



GUIDANCE NOTES FOR INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE LGBT+ COMMUNITY IN TABLE TENNIS

Table Tennis England prides itself on being an open sport that anyone can enjoy and we want to ensure that we are welcoming, accessible and attractive to everyone. We celebrate the diversity and inclusivity of our sport.

These notes are intended as an aid to our clubs, leagues, members, coaches, officials, volunteers and staff and should be read in conjunction with our Diversity and Equality Policy.

Definitions and Background

- **Gender Reassignment** – is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. It is a personal, social and sometimes medical process by which a person changes their outward gender expression. Anyone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change their gender is protected from direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation. A person does not need to be under medical supervision to be protected.

Transphobic behaviour is as unacceptable as racism, sexism or homophobia. Any organisation that is found to have discriminated against any of the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 risks reputational and financial damage.

The terms Affirmed gender, acquired gender or self identified gender refer to the gender that the person has transitioned or is transitioning to, as opposed to that which was assigned at birth.

- **Trans People** – people who feel that the gender/sex they were assigned at birth does not match or sit easily with their gender identity often describe themselves as ‘trans’, and can include:
 - ✓ People assigned male at birth who know themselves to be women (trans women)
 - ✓ People assigned female at birth who know themselves to be men (trans men)
 - ✓ People with other experiences of gender that don’t fit our cultural expectations e.g. people who don’t consider themselves to be male or female and people who cross dress.

Not everyone who has transitioned describes themselves as ‘trans’ they may just use the terms man or woman.

- **Gender Identity** – a person’s sense of their own gender. People may experience gender identity as:
 - ✓ Male/man
 - ✓ Female/woman
 - ✓ Non-Binary – neither male nor female, both male and female, or another approach to gender.
 - ✓ Gender fluid – not having a fixed sense of gender.
 - ✓ Agender – having no gender.

It does not refer to a person's sexual orientation or preference, although trans people are often grouped together as lesbian, gay or bisexual under the acronym LGBT.

The exact number of trans people is unknown but it is estimated that 1% of the UK population fall somewhere under the broad trans umbrella. The number of openly trans people is likely to increase as society becomes more accepting (as has happened with lesbian, gay and bisexual people over time). The number of trans adults who seek medical care is growing by 20% per annum. There has also been a rapid increase in the number of young trans people and a tendency for them to 'come out' at a younger age.

Some trans people live in their affirmed gender without undergoing any medical procedure whilst others have treatments such as hormone therapy and some will undergo full reconstructive surgery. Medical professionals normally require people seeking gender reassignment to live full time for a specified period in the new gender before having surgery – this is known as real life experience.

Challenges

We must all recognise that the decision to transition to another gender and to tell family, friends and colleagues is not one that anyone takes lightly. Often people can spend years feeling that they are living in a gender role that does not reflect who they are, but have struggled to come to terms with the situation themselves to finally seek advice and treatment and finally to 'come out' to others as trans. The process may have affected their mental and physical health, relationships and careers.

A person who has been through this experience and is taking the step of joining a club or playing table tennis just wants to be accepted in their affirmed gender and included just like everyone else. Taking part in sport is an important way of rebuilding health and self-esteem.

It is also important that we need to acknowledge the feelings of our members or participants who may never have met a trans person before and initially may find it difficult to understand and accept them. Anyone who differs from the 'norm' can find themselves bullied and excluded. People's prejudices are often as a result of lack of knowledge and understanding so it is our responsibility to provide the information and signpost the learning to everyone involved in any way with table tennis. Getting to know the person as an individual is important because then you can discover your shared interest in table tennis.

Table Tennis England prides itself on being an inclusive organisation and this means showing respect for all individuals and the diversity of their life experiences but in cases where this does not happen then any discriminatory behaviour will be dealt with appropriately.

Responding to a trans member or participant

You will not always know when a member of your club is a trans person. They may have transitioned before joining, join in their self-identified gender and be invisible as a trans person; or a person may know themselves to be trans but has not (yet) told anyone or taken any steps to change their gender expression.

It may be that a person may join and share the personal information that they are trans either with just certain people within your club or more open and generally; or it may be that a person may

transition whilst they are a member of your club which would mean that many members would be aware that they are trans.

If you think that someone may be trans, but they choose not to tell you, you should not ask. Everyone who joins your club or our organisation is entitled to be treated as every other member regardless of their self-identified gender.

