INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Football brings together people from different backgrounds, communities, identities and experiences. Across Wales, the Football Association of Wales' football family includes Players, Coaches, Referees, volunteers, Club Officials, parents, supporters and many others who make the game possible.

The FAW is committed to creating welcoming, safe and inclusive environments where everyone has the opportunity to participate, contribute and feel that they belong. Language plays an important part in achieving this ambition. The words we use can demonstrate respect, build connections and challenge stereotypes, but they can also exclude people, reinforce prejudice and cause harm.

This guide supports the FAW's wider equality, diversity and inclusion work by helping everyone involved in football understand inclusive language, recognise discriminatory terminology and respond appropriately when language causes harm.

This resource will help you to:

- Understand why inclusive language matters in football and the impact words can have on individuals and communities.
- Recognise appropriate terminology and identify examples of outdated, exclusive, discriminatory or potentially offensive language.
- Communicate respectfully with people whose identities or experiences differ from your own and contribute to a Welsh football culture where everyone feels welcome, respected and able to belong.
- Challenge discriminatory language and respond constructively when an incident occurs.
- Learn from mistakes without becoming defensive or avoiding important conversations. Educate teammates, colleagues, volunteers, parents and supporters about inclusive language.





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INCLUSIVE CULTURE

Building A More Inclusive Culture

Everyone has a role in shaping the culture of football. Whether we are giving instructions on the training pitch, speaking to a referee, communicating in a team group chat, addressing supporters or welcoming someone to a Club for the first time, our language helps set the tone.

Inclusive language is not about expecting everyone to know every term or never make a mistake. It is about approaching others with respect, being willing to learn and recognising that our words can affect how safe, valued and welcome someone feels. By using language thoughtfully and challenging discrimination when it occurs, we can help make football a place where people are respected for who they are.

Language Can Shape The Football Environment

Words are never just words when they affect how people are treated. A discriminatory insult, a joke based on someone's identity or a repeated assumption about who belongs in football or where someone ‘is really from’ can undermine confidence, damage relationships, and discourage people from participating.

For someone who has experienced prejudice or discrimination, a seemingly casual comment may reinforce a wider pattern of exclusion. For others, the same language may signal that discriminatory behaviour is accepted within a team, club or crowd. This can affect not only the person directly targeted but also teammates, families, officials and others who witness it.

By contrast, respectful language can help build trust, strengthen relationships and demonstrate that everyone is valued. The language we use is one practical way to bring the FAW's commitment to inclusion into everyday football.

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INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

What Do We Mean By Inclusive Language?

‘Words That Welcome Rather Than Exclude’

Inclusive language is language that recognises and respects people's identities, experiences and differences. It avoids unnecessary assumptions, harmful stereotypes and expressions that demean or marginalise individuals or groups.

In football, this can mean addressing a team as “everyone” rather than assuming who is present, describing people in ways they recognise and accept, using someone's correct name and pronouns, and avoiding language that associates ability, identity or background with weakness or inferiority.

Inclusive language does not mean avoiding every difficult conversation. It means communicating clearly and respectfully while recognising that everyone deserves dignity, whether they are playing, officiating, volunteering or watching the game.





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IMPACT

“I Was Only Joking” Does Not Remove The Impact.

Discriminatory language is sometimes dismissed as banter, humour, frustration or something that has always been said in football. A person may not intend to cause harm, but the impact of their words can still be hurtful, intimidating or exclusionary.

Intent matters when understanding a situation, but it does not automatically excuse the behaviour. If someone explains that a term or comment has offended, the appropriate response is to listen, reflect and consider the impact rather than immediately defending the intention behind it.

Football should be an environment where humour and friendship bring people together, not where someone's identity becomes a reason to ridicule or humiliate them.

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CHAMPION INCLUSION

Small Actions Can Make A Meaningful Difference.

You do not need to be an equality specialist to help create an inclusive football environment. Everyone can model respectful language, avoid repeating harmful stereotypes or jokes, use appropriate terminology and speak up when discriminatory comments occur.

Coaches can set clear expectations during training. Captains and senior Players can influence team culture. Referees and Club Officials can reinforce standards of behaviour. Parents and supporters can help children understand respect, while Club leaders can ensure that inclusive language is reflected in policies, communications and everyday practice.

Being an ally means taking practical action, not simply agreeing with inclusion in principle. Sometimes that means correcting your own language; at other times, it means calmly challenging a comment, supporting someone affected or reporting an incident through the appropriate Club or FAW procedures.





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LEARNING & GROWTH

Nobody Knows Everything

Language evolves as understanding grows and people share their experiences. It is reasonable to have questions or be unfamiliar with certain terminology. Fear of saying the wrong thing, however, should not prevent us from learning or engaging respectfully with others.

If you use an inappropriate term unintentionally and someone corrects you, listen carefully, acknowledge the mistake, apologise where appropriate and make an effort to use the preferred term in future. You do not need to make the conversation about your embarrassment or ask the affected person to reassure you.

At the same time, a willingness to learn does not mean every incident should be dismissed as an innocent mistake. Repeated behaviour, refusal to listen or the deliberate use of discriminatory language requires a more direct response and may need to be reported.

What If I Get It Wrong?

Respond with respect, not defensiveness. If someone tells you that your language has caused offence, pause and listen. Thank them for raising the issue, acknowledge the impact and ask for clarification if you genuinely do not understand. Where appropriate, offer a sincere apology and use different language going forward. For example, you could say: “Thank you for explaining that. I did not realise the term could have that impact. I am sorry, and I will be more mindful in future.”

If you hear someone else make a mistake, consider the context and respond proportionately. An opportunity to educate may be appropriate, particularly where the person is open to learning. However, serious or repeated discriminatory behaviour should not be treated as merely a learning opportunity when formal action or reporting is necessary.

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GUIDE INSTRUCTIONS

How to Use This Resource

This guide provides examples of inclusive terminology and language that may be outdated, disrespectful or discriminatory. It is intended to support understanding and encourage respectful communication across Welsh football.

The guide has been developed with the football context and environment in mind, and the examples are not exhaustive, and there is not always one universally preferred term. A word may be acceptable in one context but offensive in another, particularly where it is used as an insult, stereotype or expression of hostility.

Some individuals and communities also use terms to describe themselves that others should not automatically use for them. You should always try to use language thoughtfully and in context.

Use the guide as a starting point for learning rather than a rigid checklist. Consider the context, listen to individuals, respect their preferences and seek reliable guidance when you are unsure.





