



# Pride In Football

A Review of the inception of an alliance of  
English LGBT Fan Groups

With a Strategic Agenda for future work

February 2016

# Introduction

This Review and Strategy document is informed by preparations presentations and discussions from a meeting of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) fan groups – supporters of teams in the English FA Leagues – which was funded by the Premier League Fans' Fund and which was held at Villa Park on 2nd August 2015

## Background

### Numbers

The average crowd at a Premier League game in the season 2013-14 was 36,083, and, given the conservative demographic for the number of LGBT people in any population of at least 6%, it might be assumed that potentially 2,165 supporters in that average crowd (and possibly 2 players on the bench and pitch!) might be LGB or T.

And although some progress has been made by Football Authorities and police, homophobic abuse is still routinely directed during English League and Non League fixtures at players, officials and supporters. Homophobic language is used - outside as well as inside stadia – to demean opposition players and fans; recent examples include Arsenal Supporters Band 'The Away Boyz' demonising Ashley Cole as a 'Batty Boy' to the tune of Lily Allen's Smile as well as Ipswich fans taunting Norwich City fans at a Play-Off semi final with a chant about Justin Fashanu's sexual orientation and suicide.

Data from the Police reflect a recent growth in the reporting of homophobic and transphobic Hate Crime; and an assumption that both are underreported.

And Kick It Out who collate national reports of discrimination at League games suggest that incidents of LGBT phobia and hatred are almost certainly under reported – only 8% of reports to KIO last season related to Sexual Orientation.

### Issues – The need for Club/Football Authority action and for LGBT Fan Groups

In general, exposure to unchecked vile and offensive language and behaviour makes for an unpleasant matchday experience for all supporters and is likely to engender concerns for personal safety and that of others.

In particular, for LGBT fans, a lack of visible drive to solicit and investigate complaints and exact necessary sanctions may mean they:

- Do not feel safe or welcome or be able to be themselves; for instance being comfortable to be familiar with a partner.

- May not feel respected by club staff
- Can feel vulnerable; home and/or away and en route
- Are denied the opportunity to socialise with other LGBT Fans – home and/or away - being reluctant to be 'Out' without a safe space or peers.

A recent Stonewall study found a significant correlation between the influence of being 'Out' at work on productivity; in short people perform better when they're able to be themselves. Extrapolated to the terraces that suggests 'Out' fans can offer better support to their team.

It's also possible that members of LGBT Fan Groups may have campaigning skills of use to other supporter groups at their clubs – for many, their activism over time has helped progress the achievement of equal rights for LGBT people.

## **Timeline – Key Elements in Development of LGBT Fan Groups – Presented by Pride Sports' Lou Englefield**

1989 GFSN formed in UK

1990 Justin Fashanu 'comes out'

2001 Herta Junxx, Herta BSC lesbian & gay fan group formed in Germany

2003 Paris Foot Gay formed in France

2005 English FA hosts summit to tackle homophobia

2006 QFF (umbrella for queer fans groups) formed in Germany

Penya Blaugrana de Gais i Lesbianes (Barcelona's LGBT fan group) established

EGLSF holds workshop on homophobia at UEFA Conference and homophobia is included in FARE's publication for UEFA 'Tackling Racism in Club Football'

2007 Ground Regulations updated to include homophobic abuse

2008 Justin Campaign launched

2009 EGLSF holds first European fans network meeting in Barcelona

2010 Fußballfans Gegen Homophobie launched in Germany

FA launches 'anti-homophobia' short film

EGLSF hosts two English football strategic planning days in Manchester & London

Football v Homophobia is launched in the UK by the Justin Campaign

2011 EGLSF hosts second fans' meeting in Berlin

Anton Hysen 'comes out'

Liverpool FC launches Supporters Committee with LGBT representative

2012 English FA launches its action plan "Opening Doors & Joining In"

PFA launches poster campaign for professional clubs

Gay Gooners is formed in the UK in February – with official recognition from Arsenal FC

Pride Sports takes over the Football v Homophobia campaign

Liverpool FC is first club to participate in a Pride March

2013 Rainbow Toffees formed in UK

Robbie Rogers 'comes out'

