

The role of Supporter Liaison Officer (SLO) is a complex one. The SLO must act as an advocate of both BFC and the supporters, representing the interests of BOTH sides. It is therefore essential that the SLO is credible and has the respect and acceptance of all parties. The SLO should therefore be chosen from among the supporters. The SLO must be present among them. The SLO must know them and be known and accepted by them. Only then can they assess the mood among supporters. Only then can they understand the problems fans may face and their needs and wants.

As listed by the UEFA SLO Handbook, the standard required skills are:

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- Experience of positive people management
- Experience and contact with key supporter networks at local and national levels
- Vocational or technical qualification or academic degree
- Basic educational, psychological and sociological skills in dealing with people, especially with regard to group dynamics
- Sound understanding of new media/technologies (desktop business applications, internet, etc.)
- Political neutrality
- Commitment to key values such as anti-discrimination and the rejection of violence

PERSONAL SKILLS

- Good communication and conflict resolution skills
- Ability to work in a team
- Willingness to learn
- High degree of commitment, motivation, reliability and flexibility
- Ability to communicate, in particular in groups and in public
- Service-oriented thinking and behaviour
- Assured negotiating skills and assertiveness
- Appropriate life experience and experience of dealing with fans; knowledge of and contacts within the club's fan base
- Flexibility (time-wise), especially at weekends, and personal resilience
- Professional manner according to the situation
- Calming, de-escalating, de-emotionalising professional conduct in stress and conflict situations

DUTIES

The SLO's duties can be split into three areas: Home Matchdays, Away Matchdays & Between Matches.

Home matchdays

BFC'S SLO should attend all / practically all first team home games.

In advance of home matches, the SLO should consult with supporter groups re any displays of flags, banners, etc., assist with coordinating procedures for such displays and assist with preparation of any planned on-pitch supporters' presentations.

Before the match, the SLO should mingle with supporters in pubs and bars around Bloomfield Road and also within the stadium; upon arrival of away supporters' coaches, meet the visiting SLO and be available to answer any outstanding questions about the day's arrangements.

During the match, the SLO should sit/stand with supporters in standard price accommodation (i.e. not in corporate hospitality or the directors' box).

During half-time, the SLO should circulate among fans in main gathering points, i.e. on concourses, or take up a presence at a well-publicised, accessible information point in order to be available to answer any supporter questions / assist with queries and/or problems.

After the match, the SLO should take up a presence in the vicinity of the information point (or similar contact place) and communicate there with fans, subsequently attend any fan meetings in pubs in Blackpool and, if applicable, any events organised by supporters' groups.

Later, the SLO should summarise any complaints from fans at the match and try to establish the circumstances and underlying reasons for these complaints and any other issues that arose.

Throughout matchday, fans should be able to contact the SLO by mobile phone (voice & SMS).

Away matchdays

The SLO should attend all / practically all first team away games.

In advance of the match, they should gather and distribute travel information, including details of meeting places / pubs for away fans, contact the home team's SLO, provide information for supporters about the upcoming game on the club website, via social media and by e-mail/phone contact with supporters' groups, etc.

On the day of the match, the SLO should travel to the away games with supporters, alternating the mode of transport to cover all options over the course of the season, e.g. private coaches, train, car sharing, etc.

Before the match, the SLO should mingle with supporters in pubs and bars around the ground and also within the stadium; upon arrival of coaches (if not personally travelling on them), the SLO should meet supporters as they disembark, meet the host club SLO, be available to answer any outstanding questions about the day's arrangements and provide a presence for imparting information outside of the away supporters' section of the ground.

During the game, the SLO should have a presence in our supporters' section and communicate with fans at half-time.

After the game, the SLO should take up a presence near the away section exit, communicate with fans as they leave and monitor their departure.

Later, the SLO should summarise any complaints from fans at the match and try to establish the circumstances and underlying reasons for these complaints and any other issues that arose.

Throughout matchday, fans should be able to contact the SLO by mobile phone (voice & SMS).

Between Matches

The SLO should attend all meetings of organised fans groups unless the respective organisation indicates that it would prefer such attendance to be by invitation.

They should be available in person at Bloomfield Rd at well-publicised set times for supporters to call in and ask questions, i.e. 'consulting hours'.

The SLO should actively communicate with supporters via letter, e-mail, telephone and all forms of social media, including maintaining a regular presence on all main fans' forums, including but not limited to AVFTT, BHS and Fans Network.

The SLO should organise/attend meetings to inform fans about the latest developments at the club/deal with fan-related requests and concerns.

They should also initiate meetings between supporters and club representatives and institutional representatives (police, stewards, local authorities, etc.), for example, with the aim of improving dialogue between the various parties and their understanding of each other's roles and views.

The SLO should work with the media, e.g. Radio Wave and The Blackpool Gazette, paying special attention to ensuring that supporter liaison work and fans in general are accurately portrayed in the media.

The SLO should contact the SLO of the other club before a game to exchange information of relevance to fans.

They should also attend relevant national and regional meetings of the Football Supporters Federation and Supporters Direct (SD), being present as a very minimum at the organisations' annual Supporters Summit.

The SLO should act as a point of liaison between club officials and supporters facing a possible stadium ban and ensuring on the supporter's behalf that due process is followed and that the supporter is made aware of his/her rights, including in respect of representation and appeal.

The SLO should assist supporters' groups with the staging of supporter events, e.g. by arranging for the presence of club staff and/or players.

They should communicate/network with the SLOs of other clubs, attending regional and national meetings.

The SLO should attend without fail all SLO training meetings organised by e.g. SD, the FA or Football League.