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Understanding The Language Categories

Inclusive Terms And Terms To Avoid

Each of the following sections is organised around a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. The inclusive terminology lists provide examples of respectful language and brief explanations. The “Avoid” lists highlight examples that are outdated, derogatory, based on harmful assumptions or commonly used as slurs.

Some examples are partially obscured with asterisks to avoid unnecessarily reproducing offensive language while still helping readers recognise it. These examples are included for educational awareness, not as an invitation to repeat the terms. If you do not understand any of the obscured words, please get in touch.

The presence of a term in an “Avoid” list does not mean that every use has identical legal implications. Context, meaning, impact and the circumstances of an incident matter. Where behaviour may breach FAW regulations, follow the relevant reporting and disciplinary procedures.

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IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

This document is intended as a guide to inclusive and respectful language in football from a UK context, including terminology associated with characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010.

The definitions and examples are not exhaustive and should not be treated as legal advice. Language evolves over time, and terminology that is widely used today may change as awareness and understanding develop.

Some examples of language included are derogatory, potentially discriminatory or offensive. They are presented in a limited and partially obscured form for educational purposes and to raise awareness.

Language Is Personal And Continues To Evolve

The definitions provided offer general guidance. EDI language is highly personal, and often contested, individuals may also choose different terms to describe themselves.

Always respect people's preferences and avoid making assumptions about how they identify. Continue learning, listen to people's experiences and recognise that inclusive language must evolve alongside our understanding.





AGE



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AGE INTRO

Age And Inclusive Language

Respect People At Every Stage Of Life

Football connects people of different ages, from young children taking their first steps in the game to older adults who continue to play, coach, officiate and volunteer.

Language should not suggest that someone is less capable, less important or less deserving of respect because of their age.

Avoid stereotypes that portray young people as irresponsible or older people as incapable of change. Speak to people respectfully, recognise individual experience and avoid using age as a shortcut for judging ability, attitude or commitment.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Adult: A neutral term for a person who is no longer a child.

Child: Appropriate when referring to someone under 18 in general contexts.

Older person/older people: Respectful terms for people in later life.

Young person/young people: Appropriate for referring to younger people, particularly adolescents and young adults.

Avoid

“The old”/“the elderly”: Can reduce people to their age or suggest that they are one uniform group. “Older people” is often more respectful.

“Kids”: May be acceptable informally, but “children” or “young people” is often more appropriate in formal club communications.

“Past it”/“too old to play”: Dismissive phrases that assume age determines ability.

“Youths”: Can sound impersonal or negative when used to describe young people collectively. Choose “young people” where appropriate.



DISABILITY



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DISABILITY INTRO

Disability And Inclusive Language

Recognise People, Not Limitations

Disabled people are part of every level of Welsh football, including as Players, Coaches, Referees, staff, volunteers and supporters. Disability can be visible or non-visible and may affect people in different ways. Avoid making assumptions about someone's abilities, independence, health or support needs.

Preferences around disability language differ. Some people prefer identity-first language, such as “disabled person”, while others prefer person-first language, such as “person with a disability”.

Where possible, respect the language an individual uses for themselves. Focus on access, participation and removing barriers rather than portraying disabled people as ‘problems to be fixed’.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Accessible facilities: Facilities designed or adapted to enable disabled people to use them.

Autistic person/person with autism: Use the individual's preferred terminology.

Blind person/person with sight loss/visually impaired : Use the term preferred by the individual.

Deaf person/person who is deaf or hard of hearing: Respect individual preferences. Some people identify with Deaf culture and use a capital D.

Disabled person/person with a disability: Both forms are used; ask or follow individual preference.

Learning disability: A recognised term for a disability affecting intellectual ability and everyday functioning. Do not confuse this with a specific learning difficulty.

Mental health condition: A respectful, general term where relevant and appropriate.

Neurodivergent person: Often used by people whose cognitive functioning differs from what is considered typical, including some autistic people and people with ADHD or dyslexia.

Non-disabled person: A neutral term when describing someone who is not disabled.

Wheelchair user: A respectful term that does not imply the person is confined or restricted to the chair.

Avoid

“Able-bodied” as a blanket contrast: Not always accurate because disability is not limited to physical impairment. “Non-disabled” is often more appropriate.

“Confined to a wheelchair”/“wheelchair-bound”: Implies restriction. A wheelchair can enable mobility and independence.

“Cripple”/“spastic”: Derogatory terms that should not be used to describe disabled people.

“Mentally handicapped”/“retarded”: Outdated and offensive terms. Use the specific condition or an appropriate general term.

“Normal people”: Can imply disabled people are abnormal. Use “non-disabled people” when that distinction is relevant.

“Suffers from”/“victim of” a disability: Can make assumptions about a person's experience. Describe the specific condition or use the individual's preferred language.

“The blind”/“the disabled”: Can reduce people to one characteristic. “Blind people” or “disabled people” is often more respectful.



GENDER REASSIGNMENT



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GENDER REASSIGNMENT INTRO

Gender Identity And Inclusive Language

Respect People's Identities And Dignity

Gender identity concerns a person's own understanding of their gender. Some people's gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth, while others are transgender or identify in another way.

Gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation are distinct concepts and should not be treated as interchangeable.

Football conversations about gender can be sensitive, especially where eligibility rules or participation policies apply. Respectful language remains important in all circumstances. Avoid personal attacks, derogatory labels, speculation about someone's body or medical history, or assumptions about an individual's identity.

Where eligibility questions arise, follow the relevant FAW rules and policies rather than relying on personal opinion or speculation.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Cisgender/cis: Describes a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender identity: A person's own sense of their gender.

Gender expression: How someone expresses their gender, for example through clothing, appearance or behaviour.

Non-binary: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity is not exclusively male or female.

Pronouns: Words used to refer to someone, such as “he”, “she” or “they”. Use the pronouns a person asks you to use and never assume.

Transgender/trans person: A person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Trans man: A man who is transgender.

Trans woman: A woman who is transgender.

Transition: The process through which a trans person may take steps to live in accordance with their gender identity. Each person's experience is different.

Avoid

“Biological man”/“biological woman” as a label for a trans person: These phrases can be imprecise and inflammatory. Where relevant, use precise language and follow applicable rules or guidance.

“It”: Do not refer to a person as “it”. Use their name and appropriate pronouns.

“Sex change”: An outdated phrase that oversimplifies the varied experiences of transition. “Transition” or the specific procedure, if relevant, is more appropriate.

