose to stand; this is a cause for concern for clubs, safety staff and fans, and regulators and there is growing opposition to the Government's all-seater policy from supporters' groups. Clubs have adopted measures to discourage standing and are taking steps to reduce the risks for those who do. This research by CFE on behalf of the SGSA is exploring how effective these approaches are at assuring the safety of spectators.

Five clubs that are subject to the all-seater policy and adopting different approaches to the management of persistent standing, along with one club in Scotland, have agreed to take part in detailed case study research to consider the effectiveness of each of these approaches. This includes one club with traditional terracing to assess how the safety risks in these areas, and the management of the risks, differ from all-seater stadia. This interim report provides emerging findings at the half way point in the research. It summarises learning captured through research at the six case study clubs. **The findings and conclusions should, therefore, be treated as indicative at this stage; in particular, the modelling work to assess the risk of crowd collapse in seating areas is yet to be completed.**

Progress to date (as of January 2020)

1.1 Initial scoping

Documentation relating to the case study clubs' approaches to assessing and managing risk and crowd safety has been reviewed and collated. In addition, the SGSA inspector for each case study club and the clubs' safety officers have been interviewed to identify the particular risks and challenges facing the clubs in relation to persistent standing and crowd safety, the rationale for the strategies in place to manage these risks, and perceptions of their effectiveness. Interviews with representatives from six stakeholder organisations¹ have been conducted to include a range of perspectives on the risks of persistent standing and the management challenges this poses.

¹ The Football Association, The Premier League, The English Football League, The UK Football Policing Unit, The Football Supporters Association and Level Playing Field

1.2 Site visits to case study clubs

A series of match day visits have been planned for the 2019/20 season to observe:

- the extent that the risks of persistent standing (see section 2.1) are observed in the stadium;
- strategies for managing these risks;
- the effectiveness of these strategies; and
- how supporters respond to these strategies.

A total of 16 matches have been observed between November 2019 and January 2020, with at least two visits to each case study club (see Appendix 1 for a full list). Where possible, a range of different type of fixtures have been included (competition, kick-off time, police category, etc.). All observations were conducted at these clubs during the current football season, after the management strategy had been put in place. There has not, therefore, been the opportunity to compare with management practices or supporter behaviours prior to this. The emerging findings, relating to the impact of either installing barriers or creating areas where standing is tolerated on the safety of supporters, are based on the perceptions of interviewees and observers as well as comparisons with other areas of the stadia. Further aspects of the research, including the season ticket holder survey and interviews with key staff and stakeholders at each club, will investigate this more thoroughly in the next phase of the research.

Observations at the six case study clubs will be supplemented with seven one-off visits to lower league clubs to observe standing in alternative contexts (Rugby League, German and French Leagues). The first of these, to Shrewsbury Town, has been undertaken and incorporated into this report to include learning from a club that manages an area of seats with barriers on a smaller scale than the case study clubs. The final report due in July 2020 will include additional learning from these remaining one-off visits.

1.3 Interviews with club staff and stakeholders

A total of 20 interviews have been undertaken with a variety of key individuals who have direct involvement with safety management at each club (see Appendix 1 for a full overview). These will continue throughout the remainder of the research to ensure that the impact of management strategies and any ongoing concerns relating to standing at football stadia are investigated from a variety of perspectives.

2. The management of persistent standing in seated area

This research so far has considered the risks of persistent standing in seated areas, the various management strategies to mitigate these risks, and the residual risks and management challenges that remain.

2.1 What are the risks of persistent standing in seated areas?

The scoping phase identified a number of potential safety risks associated with persistent standing in seated areas:

- progressive crowd collapse (where persistent standing in seated areas occurs outside an area with barriers);
- injuries to spectators due to trips and falls (usually over seat backs during goal celebrations);
- migration into a specific area resulting in overcrowding of the whole area;
- migration within an area resulting in overcrowding of certain rows/blocks;
- blocking aisles, gangways and exits;
- standing on seats and other infrastructure, particularly by children;
- conflict between supporters or between supporters and stewards as a result of persistent standing; and
- other anti-social behaviour and/or crowd disorder in areas of standing.

In addition to the above, persistent standing in seating areas is believed to have a negative impact on the experience of other supporters due to sightlines being blocked. This is relevant to all supporters in seated areas but is particularly pertinent for disabled supporters, the elderly and others who are unable to stand for long periods. Whilst this is not considered a safety risk, it can lead to conflict between supporters and clubs have management strategies to address this; as such, this issue is included in this report.

2.2 How are football clubs involved in this research managing these risks?

Case study clubs are managing the risks of persistent standing by either a) installing barriers in the areas of seats where supporters are persistently standing (Tottenham Hotspur, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Celtic) or b) tolerating standing in areas where the risks associated with persistent standing are believed to be low (Cardiff City, Brighton &

Hove Albion). Brentford have two areas of traditional terracing which require specific management approaches. Three of the clubs attempt to accommodate away supporters who wish to sit without people standing in front of them. Table 1 (below) outlines the approach at each club.

