



TACKLING

HOMOPHOBIC,

BIPHOBIC AND

TRANSPHOBIC

BEHAVIOUR AT

FOOTBALL STADIA



Home Office

KICK IT OUT
TACKLING RACISM & DISCRIMINATION

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INTRODUCTION: LGBTQ+ PEOPLE IN FOOTBALL

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people have always been a part of professional and grassroots football, whether as players, coaches, managers, match officials, staff, stewards or spectators.

However, many find it difficult to be honest and open about their sexual orientation (that is, being lesbian, gay or bisexual) or their gender identity (that is, identifying as transgender) because they fear discrimination, abuse and exclusion from the game. Because of this, LGBT people often become 'invisible' in football or decide not to participate.

Everyone in football has a role to play in creating a more inclusive game where everyone, including LGBT people, feel included and can enjoy participating free from fear of discrimination, bullying and harassment.

This resource is designed to help match day stewards and safety officers think about how to help create a more LGBT-inclusive game and how to tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) abuse.

“Everyone in football has a role to play in creating a more inclusive game”

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HOMOPHOBIC, BIPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC

DISCRIMINATION IN FOOTBALL

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Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably because of:

- their sexual orientation or gender identity
- assumptions that are made about their sexual orientation or gender identity
- the sexual orientation or gender identity of people they associate with (e.g. family and friends)

The term sexual orientation refers to whether someone is lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual (straight).

A transgender (or trans) person is someone who feels that the sex or gender they were assigned at birth is different from how they feel about themselves. Some trans people

undergo gender reassignment surgery, while others do not.

Homophobic discrimination is negative behaviour which references being gay and is usually, but not exclusively, directed at people who are gay or perceived to be gay.

Biphobic and transphobic discrimination are, similarly, negative behaviour which is directed at people who are bisexual or transgender, or perceived to be.

HBT discrimination is not only experienced by LGBT people, but can also affect anyone who is perceived to be 'different' in some way. This might include people who don't fit in with gender stereotypes, for example, boys and men who don't have an interest in football, or girls and women who do.

“HBT discrimination is not only experienced by LGB&T people, but can also affect anyone who is perceived to be ‘different’ in some way.”

HBT discrimination takes many forms and can happen at any time, on or off the pitch.

This might include:

- the use of derogatory and offensive language about LGB&T people (e.g. calling someone ‘poof’, ‘dyke’ or ‘tranny’, whether they are LGB&T or not)
- excluding people from participating (e.g. refusing someone a seat at a stadium or not selecting someone to play in a match because they are LGB or T, or perceived to be)
- humiliating or embarrassing people via social media (e.g. posting a picture of a trans person on social media and inviting people to mock them)
- threats and physical violence (e.g. intimidating or attacking a same-sex couple holding hands on their way to or from a match)

Unchallenged, HBT discrimination:

- discourages people, especially LGB&T people, from participating in football
- creates an unsafe environment for LGB&T people, their families and friends
- damages the reputation of the sport, as well as of a club, team or league
- encourages further discrimination
- sends out a message that there is something wrong with being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender

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WHAT THE LAW AND THE RULES

SAY ABOUT HBT DISCRIMINATION

All forms of discrimination, including homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, are against the law and also breach English football rules, including ground regulations.

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender reassignment – these are known as ‘protected characteristics’. Under the Equality Act, you do not have to possess a particular protected characteristic for discrimination to occur. So, a heterosexual woman who experiences homophobic abuse is still protected by the Act.

The Rules of The Association – the rules and regulations which govern English football – protect football participants from all forms of discrimination. They state:

“A Participant shall not carry out any act of victimisation as defined in the Equality Act 2010, or any act of discrimination by reason of ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, disability, age, pregnancy, maternity, marital status or civil partnership, unless otherwise permitted by law and The Rules or regulations of The Association.”

Ground regulations state that: *“Racial Abuse and Homophobic abuse; chanting or harassment is strictly forbidden and will result in arrest and/or ejection from the Ground. The Club may impose a ban for one or more matches.”*

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SPECTATOR CONDUCT AT THE GAME

Football stadia provide a space for spectators to celebrate their passion for the game and get behind their team.

However, sometimes conflict between spectators from opposing clubs or frustration at players' performance can boil over and lead to aggression and abusive behaviour, including discriminatory actions and language. It's everyone's responsibility, including spectators, to create an inclusive environment where everybody can enjoy the game by respecting the rules.

The Rules of The Association clearly state The Football Association's (FA) expectations of spectator behaviour, and place a responsibility on clubs to ensure that:

"all persons purporting to be its supporters or followers, conduct themselves in an orderly fashion and refrain from... improper, violent, threatening, abusive, indecent, insulting or provocative words or behaviour, (including [reference to] ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or disability) whilst attending at or taking part in a match in which it is involved, whether on its own ground or elsewhere."

"It's everyone's responsibility, including spectators, to create an inclusive environment where everybody can enjoy the game by respecting the rules."

4 SPECTATOR CONDUCT AT THE GAME

Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic behaviour at football stadia

Like all other forms of discrimination, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic behaviour is unacceptable inside and outside football stadia, before, during and after the match. It is also a criminal offence.