GFSN 'Brighton Report' Launched

International Football Fans v Homophobia conference held in Manchester (Pride Sports & FARE)

Just A Ball Game? formed

Rainbow Laces Campaign launched

2013 Roze Rêgâhs, the first LGBT fan club in the Netherlands is established

2014 Thomas Hitzlsperger 'comes out'

Casey Stoney 'comes out'

Proud Canaries, Rainbow Tractors, Canal Street Blues, Proud Lilywhites launched; with official recognition from their clubs

Swansea City LGBT launched on Twitter

Pride in Football event held in London

UEFA hosts Respect Diversity Conference

Football v Homophobia/FARE strategic planning day in Berlin

2015 FA hosts two LGBT Inclusion Workshops

‘Fans v Homophobia’ held in Manchester

LGBT Pies, Proud & Palace, Pride of Irons, Proud Pirates, Fratton Fever, Proud Valiants, FC United LGBTQ, Foxes Pride, launched – all with recognition from their clubs

Fake ‘Charlton Rainbows’ and ‘Blues Rainbows’ accounts appeared on Twitter – both Tweet false allegations of homophobic attacks

Pride in Football approach Football Authorities and Police for action over ‘Away Boyz’ episode

FARE holds Internal Conference at Camp Nou

## **Lessons From Rugby League – review by Sarah Williams; Equality and Diversity Manager RFL**

The RFL is widely acknowledged as having lead the way amongst UK sporting Governing Bodies in making a comprehensive organisational commitment to Equity and Diversity and:

- Has achieved the Intermediate level of the Sport England Equality Standard: a Framework for Sport
- Is the first and only Governing Body of Sport to be ranked in Stonewall’s Top 100 Employers
- Is a member of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme

- With Championship side Sheffield Eagles, promoted the anti homophobia Tackle IT! campaign; the Eagles became the first mainstream UK sports team to play a fixture wearing an anti homophobia logo
- Ensured all UK Super League teams signed up to the Government's Charter to tackle homophobia and transphobia in sport
- In response to the 'coming out' and subsequent abuse of player Gareth Thomas - developed and distributed guidance material for clubs on tackling homophobia issues effectively.
- Initiated the Rainbow Forum, an online group open to all LGBT staff, players, coaches, match officials, club staff and volunteers
- Commissioned research into the perceptions and experiences of young LGBT people in relation to Rugby League

This pioneering endorsement of LGBT focussed anti discrimination and inclusion principles was achieved with ownership throughout the RFL from the Chief Executive down.

## **What Can LGBT Fan Groups Do?**

The recent exponential growth of English football fan groups made up of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender supporters may in part be a response to the lack of overt and active LGBT equality agenda on the part of National Footballing Governing Bodies - in marked contrast to their counterparts in Rugby. The movement promoting inclusion and countering prejudice in Football stadia currently is being lead from the bottom-up rather than the top down. But once engaged with club ownership and machinery much can be and has been achieved:

**LGBT Fan Groups can:**

- Through banners, Social Media, other media make the LGBT Fan base visible
- Establish a rapport with key staff; SLO, Head Steward, Safeguarding Manager
- Ensure their clubs arrange LGBT inclusion and discrimination training of stewards and other staff, improve signage, use social media and

match day programme to communicate commitment to challenging discrimination and hatred.

- Publicise Club, KIO and TrueVision Reporting mechanisms
- Work with the club to encourage fan incident reporting and see that investigations are conducted effectively (in conjunction with the police if necessary) and with appropriate penalties.
- Encourage Clubs to use their own sanctions for LGBT phobic incidents not actionable under the law as hate crimes or breaches of the Public Order Act.
- Require clubs to share statistics, including outcomes, for reports of relevant abusive behaviour
- Form alliances with other groups at their club – Trusts for example
- Arrange social events and promote safe spaces (including in their club) to meet up
- Link up with other LGBT groups for away games
- Read, use and distribute the LGBT Fan Group Toolbox

## **Why Is Pride In Football Needed?**

Several organisations address issues of Inclusion and Discrimination in football but #PIF has no other client group focus, is run by fans for fans and has no role other than to represent the interests of LGBT Supporters.