Club	League	Management approach ²
Tottenham Hotspur FC	English Premier League	Barriers in two seated areas (one area for home supporters and one area for away supporters)
Wolverhampton Wanderers FC	English Premier League	Barriers in two seated areas (one area for home supporters and one area normally used by home supporters but occasionally used for away supporters)
Brighton & Hove Albion	English Premier League	Tolerated standing area for home supporters, no barriers (section of a stand); seating option for away supporters
Cardiff City	EFL Championship	Tolerated standing area for home supporters, no barriers (a whole stand), with strict enforcement of seating in other home seated areas; seating option for away supporters
Brentford	EFL Championship	Terracing in two areas (one area for home supporters and one area for away supporters); seating option for away supporters
Celtic	Scottish Premier League	Barriers in one area for home supporters, with lockable rail seats ³

Table 1: Case study clubs and management approaches

2.3 Management strategies adopted

Football clubs vary in their stadium location, size and design, as well as fan culture, history and demand that asserts the need for club- and context-specific management strategies. What is effective at one club, therefore, may not be effective at another. All clubs in this research have adopted an approach to managing standing and particular strategies for mitigating risk that best fit their physical and cultural context. Strategies can also be adapted match-by-match, for example high-profile games requiring additional stewarding or access controls.

² Clubs describe these areas in different ways, however this report uses ‘standing areas’ to describe areas where standing is tolerated (with or without barriers) and ‘areas with barriers’ to describe areas where standing is tolerated and barriers in whatever format (independent, rail seating, integrated etc) have been installed.

³ Celtic are not subject to the all-seater policy but the Scottish Premier League voluntarily adopted the policy.

However there are some common features of these approaches to managing persistent standing, even if the application of these varies in relation to the club context. These include:

- a **specific risk assessment** for areas where supporters persistently stand in large numbers, and the implementation of additional controls where risks are identified;
- ensuring that these areas for home supporters are **positioned away from segregation lines**;
- **consistent stewarding** personnel from match to match where possible to build engagement with supporters and familiarisation with the procedures specific to these areas;
- **extra stewards** for these areas to enable management strategies to be implemented efficiently;
- **ticketing sales strategies** that ensure supporters in these areas are those who want to be there (and selling to predominantly season ticket holders);
- **ongoing communication** with supporters in these areas to emphasise expected behaviours and deal individually with any concerns, e.g. requests to move seats; and
- **high quality CCTV monitoring** of these areas before and throughout the game to identify any emerging risks.

2.3.1 Specific management strategies for areas with barriers

Clubs that have installed barriers have some additional strategies to manage identified risks associated with these areas. Management strategies related to particular residual risks are discussed further below, but include:

- **crowd density ratios in all cases of 1:1** to match the maximum crowd density in seating areas;
- extra **access control measures** to limit migration into the rail seating area at Celtic, such as ticket checks at vomitories (see section 2.5.3); and
- extra **secondary ticket checks** at Wolverhampton and Tottenham emphasised for European/FA Cup fixtures where there will be a higher number of non-season ticket holders in areas with barriers who may need directing to ensure they get to the right seat in time.

Celtic, Tottenham and Wolverhampton each manage large and full areas with barriers. Clubs in the English Football League (EFL) are likely to have smaller areas which will require different management considerations, for example Shrewsbury Town.

Managing areas with barriers: Shrewsbury Town's rail seating area

In 2018 Shrewsbury Town opened a rail seating area comprising of 555 seats, which occupies the back six rows of the South Stand behind the goal. The club is not subject to the all-seater policy and so seats are locked in an upright position. As the rail seating area is a 'stand within a stand', it requires extra access controls to prevent migration into the area.

- Safe standing ticket holders are given wristbands on entry. This is usually once through the relevant turnstiles, but at busy times the supervisor stands outside to help with wristband distribution to prevent supporters bunching in the concourse.
- Stewards are positioned at the entry point to the standing area on each gangway and check wristbands on entry. Those without wristbands are sent back to get them.
- 555 wristbands are held by stewards for each game to prevent overcrowding; once all wristbands have been given out, no more people are allowed in the area.

Whilst it is possible for a supporter with a safe standing ticket to collect a wristband then pass their ticket to someone else who could also collect a wristband, there has been no evidence of this taking place. The area is usually at 75-80% capacity and with safe standing tickets priced the same as the rest of the stand, there is little reason for supporters to attempt to migrate to the area without a ticket. On the occasions where the safe standing area has been sold out, the exact number of wristbands have been issued, suggesting that this system is effective at this club.

This system was observed to be effective. Stewards felt it took six months for the system to be embedded and supporters to get used to it, and felt that wider management strategies have aided this process.

- An experienced stand supervisor was selected (relocated from the away stand) to manage this area, and a dedicated team of club-employed stewards were also selected for their experience and confidence. A team of 8 manages this area.
- An empty row of seats between the standing and seated area allows steward movement easily across the stand if needed.
- Signs explain clearly why wristbands are necessary and state that supporters benefit from this as it is quicker to show a wristband than produce a ticket.
- A wheelchair platform is above one end of the safe standing area; flags are not permitted here so as not to impact sightlines.

Persistent standing in other areas of the stadium has been reduced but not eradicated. A number of supporters did not want to move to the safe standing area and so continue to stand in the blocks closest to the segregation line.

2.4 Impact of the introduction of management strategies on the safety of supporters who persistently stand

2.4.1 The perceived impact of the introduction of barriers

All interviewees at the three clubs who have introduced seating with barriers believe that the introduction of seating with barriers has mitigated the biggest safety risk associated with persistent standing – progressive crowd collapse. Safety staff further suggest that, as a result of the introduction of seating with barriers in these areas:

- celebrations are more orderly with no opportunity for forwards and backwards movement, reducing the risk of supporters falling on those in front and behind them;
- egress is more uniform and bulging at exits reduced because the barriers prevent supporters from climbing over seats to push in front of others exiting;
- migration to the front of stands is potentially limited; and
- barriers prevent supporters leaning over the perimeter fence and entering the pitch area.

