



## DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2016-0230, 29 November 2016

# Homophobia in sport

## Westminster Hall Debate 30 November 2016 at 1630hrs

A Westminster Hall debate on the subject of homophobia in sport has been scheduled for 1630hrs on Wednesday 30 November 2016. The Member in charge of this debate is Stuart Andrew MP.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

John Woodhouse

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# 1. Introduction

## What's the problem?

A 2016 [report](#) by [Pride Sports](#), commissioned by [Sport England](#)<sup>1</sup>, found that "significant barriers to participation continue to exist for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in sport".<sup>2</sup>

The Culture, Media and Sport Committee is currently [looking at](#) homophobia in sport. In its background to the inquiry, the Committee notes that an earlier report on [racism in football](#)<sup>3</sup> found that homophobia was "emerging as a bigger problem than other forms of discrimination".<sup>4</sup> The Committee also observes that:

(...) It is notable that there are currently no openly gay footballers in Scotland and England's professional divisions and homophobic abuse remains commonplace at matches and online. It is also the case that abusive posts are sent to football players on social media once every 2.6 minutes.

Issues that the Committee is considering include:

- the experiences of gay sportsmen and sportswomen
- the approach of governance bodies throughout sport
- how is homophobia being tackled at school?
- does football have a particular problem in comparison to other sports?
- is homophobic abuse more of an issue in traditionally "masculine" sports? And looking specifically at the experience of women who play sport: is there more acceptance in the female game or is homophobia just as prevalent amongst women?
- what effect has the advent of social media had on discrimination in sport?
- why are sportspeople fearful of being open about their sexuality?<sup>5</sup>

Written and oral evidence submitted to the Committee is available [online](#).

## What has the Government said?

In November 2016, the Sports Minister, Tracey Crouch, [said](#) there was "absolutely no place for homophobia in sport or anywhere in society."<sup>6</sup> She referred to the Government's sports strategy which places "equal

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<sup>1</sup> [Sport England](#) distributes National Lottery and Government money to support grassroots sport

<sup>2</sup> [Sport, physical activity & LGBT: a study by Pride Sports for Sport England](#), 2016, p49

<sup>3</sup> [Racism in Football](#), HC 89 2012-13, 19 September 2012

<sup>4</sup> [Culture, Media and Sport Committee website](#)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>6</sup> [HC Deb 3 November 2016 c1024](#)

emphasis on the support for LGB&T people in sport as it does for other characteristics.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Sport strategy (December 2015)**

The Government’s [sports strategy](#)<sup>8</sup> was published in December 2015, thirteen years since the last one.

On experiencing live sport, the strategy says:

(...) We want to ensure everyone is able to access live sport, both major events and local events, and benefit from the experience. The barriers to people doing so are similar to those involved in participating: some are practical, such as not knowing what events are on or how to get tickets, whereas others are emotional, such as the perception of exclusion or an intolerant atmosphere. Just as people are more likely to play sport if they can access the right experience in the right environment, they are also more likely to watch sport if the offer and experience are positive.

(...)

Organisations hosting events have legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and should be taking steps to eradicate all forms of discrimination and harassment at events, including sexism, homophobia and racism. We want sport to be at the forefront of equality and we would like to see event hosts not only actively tackle discrimination and harassment, but also consider how they engage and attract a wider range of people to events, ensuring the offer and the environment are inclusive and accessible to all...<sup>9</sup>

On safety and well-being, the strategy says:

We know that feeling unsafe or excluded from sport is a significant barrier to getting involved in sport and physical activity for some groups. People may accept or welcome some risk as part of some sports and physical activities, but a dangerous environment puts them off. In a similar way, people who feel sport is not for them because of their background, age, sexual orientation or ability, may not enjoy sport, or be put off trying in the first place.

We have made clear that sport should welcome everyone, whether they are taking part, watching, volunteering or working in sport. Those that engage in sport, whether it is as an athlete, a spectator or someone taking part in grassroots sport, should never have to worry about abuse or harassment when they do so...

