



Pride in Our Workforce

Exploring the role of the workforce in LGBT+ participation in physical activity and sport

On average, **LGBT+** people's general health is worse than that of heterosexual people.

(National LGBT Survey, 2017)

Individuals who identify as **LGBT+** are more likely to access mental health services.

(Public Health, 2014)

LGBT+ people are less likely than heterosexual people to do enough exercise to maintain 'good' health.

(Pride Sports, 2016)

Physical activity reduces our risk of major diseases by up to 50% and our risk of depression by up to 30%.

(NHS)

Our goal:
To enable the workforce to support and encourage **LGBT+** participation in physical activity and sport.

Our questions

In order to better support the workforce, we teamed up with researchers from Bournemouth University to explore 4 questions:

P.5 Is the current workforce representative of our local population?

P.7 What skills, competencies and behaviours do the LGBT+ community require of the workforce?

P.9 How could an appropriately skilled workforce identify and address real or perceived barriers to participation?

P.20 What role does the workforce play in the LGBT+ community accessing and enjoying physical activity and sport?

The research

The research consisted of:

An online questionnaire

The questionnaire was completed by 352 respondents aged 16-years or over.

54.3% identified as **female**, and **38.6%** as **male**

6.5% identified as **non-binary**, and **12.2%** as **transgender**

Sexual orientation:

30% identified as **heterosexual** (including both men and women)

23% identified as **gay men**, **4.3%** as gay women, and **20%** as **lesbian**.

13% identified as **bisexual** (including men and women).

Workforce roles:

31.5% reported **no workforce role**. 18.5% selected Coach, 16.8% Sports Development Officer, 8.8% Facilitator, 8.5% Activity leader and 6.5% Teacher.

A focus group with staff from a leisure centre facility in Hampshire

A focus group with people identifying as members of LGBT+ communities with varying levels of physical activity participation

Four one-to-one interviews with individuals who volunteered to take part via the questionnaire

For more on research methods and sample, email sophie.burton@energiseme.org

Representation:

“There is evidence that suggests heterosexual and non-transgender participants are more likely to occupy workforce roles than members of the LGBT+ communities.”

Bournemouth University, Pride in Our Workforce Report

Workforce:

Those who support people to be physically active or who work/volunteer in a physical activity or sport setting.

Is the workforce representative?

Key questionnaire findings

Non-binary individuals (those whose gender identity does not sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman') were less likely to occupy a position in the workforce than participants that identified as men or women.

Transgender research participants were less likely to hold a workforce role. Transgender participants also occupied significantly fewer roles in the workforce when compared with non-transgender individuals.

Heterosexual people were more likely to occupy a workforce role. On average, they held significantly more roles in the workforce than other sexual identity groups.

These findings are compounded by the fact that

LGBT+ workforce members displayed more varied responses in relation to comfort in expressing sexual or gender identity in their workforce role. Women who identified as lesbian were more likely to report feeling uncomfortable to express their sexual identity.

Characteristics:

“LGBT+ communities care less about the qualifications or experience of workforce members. A workforce perceived to be approachable and inclusive is a critical part of engaging with LGBT+ communities.”

Bournemouth University, Pride in Our Workforce Report

What characteristics are needed?

Understanding | Supportive | Inclusive | Approachable | Motivating | Adaptable | Informative | Experienced | Qualified

Research participants rated the importance of the workforce characteristics above on a 5-point scale. They also rated workforce performance against these characteristics, based on their own experiences of physical activity and sport.

For LGBT+ respondents, it is less important that workforce members are qualified or experienced than it is that they are approachable, inclusive and understanding.

Transgender research participants gave lower performance ratings for 'understanding', 'approachability', and 'inclusiveness' than the rest of the sample. This suggests that transgender participants experience issues with these characteristics when participating in physical activity and sport.

All mean importance and performance scores were greater than the mid-point, which indicates general satisfaction with the workforce.

Improvements:

“We asked research participants to explain how the workforce could be improved for LGBT+ communities. Two main themes emerged: workforce environments and achieving change.”