Observation of supporter activity to date at these clubs generally supports these assertions. With one notable exception (Wolverhampton home supporters sitting in the Stan Cullis quadrant), supporters in the rail seating areas were observed standing for the entire duration of the games and no instances of crowd collapse were witnessed. There was no lateral movement observed by supporters standing behind barriers during goal celebrations. For the most part, supporters were observed exiting these areas in an orderly fashion, with virtually no instances of supporters climbing over seats. This latter point was a noticeable difference when compared with seated areas.

There is the suggestion that as well as preventing a crowd collapse, by limiting forward movement, barriers will reduce injuries sustained by supporters falling over seats, particularly during goal celebrations. This is an aspect of the research that has not yet been fully explored and remains difficult to assess. Injuries are typically under-reported and there is a lack of data on the incidence of injuries before and after the installation of barriers on which to base a comparison.

Club staff feel that installing barriers has not had a significant impact on the standing preferences of supporters in those areas. At Wolverhampton, where two areas of barriers have been installed, those who previously stood continue to stand (in the Sir Jack Hayward stand) and on the whole, those who previously sat continue to sit (in the Stan Cullis stand). Barriers in the latter area do not appear so far to have encouraged standing in that area.

2.4.2 The perceived impact of the introduction of tolerated standing in seating areas

Interviewees at the two clubs that tolerate standing in seating areas believe that the main safety impact has been a reduction in the potential for conflict between supporters who wish to stand and those who wish to sit. Encouraging those who wish to stand to purchase tickets in one area where the risk of crowd collapse is deemed by ground management to be low appears to have helped to control persistent standing elsewhere (see section 2.7.1). These two clubs also demonstrate that under the right conditions, this can also be achieved with away supporters (see section 2.6.1).

Aside from reducing conflict, interviewees at both clubs stressed that creating and encouraging supporters into areas where standing is more likely to be tolerated was part of a customer service-focused approach to stadium management – a strategy to try to ensure as far as possible that supporters are in the right stand for them and to offer a range of ticket options for supporters to choose from.

However, clubs adopting this approach have not mitigated against the risk of progressive crowd collapse and injury due to falls in the way that those who have installed barriers have (see below). Investigating the extent of this risk using crowd modelling software is still underway and will be included in the final report.

2.5 Residual risks and presenting issues

Clubs recognise that there are residual risks associated with standing areas that require ongoing consideration and management.

2.5.1 Climbing on seats and other infrastructure

Where supporters are standing in areas that are designed for seating, the seat base can be stood on. Regardless of the presence of barriers, observed examples include:

- home and away supporters standing on seats during goal celebrations. In home areas this was isolated and short-lived, and is a risk in all areas of stadium. In away areas this was also usually isolated to goal celebrations but was considerably more widespread when occupied by supporters of European teams or other high risk groups;
- children standing on seats or being held whilst standing on the seat backs during normal play; and
- at Brentford, the design of the terrace with floodlight bases at each end presents an opportunity for supporters to climb and sit on these for a better view. This was regularly observed, mostly by children, and without steward intervention.

The presence of barriers provides supporters with the opportunity to stand on seats or seat backs, whether locked or unlocked, or on the barriers themselves. Observed examples of this include:

- away supporters from European clubs standing on seats in groups during normal play;
- home and away supporters standing on seat *backs* during goal celebrations, using the barrier to lean on. At Celtic, where seats are usually locked in an upright position, this was more common; and
- very occasional climbing on barriers, usually using the flip up seat to balance, during goal celebrations. This was primarily observed in away areas when occupied by European supporters, with isolated examples of this in the home rail seating area at Celtic.

All of these behaviours present risks to the supporters engaging in this type of behaviour, although the likelihood of their misadventure causing injury to someone else in front or behind them appears to be reduced where barriers have been installed. However, the potential for supporters to climb on (and fall from) barriers injuring themselves or others must be considered as an ongoing risk requiring considered management.

Although clubs identify standing on seats and other infrastructure as a risk in their assessments and plans, there is not a clear management strategy other than for stewards to intervene. As most instances were short-lived, steward interventions were not usually observed, and those that were had mixed success. In one instance a small group of away supporters that was repeatedly standing on seats during normal play were stopped by stewards at Cardiff. In contrast, during a prolonged period of standing on seats by away supporters (from a European club) at one Tottenham match, stewards made several attempts to persuade supporters to stand down with limited success.

2.5.2 Migration and overcrowding in tolerated standing areas

Areas with barriers have proved to be popular with supporters, resulting in a risk of migration from other (traditional seated) areas and overcrowding. If demand is higher than the number of tickets available in this area, and where it is accessible from other parts of the stadium, this risk is greater and additional control measures are required. This is also a consideration for tolerated standing areas without barriers and traditional terracing. Clubs have put the following strategies in place in an attempt to overcome these risks:

- **isolating the area and limiting access:** The Sir Jack Hayward stand at Wolverhampton and the away section at Tottenham are physically separated from the rest of the stadium preventing movement into these areas; and
- **additional access controls:** Where the physical layout of the stadium makes isolating the area impossible, two or three stewards are positioned by the vomitory from the time the turnstiles open to undertake secondary ticket checks. These checks are repeated for supporters leaving and re-entering the area.

However, implementing additional controls checks presents some **challenges:**

- at times of peak flow into the stand (from 15 minutes before kick-off) it can be difficult for vomitory stewards to check all tickets. Additional stewards can be moved over to these areas at peak flow times to help;
- supporters can become annoyed if they are held on the concourse while tickets are checked, particularly if they are re-entering the area having already shown their ticket and/or play is underway that they are missing;
- Celtic has experienced overcrowding due to the ‘passback’ of tickets and supporters entering the area from within the stadium without the relevant ticket;
- where it is possible to move between seated and standing areas once through the vomitories, extra stewards and/or access controls (such as wristbands at Shrewsbury, see section 2.3.1) are required to manage this; and
- thorough ticket checks can take longer for inexperienced stewards. Those who are new to the stadium or the particular stand can experience difficulties with this.