In September 2014, Gay Gooners, Proud Canaries, Canal Street Blues and Proud Lilywhites, LGBT Fans Groups officially recognised by their clubs, formed an alliance to share good practice in promoting inclusion and combatting sexuality and gender identity based discrimination in UK football stadia, with the additional aim of inspiring development of similar groups at other clubs. The alliance sought advice from existing LGBT campaigning organisations within UK Football and formed key relationships with Fans For Diversity and Football V Homophobia. Both of these organisations pooled resources to facilitate a conference delivered in partnership by the three campaigns, exploring the need for and encouraging the growth of, LGBT supporters groups. There are currently 16 active groups in the Pride In Football Alliance:

Canal St Blues (Manchester City) Chelsea LGBT (Chelsea) FC United of Manchester LGBTQ, Foxes Pride (Leicester City) Fratton Fever (Portsmouth)

Gay Gooners (Arsenal) Liverpool FC LGBT, LGBT Pies (Nott's County) Pride of Irons (West Ham) Proud and Palace (Crystal Palace) Proud Canaries (Norwich City) Proud Lilywhites (Spurs) Proud Pirates (Bristol Rovers) Proud Valiants (Charlton) Rainbow Toffees (Everton) Rainbow Tractors (Ipswich Town)

But there are still 11 Premier League and 68 Football League clubs with no LGBT supporters' group available to facilitate dialogue and vouch for the needs of that fan base. Some additional accounts appearing to represent LGBT Fans exist on Twitter but it's not clear whether they are representative or recognized.

To date Pride in Football has:

- Helped develop groups and mediate their agendas
- Offered advice - many issues in dealing with club officers and mechanisms are similar
- Provided guidance and direction to help solve problems
- Provided a channel for dialogue with Football's governing bodies and formed collaborative relationships with other key campaigning organisations; FSF, FVH, Kick It Out
- Presented a collective influence and response to Media and other organisations
- Been involved in development of projects to further progress the climate for LGBT fans through conferences, training events and research
- Reached out to potential organisers of new groups including some in the Scottish Leagues and MLS
- Exercised the potential to legitimise groups – (Charlton Rainbows/Birmingham Rainbows)
- Formed links with relevant International agencies; QFF, FARE

## **How Should Pride in Football Focus this season?**

Engage and Foster new groups

- Continue to support the development of LGBT Supporter Groups (with nascent groups potentially at present at Aston Villa, Birmingham City, Cardiff and Coventry City)



- Develop systems for data collection and maintaining a register of Groups' members interests and skills
- Characterise each of the sixteen and future member groups in a #PIF Directory including contact emails, Logo, Twitter and Facebook links, status of current engagement with their club, update for new members and regularly review as groups develop. (See appended Fan Groups pages)
- Access seminar, conference and training event places for members.
- Ensure the dissemination to all relevant organisations and stakeholders of the LGBT Fan Group Toolkit.

### Influence and respond to relevant Policy

- Clarify key contacts with Footballing Authorities to ensure effective communication
- Establish links with relevant bodies to ensure that the LGBT Fan perspective is reflected in future policy, decision making machinery and training initiatives
- Maintain working rapport with KIO, FVH, FSF and individual clubs where appropriate
- Work with the Governing Bodies and Police Authorities to produce a solution to difficulties in determining 'Jurisdiction' when offences occur outside stadia

### Campaigning and Research

- Access and analyse the progress and outcome of reports and complaints of LGBT related phobias and abuse at Premier League and Football League clubs in liaison with Kick It Out, the Police and individual clubs
- Explore and promote the potential for an action research project monitoring the impact of the growth of LGBT fan groups on the match experience of supporters in general, and recording over time the proportional game attendance of LGBT supporters
- In conjunction with Footballing Authorities, engage allies and the media in marking the new alliance and its role at a significant Launch Event
- Appoint a working group to consider and sketch outlines for a National Awareness Campaign

- Consider a response to the effective exclusion of English LGBT supporters from World Cups to be held in Russia and Qatar

## Organisational Tasks

- Agree roles and responsibilities needed to supplement those of the existing Chair, Treasurer and Secretary posts
- Review the Constitution
- Agree membership eligibility and voting rights
- Agree a meeting schedule
- Conduct an AGM and review the first year's progress
- Develop social media and web presence including a virtual community group