Bournemouth University, Pride in Our Workforce Report

Improving workforce environments:

Physical activity and sport venues could improve inclusivity in five ways

LGBT+ Leaders: The workforce requires role models, from elite through to grassroots physical activity and sport. Participants wanted to see more openly LGBT+ leaders at elite and grassroots levels - be it high-profile athletes and pundits (e.g. Gareth Thomas or Claire Balding) or LGBT+ individuals in the physical activity and sport workforce.

Stereotypical views, behaviour and language: Workforce members require training and upskilling to avoid the use of homophobic, transphobic and biphobic language, and other discriminatory behaviours.

Challenging discrimination: Workforce members need to confidently address discrimination, harassment and abuse when it occurs. They should also engage perpetrators in training to improve future behaviour.

Promoting inclusion: Study participants felt that visible symbols of inclusion are important aspects of venue and workforce marketing. This included symbols like the Pride flag to signify inclusion, targeted communications for certain groups, and inclusive imagery within facilities.

Facilities and classes: Some venues are perceived to be unsafe and exclusionary because of the built environment and nature of class/group sessions. For example, non-binary and transgender participants spoke about fears when using traditionally gendered changing spaces.

LGBT+ Leaders:

The importance of role models in the physical activity and sport workforce emerged strongly.

On one hand, this related to high profile athletes and celebrities acting as ambassadors for the LGBT+ community in sport. For example, one respondent explained, “role models (Gareth Thomas, Nigel Owens, Claire Balding, Tom Daley, Maggie Alphonsi, Megan Rapinoe, and others)” (Participant 108, heterosexual woman).

However, far more prevalent in the data were comments discussing the importance of leaders within physical activity and sport organisations that were LGBT+. One gay female respondent explained:

“More LGBT+ ambassadors - those who are ‘out’ and like me! Not just famous people, but local people too!” (Participant 45, gay woman)

While a range of participants discussed the need for better LGBT+ representation, one respondent felt there was already a positive direction of travel:

“I think it’s improved in recent years, I think there are a lot more gay men entering into physical activity as there is a much more inclusive atmosphere. I think this is because there are more and more LGBT+ coaches and teams out there.” (Participant 73, gay man)

“Encourage openly LGBTQ+ members to become more involved in club leadership”

(Participant 8, non-binary, transgender, asexual)

“We need to recruit more LGBT+ volunteers, coaches and professionals to build positive role models to inspire more to be involved in the future.”

(Participant 118, heterosexual woman)

“Culture comes from senior leaders in any organisation - visibility is key with regards to role models and creation of inclusive communities.”

(Participant 188, lesbian woman)



Stereotypical views, behaviour and language:

Many respondents discussed how the use of stereotypical language and behaviour (e.g. homophobic, transphobic) affected the degree to which they felt welcome or able to express their gender or sexual identity.

The processes through which masculine, homophobic or transphobic attitudes perpetuate in physical activity and sport can be subtle. However, such forms of discrimination are profoundly damaging to some participants. One respondent shared her perception of sport's culture:

“Male sport is still dominated by stereotypes of machismo. Break down these stereotypes through education” (Participant 42, gay woman).

A male respondent articulated that he did not perceive malice or intent in homophobic language and behaviours, but that it still impacted him:

“Not for a moment do I think anyone is homophobic, but some language that is used - whilst it may not offend me, especially when it's not directed at me - does make me feel a little unwelcome.” (Participant 79, gay man)

In some cases, language reflected the projection of assumptions or judgements about participants' sexual or gender identity. One respondent suggested a need to: **“Remind the workforce not to use language that excludes or shows that assumptions have been made.”** (Participant 186, lesbian woman)

The effect of stereotypical views, in some cases, was for participants to suppress their identity when doing physical activity and sport. One respondent said: **“My discomfort is my own issue, not sport related. I work with older males who still have stereotypical views of sexuality and therefore I do not feel it is necessary to discuss my sexuality with them in this context.”** (Participant 10, bisexual woman)

The comments about behaviour and language contain mainly negative sentiments about experiences of the physical activity and sport workforce. However, there is a clear need for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to upskill members on inclusive language and behaviour that moves beyond the stereotypical attitudes described as negative by participants.

coaches can't just not be
homophobic.. they need to

**CHALLENGE
IT!**

Challenging discrimination:



Challenging discrimination is a key way for the physical activity and sport workforce to increase perceptions of safety and inclusion for the LGBT+ community.