Celtic: Example of extra measures to control access to the rail seating area

At Celtic Park, supporters are required to use specific turnstiles and vomitories to access the rail seating area. It is not permitted to enter through the adjacent seated accommodation – and lateral barriers limit this – but in practice supporters are able to transition between the seated and rail seating areas. The club has implemented several strategies in an attempt to control entry to the area.

- Extra barriers were installed in the lateral gangways on the boundary of the area to limit movement from adjacent blocks. Stewards occupy the access points at each end of these barriers.
- Season tickets for this area are visibly different to those for other areas of the stadium making them easier to identify quickly.
- Attempts are made to ensure experienced stewards work this area, particularly on ticket checks. Stewards are warned that this is a challenging position and supervisors check they are comfortable with this before assigning roles.
- The club’s Supporter Liaison Officer provides a bridge between the club and the supporters in that area encouraging positive dialogue.
- To address the problem of supporters passing tickets for the rail seating area back to other supporters, hand stamps were trialled. These were given at the turnstiles, and were required to be shown alongside a ticket to access the lower rail seating area. The trial had mixed success.
- The club is clear with supporters that there will be penalties for non-compliance with the code of conduct in that area.

Safety staff at the club, as well as the police and SAG representatives interviewed, have stressed that controlling migration into this area of the stand was a challenge prior to the installation of rail seats.

2.5.3 Migration and overcrowding within areas

Once in an area, it is possible for supporters to move away from their designated seat and into other rows. Monitoring migration within these areas is, therefore, important to prevent overcrowding. This is considered a more significant issue at clubs where standing is tolerated in seating areas without barriers, as migration in this area can have a greater impact by increasing the risk of crowd collapse. Clubs that have installed barriers have mitigated this risk therefore although migration remains a risk in these areas, the potential impact is less severe.

- At Wolverhampton and Tottenham, migration by home supporters within areas with barriers was observed on a very minor scale, with the occasional extra body in a row at all matches. It has been suggested that the barriers make moving backwards or forwards between rows more difficult.
- At Cardiff and Brighton this has been less evident, and on two cases was a result of rain impacting the front rows of the stand.
- Where there are no barriers, supporters can move between rows by climbing over seats.
- At all clubs this is more prevalent amongst away supporters, with limited attempts to intervene by stewards.
- Overcrowding remains a risk in a traditional terrace where supporters are able to move around within the stand and numbers are not automatically spread across an area as they are with seats. However this has not been observed as a particular risk at Brentford; stewards were observed preventing supporters from accessing the middle sections during a match where they were felt to be full.

Although it can be difficult to identify pockets of migration and overcrowding from within a stand, staff at Wolverhampton perceive that the introduction of barriers has made it easier to monitor the number of supporters in a row and identify where migration has occurred.

Strategies to discourage and/or manage migration include:

- Where possible, working with supporters on a case by case basis to **accommodate any wishes to move tickets** and limit the need for migration.
- **Extra ticket checks** in place in gangways leading to particular blocks or rows where migration has occurred previously.
- **Extra stewards occupying gangways** at the back of stands to discourage lateral movement between blocks
- In the away section at Cardiff, **tickets are spread across three blocks** despite rarely filling this area; this requires extra stewards to manage but creates a lower

density of supporters than selling all of the seats in a single block. Further, tickets are colour-coded for each block and checked on entry to reduce the risk of supporters migrating to one block.

- Also at Cardiff, the drummer for the Canton Stand was relocated to an area above the stand, removing what was considered ‘a natural draw’ for migrating spectators.

All of the above strategies have been observed consistently at Cardiff and appear to be effectively managing the risk of migration to the back of the Canton Stand. At other clubs these have been observed more sporadically, but no significant migration has been evident in home areas. However in-area migration by home supporters is a more present issue at Celtic, where the lower area of the rail seating section is very popular. Strategies to manage this include:

- **Different coloured season ticket cards** for the upper and lower areas: stewards are instructed to check tickets when supporters move into the lower area, however checking every ticket is challenging at busy times.
- **CCTV cameras fixed on risk areas:** this enables staff to identify and monitor overcrowding, including an overhead camera for the rail seating area which makes it easier to identify extra bodies in rows.
- **Training for stewards and security staff:** visual images are shown to staff during the safety briefing to ensure they understand what different levels of overcrowding look like. These stress that heads and shoulders should be clearly visible – if shoulders are not visible then overcrowding is occurring and this should be reported to supervisors and checked on CCTV.

However, implementing these strategies and addressing migration and overcrowding brings its own risks, including creating conflict between supporters and stewards if supporters are challenged for being in the wrong place. This presents a subsequent risk to the safety of stewards. We did not observe any action undertaken by stewards to address migration once supporters were in the stand.

Migration was witnessed considerably more frequently at all case study clubs in areas occupied by away supporters, suggesting that it is more difficult to deal with in away sections. This adds an extra management challenge as these supporters cannot receive ongoing communication in the same way as home supporters and there are limited options for effective sanctions.

2.5.4 Blocked aisles and gangways

All clubs have a clear management strategy for ensuring that standing supporters do not migrate into aisles and gangways. These include:

- **stewards positioned at the top of gangways** from the time the gates open, giving them a clear view down the gangway. Most clubs position one steward at the top of each gangway; Cardiff have three towards the back of each in the Canton Stand;
- **regular patrols** by stewards to keep the gangways clear; and
- **removing seats from sale** if migration into gangways is considered a risk.