“Tr*nny/“sh*m*le”/”he-she”: Derogatory terms targeting trans people. Do not use them to describe or address someone.

“Transgendered”: Generally avoid this term. “Transgender person” or “trans person” is preferred.

“Real man”/“real woman” used to invalidate someone's identity: Demeaning language that can contribute to hostility and exclusion.



MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP



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MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP INTRO

Marriage, Civil Partnership And Inclusive Language

Do Not Make Assumptions About People's Relationships

Football Clubs include people with different relationship and family circumstances. Inclusive language avoids assuming that everyone is married, heterosexual or in a particular type of relationship. This matters when communicating with Players, staff, parents, partners and families.

Use neutral terms in Club communications unless more specific language is relevant. Recognise that not everyone wishes to share personal information about their relationship, and avoid jokes or comments that demean someone because they are married, unmarried, divorced or in a civil partnership.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Civil partner: A person in a legally recognised civil partnership.

Husband/wife/spouse: Appropriate terms where they reflect the person's relationship and preferred wording.

Partner: A useful, inclusive term that does not assume marital status or gender.

Relationship: A neutral term when the specific status is not relevant.

Avoid

“Just a girlfriend”/“just a boyfriend”: Can dismiss the importance of someone's relationship. Use the person's preferred description.

“Old maid”/“spinster”: Dismissive, gendered terms for unmarried women.

Assuming everyone has a husband or wife: Ask about a person's partner or use neutral language where appropriate.

Jokes that demean unmarried, divorced or partnered people: Avoid language that treats someone's relationship status as a reason for ridicule.



PREGNANCY & MATERNITY



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PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY INTRO

Pregnancy, Maternity And Inclusive Language

Support People Through Different Life Experiences

Pregnancy, maternity and parenting can affect people's experiences of football, whether they are Players, Coaches, Officials, staff, volunteers or supporters.

Inclusive communication avoids assumptions about someone's plans, circumstances, physical ability or family arrangements.

Respect privacy and allow people to decide what they wish to share. When discussing participation, return to sport or practical support, focus on individual needs and relevant policies rather than making assumptions about what someone can or cannot do.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Expectant parent/pregnant person: Inclusive terms where the gender of the person is not relevant or is not known. “Pregnant woman” is also appropriate for someone who identifies that way.

Maternity leave: Appropriate when referring to maternity-related leave and entitlements.

Parent/guardian/carer: Useful terms when referring to the adults responsible for supporting a child.

Parental leave: A broader term where the specific type of leave does not need to be stated.

Postpartum/after childbirth: Useful terms when discussing the period after giving birth.

Avoid



“She will not be able to play now”: Assumes ability or decisions based on pregnancy. Discuss individual circumstances and relevant guidance.

“When are you having children?”: An intrusive question that assumes someone wants or can have children.

“Mum and dad” as the only family model: Can exclude families with different structures. “Parents” or “guardians” is often more inclusive.

Jokes or negative comments about pregnancy, breastfeeding or maternity leave: Can undermine dignity and contribute to discriminatory treatment.



ETHNICITY & RACE



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ETHNICITY AND RACE INTRO

Ethnicity, Race And Inclusive Language

Recognise Identity, Culture And Heritage

Welsh football is enriched by people with different racial, ethnic, cultural and national backgrounds. Racism can take the form of explicit slurs and abuse, but it can also include stereotypes, assumptions, exclusion and comments that make people feel they do not belong.

Race and ethnicity are not interchangeable with nationality. A person's nationality does not tell you their race, ethnicity, language or cultural identity. Avoid guessing someone's background from their appearance, accent, name or place of birth. Where identity is relevant, be specific and use the terms an individual or community prefers.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Asian / Asian Welsh / Welsh Asian: Can be appropriate depending on a person's identity and context. Be specific where possible.

Black / Black Welsh / Welsh Black: Respectful terms for people who use these descriptions for themselves.

Chinese / Chinese heritage: Appropriate where it accurately describes a person's nationality or heritage.

Ethnically diverse communities: A social unit that shares an identity based on characteristics such as origin, language, history, traditions, religion, or common culture. A useful collective phrase in appropriate contexts, including discussions about representation and participation.

Ethnic group: A category of people who share an identity based on characteristics such as origin or common culture.

Global majority: A positive description of Black, African, Asian and Brown people, people of dual heritage, those native to the global south, and / or those who have been racialized as 'ethnic minorities'. These groups include about 80% of the world's population. A term often used as an intentional replacement for acronyms and labels like BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic), BIPOC, or ethnic minority.

Minority Ethnic Community: A community of people who belong to an ethnic minority within a territory or area. Can be useful when referring collectively to groups who are minorities in a particular context. Do not use it when a more specific description is available. Global majority or Ethnically Diverse Communities are generally preferred terms.

Mixed heritage/mixed ethnicity: Appropriate terms for someone with heritage from more than one ethnic background, if they prefer them.

Nationality or specific heritage: For example, Welsh, Somali, Nigerian, Pakistani, Polish or Caribbean, where accurate and relevant.

Race/ethnicity: One of humanity's supposed subdivisions based on physical characteristics or common lineage. The concept of 'race' is problematic, and it is accepted that it is a social construct rather than an objective physical / biological category. Use the specific concept relevant to the conversation. Ethnicity can include shared cultural heritage, history and identity.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities: An umbrella term used to describe a diverse collection of distinct ethnic minority groups and traditional nomadic or semi-nomadic communities.

Avoid

“BAME”/“BME” as a default label: These broad acronyms can group very different communities together and may obscure individual identities. It offends some of those it is attempting to describe, by overgeneralising ethnic groups and emphasising some whilst excluding others. Use specific terms or a clearly defined collective description where possible.

“Col*u*ed”: An outdated term with a history of racial segregation and derogatory use. Use an appropriate specific term instead.

“Ha*f-cas*e”: An outdated and offensive term. ‘Mixed parentage’, ‘mixed heritage’ and ‘mixed race’ are acceptable alternativesor the person's preferred description is more respectful.

Person of colour: Where possible, it is better to avoid terms that refer to the colour of other people's skin and instead use terms that refer to ethnicity rather than skin colour

“N*r” / “N***a”**: Originated as a term referring to Black people as a variation of the Spanish/Portuguese noun ‘negro’ and descends from the Latin adjective niger meaning ‘Black’. Historically ‘the N word’ was used as an intentionally derogatory word as early as the 17th century.These terms are highly offensive and should not be used to target or describe people.

