



Football v Homophobia Scotland: The Strategy



LEAP
sports

Football v Homophobia Scotland is a whole football strategy with a vision of Scottish football as inclusive for all irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity.

FvH Scotland wants football to take a clear stance against homophobia so that everyone can enjoy the beautiful game and supports football to lead the way in removing discrimination and prejudice based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

This is a LEAP Sports strategy which has been created in partnership with the Scottish FA and is supported by a range of partners (see page 12). To assist with the delivery of the strategy a working group will be created consisting of LEAP Sports and the Scottish FA. As LEAP are Scotland's LGBTI sports charity, this strategy has been designed inside a framework of national strategy priorities such as the Active Scotland [Outcomes Framework](#), the sportscotland strategy [Sport for Life](#), and Scottish Football's [One National Plan](#). The strategy is also in line with equality frameworks such as Equality Standard for Sport and the Scottish LGBT Sports Charter. LEAP is aware of the Independent Review of Sexual Abuse in Scottish Football and has considered the content and the recommendations that arose from this report.

LEAP coordinate their football-specific work under the banner of Football v Homophobia Scotland. Football v Homophobia Scotland works autonomously but has close relationships with the UK and international Football v Homophobia campaigns and movements.

Football v Homophobia Scotland recognises that committing to change includes a whole programme of work which is in constant conversation with the world of football. For this reason, partnership working and collaboration exists at its heart as a core underpinning principle.

The strategy aims to:

- Tackle the societal, cultural, institutional and individual barriers which prevent lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people from experiencing Scottish football inclusively and equally
- Work across all levels and in all areas of the game to ensure that no stakeholder is left behind.
- Ensure homophobia has no place in Scottish football and is tackled effectively
- Support the work of football as a vehicle in itself to create social change

Mission Statement:

To remove the barriers which prevent lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people from accessing, participating, enjoying and excelling across Scottish football.



Why do we need a Strategy?

1. To ensure everyone has the opportunity to play the National Sport
2. Because discrimination of any kind is wrong. In fact, your organisation could find itself outwith the law.
3. Welcoming people from the LGBTI community into football can grow the game – either in levels of participation, support, or both.
4. Institutional homophobic behaviours such as so-called ‘banter’ have wide-ranging consequences and can create homophobic cultures within football. These behaviours and cultures can contribute to the silencing of victims of sexual abuse.
5. National strategies and frameworks such as those on page 1 have expectations and commitments and implementing this strategy provides a tangible way for football to meet those.

Defining homophobia & transphobia

Homophobia encompasses a range of negative attitudes and feelings toward people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay or bisexual. Whereas transphobia is used to describe the range of negative behaviours or attitudes that transgender people, or people who are perceived as being transgender may face on a day to day basis.



The phrases 'homophobia in football' or 'transphobia in football' are often used without defining the nature of LGBTIphobia. FvH Scotland works from an understanding that homophobia and transphobia are not uniform phenomena experienced in the same way by all LGBTI sports participants. Homophobia and transphobia can vary in form throughout the different football contexts and cultures – on a continuum from lack of acceptance of LGBTI participants to physical abuse. Forms of homophobic and transphobic discrimination include, but are not limited to:

- Excluding people from participation
- Practising derogatory and offensive language with reference to LGBTI people
- Humiliating or embarrassing people via social media
- Threats and physical violence
- Allowing homophobia or transphobia to occur within a stadium.

FvH Scotland recognises that there has been an uptake in the use of terms 'HBTphobia' (homophobia, biphobia, transphobia) and LGBTphobia, and fully support this. Although this strategy targets inclusion across the LGBTI community, throughout this strategy FvH Scotland use the term 'homophobia' as it offers a widely understood and useful frame of reference. Should your organisation wish to do something more targeted Football v Homophobia also provide a range of options and designs such as 'Football v Biphobia' and 'Football v Transphobia'.