Club safety documentation suggests steward patrols should happen every 5-10 minutes; during observations these were more sporadic. When undertaken from the start of the match and regularly throughout, steward patrols were generally successful at keeping gangways clear in home areas. In away areas, the frequency of steward patrols was less or not at all. Children were also observed standing in the gangways in order to see.

Once a gangway becomes blocked it can be difficult to clear. From observations so far, contexts where this appears to be a higher risk include:

- at higher risk matches, stewards can be diverted from patrols to deal with other situations resulting in them 'losing' the gangways;
- on occasions where stewards left their position at the top of gangways (usually by being moved to the front of the stand 5-10 minutes before the end of the match) more movement into gangways was observed;
- there is a tendency for supporters to begin to leave and stand in the gangways to watch the end of the half/match. On two occasions there was a VAR review just before the end of the half and large numbers of people stood and waited in the gangways for the outcome; on one occasion these had been clear for the majority of the match up to that point;
- where consistently blocked gangways were observed, this was almost always in away areas; and
- if rows or blocks become overcrowded then supporters are more likely to spill into the gangways; controlling migration makes it easier to keep gangways clear.

This risk and management challenge is present where large numbers of supporters persistently stand in seated areas with or without barriers.

2.5.6 Crowd collapse and injuries sustained from falls (areas without barriers)

Where persistent standing occurs in large numbers in seated areas without barriers, crowd collapse remains a risk, although club safety teams perceive this to be low in the areas where they tolerate standing. Cardiff have yearly reviews by an independent consultant of the management practices at the stadium, concluding that the risk of crowd collapse is very low due to generous seat depths and a low rake in that stand. The risk of crowd collapse in these areas will be investigated further in the remainder of the research. Reports also highlighted that there have been no reports of instances of injuries or falls resulting from persistent standing in this area since the stadium has been operating.

However it is a widely held belief across the sector that injuries sustained in this way are likely to go unreported. Footage of falls during goal celebrations in seating areas at clubs across the country have been shared on social media. There is not a robust body of longitudinal data to allow any causal link between persistent standing in seating areas and injuries to be investigated.⁴ This issue will be explored through the forthcoming

⁴ Welford et al (2019) *Standing at Football: A Rapid Evidence Assessment*. CFE Research.

supporter survey. However, in the absence of data it will be difficult to draw definitive conclusions.

Brentford: Risk management for traditional terracing

Brentford's current stadium, Griffin Park, has two areas of terracing, each requiring a specific risk assessment and management approach.

The **home terrace** is an isolated stand but shares a turnstile entrance with the adjacent seated stand. Most identified safety risks and management strategies are similar to those already discussed, including secondary ticket checks at the terrace entrance, and sufficient stewarding to keep the gangways clear.

The **away terrace** is the lower part of a two-tier stand, with a seated area above. Migration between the seated and standing areas is possible and the seated upper tier has a 30 degree rake which presents a risk when supporters choose to stand, so particular strategies are needed to manage this.

- The capacity of the two tiers combined is 1900, but has been reduced to 1650. This allows a small amount of migration between the two tiers, so supporters who have a seating ticket who wish to stand are encouraged where capacity allows to move to the terrace (and vice versa).
- Supporters are communicated with in advance and on the day to discourage persistent standing in the upper tier, with varying degrees of success.

Particular management challenges for these two terraced areas include:

- **Overcrowding of the central blocks:** as tickets are not restricted to a specific block, there is an increased risk of overcrowding in the more popular central areas. This is exacerbated if it is raining as the roof does not cover the end sections. This is monitored closely by stewards and CCTV, and staff will prevent supporters from entering central blocks if they are deemed to be at capacity.
- **Identification of individuals:** safety staff acknowledge that it can be more challenging to identify and trace individuals engaging in anti-social behaviour, for example missile throwing, in a crowded terrace.

These management strategies have been observed at Brentford and no incidents or concerns have been witnessed. Gangways were generally kept clear and no overcrowding was observed; stewards were observed preventing supporters accessing the central blocks once they were deemed to be at capacity.

2.6 Supporter behaviour

2.6.1 Conflict between supporters, and between supporters and stewards

Interviews and observations so far suggest that clubs do not have particular issues with conflict, either between supporters themselves or between supporters and stewards, in

areas where persistent standing is managed, with or without barriers. This is likely because stewards' attempts to get people to sit are minimal. It was reported at Cardiff that an increase in stewards asking supporters to sit this season has created some incidences of conflict between supporters and stewards. However, safety staff generally felt that the risk of conflict has been reduced in these areas for a number of reasons:

- standing areas have been **positioned far away from segregation lines**;
- ongoing **supporter engagement and ticketing strategies** to ensure that supporters who wish to sit during play do not purchase tickets in these areas;
- supporters in these areas **understand there is a high chance of people standing** around them - there have been no observations of conflict between supporters due to the blocking of views; and
- **wheelchair bays in these areas are of a sufficient height** so that their sightlines are not interrupted by supporters standing in front of them. At Wolverhampton this has involved increasing the height of the wheelchair platform in the Sir Jack Hayward stand.

Safety staff have reported that in away areas, supporters are unlikely to be asked to sit down because of the potential risk of conflict this can create. For example, the away stand at Brentford includes an upper seated tier where although supporters are encouraged to sit down, stewards are not expected to enforce this in order to mitigate the risk of conflict and progressive crowd collapse given the steep rake of the stand.

