



British DanceSport Association

Trans Inclusion Policy

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Definitions

We acknowledge that there are an array of definitions and variations on how people choose to be identified. For the purpose of this policy, trans is used as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth (i.e. cis gender).

Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, gender-queer (GQ), gender-fluid, non-binary, gender-variant, genderless, agender, non-gender, trans man, trans woman.

For a full glossary of terms, the following link is useful - <https://transactual.org.uk/glossary/#:~:text=Trans%20people%20may%20describe%20themselves,masculine%2C%20trans%20feminine%20and%20neutrois>.

Trans experience of sports

Trans people experience discrimination in society and in sport. In 2020/2021, 2,630 Hate Crimes against transgender people were recorded by the police, an increase of 16% from the previous year (Home Office, 2021). This number is underreported because out of 108,100 responses to the National LGBT Survey, 88% of transgender people did not report the most serious type of incident. 48% of transgender people were not satisfied with the police response after reporting the most serious types of incidents. Transgender people are also more likely to experience threats of physical or sexual harassment or violence compared with the LGBT community as a whole (National LGBT Survey, Government Equalities Office).¹

Numerous studies have shown that trans people experience of sport is often marked by exclusion and discrimination. In a 2021 large-scale study, 49% of participants had witnessed trans negative and/or homophobic language in the past 12 months and 48% of trans participants had 'felt excluded from particular sports or have at one point stopped participating in a particular sport as a result of their gender identity'.² These findings replicate a significant body of prior research on LGBT experiences of sport that show how gender and sexual minorities are excluded from participating in sport due to discrimination. Research commissioned by Pride Sports and Sport England in 2017 found that amongst active LGBT+ people, trans men and women are significantly less likely to participate in the top team

¹ <https://www.stophateuk.org/about-hate-crime/transgender-hate/>

² Hartmann-Tews, I., Menzel, T., & Braumüller, B. (2021). Homo- and transnegativity in sport in Europe: Experiences of LGBT+ individuals in various sport settings. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 56(7), 997-1016. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690220968108>



sports compared with the population as a whole, with only 41% of active trans men and 46% of trans women agreeing that sport is an inclusive activity.³

As a result of exclusion, the number of trans people who compete at the highest level is extremely small. For example, only four openly trans athletes have participated in the Olympic Games, an overall participation rate of 0.0006%. None has won a medal. Similarly, when the Rugby Football Union announced in 2023 a ban on trans women participation in women's rugby, only seven trans women were registered with the RFU of whom just three were active players.⁴ There had been no incidents of unsafe play involving trans women or of unfair competition in a sport where there is a huge diversity of body shapes, sizes and weights. To summarise, the real problem is not that trans athletes will dominate sports, but that trans athletes are being systematically excluded from sports, thus contributing to the high levels of discrimination faced by trans people in society as well as the negative health effects caused by exclusion from physical activity opportunities.

Sex/gender segregation in sport

There are good reasons why many sports are organised along separate sex/gender line, notably because men, as a population, enjoy a physiological advantage over women of approximately 10 – 12% (for many sports reliant on speed and power) that would make mixed competitions untenable and unfair. The UK Equality Act 2010 recognises this state of affairs and allows for an exception to the general rule that those people with protected characteristics must not be discriminated against.

Section 614 of the Equality Act 2010 states:

"This section allows separate sporting competitions to continue to be organised for men and women where physical strength, stamina or physique are major factors in determining success or failure, and in which one sex is generally at a disadvantage in comparison with the other. It also makes it lawful to restrict participation of transsexual⁵ people in such competitions if this is necessary to uphold fair or safe competition, but not otherwise."

DanceSport is **NOT** a sport that is sex/gender segregated so this provision does not apply and the general law against discrimination applies to all DanceSport activities and competitions including those held in the UK under international governing body regulations.⁶

Whereas many sports governing bodies are introducing highly restrictive rules on trans participation (based on poorly conducted and limited scientific 'evidence'⁷), the BDSA has an opportunity to provide a safe and welcoming space for trans people in a sport where sex/gender is not a factor that determines success. DanceSport is traditionally a mixed gender sport but also welcomes same

³ Lawley, Scott & Smith, Sarah (2017) 'Review of LGBT+ Sport and Physical Activity Infrastructure.' Report commissioned by Pride Sports and Sport England, September 2017.

