



Brighton & Hove Albion Supporters' Club

**A report into homophobic abuse
reported at Brighton & Hove Albion
fixtures in the 2012-2013 season**



Gay Football Supporters' Network

Summary

For many years now the fans of Brighton & Hove Albion have been subjected to a barrage of homophobic abuse from visiting fans and have experienced similar behaviour when attending away matches.

At the start of this current season (2012/13), the Brighton & Hove Albion Supporters' club (BHASC) teamed up with the Gay Football Supporters' Network (GFSN). They jointly resolved to tackle the issue. In order to do this effectively, and hopefully catalyse action by the authorities, they embarked on an awareness raising campaign. They collected evidence on the nature of the chanting the Brighton fans have been subjected to.

This Report sets out a detailed log of the Brighton & Hove Albion matches to date this season based upon the experiences of BHASC or as reported to them and from this we see that Brighton fans have been subjected to homophobic abuse:

- by at least 72% of opponents they have faced this season;
- in at least 70% of away games; and
- in at least 57% of all their matches so far this season.

Some of the chants are fairly mild ("does your boyfriend know you are here") and some more unpleasant ("you're just a town full of faggots"). Some are meant as a "joke", some are meant as terms of abuse. It is the view of the BHASC and GFSN that neither is acceptable. For us it is really simple, if the words relating to a person's sexuality were replaced with words relating to someone's race or skin colour, would those chants be acceptable? In all these cases they would not and appropriate action would be taken.

In November 2012, the FA sent a delegation to meet BHASC. Following this meeting it was decided that the FA's Senior Manager of Stadia Safety and Security would send a letter in advance of each away fixture to the host club, alerting them to the on-going problems facing Brighton fans and offering members of BHASC as a liaison person with the club.

To give this issue some context we would like to highlight the following statistics. Stonewall's *School Report* of 2012 says 16% of gay and bisexual boys and 29% of lesbian and bisexual girls have attempted suicide, while 57% have thought about taking their own life in the UK.¹ According to the Lesbian & Gay Foundation, the suicide rate for gay youngsters is up to three times higher than for their heterosexual peers.²

We also note that you don't need to be LGB&T to be the victim of homophobia, nor do you need to have been the target of the chants. Not only are Brighton fans themselves the victims but anyone hearing the chants, even those on the same side as the perpetrators can be seen as victims. It is impossible to assess what impact it might have on them.

The aim of this Report is to provide demonstrative experiences from members of BHASC over the season to date and not to provide a comprehensive list and full details of every chant at every ground.

A number of clubs, including Brighton & Hove Albion itself, have established practices to minimise the spread of homophobic chants and the Report highlights some instances where members of BHASC witnessed stewards taking action.

The main objective of this Report is to highlight the nature of the problem.

¹ <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/schoolreport>

² <http://www.lgf.org.uk/news-articles/world-suicide-prevention-day/>

Statement by the Brighton & Hove Albion Supporters' Club

"Brighton fans have been the subject of "banter" about the city's gay community for as long as many of our fans can remember.

It wouldn't be described as "banter" if the taunts and chants were about skin colour and something would have been done by now to stop it. Brighton & Hove Albion Supporters' Club has spent over 15 years trying to get the authorities to take this regular abuse of one club's fans seriously.

We would like our fans to be able to go to games with kids or their grandparents and not hear much of the stuff we are subjected to; it's our basic human right.

Our campaigning with the help of the Football Supporters' Federation has led to "homophobic abuse" being included in the list of unacceptable behaviour in ground regulations; yet many clubs, their stewards and their fans do not seem to know what constitutes "homophobic abuse".

We have had and continue to have good support from both Brighton & Hove Albion and Sussex Police, who are actively helping us to stamp this abuse out. More recently the FA & GFSN have started to work with us as well and we hope to strengthen these partnerships.

We hope that this report will increase public awareness and help educate our fellow members of the football family of the issues faced, to address them and, ultimately the need to treat each other with basic respect."

Sarah Watts

Brighton & Hove Albion Supporters' Club | Secretary

About the BHASC

Brighton & Hove Albion Supporters' Club is the largest organisation representing Albion fans with over 380 members. Originally formed in 1912, it has been providing practical help to the football club for over 90 years. In the 1930's for instance, we funded the construction of the first North Stand at the club's Goldstone Ground and have continued to help and raise funds to help ever since.

The current Supporters' Club was established in 1982 and as a democratic organisation run according to rules, it exists to support and help the Albion. The last eighteen years have seen a tremendous battle to save our club and to build a new stadium in Brighton. After two Public Enquiries and some hard and inventive campaigning we now have a brand new stadium, the American Express Community Stadium.