Cardiff and Brighton: Minimising conflict as a result of persistent standing in away sections

Both Cardiff and Brighton have taken a proactive approach to away ticket sales in an attempt to accommodate the wishes of away supporters who prefer to sit and watch the match without their view being obstructed by others persistently standing around them. The two clubs differ slightly in their management strategies because of differences in their capacity level in away sections.

Cardiff City has a capacity of 3,300 in the away section, with 270 of these in front of the vomitories in a lower section divided by an independent barrier. These 270 seats are designed to accommodate away supporters who wish to sit.

- Some visiting clubs agree to sell the front 270 seats only to supporters who wish to sit. This is encouraged if clubs wish to take the full allocation, which happened on a small number of occasions when the club was in the Premier League.
- In most cases in the Championship, away clubs do not take the full allocation so the front section is not sold and is used to relocate supporters whose view is obstructed as a result of persistent standing. When supporters arrive who wish to sit, they are offered seats in these areas even if their ticket is nearer the back. Stewards approach families, the elderly and the less mobile at the vomitories to offer them this option.
- As well as visibly dividing the blocks into two sections, the independent barrier also acts to prevent those standing behind it from falling forward onto those sitting in the row in front of them.
- Away supporters were observed sitting in the front area during visits.

Brighton and Hove Albion have a similar strategy, but because Premier League clubs regularly sell their full allocation of away tickets, the club is much more reliant on the compliance of away club ticket systems.

- A small raised section of 74 seats at the back of the away stand is reserved for supporters who wish to sit. Signage makes it clear that standing will not be tolerated in this area.
- This policy can only be enforced (and stewards will only be instructed to enforce it) if the away club has sold these tickets on this basis. Some clubs comply with this, others do not.
- Away supporters were observed all sitting in this section at one match where tickets had been explicitly sold as seating tickets. It was reported by a supporter that the ticket arrived in the post with a note stapled to it reinforcing that this was a sitting ticket and standing would not be tolerated in this area. In this case the strategy was successfully implemented.

Both clubs combine this approach with attempts to create a welcoming atmosphere for away supporters, such as a family area at Cardiff and the away club logo and colours lighting the away concourse at Brighton.

2.6.2 Anti-social behaviour and crowd disorder

All club interviewees so far have acknowledged that supporters who persistently stand in large numbers, and who are therefore most likely to occupy these areas, tend to be the ones who are also the most challenging to manage. But it has been asserted that these challenges would require management regardless of the type of accommodation provided. Nobody has so far expressed the opinion that these challenges have increased as a result of the introduction of barriers or tolerated standing areas.

Clubs have management strategies to identify and deal with anti-social behaviour throughout the stadium, with some reference to areas where standing is managed. Where incidents of anti-social behaviour have been observed they have been isolated (and usually in away areas) and dealt with by security teams. The following management strategies have been observed

- comprehensive and high-quality **CCTV coverage and monitoring** of areas of risk supporters. This allows identification and tracking of any supporters engaging in anti-social behaviour and disorder and a basis for response team intervention;
- inviting **away club stewards** to support the home club safety team;
- clear procedures for **reporting and escalating incidents** to response teams; and
- positioning tolerated standing areas **away from segregation lines**.

Interviews with local police representatives so far have not identified any ongoing concerns from their perspective in terms of the behaviour of supporters in areas where barriers have been installed, or the impact of these areas on their ability to perform their duties on match days. All so far have been positive about the introduction of these areas, believing that the risk of supporters falling forwards has been reduced and that, in conjunction with an effective management plan, there is no increased risk to safety.

2.7 Persistent standing elsewhere in the stadia

The presence of areas of where standing is managed, with or without barriers, has not eradicated persistent standing amongst home supporters elsewhere in the stadia, and clubs are having varying degrees of success in managing this. Away supporters at all clubs were observed largely standing throughout the game regardless of the type of accommodation.

2.7.1 The extent of persistent standing elsewhere in the stadium

Persistent standing amongst home supporters has been observed to varying degrees at most clubs, most commonly on the back rows; supporters tend to feel that if there is nobody behind them and they are not blocking anyone's view, standing should not be considered a problem. Observations at most matches suggest that standing on back rows is common and tends to be tolerated. This typically involves only a small number of supporters and safety staff view this as a low safety risk.

- At Tottenham, persistent standing is evident to varying degrees in the South Stand above Level 1 (the area of the stand with no barriers). Staff feel this has reduced since the opening of the new stadium, but remains an ongoing challenge. There are also occasions of persistent standing in the lower North stand adjacent to the away supporters. In this area standing supporters can block the view from the disabled platform which created conflict between supporters.
- At Celtic, there was some evidence of standing in the lower blocks in the Lisbon Lions stand adjacent to the rail seating, which was also more widespread in the high-risk game observed. Interviewees felt that having an area of rail seating made it easier to enforce seating elsewhere (compared with when this area had supporters standing behind seats) as staff could be clear that standing was only permitted when behind a barrier.
- At Brighton, where standing is tolerated in the back half of one stand, this can spread towards the front of the stand. In one instance this was likely due to bad weather. However, persistent standing by home supporters elsewhere was not observed.

2.7.2 Managing persistent standing elsewhere in the stadium

Risk assessments and management plans at all clubs include the need to manage persistent standing elsewhere in the stadium. Approaches to this are club- and context-specific. Two examples are given below of club strategies to manage this.

Cardiff: Example of extra measures to manage persistent standing elsewhere in the stadium

Part of Cardiff City's strategy to manage persistent standing by home supporters in the stadium is to encourage those who want to stand to move to one area (the Canton Stand), alongside a zero tolerance policy of standing elsewhere.