Participants spoke frequently about the need to challenge and punish homophobic, transphobic and gender inappropriate language and behaviour:

“Impose stricter penalties/punishments on homophobic/transphobic/etc. views and behaviour” (Participant 8, non-binary, transgender, asexual).

The need for anti-discrimination responses was also expressed in relation to the use of **“visible safeguarding measures/zero tolerance policy towards any form of harassment/discrimination”**

(Participant 53, gay man).

Therefore, while responses to inappropriate language and behaviour are essential, proactive promotional efforts to communicate that such acts are unacceptable may cultivate perceptions of safer environments for LGBT+ communities. Further comments also highlighted the need to train perpetrators.

“Mandatory training for all staff on how to support people on an individual basis... on how and when to challenge bullying/discriminatory language and behaviours.”
(Participant 20, bisexual woman)

“Deal quickly and effectively with any homophobia and provide education to those involved.”
(Participant 168, lesbian woman)

“I think training is needed for coaches and other volunteers so that they feel confident to challenge inappropriate behaviour and support people in understanding why there are better alternatives - particularly vocabulary in common use e.g. “don’t be a big girl’s blouse’ or ‘that’s so gay’ etc. Also, self-awareness - people don’t always realise we make assumptions based around sexuality e.g. ‘what does your husband do’ etc.”
(Participant 24, bisexual woman)

Promoting inclusion:

Participants clearly articulate that marketing and promotions are crucial in order to ‘speak to’ LGBT+ communities in a manner that advocates inclusion.

“We do talk frequently about equality and diversity and being inclusive. My initial thoughts are to have the rainbow flag and symbols on all marketing material.” (Participant 10, bisexual woman)

Symbols of inclusion

On a basic level, participants discussed the display of symbols of inclusion. This was discussed in relation to a range of exercise and sport environments, including sport.

Diverse imagery

Some transgender participants felt that imagery in venues could be more diverse and applicable to a range of sexual and gender identity groups.

LGBT+ sessions

Participants explained that the promotion of LGBT+ sessions would also demonstrate that venues were inclusive.



“Display more symbols of LGBT+ celebration - rainbow banners and posters that are LGBT+ in venues or wear rainbow lanyards.”

(Participant 14, bisexual woman)

“Targeted promotion could really make a difference. People in the LGBT+ community do not always feel welcome in team sports so assurance they are welcome could really make a difference.”

(Participant 84, gay man)



“Trans people need to feel safe and normal within a sports environment. Seeing a trans body in posters for sports would make me feel super encouraged to go do it!”

(Participant 51, gay transgender man)

“Offer LGBT+ specific sessions, create safe spaces for queer people to engage in sports and physical activities.”

(Participant 179, lesbian woman)

Facilities and classes:

The structure of facilities and classes can be unwelcoming for LGBT+ communities.

Participants' comments repeatedly cited changing facilities as sites of fear, lack of safety, and insecurity for LGBT+ communities. This is especially true for non-binary and transgender participants, for whom traditional male/female changing spaces present challenging environments.

“Locker rooms are almost always gendered which creates access issues.” (Participant 15, bisexual woman)

“Changing rooms are the biggest issue for trans people, you feel you have to pass perfectly or be labelled a pervert for just getting changed in women’s changing rooms.” (Participant 27, bisexual, transgender woman)

Participants also discussed how the traditional delivery of sport and classes for men and women also created issues for people with other gender identities.

“In group classes I’ve had instructors say things like women grab an x weight, men a y weight. This is both gendering and weakening. Coaching and training should be gender neutral!” (Participant 25, bisexual woman)

“More individual changing stalls and/or explicitly trans inclusive changing rooms. I’m scared to go to the gym because I’m transgender.”

(Participant 33, bisexual, transgender man)

“Inclusive changing rooms where the changing rooms are not gendered.”

(Participant 198, lesbian transgender, non-binary)

“Remove the perception on gendered roles in sport, championing female and diverse leaders.”