The Supporters' Club has been heavily involved in helping the club in many varied ways over the years and will continue to go from strength to strength, bringing together the family of Seagulls fans all over the world.

Statement by the Gay Football Supporters' Network

"We hope this Report will demonstrate clearly the level and nature of homophobic abuse that is so frequently targeted at Brighton supporters and as this Report shows, they are on football's front line in the on-going fight against homophobia. For us the issue is really simple.

We firmly believe that the levels of abuse demonstrated in this Report would not be tolerated if the abuse was of a racial nature and nor should it be tolerated here. We reject as false any suggestion that these chants amount to banter in the same way that "banter" relating to a person's skin colour is unacceptable. Nobody should be subject to ridicule over their actual or perceived sexual orientation and we are horrified that it has been tolerated, excused and ignored in relation to Brighton supporters for so long.

It needs to stop."

Chris Basiurski
Gay Football Supporters' Network | Chair

About the GFSN

The GFSN was established in 1989 as a social network for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) football fans across the country. Since then it has expanded into hosting its own national league and works to tackle homophobia in football. It divides it's into the three elements of Supporting, Playing and Campaigning.

Supporting – it enables LGBT fans across the UK to meet up and socialise with others interested in the beautiful game.

Playing – The GFSN league is the world's only national league which is aimed at the LGB&T community and is open to all, regardless of age, races, nationality, religion, gender, health status or sexuality. It currently hosts teams from London, Manchester, Yorkshire, Birmingham, Brighton, Nottingham, Newcastle, Cardiff, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Wolverhampton, Trowbridge, Bristol and Leicester.

Campaigning – The GFSN works very closely with partner organisations including The FA and Kick It Out to encourage a safe environment in which LGB&T people can watch and play football.

The GFSN mission statement is:

The mission of the Gay Football Supporters' Network is to promote the support and participation of LGB&T people in football. The GFSN will work to establish a social network for LGBT football supporters, to encourage the formation of LGB&T teams for players of all abilities and to campaign against homophobia and transphobia in football, with a view to creating a safe and tolerant environment and to gain the respect and recognition for LGB&T involvement in football.

Appendix: Summary of the homophobic chanting 2012-13

Date	Fixture	Examples of chants reported	Comments
14 August 2012	Swindon Town (A)	"Town full of faggots". Other abuse heard too.	Letter sent from BHASC to Swindon Town FC. Response received from club who said that they would be vigilante and apologised.
18 August 2012	Hull City (A)	"We can see you holding hands" and others. Player rubs his hands up and down several times over his backside whilst standing in front of, but with his back to, Brighton fans.	Spoke to senior steward after match. Letter sent to Club. Club's stewards take action during game. Hull City FC defended its player saying he had done nothing wrong.
21 August 2012	Cardiff City (H)	Nothing audible	n/a
25 August 2012	Barnsley (H)	Nothing audible	n/a
1 September 2012	Burnley (A)	Home fans used many derogative words. So bad that BBC Sussex radio had to turn off a microphone and apologise several times on air for the language being used around them.	No action was taken.
14 September 2012	Sheffield Wednesday (H)	Nothing audible	n/a
18 September 2012	Watford (A)	Nothing audible	n/a
22 September 2012	Millwall (A)	Multiple, persistent chants heard.	No action was taken this season. BHASC corresponded with Millwall in 2011 & 2012 season and have trusted them to work away at the problem.
29 September 2012	Birmingham (H)	Nothing audible	n/a
2 October 2012	Ipswich Town (H)	Nothing audible	n/a
6 October 2012	Derby County (A)	Nothing audible	n/a
20 October 2012	Middlesbrough (H)	Nothing audible	n/a
23 October 2012	Leicester City (A)	A variety of chants including "We can see you holding hands".	BHASC has reported to Leicester City FC in the past who didn't accept that it was anything but banter. With this mind set BHASC didn't see that we could achieve anything else at this time.