- Supporters who do not wish to sit are encouraged to purchase tickets in the Canton Stand. This has taken time and requires ongoing management from the Supporter Liaison Officer as supporters' preferences change.
- A strict management plan is in place for the Ninian Stand where there is a risk of small numbers of persistent standing. Stewards are instructed to strictly enforce seating in this area and escalate those who don't comply.
- Where their details are on the club database, supporters standing in the Ninian Stand have on occasion been sent a text message instructing them to sit down for the rest of the match or risk ejection.
- The block of the Ninian Stand closest to the away supporters has the highest risk of persistent standing, and if deemed necessary the club will take a number of seats in that block off sale. This reduces the density and aids management.

Observations so far suggest that this strategy, as part of their wider management approach, is effective at limiting persistent standing elsewhere in the stadium.

Tottenham: Example of extra measures to manage persistent standing elsewhere in the stadium

Tottenham do not tolerate standing in the upper tier of the stadium, and this is communicated to supporters before and during games. However, the club continues to experience varying levels of persistent standing throughout the South Stand in particular and the safety team is continually reviewing management plans and progress in this area to reduce this, with the following strategies in place.

- Consistency of agency supervisors and staff (where possible). The agency was selected based on their reputation and experience of dealing with challenging supporter behaviours. The level of consistency of stewards has helped to build a relationship with supporters.
- Stewards are positioned at the top of the gangways before the turnstiles open and perform regular patrols during play to keep gangways clear and instruct supporters to sit down.
- The club operates a 'three strikes and out' policy, with supporters receiving two warnings to sit, with a response team and CCTV called in on the third occasion. A number of ejections have occurred in this area as a result, with some supporters receiving a three-match ban.
- 12 stewards have specific responsibility for dealing with persistent standing supporters. Attempts are made as far as possible to use the same stewards.
- Supporters can use a text service to report problematic behaviour, including persistent standing. This data is used to create a 'heat map' of areas with high levels of persistent standing and the club can communicate with supporters in problematic areas in advance of the next home match and instruct staff to target that area on a match day.

Research so far suggests that this is an ongoing challenge for the club but overall, strategies are gradually reducing the extent of persistent standing. However this is considerably more challenging at high risk matches.

3. Emerging conclusions

This research is currently at the midway point and so any conclusions at this stage should be considered as emerging and not definitive. In particular, crowd modelling work to investigate the risk of crowd collapse when crowds stand in seated areas has not been completed.

3.1 Considerations relevant to all standing areas (with or without barriers)

All clubs have developed management strategies appropriate for their particular stadium's layout. All clubs manage standing areas through high-quality CCTV monitoring, specific risk assessments, siting these areas far from away sections, employing appropriate levels of stewarding and maintaining 1:1 ratios if installing barriers. They also engage with supporters to ensure the club's expectations of supporter behaviour in these areas are clear and they employ ticketing strategies in an attempt to ensure that supporters are in the most appropriate stand for them.

While most strategies share many of these characteristics, there is no 'one size fits all' approach. **Strategies to assure the safety of supporters are nuanced to take account of the physical features of the stadium, the behaviour and culture of supporters who occupy those areas, and the match context.** In high-profile matches, supporters are more likely to stand during play, crowds may be bigger and stewards are required to deal with a range of issues in addition to persistent standing. Extra measures are often implemented in the context of these matches, such as additional stewards or response teams.

Although not thoroughly investigated in this research at this stage, in areas where standing occurs in seating areas without barriers, **there remains a (however small) risk of progressive crowd collapse as barriers are not present to mitigate this.** The extent of this risk will be investigated during the remainder of the research.

Migration into standing areas is a risk where the area is accessible from other parts of the stadium and demand for this area is greater than the capacity. Clubs wishing to develop standing areas should, therefore, consider the most appropriate location for the area in the context of their stadium, ensuring entry can be effectively controlled. A thorough supporter consultation would help identify the likely demand for tickets in the standing area, to inform decisions concerning capacity and strategies and resources that will be required to manage it effectively.

Within standing areas, there is the risk of migration to popular rows/blocks that requires ongoing management and monitoring. Where there are no barriers, supporters can move between rows by climbing over seats. Additional access controls, such as secondary ticket checks and different coloured tickets for different blocks, can help to mitigate this risk. CCTV monitoring can identify overcrowding in the event that migration does subsequently occur. Removing a small number of seats from sale to

reduce density in these areas can help to prevent overcrowding even if a small amount of migration does occur.

Stewarding fulfils a crucial role in managing standing areas. Stewarding appears to be most effective when teams are sufficiently large and comprise experienced stewards who are consistently deployed to these areas of the stadia. This is particularly important when additional access controls are required. Some clubs place teams of long-standing club stewards in these areas, whereas others use an agency with highly experienced staff and supervisors. Maintaining clear aisles and gangways is an important aspect of a steward's role. Regular steward patrols and the presence of stewards at the top of gangways appear to be effective ways to achieve this. However, this is more challenging in high profile matches and in areas with away supporters.

Although we have found no evidence to date to suggest that having standing areas (tolerated, or with barriers) increases standing elsewhere in a stadium, it has not eradicated it. The evidence from one club suggests that a high level of supporter engagement at the point of ticket sale and a strictly enforced seating policy outside the standing area on match day can effectively reduce persistent standing elsewhere in a stadium, but this approach takes time to establish and embed. Clubs with standing areas still need to consider how to best manage persistent standing elsewhere in their stadia.