(Participant 106, heterosexual woman)

“Help break gender expectations and stereotypes... Have participation sessions or tournaments open to all genders/everyone. Run inclusivity CPD workshop for staff involved in... physical activity and sport.”

(Participant 25, bisexual, woman)

Achieving change:

Participants discussed two ways that change could be achieved: 'training and knowledge', and 'understanding intersectionality'.

Participants spoke about the importance of policies and procedures to enhance workforce provision for LGBT+ communities. This ranged from local organisations (e.g. leisure centres) to national governing bodies. Participant 111 (heterosexual man) noted that Sport England are due to release a transgender inclusion guide, which was welcomed by participants. However, more work is required in this arena for organisations throughout the domain of physical activity and sport.

Training and knowledge: Training and knowledge were seen as avenues to increase workforce capacity to offer inclusive and accessible environments for LGBT+ communities. Continuous professional development is a key avenue for development in this regard.

Understanding intersectionality: Participants discussed how disabilities or other characteristics coincided with their gender or sexual identity to create multiple effects, making physical activity and sport environments less inclusive or accessible. Understanding the person is a key agenda for future practice.

Training and knowledge:

The need for training and knowledge emerged strongly in participant comments about how the workforce could be improved.

Training was expressed as a requirement by members of the LGBT+ communities.

“Access to training or support to improve basic knowledge/insight re. LGBT+ communities. Opportunities to meet, speak to and better understand the lives and reality of LGBT+ people. Knowledge of policy or legislation. Practical ideas and examples of how this has been done or what could be done in their setting.” (Participant 47, gay woman)

However, it was also acknowledged as necessary by members of the workforce. For example, Participant 83 (gay man) spoke about his anxieties when working with transgender or non-cisgender participants.

“I do feel woefully underprepared when it comes to trans individuals. Teams and tournaments are heavily gender based - men’s A etc. I am not sure how best to accommodate a member who is non-cisgender. I suspect this would have to be worked through on an individual basis.” (Participant 83, gay man)

The effects of enhanced training and knowledge were discussed in broad terms. For some participants, a more knowledgeable workforce was a route to developing safer sporting environments (Participant 201, pansexual, transgender, non-binary). For others, it was about raising “awareness by running courses and workshops” (Participant 177, lesbian woman).

A range of participants explained that training and understanding differences across the LGBT+ communities would lead to a more inclusive physical activity and sport workforce. It was also clear that members of the LGBT+ communities wanted the needs of the community to be heard.

“Workforce perhaps do some general awareness training around LGBTQ+ challenges, language to use and feeling more informed around the LGBTQ+ community. Also appreciating that not everyone that is LGBTQ+ wants to fly the LGBTQ+ [flag] when playing sport. Some would rather a club be fully inclusive as opposed to going to a LGBTQ+ specific club/session.” (Participant 43, gay woman)

If you lack confidence about LGBT+ language, don't worry. Hop over to **Stonewall's glossary of terms** to start building your knowledge.

Understanding the LGBT+ community and intersectionality:

Achieving change also included comments about the importance of a workforce that understood how gender and sexual identities intersected with other demographics (e.g. disability).

Participant 194 notes that as a lesbian woman:

“It has only ever been obvious to me that I have been ‘discriminated against’ for my gender and not my sexuality. I think attitude change is the key and ensuring that employment is based on skills and experience rather than ‘who you know’ or your gender and perceived abilities.” (Participant 194, lesbian woman)

Another participant explained how age and disability mapped onto their non-binary identity:

“I haven’t done organised sport since I came out. There is a trans swimming group an hour away, but that is too far. Currently I’m more struggling with access to sport that is disability friendly, but not for older people. I’m looking for a personal trainer who will be confident to help with fatigue management and masculinising my frame.” (Participant 204, queer, transgender, non-binary)

Participant 36 (bisexual, transgender, non-binary) provided another experience associated with transitioning that brings to life the associated health issues created for some individuals:

“There could be more awareness of the physical restraints trans people go through, such as binding¹⁰, so they are aware of health problems that may arise from them and will be able to help them more.” (Participant 36, bisexual, transgender, non-binary)

¹⁰ Chest ‘binding’ is a process through which transgender individuals seek to flatten the appearance of breasts when transitioning.