New members – everyone should be treated according to their self-identified gender, respecting their affirmed gender and using the name and title they provide whether you believe them to be trans or not.

If someone tells you they are trans then it would be good practice to ask if they have any concerns or questions as a trans member. They may ask about toilets, changing facilities or confidentiality – take the time to address any of their concerns as you would with any member to help them feel welcome and included. It is always good practice to operate a ‘buddying’ system within your club for new members.

Advice if someone transitions whilst a member of your club – this could be, for example, a member who was assigned male at birth but now wishes to be treated as female, you should discuss with them such matters as:

- Communication with other members
- What name, pronoun and title they would like people to use
- Amending membership records
- Updating the club’s website if they appear on it in their previous identity
- Any qualifications or records as a coach, official or volunteer – in terms of formal qualifications these may need to be amended for their new identity
- Use of changing rooms and toilets

These discussions will form part of a plan to assist the person’s transition and should be reviewed on a regular basis so that they reflect the current situation.

Other club members should be supported to use the persons new name and their chosen gender pronoun (he, she or they) and politely reminded if they accidentally forget to do so.

Please remember that everyone has a right to confidentiality with regard to their personal circumstances and this must be respected. You should only share the information the person is comfortable and gives you permission to share.

Practical issues

There are 2 main areas of concern and these relate to the use of toilets/changing rooms and also competition.

Single Sex Facilities – trans people should always be able to use the toilets, changing rooms, showers of their self-identified gender if they wish, whether or not they are undergoing gender reassignment surgery/retain the physical characteristics of their former gender. If someone presents themselves at your club as a new member and does not tell you that they are trans or have a trans history then you should accept them in their self-identified gender regardless of whether you believe them to be trans or not.

Nevertheless, the use of single sex facilities can be challenging for trans people, who may at times feel very self-conscious in those spaces and will not want to cause embarrassment for themselves or for other people. If someone shares with you the information that they are trans or have a trans history then it is appropriate for you to ask how the club can best support them. If they request alternative facilities, then in the same way as with any individual who has a particular requirement, the best approach is to talk to them and reach a mutually agreeable solution.

Toilets – all toilet facilities include cubicles so there is appropriate privacy for all. It is good practice to assume that everyone chooses the facilities that are right for them and not to make assumptions on the basis of appearance. Consider the needs of non-binary people and what options you can provide that would work for them. Gender neutral facilities are often the best way forward for all. If this is not possible then the ‘disabled’ toilet should be designated the gender neutral toilet accessible for all.

Changing facilities – many facilities used by table tennis clubs do not have changing rooms so people will use the toilets if necessary. However, if clubs have their own facilities or use a leisure centre or school then they should consider making open, family, gender neutral changing areas as an addition to those designated male or female. This would make it easier for a father, as an example, to bring his young daughter to table tennis and help her to change into or out of kit if necessary. In this instant it may just be necessary to have clear signage.

Competition

In terms of Table Tennis England competitions currently a person will compete in the gender that they self-identify with. There is guidance by UK Sport for elite international events and Olympics/Paralympics. Anyone who has concerns should discuss with the Events Department and/or the Safeguarding and Ethics Manager.

Membership and Records

In terms of membership records a person can use any name they choose without any formal documentation. However, it would be good practice to ask the person if they would like to have a completely new record for their new identity and delete any previous records or if they would just like their current record amended so that any history is retained. Similarly this could relate to trophies and awards boards – again be guided by the person.

Concerns and Complaints

There are clear identified regulations and routes for complaints to be taken through table tennis which allow anyone to raise a concern or complaint that relate to discrimination, harassment or inappropriate language.

REMEMBER:

- **For most trans people the decision to transition will not have been taken lightly and many will have been through a period of significant stress beforehand.**
- **Like all other members a trans member just wants to participate in a sport they enjoy.**
- **A trans member may feel very self-conscious and uncomfortable at first – make them welcome.**
- **Encourage the trans member to take part in club activities, duties and responsibilities.**
- **Honest mistakes are rarely a problem, just apologise and move on – deliberate misnaming is not acceptable and should be challenged.**

- **You should not ask questions of a personal nature that you would not ask any other members.**

If you have any concerns or questions please contact the Table Tennis England Safeguarding and Ethics Manager, on judy.rogers@tabletennisengland.co.uk.

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