

Guidance for LGBTQ Issues in The Pony Club



Key:

- LGBTQ+ = A term often used for a member of the community. The initialism means Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/Questioning.

This guidance is a framework for The Pony Club to support others who wish to, are in the process of, or have already changed, their gender identity. It aims to support members, coaches, volunteers and others in understanding the needs of individuals, and meeting the requirements of relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and the Gender Recognition Act 2004. Gender reassignment is one of nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 which also includes race, sex, age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, prohibiting unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation and ensuring that all are treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect.

It is recognised that the period of transition can be difficult and very complex for the individual and their family and requires sensitive support and assistance during this time. Many of the LGBTQ community have difficult experiences when they reveal their sexual orientation or identity, but support is available. This can be a very difficult time in their life and it is very important that care, support, and the opportunity to talk about issues, is available. The care, understanding and support of parents, carers, friends, family members, peers and their wider community is vital. Many will have questioned their sexuality or gender identity from a very young age, but are unlikely to have told anyone until they are older as they may have been afraid of the reactions and perceptions of others. This can lead to the individual suffering from lower self-esteem, depression or a sense of isolation.

Changes in legislation have ensured that LGBTQ people should enjoy, and can demand, the same rights as anyone else. Organisations have a responsibility to provide support and services for all, including members of the LGBTQ community. It is important that help is available to make sure everyone feels included and valued, and any bullying is challenge and prevented. This will include all members of The Pony Club who are from the LGBTQ community, but could also apply to family members, volunteers or coaches. All settings should aim to provide an atmosphere where everyone feels free to be themselves and to feel accepted by others, both adults and young people, in a safe environment. Individual Branches or Centres may feel that they would benefit from specific training on LGBTQ issues. If so, this could be facilitated via The Pony Club Office. Some reputable support agencies are listed at the end of this document.

Many people within and without the LGBTQ community may not want their families or others to be aware of their status, and this is their right. Presuming there is no coercion, imbalance of power or Safeguarding concerns in the relationships, there is no need to discuss the matter further. However, this is not the case for transgender issues. The changes will be easily visible and the individual may wish to be known by another name etc. It is important for the emotional security and wellbeing of the individual that their family and other close networks are aware and supportive, but this cannot be forced. Advice as to the location of help, information and support which could be made available to them if required would be helpful. (See list at the end of this document).

If a Member of The Pony Club community informs an official that they wish to be regarded as of another gender and that wish for others to be informed, the Branch or Centre must discuss with the individual the best way forward. If the individual is an adult this can be agreed with them and the agreed steps taken. If the individual is under 18, then the parents or other appropriate adults should be included in the discussion. If and when agreement is reached the Branch or Centre, in co-operation with the individual and the family (if appropriate) should carry out the agreed actions. These are likely to include:

- Informing the Branch/Centre community of the change in name of the person and the way this can be done
- Stressing the Anti-bullying policy and procedure in the event of any difficulties and ensure that it is used if there is any adverse comments in person, at events, online or in other circumstances. This is covered by the Equality Act and may need to be included into the Anti-Bullying procedures of the Branch / Centre. Any such activity must be stopped immediately and could result in disciplinary action, termination of membership or even prosecution depending on the level and frequency of abuse.
- Changing the records to note that "P C" will be known as "A B". Pony Club membership and contact records are not formal legal documents. There is no bar to changing them. For example, "*New, preferred name, formerly known as Former name*". Neither is there a need for there to be a Gender Recognition Certificate before this action is taken. The law has always allowed for people to be known by other names without a formal, legal change and is often used in reconstituted families.
- Discussing with the individual and the family (if appropriate) what measures will be appropriate for toilet/shower use etc. at Pony Club events. At many Pony Club events, the toilets are unisex (porta-cabins etc.) and so this would not be an issue, but if they are marked Male or Female, then the preferred option must be agreed.
- When considering camps, decisions should be made about sleeping options. It may be that the individual would be included with girls, boys, or alone as preferred and appropriate. Whatever the decision, this must be agreed with all the people involved as would normally be the case when allocating sleeping areas. There is no justification for refusing to allow the individual to join the camp presuming that they are eligible.
- If swimming is an activity either at camp or when taking part in Tetrathlon, agreement should be made as to the use of changing rooms etc.
- Agreeing the limits of confidentiality. The basics, e.g. names, are likely to be freely available, but there is no need to discuss other issues around the individual unless they wish for other people to be informed. This must be agreed in early discussions.
- If the individual is a member, there is no need to change The Pony Club activities that they may be permitted and encouraged to join. Regarding any activities, The Pony Club operates an unisex approach and so any change in preferred gender would not be an issue.

There is precedent here in the manner these issues are handled in schools. It is no longer unusual for a message to go out to all children and their families that, for example, Mr Jones will be known as Miss Jones next term or vice versa. After a very short time this ceases to be worthy of remark.

Some Sources of Support and Information

Family members	Childline - www.childline.org.uk
GP	Stonewall - www.stonewall.org.uk
Local Council Services	NSPCC - www.nspcc.org.uk
Youth Services	Rainbows
Education Services	ThinkUKnow - www.thinkuknow.co.uk
Specific LGBTQ services, help lines etc	Pride Sports – www.pridesports.org.uk