### **LGB&T People in Sport**

LGB&T equality is a crucial part of ensuring everyone that engages in sport can do so in a safe and positive way. LGB&T equality has not historically had the same level of support as other protected characteristic groups. Some work has already been undertaken by Sport England in this area, but this is something we would like to see expanded.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> HM Government, [Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation](#), December 2015

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p40

Sport England will place equal emphasis on the support for LGB&T people in sport as it does for other characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010.<sup>10</sup>

## What is being done?

A brief summary of what is being done to tackle homophobia is given below.

### Football

The Football Association (FA) has published an [action plan](#) for including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in football.

The [rules and governance](#) section of the FA website includes information on widening LGBT representation in football.

There is a [Football v Homophobia campaign](#) – “an international initiative opposing homophobia in football at all levels – from grassroots to professional clubs”. The campaign’s website includes further information and resources. The FA is [supporting](#) the campaign.

### Rugby

The Rugby Football League (RFL) has published [guidance](#) for rugby league clubs challenging homophobic abuse and behaviour.

The 2016 [report](#) by Pride Sports (referred to above) cites the RFL’s programme on LGBT inclusion as a “good practice example”.<sup>11</sup>

In March 2015, World Rugby (the international governing body of rugby union) [signed](#) an agreement with [International Gay Rugby](#) to work together to educate and eliminate homophobia in rugby.<sup>12</sup>

### Stonewall

[Stonewall](#) has a [programme](#) to increase the visibility of LGBT role models in sport.

There is also a [“Rainbow Laces”](#) anti-homophobia campaign.

### Sport England

Sport England’s website has a section on [Sport, sexual orientation and gender identity](#).

### Sport Wales

[Sport Wales](#)’ website has a [section](#) on LGBT equality in sport.

### Sport Scotland

The [Equality Network](#) is working with [SportScotland](#) and others to improve the involvement of LGBT people in Scottish sport.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p70

<sup>11</sup> [Sport, physical activity & LGBT: a study by Pride Sports for Sport England](#), 2016, p18

<sup>12</sup> [“World Rugby signs historic agreement with International Gay Rugby”](#), World Rugby press release, 5 March 2015

## 2. Media

### 2.1 Articles and blogs

Sky Sports News

[Is English football ready for a gay star?](#)

Geraint Hughes 21 November 2016

Guardian

[Gay Premier League players are scared to come out, John Amaechi tells MPs](#)

Sean Ingle 8 November 2016

BBC online

[Homophobia in sport: FA chairman Greg Clarke's views 'old-fashioned' - Keegan Hirst](#)

26 October 2016

BBC online

[Homophobia in sport: Most fans 'would welcome gay players' - BBC survey](#)

26 October 2016

Pink News

['I know seven gay Premier League footballers,' says Amal Fashanu](#)

7 March 2016

Telegraph

[John Fashanu: 'I paid my brother £75,000 to stop him admitting he was gay'](#)

31 October 2015

Sport and Recreation Alliance

[What does Pride mean for LGBT Sports?](#)

James Brandon 2 July 2015

## 2.2 Press releases

Stonewall

[Homophobic views still prevalent in sport](#)

November 2016

Stonewall

[Sport turns rainbow](#)

24 November 2016

World Rugby

[World Rugby signs historic agreement with International Gay Rugby](#)

5 March 2015

## 3. Parliamentary Business

### 3.1 Culture, Media and Sport Committee

[Homophobia in sport](#) Open inquiry, Session 2016-17

Gives links to evidence taken so far and refers to the Committee's earlier [Racism in football](#) Inquiry, stating that:

*'a key conclusion of [this Inquiry] was that homophobia was identified as emerging as a bigger problem than other forms of discrimination'*

[Racism in football](#) Inquiry, Session 2012-13

House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee. [Racism in football](#) Second Report of Session 2012–13. Vol 1. HC 89. 19 September 2012

Vol II. [Additional written evidence](#)

### 3.2 Parliamentary Questions

[Homophobia in Sport](#)

Asked by: Hannah Bardell

What steps she is taking to reduce the incidence of homophobia in sport.