⁴ https://www.espn.co.uk/rugby/story/_/id/35574993/rugby-saved-transgender-player-julie-curtiss-fighting-rfu-ban-her

⁵ Note that transsexual is used in this legal context only but is not used by trans people for self-identification and should not be used outside of the legal context.

⁶ Note that the burden of proof that a sport is gender affected lies with the governing body to establish.

⁷ See <https://www.cces.ca/transgender-women-athletes-and-elite-sport-scientific-review> for a review of the scientific papers in this field.



sex/gender couples. It is therefore an ideal sport for trans people to be able to participate at all levels and ages.

Trans and non-binary identities are legally protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. This policy aims to give effect to the British DanceSport Association's (hereinafter referred to as BDSA) legal and ethical obligations to provide a welcoming space for all participants regardless of their sex/gender identity.

PARTICIPATION AND COMPETITION POLICY

In line with our values the BDSA will promote a zero-tolerance approach to transphobia. Transphobia includes discriminatory language or behaviour directed towards anyone who comes under the umbrella term of trans and anyone who may be perceived to be a trans person whether they are or not.

The following procedures are considered good practice for all BDSA members, and any other person involved in BDSA activities/events who identifies as trans.

- Treat the individual with dignity and respect. This especially includes respecting their chosen sex/gender identity and any pronouns that they use.
- Explain the BDSA policy to the individual and ask them how they wish to be included in BDSA activities/events.
- Respect the private and confidential nature of the individual's situation.
- Agree with the individual what information is to be shared with others and, if this is necessary, how this should be shared. In general, no information should be shared unless they have express permission from the person.
- Encourage the person to feedback any inappropriate language or behaviour from individuals so that it can be dealt with.
- No-one should ever be asked to provide evidence of sex/gender as it is an irrelevant factor in DanceSport. Trans participants do not need a gender recognition certificate (GRC) and should never be asked to produce one.

The BDSA and any other organisation operating under BDSA regulations must not restrict the participation of a trans person to compete or otherwise fully take part in BDSA activities/events. Any such restriction amounts to direct discrimination. The BDSA supports trans people to take part in all activities and events in the gender with which they identify. As DanceSport is not segregated by sex/gender there can be no unfair advantage in doing so. Local events run by clubs/regions should be organised on a self-identification basis. The BDSA will assist with this via its registration system upon request. Members can register with the BDSA in their chosen sex/gender. There is no requirement for medical or other documentation.

International competitions

The BDSA recognises that international governing body rules may differ from the BDSA policy. However, any international competitions held in the UK must comply with UK law if this differs from the international governing body regulations.



For events held outside the UK under BDSA rules, this policy will apply unless it conflicts with the national legislation of the host country in which case the national legislation will apply.

Trans employees/volunteers of BDSA

Any discrimination, unfair or unreasonable behaviour or treatment will not be tolerated, and action taken in accordance with best practice. BDSA encourages all employees and volunteers to tackle any such behaviours and to make it clear that it will not be tolerated.

Education

The BDSA is committed to educate the membership and others who are involved in BDSA activities/events about trans inclusion. If any clubs/schools/competition organisers need support in this area, BDSA will do all it can to assist.

Facilities

Organisers of activities/events run under BDSA auspices must ensure that all facilities are user friendly, well maintained and safe for all participants. Changing rooms and bathroom facilities need to ensure privacy so that all people can use them safely and comfortably. Some people may choose to use the facilities of their gender, while others may prefer private or gender-neutral facilities. Ask the participant which facilities they would prefer to use in a way that respects their privacy.

Where possible, the following should be considered to make facilities more welcoming:

- changing signage to be gender neutral.
- modifying changing rooms and bathrooms to create private spaces by hanging curtains or putting in room dividers.
- making some bathrooms gender neutral by removing urinals.
- making open showers private.
- providing single self-contained bathrooms.

Complaints

Any issues and concerns can be raised directly with the BDSA and will be dealt with under the BDSA complaints policy procedure.

Inclusion of other gender and sexual minorities

While this policy is specifically concerned with trans inclusion, the BDSA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policy means that all gender and sexual minorities (including those with natural variations of sexual development) must be treated in the same way.

Other relevant policies

BDSA Safeguarding Policy