The role of the workforce:

“The physical activity and sport workforce (non-LGBT+ and LGBT+) has untapped potential to play a more prominent role in providing opportunities for LGBT+ communities.”

Bournemouth University, Pride in Our Workforce Report

The role of the workforce:

Researchers from Bournemouth University concluded that the physical activity and sport workforce (LGBT+ and non-LGBT+) has untapped potential to play a more prominent role in providing opportunities for LGBT+ communities.

The questionnaire responses from those who identified as LGBT+ revealed general levels of satisfaction with the workforce. But they did show scope to build on characteristics that were particularly valued by LGBT+ communities - namely approachability, inclusivity and understanding. This could increase satisfaction levels and enjoyment of physical activity and sport.

The workforce themselves revealed that, generally speaking, they were not actively promoting LGBT+ inclusion or targeting LGBT+ communities. But they were willing to play a greater role in building participation.

“For the non-LGBT+ workforce there is willingness, levels of confidence and existing transferable skills connected to inclusion remits and policy, which can explicitly enable LGBT+ access to physical activity and sport”.

The workforce has a role to play in:

- Increasing LGBT+ representation within the workforce (in paid and unpaid roles)
- Being approachable, inclusive and understanding
- Creating environments that feel safe and welcoming for LGBT+ communities
- Actively promoting activities for and/or to LGBT+ communities

There is a wider role for organisations, like Energise Me, who support the workforce to increase awareness and understanding. Bournemouth University concluded:

“Moving forward, developing actionable and monitorable strategies, toolkits and benchmarks for organisations to achieve such progression are an important point for action.”

Focus groups

The focus groups delved deeper into ideas, experiences, and perspectives revealed in survey findings. They began a more in depth conversation about the role the workforce plays, and could play, in supporting LGBT+ participation in physical activity and sport. The conversation will continue and we would love you to be part of it.

Non-LGBT+ workforce perspective:

It was evident that the non-LGBT+ workforce involved in the first focus group were involved with inclusive practices, but not to do with increasing LGBT+ participation.

“Our premise is that all our activities are seen as fully inclusive, so LGBT would come under that inclusivity banner, but we haven’t actually done specific targeted work to engage with the LGBT community”. (Focus group 1 participant, non-LGBT+ workforce)

Despite not knowingly working with the LGBT+ community to increase participation, there was a keenness to do more.

“I’d like to think there’re ways in which we can help specific groups, maybe having a bit more awareness and education on it in order to do what would definitely help.” (Focus group 1 participant, non-LGBT+ workforce)

When asked about confidence levels related to working with LGBT+ people there was a general consensus that:

“It wouldn’t make the slightest bit of difference.”


“We’ve all got friends or colleagues that are, come under one of those [LGBT] headings.”

“I agree there’s not the stigma attached to it sort of 20 years ago. A lot has changed and our generation onwards I think are very open.”



ATTITUDES CHANGE OVER GENERATIONS, OLDER GENERATIONS MIGHT NOT UNDERSTAND HOW HURTFUL THEIR VIEWS CAN BE

Scriberia



The non-LGBT+ workforce is willing to do more, they were open to LGBT+ inclusion and open to more training to help achieve inclusion. During the discussions there was a feeling that the workforce already had skills that could be drawn upon and that initiatives could involve an intersectional approach.

“The kind of wider issues, so we talk about mental health, body confidence etc. It’s understanding that someone may have a different sexual orientation but what’s causing them to be anxious to come into a centre or to play sport. It’s making sure the workforce has the confidence to deal and work with people’s mental health issues and body confidence.”

“I mean we’re really good at identifying barriers to someone who is overweight, barriers about coming in [to the centre], mental health, even underweight, just appearance, physical limitations for example disabilities. They’re very similar so you approach them in a similar way, but they might be slightly different for LGBT community and it’s just trying to identify that so you could do something like This Girl Can or some kind of promotion or course that can target people to get them here and get them active.”

