Every team member plays a huge role in making people feel part of the team. Take these steps to ensure everyone can give their all to the club and make the best of themselves.

1. **Don’t assume:** Avoid using language that makes assumptions about people’s gender identity and the gender of their partner. It’s far more inclusive to say things like ‘bring your partner to the game’ rather than ‘boyfriend or girlfriend’, and celebrate a ‘player of the match’ instead of ‘man’ or ‘woman’.

2. **Language:** If language focuses on someone’s identity in a negative way, it’s hurtful and abusive, even if it’s not directed at anyone around you at the time. This isn’t banter; it’s abuse. Slurs cause harm even if there’s no obvious ‘target’. LGBT people don’t need to hear the words to be hurt by them. They reinforce stereotypes, build barriers to understanding and stop the sporting arena being a welcoming place. If you feel safe to do so, challenge abusive language and behaviours. Remind people that this language is offensive and exclusionary.

3. **Respect difference:** LGBT is an umbrella term but the experiences of the people it covers can be very different, both in sport and in the wider world. Support everyone as the individuals they are. Talk to everyone about wellbeing and valuing team spirit, and be sensitive to differences in experience.

4. **Celebrate:** Talk to LGBT people on your team about how they want to be supported and championed. Small actions can go a long way, and there may be things they need that are specific to your environment and/or their own personal experiences. Teammates look out for each other, so make a habit of checking in with all of yours!

5. **Training:** Stonewall is launching bespoke Empowerment sessions for people involved in sport. These sessions will cover how to create inclusive environments, step up as an active ally, and challenge homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. **Register your interest** in participating in a future Sport Empowerment Programme.

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**TOP TIPS: BEING AN INCLUSIVE TEAMMATE**

**ERIN WALTERS-WILLIAMS**

Image credit: Paul Marvin

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I’ve been very lucky to find a home in the friendship of team sport. In a world which is still very much not a safe space for queer people, lacrosse has given me a safe environment where I can express myself physically and support my friends in a common goal.

The first people I came out to were teammates. They supported me the same way we supported each other on the pitch: with loyalty and laughter. When I couldn’t find family elsewhere, my lacrosse family stepped in.

I firmly believe such benefits should be available to everyone, and I love that Rainbow Laces visibly works to make sport a truly positive force for people.

Tweet [@StonewallUK](https://twitter.com/StonewallUK) and [#RainbowLaces](https://twitter.com/search?q=%23RainbowLaces)