



## **Top Tips to be an ally to LGBTQ+ people in Rugby**

Today, there are more LGBTQ+ athletes than before competing openly as their true selves. However, for every success story, there are LGBTQ+ people who are forced to abandon their love of sport due to a bad experience.

Everyone deserves the chance to participate in sport and experience the positive things that sport can offer, be it as a fan, a player, or a coach or volunteer. LGBTQ+ inclusion has no off-season and is more than 1-month a year, so have a look at our 10 tips for being an ally to LGBTQ+ people in rugby:

### **1. Challenge anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes**

Over the years, the culture around anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes started to shift in the sporting world. However, more than one in five sport fans still think anti-LGBTQ+ language is harmless if it's meant as 'banter'. Speak up when you see or hear anti-LGBTQ+ bullying or language. 'Allyship' is a doing word. Even if it feels hard to challenge, your actions can have a real impact and go a long way to making sure that sport is everyone's game. For more information on appropriate inclusive language take a look at the IRFU D&I training module, <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/diversity/>

### **2. Celebrate LGBTQ+ people's achievements in sport**

It's important to recognise and uplift LGBTQ+ people throughout the year, not just in the context of discrimination. This can be through sharing positive news stories or interviews with LGBTQ+ people in sports on your social media channels. Have you watched Joy Neville & Nick McCarthy: Coffee and Chats - Barriers & Education: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bl7B7ZOfoZM> or Mental Health & Advice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsiXILC7ZrU>. Can your club do a similar news stories involving your own members and/or local community?

### **3. Be an ally to LGBTQ+ who face multiple forms of discrimination**

The fight against discrimination in sport has been and continues to be a long and difficult one. For LGBTQ+ people, sport can be an especially unwelcoming environment with barriers to inclusion and recognition. You can start to tackle discrimination by educating yourself about these issues. Have you and your club completed the 'IRFU diversity and inclusion training'? Why not share the links below:

**Connacht:** [https://educationstore.irfu.ie/product?catalog=SP-DIVINC\\_2223\\_CON](https://educationstore.irfu.ie/product?catalog=SP-DIVINC_2223_CON)

**Leinster:** [https://educationstore.irfu.ie/product?catalog=SP-DIVINC\\_2223\\_LEI](https://educationstore.irfu.ie/product?catalog=SP-DIVINC_2223_LEI)

**Munster:** [https://educationstore.irfu.ie/product?catalog=SP-DIVINC\\_2223\\_MUN](https://educationstore.irfu.ie/product?catalog=SP-DIVINC_2223_MUN)

**Ulster:** [https://educationstore.irfu.ie/product?catalog=SP-DIVINC\\_2223\\_ULS](https://educationstore.irfu.ie/product?catalog=SP-DIVINC_2223_ULS)

### **4. Establish or re-establish the ground rules of respect and inclusion**

Every team member plays a huge role in making people feel part of a team. Whether it's in team talks, end of season speeches, WhatsApp groups or changing room chatter – is the **Spirit of Rugby Charter** on display in your club and do members know they sign up to it on registration, <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the->

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[game/spirit-of-rugby/what-is-spirit/](#). This not only sets the tone of 'Respect' but also advocates members to speak up and not to be a bystander.

### **5. Make sure your club's policies reflect inclusive values**

For many, sport and sporting environments are 'safe spaces' - somewhere they feel comfortable and at ease. However, for some that same place might make them feel like they must hide part of their lives because of how others might react. Encourage your club to create a space where everyone can be themselves with respect for differences. See how this was for Darren Morrin from Malahide RFC

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/2022/06/23/lads-asked-the-question-and-i-said-yeah-i-was-gay-then-we-played-the-game-and-had-a-beer-afterwards/>

### **6. Be aware of the challenges your LGBTQ+ peers might be facing**

Take the time to listen to LGBTQ+ people's experiences. Consider the ways that they could be impacted by issues such as social isolation, healthcare inequalities, or discrimination at home, in the community, or at their place or work or education. Read how Coach Graeme McNerney believes that language on and around pitch matters, <https://www.irishrugby.ie/2022/07/13/i-do-believe-that-we-need-to-be-careful-about-language-and-the-words-we-use-coach-to-coach-advice-on-being-more-inclusive/>

### **7. Be a visible ally**

Wearing Rainbow laces can go a long way to demonstrating commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion. Consider how you can support the Rainbow Laces campaign and be a visible ally throughout the year.

<https://www.belongto.org/rainbow-laces/> AND/OR

<https://stonewalluk.myshopify.com/collections/rainbow-laces>

### **8. Share your pronouns**

Sharing your pronouns (if you feel comfortable), and suggesting your teammates or fellow fans do too, helps to create a culture where gender identity isn't assumed. You can share your pronouns when introducing yourself to others, in your social media bio and/or in your e-mail signature.

### **9. Commit to continuous improvement**

Whilst there can be some quick wins for LGBTQ+ inclusion, the real impact comes with continued effort. Ask yourself what else you could do to be an ally to LGBTQ+ people. Even better, ask some LGBTQ+ people too. Seek out opinions of your members as to what would help create a more inclusive environment for the LGBTQ+ community in and around your club.

### **10. Be consistent**

Being an ally is about being consistent and looking out for your LGBTQ+ peers, no matter what. LGBTQ+ Inclusion has no off-season and even if it doesn't matter to you, it will matter to someone in your club.