Enforcing the all seater policy has been a source of conflict between supporters who persistently stand and those who wish to sit, as well as between supporters and stewards, resulting in safety risks. **The introduction of standing areas (tolerated, or with barriers) areas appears to have reduced the potential for conflict, and the associated risks,** as stewards rarely attempt to enforce seating in these areas and supporters who buy tickets in these areas understand and accept that those around them will stand. Ticketing strategies to ensure that supporters are in the right area of the stadium for their standing preferences are crucial and require considerable thought and ongoing management.

Accommodating away supporters who wish to sit along with those who wish to stand can be achieved, but this requires the co-operation of the away club. Home clubs seek to accommodate the preferences of away supporters through ticketing strategies, e.g. ensuring those that wish to stand are allocated seats towards the back of the stand and those that wish to sit towards the front, but rely on the compliance of away clubs when selling tickets. Home clubs then devise and put into action a specific stewarding plan. This is more straightforward to implement if away sections are not at capacity.

3.2 Considerations specific to areas with barriers

Research so far suggests that, overall, installing barriers has had a positive impact on spectator safety, particularly in mitigating the risk of crowd collapse. Celebrations are more orderly with no opportunity for forward or backwards movement compared to observations in seated areas. Further, safety staff feel that the

introduction of barriers has not encouraged standing in areas where supporters previously sat.

Other positive impacts include **orderly egress, a reduction in the number of supporters leaning on/over perimeter fencing and a decline in conflict that is triggered by persistent standing**. However, the risk of injury caused by climbing on infrastructure remains as supporters can climb on unlocked seats, seat backs and barriers. These areas should be monitored closely to identify and manage this behaviour.

Incorporating wheelchair platforms into areas with barriers allows disabled ticket holders to be part of this experience. This is important for development of progressive and inclusive approaches that encourage and enable a diverse range of supporters to engage with football. The platforms that are in place in two case study clubs are popular with supporters and are well managed.

Away areas remain a challenge to manage for some matches. Persistent standing in away areas is extensive and migration within stands is more prevalent than in home areas. The installation of barriers as a strategy to mitigate the risk of crowd collapse should not therefore focus solely on home areas, and management strategies specifically for away supporters are required.

3.3 Next steps

These emerging conclusions are informed by the findings at the mid-point in the research and are predominantly based on desk-research, a small number of interviews and match day observations. The season-long methodology will also capture evidence from a number of other sources, including crowd modelling, further stakeholder interviews, a supporter survey and comparative observations of management strategies in lower league clubs and Europe. By bringing together the evidence from a range of different sources, the conclusions will be strengthened and enhanced. This will ensure policy decisions that are subsequently taken are informed by the most robust range of insights possible.

Over the course of the remainder of the season, the research team will undertake:

- further match-day observations at case study clubs, as well as one-off visits to EFL clubs, clubs in France and Germany and English Rugby League;
- a survey of season ticket holders at the six case study clubs to investigate their perceptions of match day safety, including the impact of installing barriers, and the prevalence of injuries sustained when standing in seated areas which has been identified as a significant gap in the current evidence base;
- focus groups and interviews with a cross-section of supporters to explore their perspectives of match-day safety in more depth;
- crowd modelling to develop a fuller understanding of the risk of progressive crowd collapse when supporters stand in seated areas, and
- interviews with police, SAG and other safety representatives at all clubs.

A final report will be submitted to SGSA in July 2020. This report will synthesise evidence from the case study clubs with the learning from the visits to other national and sporting contexts to address the key research questions set out in the original invitation to tender. In order to identify examples of effective practice and key considerations for clubs seeking to adopt similar approaches, the report will examine what's worked, as well as what hasn't, in terms of managing persistent standing in different contexts. It will also identify key issues for consideration by SGSA and policy makers as they review current legislation in the context of the Government's manifesto pledge to "*work with fans and clubs towards introducing safe standing*".

Appendix 1: Research undertaken as of January 2020

Observations conducted

Home team	Opposition	Kick-off time	Police category ⁵	Competition
Case study club observations				
Tottenham	Olympiakos	8.00pm	B	Champions League
Tottenham	Chelsea	4.30pm	C-IR	Premier League
Wolverhampton	Bratislava	8.00pm	B	Europa League
Wolverhampton	Aston Villa	2.00pm	B	Premier League
Wolverhampton	Manchester United	4.30pm	C	FA Cup
Brighton	Leicester City	3.00pm	A	Premier League
Brighton	Wolverhampton	4.30pm	A	Premier League
Cardiff	Sheffield Wednesday	7.45pm	A	Championship
Cardiff	Bristol City	12.00pm	C	Championship
Cardiff	West Bromwich Albion	7.45pm	A	Championship
Brentford	Millwall	3.00pm	B	Championship
Brentford	Luton	3.00pm	B	Championship
Brentford	Cardiff City	7.45pm	A	Championship
Brentford	Leicester City	12.45pm	A	FA Cup
Celtic	Stade Rennais	8.00pm	B	Europa League
Celtic	Rangers	12.30pm	C-IR	Scottish Premier League
One-off observations				
Shrewsbury Town	Lincoln City	3.00pm	A	EFL 1

⁵ A standardised set of categories used by the police in relation to the risk of disorder associated with individual football matches. Categories take into account the potential for disorder inside and outside the stadium, with Category C-IR (Increased Risk) the highest risk category. <https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/public-order/policing-football/#football-event-categories>

Interviews conducted

Club	SGSA inspector	Safety officer	Local police representative	SAG representative	Other
Tottenham	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Wolverhampton	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Brighton	Yes	Yes		Yes	
Cardiff	Yes	Yes		Yes	Supporter Liaison Officer
Brentford	Yes	Yes			
Celtic	Yes ⁶	Yes	Yes	Yes	Scottish Government

⁶ Interview with Ken Scott, in lieu of an SGSA inspector at the club.