## Conclusion

The planning day for Pride In Football and its member groups saw an unfavourable comparison between the Governing Body of Rugby League in this country and that of Football in terms of their respective agendas for engendering LGBT Diversity and Inclusion for supporters of their sports teams and it appeared that Football's LGBT fan groups were filling a vacuum left by administrators. Although this is to an extent an indictment of the slow progress in implementing anti discriminatory measures on English and Welsh terraces it's also a measure of the effectiveness of supporters as a force - their potential to transcend individual difference to achieve change.

But ownership and engagement on the part of the Governing Bodies is needed now to ensure that progress in improving the match-day environment for LGBT supporters nationwide is systematic and comprehensive; by translating the strategic direction and long, medium and short term goals described here into a binding agenda.

## Fan Group Pages (Incomplete)

Name of Club and logo	Name of Fans Forum and logo
Aston Villa	
Club Diversity / LGBT lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)	Fans forum Chair / lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)
Club reporting line number	
Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by club	Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by fans forum
<p>Long terms commitment to trying to set up a fans group since 2007</p> <p>Diversity training for support</p> <p>Positive engagement with FVH</p> <p>Information on website</p> <p>Villa always send representative to LGBT conferences</p> <p>Attended Pride events</p> <p>Supportive of LGBT fans</p>	
Future / planned activities	Future / planned activities
<p>Communicate work around LGBT engagement and tackling homophobia across the staff and fans as many do not know what good work has been done</p>	

Name of Club and logo	Name of Fans Forum and logo
Manchester City	Canal Street Blues
Club Diversity / LGBT lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)	Fans forum Chair / lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)
Club reporting line	
Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by club	Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by fans forum
<p>Support FVH  CEO positive but needs to permutated to staff  Man City 10 point plan  T Shirts  Fan zone  Home and away  Academy players all received training  Village FC  Attend Pride  Fly the rainbow flag  Pride Banner  Articles and information in match programmes</p>	<p>Attended pride  Active social media presence  Away ticket initiative engages fans  Designated roles  Charitable element  Network  1894 Womens team  Support for the womens team  Influencing other fans at matches  Challenging anti social behaviour</p> <p>If we give them a list the club will do it!</p>
Future / planned activities	Future / planned activities
<p>Communicate work around LGBT engagement and tackling homophobia across the staff and fans as many do not know what good work has been done</p>	<p>Club needs a new list from today!  Widen remit to include fighting for a living wage or other equalities movements  Increase awareness of</p>

	<p>projects and FVH as Paddy Power achieved through Rainbow Laces campaign</p> <p>Form allegiances between LGBT and other groups - we all have different passions and interests. Need to break down misunderstanding between groups</p>
--	---

Name of Club and logo	Name of Fans Forum and logo
Arsenal	Gay Gooners
Club Diversity / LGBT lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)	Fans forum Chair / lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)
Club reporting line	
Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by club	Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by fans forum
<p>Banner in stadium  Rainbow Laces video which is also played on the away coaches every hour  Meeting spaces provided  Funded Pride march banner  LGBT representative of committee  Gay Gooners link on AFC website on supporters page  Arsene Wenger made a statement on inclusion</p>	<p>350 members with 30% women  LGBT history month electric rainbow  Pride marches  Meet up with other London LGBT fan clubs (quizzes and football matches)  Invite LGBT away fans to watch the game  Christmas socials  Brazil press releases  Advertising in gay press</p>
Future / planned activities	Future / planned activities
	<p>Trying to engage and attract younger people as members. Not much success so far</p>

Name of Club and logo	Name of Fans Forum and logo
Liverpool	
Club Diversity / LGBT lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)	Fans forum Chair / lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)
Club reporting line	
Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by club	Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by fans forum
<p>Inclusion banners very visible</p> <p>Zero tolerance to any abusive language or behaviour</p> <p>2 members of the senior management present on at the supports committee on a 3 monthly basis</p> <p>Raised rainbow flag at stadium for LGBT history month</p> <p>Support Pride parade with banner LFC Ladies joined parade</p>	<p>LGBT supporters had Colin Farrell tweet his support for LFC LGBT supporters</p> <p>Attended pride events</p> <p>LGBT rep on supporters committee</p>
Future / planned activities	Future / planned activities