The use of such language, chanting or behaviour causing harassment, alarm or distress are offences under the Public Order Act 1986 and the Football (Offences) Act 1991. Following conviction of these offences a football banning order may be imposed.

These types of behaviour usually take two forms:

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language directed at players, spectators, match officials or any other person which negatively references sexual orientation or gender identity. This includes language such as 'poof', 'faggot', 'dyke', 'queer' and 'tranny' as well as phrases such as 'you're so gay' or 'that's so gay', where the word 'gay' is used in a derogatory manner. This kind of language isn't always intended to be offensive and is often used in frustration without considering its meaning. However, it is unacceptable, a criminal offence if it causes harassment, alarm or distress, and should always be challenged.

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homophobic, biphobic and transphobic chanting which negatively references sexual orientation or gender identity is unacceptable and offensive. Such chanting, whether alone or with others, is a criminal offence.

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THE ROLE OF STEWARDS IN TACKLING HBT BEHAVIOUR

The role of the steward is to ensure the safety of spectators, players, officials and club employees before, during and after a match. This includes responding to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) behaviour.

HBT behaviour in football stadia should be addressed with the same seriousness as all other forms of discriminatory behaviour.

Make sure you have read and understood:

- the ground regulations
- your club's equality policy
- your club's customer charter, which explains what behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable
- your stewards' safety handbook
- the advice in this guide on why and how to challenge HBT behaviour in or around the stadium

If you hear spectators using homophobic, biphobic or transphobic language:

- if possible, alert your supervisor
- accompanied by a fellow steward, approach the individual(s) and explain to them that the language they are using is against club regulations
- ask them to refrain from using the language and warn them that if they continue to use it they may be ejected from the stadium
- make a record of the language used, where in the stadium it is taking place and, if possible, the approximate seat number and the description of any individual perpetrators
- ask for any cameras to be repositioned to monitor their behaviour

5 THE ROLE OF STEWARDS IN TACKLING HBT BEHAVIOUR

If the language persists:

- if possible, alert your supervisor
- accompanied by a fellow steward, approach the individual(s) again and explain to them that their behaviour is unacceptable at the club
- inform them that you will report their behaviour to the safety officer and that they might be asked to leave the stadium with the possibility of further action being taken
- make a further record of the incident and report it to your supervisor, which they can then escalate to the safety officer
- if necessary, ask your supervisor or the safety officer to inform a police officer

If you hear spectators participating in homophobic, biphobic or transphobic chanting:

- make a record of the language used, where in the stadium it is taking place and, if possible, the approximate seat number and the description of any individual perpetrators
- ask for any cameras to be repositioned to monitor their behaviour

- if possible, approach any individuals involved and ask them to refrain from chanting and explain that it is against club rules
- inform them that their behaviour is being monitored on camera
- to discourage further unrest, let nearby spectators know about the situation and that it is being addressed
- if possible, ask the match day announcer to make a public announcement that all forms of discriminatory chanting are unacceptable at the match and are an arrestable offence

If the chanting persists:

- accompanied by a fellow steward, approach any individual perpetrators you can identify and explain to them that their behaviour is unacceptable at the club
- inform them that you will have to report their behaviour to the safety officer and police, if present, and that they might be asked to leave the stadium, with the possibility of further action being taken
- make a further record of the incident and report it to the safety officer and, if necessary, the police

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TACKLING HBT BEHAVIOUR: TEN THINGS TO REMEMBER

- 1 HBT abuse in football stadia can affect anyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and not just LGB&T people
- 2 LGB&T people are part of football but HBT discrimination puts them off taking part and takes the fun out of the game for them
- 3 HBT discrimination is against the law and ground regulations, and should be taken as seriously as all other forms of discriminatory behaviour such as racism, sexism and disability discrimination
- 4 The FA, leagues and clubs have clear rules and robust sanctions for all forms of discrimination, including HBT discrimination
- 5 Familiarise yourself with your club's Customer Charter and its Equality Policy
- 6 Don't ignore HBT behaviour - like all forms of discrimination it must be challenged
- 7 Don't put yourself at risk: if you are made aware of HBT behaviour in football stadia, only challenge it with a colleague and never by yourself
- 8 When you challenge HBT discrimination, explain why it's unacceptable at the club and record details of the behaviour
- 9 If HBT behaviour persists, make sure the safety officer is aware so they can escalate the response
- 10 Find out what else your club is doing to tackle HBT discrimination, including training opportunities

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REPORTING HBT DISCRIMINATION

It's essential that everyone knows how to report all forms of discrimination, including homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Below are some of the ways you or anyone at the game can confidentially report anything you witness or experience.



Kick It Out is football's equality and inclusion organisation. You can report all forms of discrimination to them via the **free reporting app**, available on the App Store and Google Play, through the online reporting form at **www.kickitout.org**, emailing **info@kickitout.org**, by calling the freephone number – **0800 169 9414** or on Twitter via **@kickitoutreport**



Just A Ball Game? campaigns to help grassroots and professional sports create inclusive and respectful environments for LGB&T people. For more information on how JABG? can help support you, visit their website – **www.justaballgame.co.uk**



The FA and County FAs investigate all allegations of discriminatory behaviour in professional and grassroots football **www.thefa.com**



True Vision is a police-funded website for reporting hate crimes including HBT discrimination. Report any hate-related crime via their website **www.report-it.org.uk**



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