“Pi”:** Racial slur often directed at South Asian people. Use a person's name or appropriate identity term.

“Ch*nk” / “Chky”**: Anti-East Asian slurs. Use an accurate and respectful description where relevant.

“Gy*o” / “P*key”: Derogatory terms used against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

“You people”/”Them”/”They” when used to stereotype or single out an ethnic group: Can be dismissive and othering. Be specific and respectful.

“Where are you really from?”: Can imply that someone does not belong because of their appearance or name. If someone wishes to discuss their background, let them share it in their own terms.



RELIGION & BELIEF



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RELIGION AND BELIEF INTRO

Religion, Belief And Inclusive Language

Make Space For Different Beliefs And Identities

Football brings together people with religious, spiritual and non-religious beliefs. Inclusive language respects the right of people to hold different beliefs, to practise their religion or to have no religious belief. It does not treat someone as less committed to their Club, team or community because of their faith.

Be mindful of religious observances, dietary needs, clothing, prayer and important dates where these affect football activities. Avoid assumptions about what someone believes or how they practise their faith. Criticism or discussion of beliefs should not become an excuse for abuse directed at people because of their religion or perceived identity.

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INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Christian/Muslim/Jewish/Hindu/Sikh/Buddhist: Use the appropriate term for the person's faith, where known and relevant.

Faith community/religious community: Useful terms for referring to a group of people connected by religion.

Jewish person/Jewish community: Appropriate descriptions of Jewish identity. Jewish identity may be religious, cultural, ethnic or a combination.

Muslim person/Muslim community: Appropriate descriptions for people who identify with Islam.

Non-religious/person with no religious belief: Respectful terms for people who do not identify with a religion.

Religious observance: A neutral term for practices connected with faith.

Avoid

“Extremist” used as a blanket description of a religious group: Unfairly associates a whole faith with the actions or beliefs of some individuals.

“Jew” or “Muslim” used as an insult: Turning a religious or cultural identity into an insult is discriminatory.

“P*ki /“terrorist” used to target someone perceived to be Muslim or South Asian: These terms can be racist or Islamophobic when used to abuse or stereotype people.

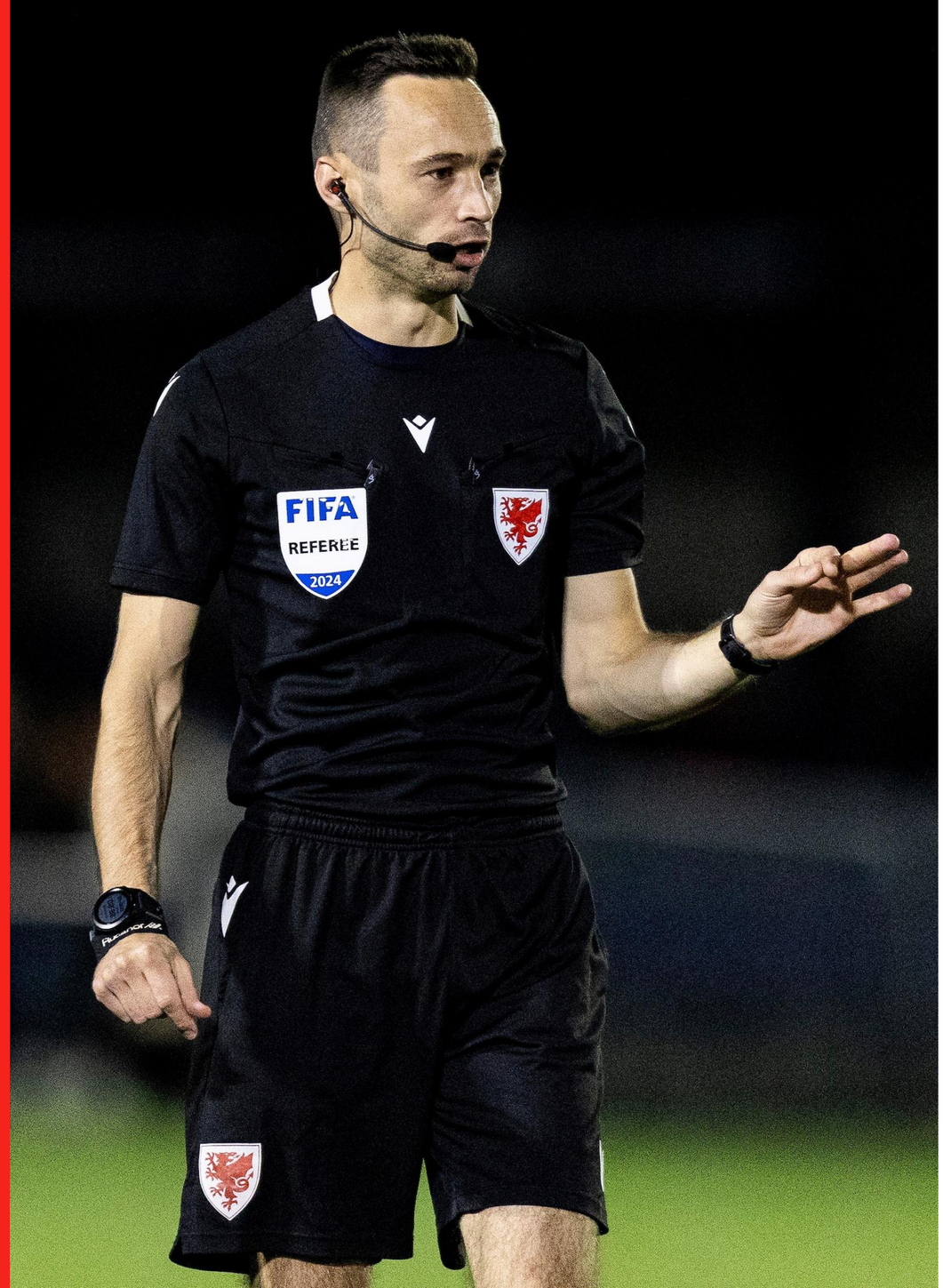
“Y*d”: An antisemitic slur when used as an insult or to demean Jewish people.

“You people”/”They”/”Them” or stereotypes about religious communities: Avoid assumptions that everyone from a faith shares the same beliefs, behaviour or political views.

Mocking religious clothing, dietary requirements or observances: Such behaviour can undermine respect and create a hostile environment.