--	--

Name of Club and logo	Name of Fans Forum and logo
Norwich City	Proud Canaries
Club Diversity / LGBT lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)	Fans forum Chair / lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)
<p>Supporter Liaison - Stephen Graham Stephen.graham@canaries.co.uk</p> <p>Safeguarding Manager - Tony Hedges tony.hedges@canaries.co.uk</p>	<p>Contact: info@proudcanaries.co.uk</p> <p>Organiser: Di Cunningham di@proudcanaries.co.uk</p> <p>Facebook.com/Proudcanaries @proudcanaries</p>
Club reporting line	
<p>txt 07931235513 or email safety@canaries.co.uk and/or use the @kickitout app or phone 0800 169 9414</p>	
Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by club	Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by fans forum
<p>CEO accessible - at meetings and via email Involved in training front line staff, schools and stewards launched on the pitch High visibility - banner, Pitch parade (twice) has resulted in increased reporting and awareness of LGBT fans at the games Sanctions in place and action taken for transgressors last season Patrons S Fry and Amal Fashanu Programme features</p>	<p>Access to CEO Co-opted onto Supporters Trust Meet up with other clubs' groups at matches Support for FVH day of action Links with other Supporters Groups - eg safe standing, Forces Canaries, Amsterdam Canaries Co opted onto Supporters Trust and active member Met with Board members Tweets endorsed and Retweeted by Club and</p>



<p>Electronic score board messages  FVH Day of action  Rainbow laces worn by 4 players  3 players wore and signed FVH TShirts  1 player follows FVH on twitter</p>	<p>patrons  Presence in local news and sports media including punditry!  Links made with other Local, National and Global groups campaigning f on inclusion and discrimination issues</p>
<p>Future / planned activities</p>	<p>Future / planned activities</p>
	<p>Signage improvements  Mascot Captain Canary at Pride</p>

Name of Club and logo	Name of Fans Forum and logo
Spurs	Proud Lilywhites
Club Diversity / LGBT lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)	Fans forum Chair / lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)
SLO/Chief Exec	Chris Pauoros
Club reporting line	
Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by club	Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by fans forum
<p>Provide a conference space for FARE Q &amp; A session</p> <p>Banner and flag present at games</p> <p>Provide space outside stadium for LGBT group</p> <p>4 players wore rainbow laces</p>	<p>Meet with senior management</p> <p>Banner and flag present at games</p> <p>Season of action game:</p> <p>5 a side football game</p> <p>Quiz night</p> <p>Space outside stadium to promote and have a presence</p> <p>Work with THFCST</p> <p>TH community foundation diversity project</p>
Future / planned activities	Future / planned activities

Name of Club and logo	Name of Fans Forum and logo
Ipswich Town	Rainbow Tractors
Club Diversity / LGBT lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)	Fans forum Chair / lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)
Club reporting line	
Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by club	Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by fans forum
Initial support to set up the fans group	Set up the Rainbow Tractors fans group Created a banner Attended several pride marches Twitter and face book 728 followers
Future / planned activities	Future / planned activities
	Club recognition - Need support to get the club to progress beyond setting up the fans group (LFSF help?) Steward training Growth - finding active supporters

Name of Club and logo	Name of Fans Forum and logo
West Ham United	Pride of Irons
Club Diversity / LGBT lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)	Fans forum Chair / lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)
Club reporting line	
Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by club	Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by fans forum
Club supportive at start but now???	Active on social media Committee now in place 2 meetings held to date Attended Pride
Future / planned activities	Future / planned activities
	Social aspect on match days Help develop PIF Branding flags, banners and T Shirts? Need to work with the club to secure more active buy in and support

FAN PAGE TEMPLATE

Name of Club and logo	Name of Fans Forum and logo
Club Diversity / LGBT lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)	Fans forum Chair / lead and contact details (including website, Facebook and twitter)
Club reporting line	
Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by club	Summary of key LGBT initiatives supported by or initiated by fans forum
Future / planned activities	Future / planned activities