The point was made that the workforce was ready to engage with LGBT+ inclusion, but that it might be the other facility users that could create hostility: “I think it’s more the public they’re worried of than the actual workforce, the staff”. This point gave rise to the role of the workforce in challenging homophobic comments and workforce professionalism surrounding ‘check and challenge’, especially so-called banter.

For the participants in the focus group, the main points of uncertainty were a) not being able to see sexuality and therefore not being able to target LGBT+ for physical activity promotion, and b) having less experience of transgender participants. However, there was empathy in terms of how the facility might be perceived by LGBT+

“... quite intimidating to start off with. If you’re apprehensive about it already, going into a centre where there’s loads of people, I’m sure it can feel quite intimidating.”

“... maybe it’s apprehension about using the changing rooms, maybe they feel they have to ask, the fact of asking can make them feel apprehensive.”

This is when the group talked about displaying signs and symbols of LGBT+ welcome such as Pride Flags, Rainbow Laces and Rainbow Lanyards.

PRIDE IN OUR WORKFORCE



IT'S NOT ALWAYS VISIBLE

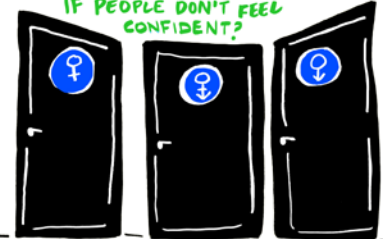
PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES AT SCHOOL CAN HAVE A LONG LASTING IMPACT ON ENGAGEMENT

ARE THERE ANY LGBT+ SIGNS OR SYMBOLS ON DISPLAY?

HOW DO PEOPLE IDENTIFY THAT WE ARE LGBT+ FRIENDLY?



ARE THERE OTHER SPACES AVAILABLE IF PEOPLE DON'T FEEL CONFIDENT?



QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER TRANS ATHLETES CAN PERFORM IN BINARY GENDERED SPORTS.



BUT THINGS ARE CHANGING & CAN GET EASIER WITH EACH GENERATION.

LGBT+ OFTEN FEEL INVISIBLE!!! BUT PLACES & SPACES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CAN VISUALLY WELCOME LGBT+

ARE YOU CONFIDENT ENOUGH TO CHECK & CHALLENGE POTENTIALLY HURTFUL "BANter"?



ARE THERE TRANSFERABLE SKILLS ALREADY IN YOUR WORKFORCE?



ATTITUDES CHANGE OVER GENERATIONS, OLDER GENERATIONS MIGHT NOT UNDERSTAND HOW HURTFUL THEIR VIEWS CAN BE

Welcome!

- LGBT+ GUEST EVENTS! NETWORK & SHARE EXPERIENCES
- ONE-TO-ONE SESSIONS FOR PEOPLE WHO STRUGGLE WITH THEIR CONFIDENCE
- SHOW THE LGBT+ COMMUNITY THAT YOU ARE AN ALLY DON'T ASSUME THEY KNOW
- MAKING THE FOYER MORE VISIBLY FRIENDLY TO THE LGBT+ COMMUNITY

SEXUALITY MAY NOT BE VISIBLE, BUT THE BUILDING CAN BE! AT LEAST UNTIL IT'S MORE WIDELY ACCEPTED.



THE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WORKFORCE HAVE EXISTING SKILLS THAT ARE TRANSFERABLE & CAN HELP INCREASE LGBT+ PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS.

LGBT+ workforce perspective:

The workforce research participants who identified as LGBT+ shared positive experiences of physical activity and sport and of LGBT+ groups but admitted to negotiating their own 'outness' in the workplace.

Two of the interviews were with people that self-identified as cisgender lesbian (interviewee 1) and cisgender bisexual (interviewee 2). Both women were employed in paid positions to increase physical activity participation; their jobs enabled their own active involvement.

Interviewee 1 was a Tackling Inactivity Coordinator for a college. Interviewee 2 started her involvement in coaching as a football coach for year 7s when she was in sixth form. She is now employed as a Coach for a national governing body of sport.

Both women have experience of working, voluntarily, with LGBT+ young people and talked about feeling a level of confidence with LGBT+ participants. But they had not actually worked with known LGBT+ in their paid physical activity and sport workforce roles.