SEX



PAWB

SEX INTRO

Sex, Women, Men And Inclusive Language

Communicate Clearly And Respectfully

Sex is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. In football, discussions about sex may arise in relation to participation, facilities, teams, statistics or policies. Use precise language that reflects the subject being discussed, and avoid turning differences or disagreements into personal insults or stereotypes.

Inclusive language also means recognising the contributions of women and girls across football. Avoid presenting men's football as the default and women's football as secondary, or assuming that a person's role, skills or interests are determined by sex.

Where a question concerns eligibility or participation rules, refer to the relevant FAW policy rather than relying on generalisations or speculation about individuals.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Women and girls: Appropriate when referring to women and girls.

Men and boys: Appropriate when referring to men and boys.

Players/team/squad/officials: Useful neutral terms when sex is not relevant to the message.

Sex: A term used in contexts where biological or legal sex is specifically relevant.

Women's football/men's football: Clear descriptions when referring to the relevant game or competition, if required.

Avoid



"Girls can't play football"/"football is a man's game": Sexist stereotypes that undermine women's and girls' participation.

"Female" or "male" used as a noun to label people unnecessarily: In everyday communication, "women", "men", "girls" or "boys" may sound more natural and respectful. "Female" and "male" may be appropriate in specific technical contexts.

"Man up"/"you play like a girl": Phrases that associate masculinity with strength and femininity with weakness.

"Women's football is not real football": Dismissive language that devalues women's participation and achievement.

Sexist insults or comments about appearance: Avoid reducing Players, Officials or staff to their bodies or appearance rather than their role and contribution.



SEXUAL ORIENTATION



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SEXUAL ORIENTATION INTRO

Sexual Orientation And LGBTQ+ Inclusive Language

Everyone Should Feel Welcome In Football

Sexual orientation relates to who a person may experience romantic or sexual attraction towards. It is different from gender identity. People involved in football may be lesbian, gay, bisexual, straight, queer, questioning or use another term to describe themselves.

People should not feel pressured to disclose their sexual orientation. Avoid assumptions about someone's relationships or identity, and do not use LGBTQ+ terminology as an insult. Homophobic and biphobic language can affect the person targeted and create an environment in which others feel unable to be open about who they are.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Ally: Someone who supports LGBTQ+ inclusion and takes action to challenge discrimination.

Bisexual/bi: Describes someone who experiences attraction to more than one gender.

Gay: Often describes a person attracted to people of the same sex or gender. Some women and non-binary people also use this term.

Heterosexual/straight: Describes a person who experiences attraction to people of a different sex or gender.

Lesbian: Commonly describes a woman who experiences attraction to women.

LGBTQ+: An umbrella acronym commonly used for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning people, with the plus recognising other identities.

Pansexual: Describes someone whose attraction is not limited by sex or gender.

Queer: A term some people use to describe their sexual orientation or gender identity. It has historically been used as a slur, so do not apply it to someone without knowing they use or accept it.

Questioning: Describes someone who is exploring or uncertain about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Avoid

“Fat” / “f*g”:** Anti-gay slurs. Do not use these to insult or describe someone.

“D*ke”: A slur historically used against lesbians. Some people reclaim it for themselves, but it should not be applied to others without their consent.

“Gay” used to mean bad, weak or embarrassing: Turns a sexual orientation into an insult and reinforces homophobic stereotypes.

“Homo”/“homosexual” used as a label or insult: “Homosexual” can sound clinical or distancing in everyday communication. Use “gay”, “lesbian” or the person's preferred term where appropriate.

“No homo”: Can imply that being gay is something to distance yourself from or be embarrassed about.

“That's so gay”: Avoid using this as a negative description of something.



OTHER DIVERSITY CATEGORIES



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LANGUAGE, CULTURAL & COMMUNICATION INTRO

Language, Culture, Communication And Inclusive Language

Respect The Languages People Use

Wales is home to people who speak many different languages. Welsh and English are used across communities, Clubs and football settings, alongside many other languages spoken by people from different backgrounds. Welsh language and cultural identity are important parts of the football family, and respecting the full range of languages people use helps create a more welcoming and inclusive environment.

Some people speak Welsh and English, while others speak one of these languages or have English as an additional language. Avoid assuming that everyone in Wales speaks Welsh, that someone who does not speak Welsh is less Welsh, or that a person's accent or level of English reflects their intelligence, ability or identity.

Respecting language preferences, communicating clearly, being patient and avoiding jokes about accents or language ability can help everyone feel that they belong.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Cymraeg/Welsh language: Use appropriate names for the language and respect people's language preferences.

Welsh/Welsh person/Welsh community: Use where it accurately reflects a person's identity or the context. Do not assume everyone in Wales shares the same cultural identity, experiences or political views.

Multilingual: Describes someone or a community that uses multiple languages. Recognise and value the different languages spoken across Welsh football.

First language/preferred language: Use where relevant and known. Do not assume someone's first or preferred language based on their name, appearance, nationality or accent.

English/Welsh as an additional language (EAL): A term used to describe people for whom English or Welsh is an additional language. Use respectfully and never as a judgement of someone's ability or understanding.

Bilingual: Describes the use of two languages. Do not assume a person is bilingual simply because they live in Wales or do not originate from Wales.

Welsh football family: A welcoming collective term for the people and communities involved in football in Wales, recognising the diversity of languages, cultures and experiences they bring.

Language support/translation/interpretation: Use where appropriate to describe practical ways of helping people understand information and participate fully.

Avoid

Mocking accents, pronunciation or language ability: This can undermine someone's confidence, dignity and sense of belonging.

“Speak English” used to belittle or exclude someone speaking another language: This can be disrespectful and create unnecessary barriers to participation. Communicate respectfully and consider the needs of everyone involved.