27 October 2012	Blackpool (A)	Nothing audible	n/a
2 November 2012	Leeds United (H)	Several different chants	BHASC is comfortable that Brighton & Hove Albion FC has adequate procedures to take action if deemed appropriate. Fans have historically been ejected and on sometimes even prevented from going in if they make such comments.
6 November 2012	Peterborough (h)	Nothing audible	n/a
17 November 2012	Huddersfield Town (A)	"We can see you holding hands" "You're just a town full of faggots"	Spoke to police at game and letter sent to club. Club responded apologising and explaining actions of stewards in preventing abuse spreading
24 November 2012	Bolton Wanderers (H)	"We can see you holding hands" "You're just a town full of buggerers" "We always shag girls"	Email sent to Bolton who responded.
27 November 2012	Bristol City (H)	Nothing audible	n/a
1 December 2012	Crystal Palace (A)	"Palace 5, Brighton 0, Brighton take it up the bum" "We can see you holding hands".	Complaint to stewards and letter sent to club. No action taken at the time by the stewards, but Senior Steward reprimanded by CPFC for failing to take action.
8 December 2012	Charlton Athletic (A)	"We can see you holding hands".	Chants were sporadic and did not spread possibly due to actions of stewards.
16 December 2012	Nottingham Forest (H)	Nothing audible	n/a
18 December 2012	Millwall (H)	Several individual incidents reported after the game. A father and son pair of Brighton fans were walking away from the ground and the father was asked "Do you pass him round?"	BHASC is comfortable that Brighton & Hove Albion FC has adequate procedures to take action if deemed appropriate. Fans have historically been ejected and on sometimes even prevented from going in if they make such comments.
29 December 2012	Watford (H)	Sporadic chanting reported	BHASC is comfortable that Brighton & Hove Albion FC has adequate procedures to take action if deemed appropriate. Fans have historically been ejected and on sometimes even prevented from going in if they make such comments.
1 January 2013	Ipswich Town (A)	Nothing audible	n/a
5 January 2013	Newcastle United (H)	Sporadic homophobic chanting reported	Stewards took action to prevent chants being

			spread.
12 January 2013	Derby County (H)	Nothing audible	n/a
19 January 2013	Birmingham City (A)	<p>"Does your boyfriend know you're here?"</p> <p>"Go home you qayers"</p> <p>"Up your arse m'lord, up your arse"</p>	Incidents were reported to Birmingham City FC.
22 January 2013	Blackburn Rovers (A)	<p>"soft Southern poofers"</p> <p>Two fans attacked outside the ground</p>	n/a
26 January 2013	Arsenal (H)	<p>"Does your boyfriend know you're here?"</p> <p>"We can see you holding hands"</p>	BHASC is comfortable that Brighton & Hove Albion FC has adequate procedures to take action if deemed appropriate. Fans have historically been ejected and on sometimes even prevented from going in if they make such comments
2 February 2013	Sheffield Wednesday (A)	<p>"We can see you holding hands"</p> <p>"Does your boyfriend know you're here?"</p> <p>"Town full of faggots"</p> <p>"Up your arse, up your arse, if you're not a fucking wanker you're a qayer"</p>	Complaint made to stewards. BHASC understands that stewards may have taken action to prevent the chants spreading
9 February 2013	Hull City (H)	Local paper reported that three Hull fans were arrested for homophobic comments made after the match.	Two of those arrested were cautioned.
12 February 2013	Blackburn Rovers (H)	Homophobic gestures from Blackburn player Colin Kazim-Richards	Investigations by the Sussex County Police and The FA.
19 February 2013	Cardiff City (A)	Nothing audible	n/a
23 February 2013	Burnley (H)	Nothing audible	n/a
2 March 2013	Huddersfield Town (H)	Nothing audible	n/a
5 March 2013	Bristol City (A)	<p>"We can see you holding hands"</p> <p>"You're just a town full of faggots"</p> <p>"What's it like to suck a cock"</p> <p>"We drink cider, you suck cock"</p> <p>"The referee's a gay boy"</p> <p>"Gay and you know you are"</p>	Incidents not reported.
9 March 2013	Bolton Wanderers (A)	<p>"We can see you holding hands"</p> <p>"Do you take it up the arse?"</p> <p>"Gay and you know you are"</p>	This was reported to previous contact at Bolton by email. A response has not been forthcoming to date.
12 March 2013	Barnsley (A)	Nothing audible	Barnsley demonstrated to BHASC procedures of stewards and how they deal with any instances of reported abuse.

17 March 2013	Crystal Palace (H)	<p>"You're queer and you know you are"</p> <p>"We can see you holding hands"</p>	BHASC is comfortable that Brighton & Hove Albion FC has adequate procedures to take action if deemed appropriate. Fans have historically been ejected and on sometimes even prevented from going in if they make such comments.
30 March 2012	Nottingham Forest (A)	<p>"Does your boyfriend know you're here?"</p> <p>"You only sing when you're bumming"</p> <p>"Have you ever shagged a girl?"</p> <p>"We can see you holding hands"</p> <p>And shouts of 'faggots', 'gay' and 'nonce' with limp-wristed gestures</p>	Brighton supporters reported incidents to the police and stewards. The stadium safety officer assured GFSN before the game that a zero-tolerance policy was in place and the stewards would take any appropriate action necessary.