For example, interviewee 1 is a volunteer coach for a gay men's rugby team and helps run a college-based LGBT group: **“My colleague and I were like, shall we start an LGBT group? The welfare officer was like ‘yes, absolutely’, go for it.”** However, the college LGBT group and her employment to tackle inactivity were not joined up. This meant that the LGBT young people in the group were not involved with the physical activity and sport offering she provided; the group was a support group for students at the college.

Interviewee 2 explains how she got involved with LGBT+: **“I just started volunteering with an LGBTQ+ youth group because actually I decided I didn't know enough and I wanted to learn more... when I started they said that previously they had taken the group swimming. I was like “okay wow” so a lot of these kids are experiencing gender dysmorphia, how does that work?”**

For both women, working with transgender young people presented a new aspect to their appreciation of the LGBT+ community. Interviewee 1 tells of how she checks in with one of the students in the LGBT+ group: **“I was like what pronouns would you like me to use? Because I haven't seen them for a while, and he was presenting female.”**

The two research participants that identify as belonging to the LGBT+ community and the workforce (paid and unpaid) have positive experiences of physical activity and sport and of LGBT+ groups. These two aspects came together during their voluntary workforce role, but not during their formal employment in physical activity and sport. Additionally, they both admitted to negotiating their own 'outness' in the workplace. Being 'out' is a complex and layered process and one that LGBT+ constantly navigate. It is often not fixed and not always complete.

For interviewee 2 the decision not to be 'out' at work was a personal decision and based on the idea that sexuality might not be relevant and is not always visible. That said, she did talk about:

“I am not necessarily doing anything to seek out LGBT and having an LGBT-only group although we did have a project [LGBT] planned for the summer that I am excited about.”

Interviewee 2 mentioned that the physical activity she was involved with was predominantly female and that this appeared to have lower levels of hostility towards LGBT+. This point was reiterated in the focus group (FG2) with LGBT+ people and is depicted by the caption in the illustration: All-women's groups can be a safer space than men's teams. This is an interesting point that deserves further research given the publicly aired transphobia towards transwomen in physical activity and sport spaces and places.



55% OF THE LGBT+ COMMUNITY ARE NOT ACTIVE ENOUGH!



PRIDE IN OUR WORKFORCE



ALL WOMEN'S GROUPS CAN BE A **safer space** THAN MEN'S TEAMS!



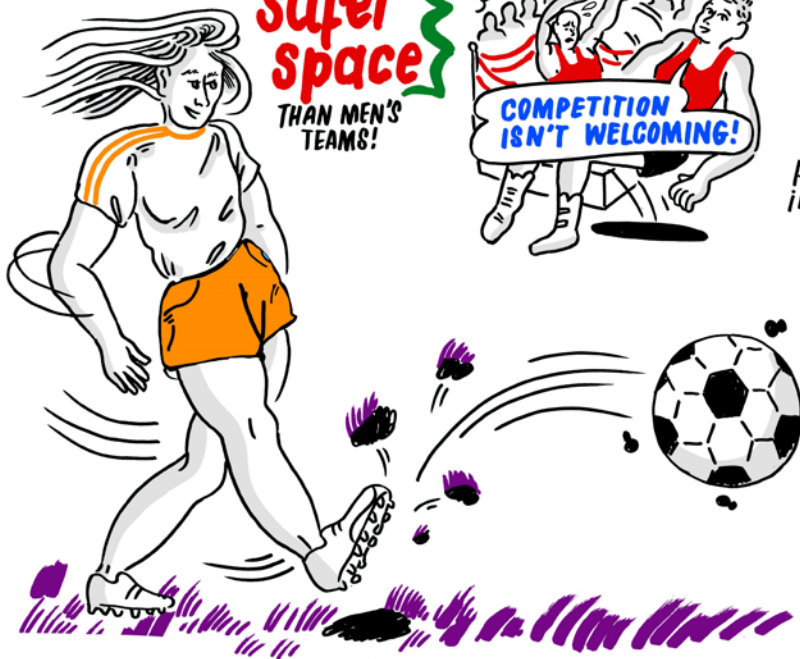
body image is a huge barrier to people getting involved in sport.