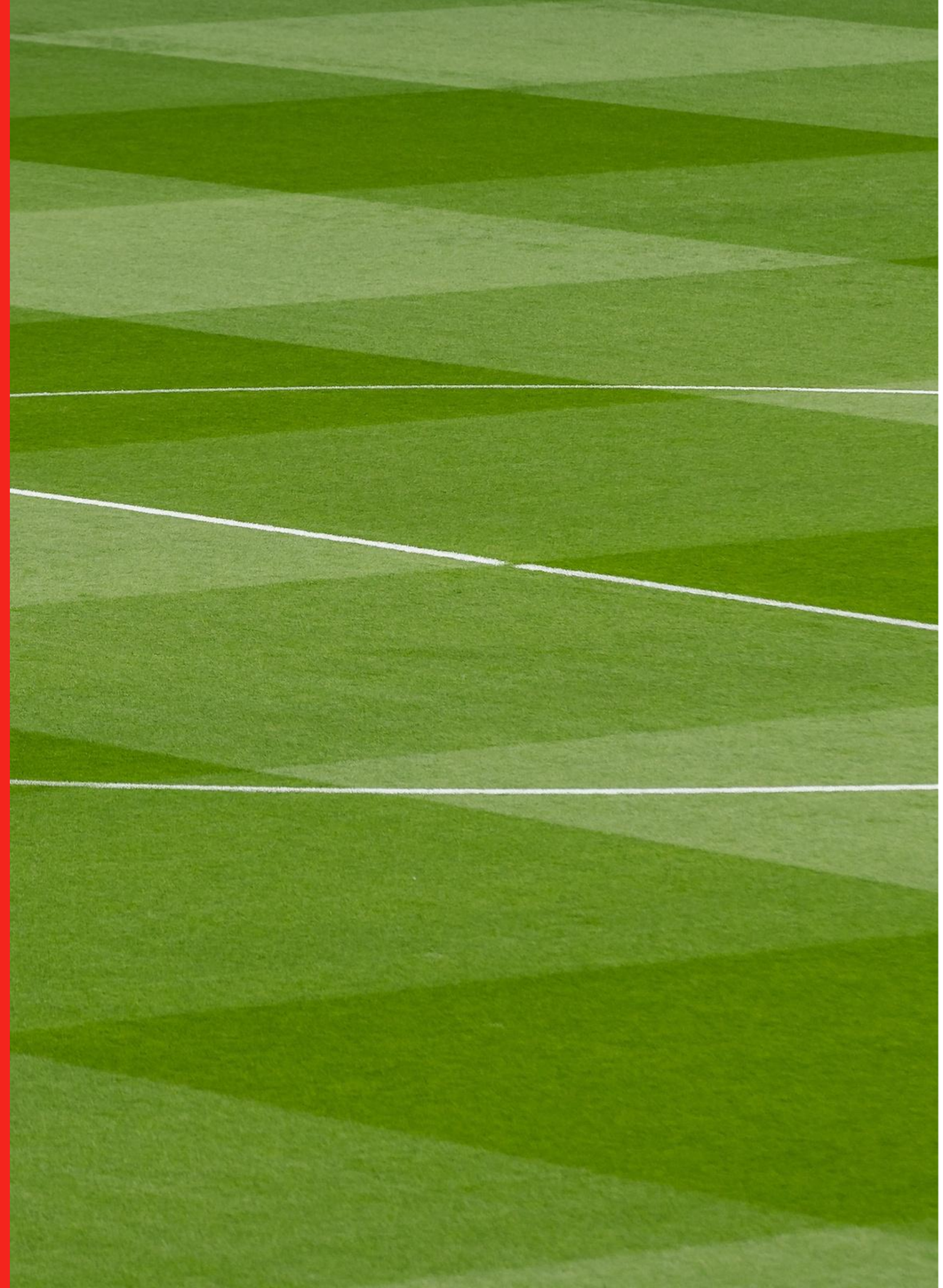
Assuming everyone in Wales speaks Welsh or English fluently: People have different language backgrounds, experiences and levels of confidence. Do not make assumptions about what someone understands or speaks.

Assuming someone's nationality, identity or political views based on the language they use: Language does not define a person's identity, background or beliefs.

Using Welsh words, other languages or accents as a punchline: Avoid turning language or cultural identity into a reason for ridicule.

Describing someone as less capable because English is not their first language: A person's language skills do not determine their intelligence, knowledge or ability to contribute.

Expecting everyone to communicate in the same way: Where practical, use clear language and offer translation, interpretation or other communication support to help people understand and participate.



PAWB

NEURODIVERSITY INTRO

Neurodiversity And Inclusive Language

People experience, process information and communicate in different ways. Neurodiversity refers to the natural variation in human brains and minds.

Neurodivergent people may include autistic people and people with ADHD, dyslexia or other differences.

In football, avoid using diagnostic terms as insults or assuming that someone's behaviour is caused by a particular condition. Ask what support or communication approach works for the individual rather than making assumptions.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Neurodivergent: An umbrella term used by people whose brain functioning differs from what is considered typical.

Neurodiversity: The natural variation in how people think, learn, communicate and process information.

Autistic person/person with autism: Use the person's preferred terminology.

Person with ADHD/person with dyslexia: Appropriate where the person prefers person-first language.