Homophobia & transphobia in football

The presence of homophobia in football, and in sport more generally, has been well documented. [Outsport](#) research published in 2019 found that in Scotland, almost 88% of respondents considered homophobia, and particularly transphobia in sport to be a current problem. This figure shows an increase from the 2012 [Out for Sport](#) findings, where 79% considered homophobia to be a problem in sport, with 66% saying the same of transphobia. The OutSport research (2019) also found that approximately 20% of Scottish respondents active in sport had at least one negative personal experience in the previous 12 months that was related to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

[Research](#) undertaken by the National Union of Students in 2012, found that 46.8% of LGBT respondents found their experience of sports culture to be 'alienating or unwelcoming'. Meanwhile, the [Youth Chances Survey \(2016\)](#) found a third of LGBTQ people aged 16-25 do not feel they can be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity in a sports club. This is further echoed by Outsport (2019) research where almost 1/3 of Scottish respondents were not out to everyone in their sport. LGBTI people have always been a part of football, however many find it difficult to be honest and open as they fear abuse, discrimination and exclusion. For these reasons, LGBTI people often become 'invisible' in football or decide not to participate.

Beyond 'invisible' LGBTI identities in sport, almost 1/3 of Scotland's LGBTI respondents have refrained from a certain sport because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The sport which respondents from Scotland most often refrained from was football (41%). Although football topped the board across EU countries, this was particularly high in Scotland, with the Scottish figure coming in 14% above the EU total.

Research shows that homophobia amongst football fans is particularly rife. [Stonewall Scotland \(2016\)](#) showed that 82% of Scottish fans who had witnessed anti-LGBT language or behaviour at a sporting event, said that it took place in relation to football. Of all Scottish sport fans, football fans are most likely to encounter homophobic abuse.

[Equality Network \(2017\)](#) carried out Scotland specific research regarding people who had witnessed, or experience homophobic, biphobic or transphobic behaviour at or outside a football venue. 51% of respondents reported having witnessed it, and 15% reported that it had been directed at them personally.

Whilst it is clear attitudes are changing, there is still a widespread problem with homophobic language in football which affects the experience of LGBT people watching, playing, officiating and administering the game. It impacts particularly on the experience of LGBT children and young people in football who may feel especially vulnerable and isolated if they hear negative comments at a time when they are discovering their own identities.

Implementing the vision

Changing hearts and minds in the beautiful game is not a once per year campaign but a year-round commitment, and the strategy offers a comprehensive approach to this reality. We don't expect your organisation to do everything all at once, but by tackling issues and targeting changes, you can make real strides in affecting long term impact.

Implementing the Football v Homophobia Scotland vision covers three strands that we believe are crucial for creating sustainable change in football: **Policy & Procedure**, **Education** and **Communication**. In order to fulfil its vision, mission and aims, FvH Scotland has listed strategic goals regarding these three strands of work at the end of each section.

a) Policies and Procedures

There are plenty of ways to make your organisation's policies and procedures support a more inclusive environment for LGBTI people. Not having the correct policies and procedures in place can open your organisation up to scrutiny. Clear guidance through P&P can help your stakeholders respond in the correct manner to a situation, avoiding possible harm coming to an LGBTI person. Having clear and accessible guidance means that everyone can feel confident in dealing with a situation. Furthermore, it provides the LGBTI person with the comfort that comes from being heard and having an appropriate procedure in place.

It is FvH Scotland's vision that no homophobic incident goes unreported. No matter your organisation's size or impact, you should have clear and robust reporting mechanisms in place. Information on your organisation's reporting mechanism should be readily available if someone observes or is targeted by homophobia. We see a future where victims and witnesses of homophobia know where to turn to, that they will be supported not interrogated when they do and that their reports will be treated with the utmost sensitivity.

It is also important that reports are acted on in a manner which is supportive of the LGBTI community. A strong response to incidents of homophobia plays a huge role in eradicating its ugliness from the beautiful game and shows that your organisation stands on the side of inclusion. Some people see football as a space in which to make derogatory comments, for these people, practising homophobia will remain a part of their football routine until they are told otherwise. Football is an emotional game, but culprits should know when they are stepping out of line and should be educated on the impact of their words and actions.