DON'T JUST WEAR THE LANYARD... BACK IT UP WITH SUPPORT & KNOWLEDGE!!

CHANGING ROOMS ARE ALWAYS AN **ISSUE!** WE NEED MORE PRIVATE & CONSIDERED SPACES FOR **everyone**



SEXUALITY IS INVISIBLE- WE NEED INCLUSIVE CAMPAIGNS!



LGBT+ physical activity participants:

The focus group with LGBT+ physical activity participants revealed different experiences, needs and levels of physical activity participation.

The participants in focus group 2 (FG2) belonged to a work-based LGBT+ network. None of the focus group participants identified as transgender. The group was active in supporting LGBT+ employees but did not have a specific remit for physical activity and sport.

During FG2 it was evident that members had different levels of physical activity and sport participation. The differences ranged in terms of individual activities such as swimming and kayaking to team sport such as football. Frequency of involvement also varied with some participants walking daily and playing team sport weekly to sporadic activity according to aspects such as the weather and time available.


None of the group reported experiencing homophobia during their physical activity participation, but they were aware of homophobia in other contexts and they were assertive about the need to eradicate homophobia in any environment:

“Part of my role [chair] and the vice-chair of the network, we will give talks at managers’ briefings, which are about inclusion, and we say “please challenge homophobia if you hear it.” But there’s no specific corporate guidance or training on the right approach.”

There was a feeling that colleagues can appear to be supporting LGBT+ equality (wearing rainbow lanyards), but informed understanding was sometimes lacking. This suspicion was extended to the physical activity and sport workforce.

The LGBT+ research participants that reported some negative experiences of physical activity were the participants that identify as non-binary (Interview 3) and queer (Interview 4). Both research participants started playing sport at school: “I used to love playing hockey” and “I started being on the sports teams when I was at school and then in university, I used the university gym”.

Interviewee 3’s participation declined during their late teenage years, but was starting up again: “I’ve joined a gym”.



Interviewee 4 continued to participate in individual sports such as cycling, swimming and triathlons and eventually climbing. Interviewee 4 identifies as a queer woman and her climbing appears to be contingent on finding a comfortable space to climb. For instance, she had been to one local indoor climbing wall, “which is not, a queer space”.

She eventually found a gym and climbing space:

“like a community space... it hosts ukulele band practice... does all of these kinds of yoga, has a physio, cafe, it does film screenings, it’s a bespoke bouldering gym in a warehouse.” She recounts that it was the **“first time I was around a bunch of tattooed up, pierced, shave head... there were all these people you don’t normally see in a gym”**. This ‘alternative’ physical activity environment was conducive to her continued physical activity engagement.

In contrast, interviewee 3 found it easier to go to the gym with the support of a small number of significant people: “... it all depends who you go with and I go to the gym with my mum and dad so they’re my encouragement. One of the personal trainers he’s pretty good; he’s very encouraging.”

Interviewee 3 had been swimming recently because of their employment as a support worker for people with learning difficulties. This was a conscious move to engage with swimming:

“I said to my boss when I started this job, this is my goal, I want to go swimming with them.”

The swimming took place in a public pool during a public session: “it was crowded full of people”. Interviewee 3 was able to wear swim shorts and swim shirt and “avoided the gendered facilities”. This is of interest because it demonstrates how LGBT+ people find their own way into physical activity, in this case through their employment and engaging others in physical activity. It indicates that it is worth considering a holistic approach to participation that includes aspects such as employment and working life.

Act now:

To promote LGBT+ inclusion and eliminate hurtful language and behaviours.

Learn about LGBT+ inclusive language and educate yourself, colleagues and participants on stereotypes and discriminatory behaviours to avoid.

Challenge homophobic, transphobic and biphobic language and behaviours.

Promote LGBT+ inclusion with visible symbols and inclusive imagery.

Review your facilities and classes with LGBT+ inclusion in mind - particularly facilities and sessions, which may be traditionally gendered.



ENERGISE ME



**SPORT
ENGLAND**

BU Bournemouth
University