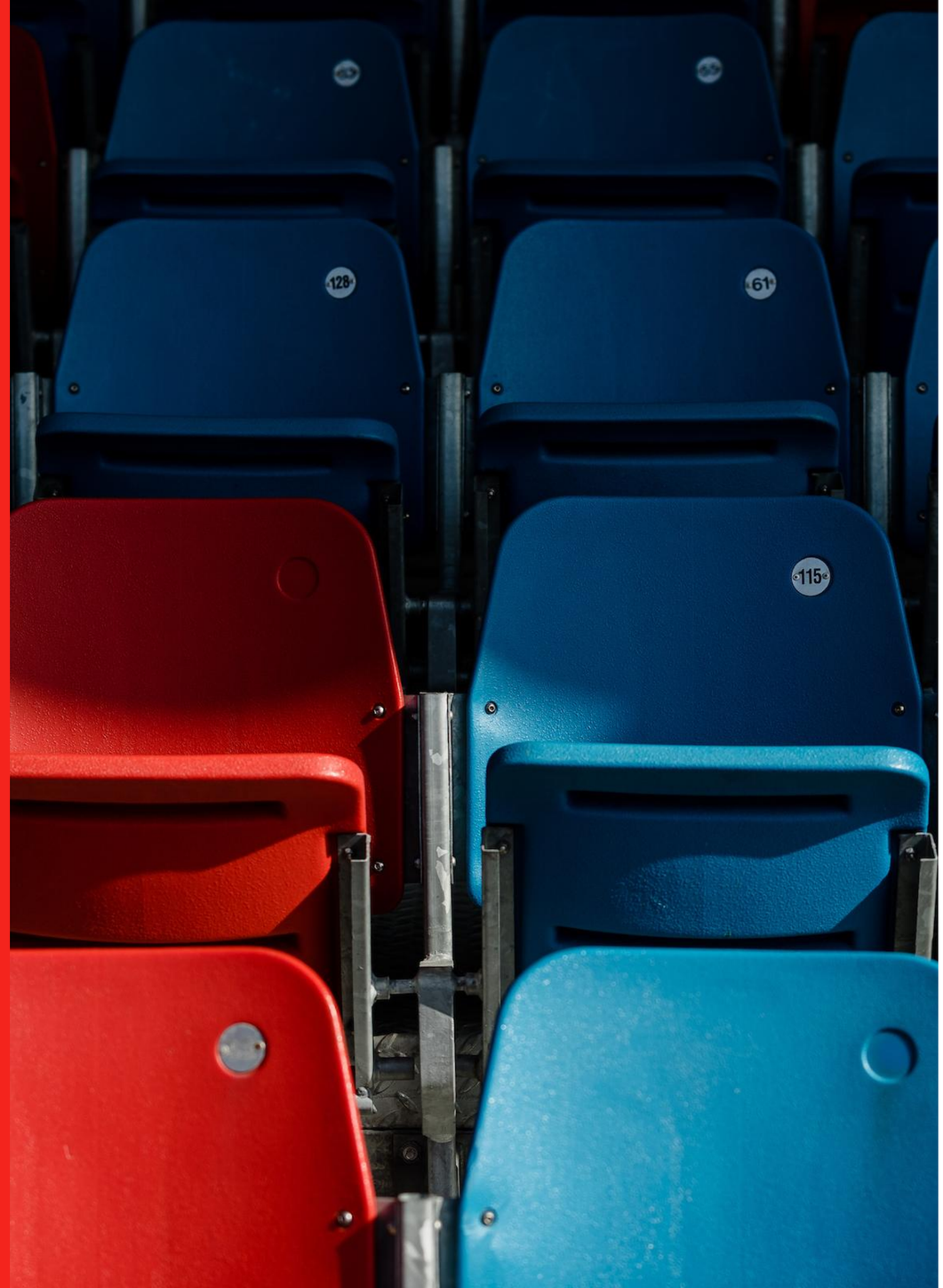
Avoid



“Everyone is a little autistic”: Minimises the individual experiences of autistic people.

“Low functioning”/“high functioning” as blanket labels: Can obscure a person's strengths, needs and experiences. Describe specific support needs where relevant.

Using “OCD”, “ADHD” or “autistic” as casual insults or jokes: Can trivialise conditions and the experiences of people who have them.



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MENTAL HEALTH INTRO

Mental Health And Inclusive Language

Mental health is an important part of overall health and wellbeing. People may experience a range of mental health challenges throughout their lives, and these experiences can affect individuals in different ways. Inclusive language helps create an environment where people feel respected, supported and able to talk about their wellbeing without fear of judgement or stigma.

In football, the language we use can influence whether Players, Coaches, Officials, staff and supporters feel comfortable seeking support or speaking openly about how they feel.

Avoid using mental health conditions as insults, making assumptions about someone's behaviour or ability based on their mental health, or defining a person solely by a diagnosis. Where possible, focus on the individual rather than their condition, respect personal preferences and recognise that everyone's experiences are different.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Mental health condition: A respectful term when a condition is relevant.

Mental health: A broad term referring to our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing.

Mental health difficulties/challenges: Useful terms when discussing experiences without assuming a diagnosis.

Person with a mental health condition: Person-first language that recognises the individual beyond their condition.

Person experiencing mental health difficulties: A respectful way to describe someone who is struggling with their mental health.

Mental health support: Use when referring to help, resources or services that support someone's wellbeing.

Mental wellbeing: A useful term when discussing emotional wellbeing and the wider factors that can affect it.

Recovery: Use where appropriate, recognising that recovery means different things to different people and may not follow a straightforward path.

Seeking support/accessing help: Respectful ways to describe someone reaching out for assistance.

Living with [condition]: Can be appropriate when describing someone's experience, where relevant and consistent with their preference.

Avoid

“Crazy”/“insane” used as insults: Can stigmatise people with mental health conditions and reinforce harmful stereotypes.

“Psycho”/“mental” used to demean someone: Can be derogatory and reinforce the idea that mental health conditions make people dangerous or unpredictable.

“Schizo” used as an insult: Trivialises schizophrenia and reinforces misconceptions about people living with the condition.

“Nutter”/“lunatic”: Derogatory terms that can dehumanise people experiencing mental health difficulties.

“Attention-seeking” used to dismiss someone's distress: Can invalidate genuine difficulties and discourage people from seeking help.

“They're just being dramatic”/”They're overreacting”: Can minimise someone's feelings or experiences without understanding their circumstances.

“Suffering from” used as a default description: Can frame a person's experience solely in terms of suffering. Consider “living with” or “experiencing” instead, while respecting individual preferences.

Defining someone by their condition: Avoid labels such as “a schizophrenic” or “a depressive”. Where appropriate, refer to a “person with schizophrenia” or “person experiencing depression”, while recognising that some people prefer identity-first language.

Assuming someone is dangerous, unreliable or incapable because of their mental health: Reinforces stigma and unfair stereotypes. Treat people as individuals and avoid making assumptions.

Using mental health conditions as casual descriptions of everyday behaviour: For example, describing someone as “OCD” simply because they like things organised can trivialise a specific condition and the experiences of people living with it.



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SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND INTRO

Socioeconomic Background, Migration And Inclusive Language

Football Should Not Be A Place For Class-based Prejudice

People's experiences of football may be influenced by income, education, employment, housing, migration or access to transport and facilities. These factors can affect participation, but they should never be used to make assumptions about a person's worth, commitment or ability.

Use language that recognises barriers without blaming individuals or communities for circumstances they may not control. Avoid treating poverty, migration or a person's accent as a measure of character.

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INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Asylum seeker: A person who has applied for international protection and is awaiting a decision on their claim.

Migrant: A person who has moved from one place to another, within or across national borders.

People experiencing poverty/people living in poverty: Describes a circumstance rather than defining a person's identity.

Refugee: A person recognised as needing international protection under the applicable legal framework.

Underrepresented communities: Useful where groups are less represented or face barriers to participation in a particular context.

Avoid



“Chav” / “scrounger”: Demeaning labels often used to stereotype people based on class or perceived economic circumstances.

“Illegal person”: Reduces someone to an immigration status. Use precise language about a person's circumstances where relevant.

“They don't belong here” based on nationality or migration status: Exclusionary language that can fuel xenophobia.

Mocking someone's accent, education or income: Can reinforce class-based prejudice and exclusion.