Where possible, it is always best to be proactive rather than reactive when it comes to homophobia. It is important that throughout documentation and communications, homophobic language and behaviours are defined and a strong stance against them is clear. Such statements force people to assess their own language and behaviour, rather than waiting until the damage is done. Clear statements also make LGBTI people feel accounted for and safer knowing that homophobia will not be tolerated.

We strive for a future in which trans people are able to gain the same benefits from football as everyone else. Someone's trans identity does not impact on their role off the pitch, a trans supporter can sing just as loud, a trans coach can motivate just as well and a trans steward can monitor fans just as attentively. In a lot of cases someone's trans identity won't affect them on the pitch either. However, because football is categorised as a gender affected sport, trans participation as a competitive player can be limited by certain conditions set by leagues and other administrators. It's important that your organisation understand these restrictions and remains inclusive outwith the rules of competition.



Goals:

To develop policies and procedures which support greater inclusion of LGBTI people in Scottish football.

- Develop clear and robust reporting mechanisms and increase stakeholder awareness of their existence.
- Develop a clear code of conduct defining homophobic language and behaviours.
- Embed a strong stance against homophobia in new and existing policy & procedure, ensuring reported incidents are responded to with appropriate action.
- Develop clear, inclusive and visible equality policies.



How we will support you:

- Provide clubs across Scotland with a policy guide, including template equality policy and code of conduct.
- Provide leagues with guidance on how to improve the inclusion of their trans policy
- Introduce discrimination reporting.



b) Education

FvH Scotland believe that education is central to creating a long term culture shift away from homophobia. We encourage you to educate yourself and those in your organisation so that they are aware of the issues which may arise, are alert and responsive to homophobic abuse, and are proactive in creating an inclusive environment. A comprehensive education on this topic will give people the confidence to speak up about LGBTI equality related issues, and provide them with the skillset to respond to homophobia in the most effective way.

Although considerable progress has been made in wider Scottish society, many people view football as a space in which it is still fair game to use homophobic terms such as 'poof', 'faggot' and 'you're playing like a girl'. On the other hand, some people use this language as 'banter' without thinking that what they are saying has an impact on those around them, is homophobic, and may in fact be illegal (Equality Act 2010). Education is the key to unlocking a realisation amongst those practising homophobia.

LGBTI inclusion requires more than just the absence of homophobia. It is important to be aware of other barriers faced by LGBTI people and understand how these impact on access to and satisfaction with football. For example, stereotypes surrounding football and lesbian gay and bisexual people create a complex terrain, whilst accessibility can cause problems for trans people. Familiarising those in your organisation with these issues can make you more approachable and give you food for thought on how best to remove these barriers.

There are many important pieces of policy and legislation that impact upon LGBTI people in football. For example, The Equality Act 2010 covers the protected characteristics of 'sexual orientation' and 'gender reassignment' and therefore there are particular considerations that your organisation may need to be aware of. Education is important for knowing where your organisation's services sit in regard to the law and legislative framework.

There are a selection of organisations which offer training sessions, you may also find some useful material online. Whatever the method, we encourage you to choose educational routes which suit your organisation's audience and effectively cover areas where improvement is possible. Football v Homophobia Scotland offer a range of training options which may be of interest. You can find a full list with prices in the toolbox and online.



Goals:

To improve the awareness, understanding and knowledge of homophobia and LGBTI inclusion in Scottish football.

- Improve the understanding of inclusive and discriminatory terminology and language.
- Increase the confidence of stakeholders when dealing with incidents of homophobia or challenging prejudiced or discriminatory behaviours.
- Increase awareness around the barriers to participation faced by LGBTI people
- Improve the understanding of policy and legislation that impacts upon LGBTI people in football.



