

LGBTI+ INCLUSION IN THE SPORTING FIELD

A BRIEF GUIDE, TIPS
AND HINTS



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WHY IS LGBTI+ INCLUSION IMPORTANT?

Research has shown that many LGBTI+ people avoid participating in sport due to unwelcoming sporting environments and fear of discrimination or harassment [1, 2]. As a result, many LGBTI+ people miss out on the incredible physical, mental and social benefits of participating in sport.

Everybody deserves the right to participate in sport regardless of their sexuality, gender identity or any other characteristic and athletic departments with proactive diversity strategies have been shown to outperform their peers [3]. Acceptance by coaches, officials, fellow participants and other people on the field can go a long way to easing the nerves or hesitation many LGBTI+ people feel when joining a sporting environment.

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

Understanding sex, sexuality and gender identity may be challenging at first. For many people, their sex, sexuality and gender identity will match conventional ideas of these characteristics (e.g. you are assigned female at birth, you identify as female, you are attracted to men). However, it is important to note that these characteristics exist on a spectrum and are not necessarily binary. Approximately 10% of people are same-sex attracted [4], 4% are gender diverse [5] and almost 2% are intersex [6].

Adapted from “Safe Schools – All of Us” [7]

Sexuality: who you may love or like

Straight	A man attracted to women or a woman attracted to men
Gay	A man attracted to men
Lesbian	A woman attracted to women
Bisexual	Attraction to more than one gender
Queer	A catch-all term for sexuality that isn't straight



Gender identity: How you perceive your gender, how you present this to others and how you want to be treated by others [8]

Cisgender	Assigned sex matches your gender identity
Transgender	Assigned sex does not match your gender identity
Non-binary	Gender identity does not fit into conventional binary genders (male and female)

Sex: The chromosomes, hormones, sexual organs or any other physical characteristics someone is born with

Intersex Someone born with natural variations in chromosomes, hormones or sexual organs that differ from conventional ideas about what it means to be male or female

“ BE INCLUSIVE, CHALLENGE THE NEGATIVE ”

One of the easiest ways to make someone feel included in the sporting field is through the use of inclusive language. Pronouns can form an important part of someone's identity. Gender diverse people may not always be visible with their gender identity status and we should not assume somebody's pronouns based on their appearance. If unsure, politely ask about the pronouns they use.

"Which pronouns do you use?"

Male	He/Him/His	He played well
Female	She/Her/Hers	I play on <i>her</i> team
Neither	They/Them/ Theirs	That is <i>their</i> racquet

Similarly, opt for inclusive language to avoid accidentally incorrectly assuming someone's sexuality. For example, the question "Do you have a girlfriend?" can be made more inclusive by asking "Do you have a partner?"

Research shows that the behaviours of sports leaders like coaches are reflected in the behaviours of sports participants [9]. Discriminatory language such as homophobia, transphobia and sexism in sport should be banned. If you hear discriminatory language on or off the field, speak out. Demonstrating a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination will set a standard of inclusivity and respect that makes a huge difference to LGBTI+ people and other groups that may feel marginalised.

CASE STUDY 1

A gay man has been subject to homophobic slurs at his local athletics club. How should this be addressed?

Under most sports' member protection policies, people have the right to participate in that sport free from discrimination or harassment on the basis of any characteristic, including sexuality. Leadership support in a situation like this is vital. Clubs or sports leaders should address this behaviour with the perpetrator and make it clear that this behaviour will not be tolerated in this sporting environment. If this situation cannot be resolved, members are entitled to utilise sporting organisation's complaints handling processes to resolve such matters.

CASE STUDY 2

A 25 year old trans male (assigned female at birth, identifies as male) wants to play in the local men's football team. How should this situation proceed?

In accordance with each state's anti-discrimination or equal opportunity laws, denying someone the right to play sport in their affirmed gender's division amounts to discrimination and is illegal. The individual in this case study should be allowed to play football on the men's football team. Having policies and procedures already in place within clubs to handle situations like this will ensure players feel welcomed in the club from the very beginning.

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