Answered by: Tracey Crouch | Department: Culture, Media and Sport

There is absolutely no place for homophobia in sport or anywhere in society. In the sports strategy, we asked Sport England to

"place equal emphasis on the support for LGB&T people in sport as it does for other characteristics"

that are protected. Some research has been commissioned, and Sport England is currently considering its findings.

03 Nov 2016 | Oral questions | 907008

Asked by: Hannah Bardell

When the chairman of the English Football Association said that it was not the time for gay footballers to come out in the male Premier League he shamed himself and he shamed football. Does she agree that those comments are wholly unacceptable, and that the FA and Premier League clubs in England should follow the example of Scotland, which, with the Equality Network, has developed an LGBT sports charter? Will she work with me and others to take that forward?

Answered by: Tracey Crouch | Department: Culture, Media and Sport

The reported comments are indeed unhelpful and we should encourage and support people in all sports who wish to come out. We need to ensure that we use existing legislation to stop homophobic chanting and language during sporting events. I know that the Football Association is working hard trying to support people in the game and that progress has been made in tackling homophobia, but we need to consider other means of doing that as well. Supporting players is absolutely essential.

03 Nov 2016 | Oral questions | 1st supplementary to 907008

#### [Football: Homophobia](#)

Asked by: Diane Abbott

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to tackle homophobic abuse in football stadiums.

Answered by: Helen Grant | Department: Department for Culture Media and Sport

DCMS and the FA take matters of discrimination very seriously: any form of racism, anti-Semitism or homophobia is completely unacceptable. We have made good strides in tackling discrimination in sport in this country in the last 25 years but we can't be complacent and must continue to work on it.

Following the 2012 Downing Street summit on racism in football, the FA are now delivering against a whole sport Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Plan called "Football's for Everyone" to build equality and inclusion in football. DCMS welcomes this commitment, and specific initiatives, such as "Football vs Homophobia". The FA Inclusion Advisory Board reports quarterly to DCMS on the progress made.

03 Nov 2014 | Written questions | 212242

#### [Homophobia: Sports](#)

Asked by: Gloria De Piero

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what targets the Government has set for tackling homophobia in sports; and what steps have been taken to achieve those targets in the last 12 months.

Answered by: Helen Grant | Department: Culture Media and Sport

Although the Government does not set specific targets for tackling homophobia in sports, all National Governing Bodies (NGBs) are expected to demonstrate equality in sport and many support specific programmes such as the FA with its "Football's for Everyone" anti-discrimination plan. The Government is committed to ensuring this expectation of equality is upheld and in March 2011 called for an end to

homophobia and transphobia in sport with the launch of Tackling homophobia in sport: The Charter for Action.

Since then over 40 NGBs and approximately 4,000 sports stars, fans and clubs from across the sporting world, including all professional football clubs, have signed up to the Charter.

12 Sep 2014 | Written questions | 208533

## 4. Organisations and further reading

Equality Network (LGBT Rights in Scotland). [Out for sport](#): tackling homophobia and transphobia in sport. Equality Network. 2012.

### [Federation of Gay Games](#)

The mission of the Federation of Gay Games is to promote equality through the organization of the premiere international LGBT and gay-friendly sports and cultural event known as the Gay Games

[Football v Homophobia](#) campaign, supported by the [Football Association](#)

### [Football Association](#)

Opening doors and joining in: FA [action plan](#) for including lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people in football 2012-2016

Rules and Governance [section](#) of website including information on widening lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) representation in football

### [Gay Football Supporters Network](#)

### [International Gay and Lesbian Football Association](#)

National Union of Students. [Out in sport](#): LGBT students' experiences of sport. NUS. 2012.

### [Pride Sports](#)

Pride Sports describes itself as 'the UK's organisation for LGBT sports development and equality. It campaigns for change, educates, promotes good practice, and works to grow LGBT participation and satisfaction in sport

Rugby Football League. [Guidance for Rugby League clubs](#): challenging anti-gay (homophobic) abuse and behaviour. RFL. 2010.

Rugby Football League. [Perceptions and experiences of Rugby League: young LGBT people](#). RFL. 2012.

Stonewall

[Sports Role Models programme](#)

[Rainbow Laces](#) campaign

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