How we will support you:

- Provide clubs with guidance on supporting trans participation
- Provide clubs and referees' associations with guidance on how they can support a player, coach or referee 'coming out'
- Launch FvH Scotland training courses.
- Offer training courses to the Scottish FA Performance Schools and Schools of Football.
- Introduce LGBTI awareness into Scottish FA Coach Education, through an FvH e-learning resource.
- Aim to introduce training into the Quality Mark programme.

c) Communications

Perfecting policy & procedure and brushing up on knowledge are important steps in accomplishing the vision of LGBTI inclusion and tackling homophobia. As these steps are largely internal, they can make a big impact on those in your organisation but can often go unnoticed by the wider community. When you have done something positive, **SHOUT ABOUT IT.**

Communication and visibility of the work your organisation has done not only encourages others to do the same, but shows LGBTI people outside your network that you are making an effort to include them, encouraging those who have previously been apprehensive to get involved. Showing solidarity with the LGBTI community is central in gaining trust and combatting prior discrimination. For many LGBTI people, football has been a negative experience, whether through playing as a young person, spectating on match days or working in the world of football, there are wounds to be healed. For a long time football has been considered incompatible with gay and bisexual men and trans people, there is a lot to be done to combat this message as well as the stereotype of women in football as lesbian.

Look out for campaigns which can help your organisation with promotion, particularly those with exposure to an LGBTI audience. LGBT History Month takes place every February and we encourage you to engage through the concurrent Football v Homophobia Month of Action. The Month of Action gives your organisation an opportunity to showcase your good work and take your place in an international, united stand against homophobia in football. For teams, clubs, leagues and community foundations who are taking steps to tackle homophobia and include LGBTI people, becoming an FvH Champion is a highly visible means of showing your engagement. Signing up to the LGBT Sports Charter makes an overarching statement of intent about your organisation's commitment to these issues. Engaging with the Stonewall Rainbow Laces campaign can also give your organisation great visibility of LGBT support.

Unchallenged homophobia discourages people, especially LGBTI people, from participating in football. It creates an unsafe environment for LGBTI people, their families and friends and damages the reputation of the sport, as well as of a club, team or league. By failing to respond to homophobia your organisation encourages further discrimination and send out a message that there is something wrong with being LGBTI. It is on this aspect of communication that many football stakeholders fail, as they do not see this as their responsibility or are scared of a critical response from fans. However, in the circumstances where teams, clubs, leagues, coaches, players and bodies have publicly communicated their disapproval, the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

Plenty of LGBTI community groups exist in Scotland, many of which can be found at equality-network.org/resources/directory/ and leapsports.org/clubs. Of course, not all of the organisations listed know about FvH Scotland, but many of them would be happy to work in partnership with their local football stakeholders on a campaign to tackle homophobia. By building links with these groups your organisation can harness local knowledge and expertise in LGBTI inclusion/tackling homophobia and reach new communities.



Goals:

To take a clear and visible stand against homophobia and promote the involvement of LGBTI people in football.

- Engage with LGBTI campaigns and awareness days.
- Create and highlight participation opportunities for the LGBTI community.
- Challenge homophobia and respond with clear and concise messages of disapproval, showing visibility of this where appropriate.
- Communicate messages of solidarity with the LGBTI community
- Improve the dissemination of good practice and good news stories.



How we will support you:

- Provide access to FvH Scotland t-shirts, pins, flags, banners, pitch hoardings, digital banners, poster and flyers.
- Provide template tanoid announcements, programme features and social media posts.
- Connect stakeholders to the LGBT Sports Charter, FvH Month of Action and Rainbow Laces.
- Aim to introduce the Manifesto for Inclusive Physical Education in the individual Scottish FA Performance Schools and Schools of Football.

Contact us

Football v Homophobia in Scotland is led by LEAP Sports, Scotland's LGBTI sports charity. If you would like to contact us or find out more about the strategy, check out the information below.

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ENDORSED BY:

