



Gender participation policy

Introduction

The British American Football Association (BAFA) is the recognised National Governing Body for American football throughout the United Kingdom and is responsible for the development, promotion, and delivery of both flag and contact formats of the sport.

BAFA welcomes and supports all players, coaches and volunteers who identify as transgender, non-binary, and gender fluid.

Inclusion is one of the key beliefs that drives our decision making and planning as a governing body. This includes recognising diversity and valuing everyone's individual differences and we are committed to ensuring that we provide services fairly and without discrimination to all who want to participate in the sport of American football.

This policy aims to facilitate the participation in the United Kingdom of transgender and gender diverse people as players, coaches, and volunteers in American Football. It also looks to bring clarity on their eligibility.

We feel this policy is appropriate for British American Football right now, but BAFA will continue to engage with the UK Sports Councils, IFAF, other sports, participants and other key stakeholders and specialists to keep this topic under review. This includes learning from further research that may be instigated in this area.

Policy Summary

We commit to creating a safe and welcoming space for all members. We will ensure that all participants are able to take part in British American Football without fear or harassment.

BAFA has a zero tolerance approach to transphobia. BAFA and its employees, members and volunteers will ensure that any unacceptable behaviour and language is tackled promptly, and sanctions implemented to ensure compliance and the creation of a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment for transgender, non-binary and gender fluid participants. This means that all BAFA affiliated clubs must always:

- Welcome all trans, non-binary or gender fluid members as you would any other member and treat them with dignity and respect at all times.

- When welcoming players, explain BAFA's policy on gender eligibility for players. Provide contact details for registrations@britishamericanfootball.org to discuss any questions they may have.
- Don't make assumptions about any member's gender identity or related characteristics or stereotypes attached to that gender. Take the lead from the member - if presented with a preferred pronoun use them.
- 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.
- Support the individual with their choice of changing facilities. Where possible athletes should be able to use the changing room of their choice, however we recommend team managers work together with the athlete to discuss and agree a plan ahead of competition. This could include the use of a risk assessment to cover the needs and requirements of all players.
- Encourage the individual to feedback any inappropriate language or behaviour from other individuals so that it can be dealt with.
- Take prompt and decisive action against anyone in the organisation whose behaviour or language is inappropriate or offensive. Use your own disciplinary procedures to manage this or escalate this to BAFA where appropriate.
- Ensure your club Code of Conduct includes a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying/harassment of all people with protected characteristics.

Player participation and eligibility

Following guidance and input from the Equality Group of the five UK Sports Councils, IFAF, comparable sports and other key stakeholders, we have reviewed options for the participation of transgender people in American Football based on inclusion, fairness, and safety.

For National Leagues competitions in particular, we have considered the gender-affected nature of our sport for both contact and flag and the provisions that BAFA can make for a fair, safe, and inclusive competition structure for all players.

The [UK Sports Councils' Guidance for Transgender Inclusion in Domestic Sport](#) emphasises that inclusion of players originally recorded male at birth in female only sport cannot be balanced against considerations of safety and fairness. They believe this is due to retained advantages in strength, stamina and physique between the average person originally recorded male at birth and the average female.

In its review of available research, the UK Sports Councils found, with or without testosterone suppression, there was no appreciable loss of mass, muscle mass, or strength in transitioning males.

British American Football is a gender-affected sport with different categories of competition to ensure fairness and, to some extent, safety. Specifically, we offer women's only flag and contact American football. As a result, it is believed that fairness cannot be reconciled in female only competitions with self-identification in the female category.

Both our flag and contact formats of British American Football also offer mixed competition at all ages where individuals may participate regardless of their sex recorded at birth.

The following outlines eligibility requirements with regards to gender participation in British American Football in our domestic National Leagues, and international participation.

| Category | Eligibility requirements |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Leagues – Domestic competition | |
| Mixed Adult Contact | Available to all without any gender-based or sex-based eligibility criteria. Players may participate in the gender with which they identify. |
| Mixed Adult Flag | Available to all without any gender-based or sex-based eligibility criteria. Players may participate in the gender with which they identify. |
| U19 Contact | Available to all without any gender-based or sex-based eligibility criteria. Players may participate in the gender with which they identify. |
| U16 Contact | Available to all without any gender-based or sex-based eligibility criteria. Players may participate in the gender with which they identify. |
| Youth Flag | Available to all without any gender-based or sex-based eligibility criteria. Players may participate in the gender with which they identify. |
| Women's Contact | Players are only permitted to play in this category if the sex that was originally recorded at birth is female irrespective of gender identity. A transgender man, or a non-binary or gender fluid player can continue to play in female competition, provided no hormone treatment has commenced. |
| Women's Flag | Players are only permitted to play in this category if the sex that was originally recorded at birth is female irrespective of gender identity. A transgender man, or a non-binary or gender fluid player can continue to play in female competition, provided no hormone treatment has commenced. |
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| National Programme – International Competition | |
| GB Men's Contact | Players are permitted to play in this category if the player's sex recorded at birth is male. If the player's sex recorded at birth is female or the player identifies as transgender, non-binary or gender fluid or genderqueer, the player may participate provided the passport the player currently holds (with the issue date of that passport being on or before 31 December of the previous year) records their gender as male. |

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| GB Women's Contact | Players are only permitted to play in this category if the sex that was originally recorded at birth is female irrespective of gender identity. A transgender man, or a non-binary or gender fluid player can continue to play in female competition, provided no hormone treatment has commenced. |
| GB U17 Men | Players are permitted to play in this category if the player's sex recorded at birth is male. If the player's sex recorded at birth is female or the player identifies as transgender, non-binary or gender fluid or genderqueer, the player may participate provided the passport the player currently holds (with the issue date of that passport being on or before 31 December of the previous year) records their gender as male. |
| GB U19/U20 Men | Players are permitted to play in this category if the player's sex recorded at birth is male. If the player's sex recorded at birth is female or the player identifies as transgender, non-binary or gender fluid or genderqueer, the player may participate provided the passport the player currently holds (with the issue date of that passport being on or before 31 December of the previous year) records their gender as male. |
| GB Men's Flag | Players are permitted to play in this category if the player's sex recorded at birth is male. If the player's sex recorded at birth is female or the player identifies as transgender, non-binary or gender fluid or genderqueer, the player may participate provided the passport the player currently holds (with the issue date of that passport being on or before 31 December of the previous year) records their gender as male. |
| GB Women's Flag | Players are only permitted to play in this category if the sex that was originally recorded at birth is female irrespective of gender identity. A transgender man, or a non-binary or gender fluid player can continue to play in female competition, provided no hormone treatment has commenced. |
| GB Youth Flag Girls | Players are only permitted to play in this category if the sex that was originally recorded at birth is female irrespective of gender identity. A transgender man, or a non-binary or gender fluid player can continue to play in female competition, provided no hormone treatment has commenced. |
| GB Youth Flag Mixed | Available to all without any gender-based or sex-based eligibility criteria. Players may participate in the gender with which they identify. |
| GB Youth Flag Boys | Players are permitted to play in this category if the player's sex recorded at birth is male. If the player's sex recorded at birth is female or the player identifies as transgender, non-binary or gender fluid or genderqueer, the player may participate provided the passport the player currently holds (with the issue date of that passport being on or before 31 December of the previous year) records their gender as male. |

Frequently asked questions

What do we mean by a 'gender affected activity'?

A gender-affected activity is a sport, game or other activity of a competitive nature in circumstances in which the physical strength, stamina or physique of average persons of one sex would put them at a disadvantage compared to average persons of the other sex as competitors in events involving the activity.

What can transwomen do to stay involved in American football if they no longer meet the eligibility criteria to participation in women's only American football?

We appreciate that the introduction of this policy will mean that existing members may now no longer be able to participate in their chosen playing category. However, there are still opportunities to stay involved in British American football through our mixed contact and flag categories, or through taking on a different role such as a coach.

What about coaches and volunteers? Are there any gender eligibility requirements

British American Football welcomes and supports coaches and volunteers who identify as transgender, non-binary and gender fluid across all our formats of football. There are no gender eligibility requirements for these roles.

How will you know if people are adhering to BAFA's gender participation policy?

In terms of self-disclosure of sex, our approach is one of trust. We expect that players will follow the provisions of this policy and enter appropriate competitions.

A player's eligibility should not be challenged during a competition or event. Any questions about player eligibility should be made as a formal enquiry to British American Football via email to registrations@britishamericanfootball.org and this will be followed up as appropriate with the club and individual(s) concerned.

How do non-binary or gender fluid players whose sex was originally recorded as female at birth register for women's only American football?

In order to register to play with BAFA on our membership system, currently eligible non-binary and gender fluid participants must select 'female' as their gender in order to be able to buy a membership. Their gender may be changed back to non-binary or gender fluid after purchase. We are reviewing how we can adjust this in future to offer a more inclusive purchasing journey for our non-binary and gender fluid members. Please contact registrations@britishamericanfootball.org for support if required.

What should we do if we experience or observe transphobic behaviour within our sport?

We expect all our clubs and teams to be safe and welcoming spaces and will treat any transphobic behaviour as a serious disciplinary matter. Any instances should be reported to discipline@britishamericanfootball.org for review and investigation and where appropriate the club or relevant individual will be subject to disciplinary action according to BAFA's regulations and disciplinary processes.