FURTHER INFORMATION

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EVERYDAY LANGUAGE

Inclusive Language In Everyday Football

Small Changes Can Make A Difference

Inclusive language is often about making communication clearer and avoiding assumptions. In team talks, Club announcements, emails, social media and conversations with parents, choose words that welcome everyone and focus on the issue rather than a person's identity.

For example, “Good afternoon, everyone” can be more inclusive than assuming everyone is a “lad” or “gentleman”. “Parents and guardians” recognises different family arrangements. “Players and officials” avoids unnecessary assumptions about who is involved.

These choices may seem small, but repeated everyday language helps shape Club culture and signals who is welcome.





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Respect How People Describe Themselves

A person's name and pronouns are part of how they are recognised and addressed. Use the name someone asks you to use, and do not make assumptions about pronouns based on appearance, clothing or voice.

If you make a mistake, correct yourself briefly and continue. Avoid making a scene or asking someone to explain personal details in front of others. If you are unsure and the information is relevant, ask politely and privately.

Do not share personal information about someone's identity, disability, health or sexual orientation without their permission, unless there is a legitimate safeguarding or other appropriate reason to do so.

Where The Line Is Crossed

Banter can be part of football culture, but it should not be used to excuse discriminatory abuse. Comments, chants, memes, emojis and online posts can all communicate hostility or reinforce stereotypes. The fact that a message is posted in a private group chat or intended as a joke does not automatically make it harmless.

Consider whether a comment targets someone's identity, humiliates them, repeats a harmful stereotype or creates an intimidating environment. Club members should understand that discriminatory language can occur in changing rooms, on the touchline, in the stands and online.

When language crosses the line, challenge it appropriately and follow the Club's reporting arrangements. Serious or repeated incidents may require formal action.

Avoid Assumptions And Generalisations

No individual represents an entire community. Avoid statements that suggest everyone from a particular ethnic, religious, disability, gender or LGBTQ+ group thinks or behaves in the same way.

In football, this means not assuming a player's ability, temperament, leadership, commitment or suitability based on identity. It also means not treating one person's actions as evidence about a whole community.

Focus on what someone has actually said or done, rather than making judgements about who they are. Specific, fair and respectful language supports better communication and helps challenge prejudice.





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CHALLENGE LANGUAGE

Recognise, Respond And Report

Do Not Ignore Discrimination

Everyone involved in football has a role in challenging discrimination. If you hear or witness discriminatory language, take it seriously, consider immediate safety and respond in a way that is appropriate to the situation.

Where it is safe to do so, calmly identify the language or behaviour that is unacceptable and reinforce the club's expectations. Support the person affected, avoid escalating a confrontation unnecessarily and make sure the incident is recorded and reported through the correct route.

Not every incident should be managed through an informal conversation. Threats, serious abuse, repeated behaviour or incidents that may constitute a hate crime should be escalated through the appropriate reporting and safeguarding procedures.

How to Challenge Language Constructively

Be Clear, Calm And Consistent

You do not need to deliver a speech to challenge discriminatory language. A short, direct response can make clear that the behaviour is not acceptable.

Examples Include:

- “We don't use that language at this Club.”
- “That comment is discriminatory. Please don't repeat it.”
- “We expect everyone here to treat players, officials and supporters with respect.”
- “I understand you may not have intended offence, but that term can cause harm. Please use different language.”
- “Football is for everyone. There is no place for discrimination here.”

Choose your response based on the circumstances and your role. If challenging the person directly could put you or someone else at risk, seek help from a Club official, safeguarding officer or match official.

Listen, Respect And Follow Up

If someone tells you that they have experienced discriminatory language, listen without judgement. Thank them for raising the issue, take their concerns seriously and ask what support they need. Do not assume how they feel or pressure them to share more than they want to.

Explain what steps can be taken and what may happen next, while being honest about confidentiality and the limits of what the club can promise. Record the incident appropriately and share information only with those who need it to respond.

A person should not have to repeatedly explain their experience to be taken seriously. Follow up where appropriate and make sure they know how to access further support.





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Reporting Discrimination In Football

Follow The Correct Reporting Route

Where an incident takes place within a Club, follow the club's reporting arrangements and contact the designated safeguarding officer or other appropriate club official. Incidents occurring during a match should be reported to the match referee or relevant match official where appropriate, as well as through the applicable FAW reporting procedure.

Record what happened as accurately as possible, including the language used, the time and location, who was involved and any witnesses. Avoid repeating discriminatory language unnecessarily when sharing information, but provide accurate details where they are needed for an investigation.

For serious incidents or suspected hate crimes, consider the appropriate police reporting route as well as football's own procedures. Reporting does not mean that an allegation has already been proven; it allows the relevant authority to assess the information and determine the next steps.

Challenging Discrimination in Football: A Guide for Clubs

The FAW's 'Challenging Discrimination in Football: A Guide for Clubs' provides practical guidance on recognising discrimination, responding to incidents, supporting people affected, reporting concerns and helping Clubs create more inclusive environments.

This language and terminology resource complements that guide. It helps people recognise the words and phrases that can contribute to discrimination and provides alternatives that support respectful communication. When an incident occurs, use both resources: this guide can support understanding and education, while the companion guide explains the practical steps and processes Clubs should take.

Download the Challenging Discrimination in Football: A Guide for Clubs for further information.

REGULATIONS

The FAW Discrimination Regulations

Know The Rules

The FAW Discrimination Regulations set out how discriminatory conduct connected with football regulated by the FAW may be addressed. They cover discriminatory or denigratory words and behaviour and establish procedures for reporting, investigation, disciplinary action and potential sanctions.

The use of discriminatory language may be relevant to an incident under these regulations, depending on the circumstances and evidence. A person should not assume that an incident is too minor to report or that an informal apology automatically resolves it. Follow the applicable procedure and allow the relevant authority to assess the circumstances.

They apply to Members, Associate Members and/or Subordinates and cover discriminatory conduct relating to characteristics.

The Discrimination Regulations also recognise that conduct can be considered discriminatory even where a specific person cannot be identified as having heard or seen it.

Always refer to the current Discrimination Regulations for the full legal and disciplinary position.





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ONGOING LEARNING

Keep Building Your Understanding

Inclusive language is part of a wider commitment to education, respect and continuous improvement. Clubs can use this guide during coach and volunteer inductions, team meetings, parent communications, equality training and discussions about Club values.

The FAW's PAWB related education resources can help Clubs develop their approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. Clubs should also review their policies, make reporting routes clear and ensure that people know where to seek advice or raise concerns.

Learning is most effective when it becomes part of everyday Club life rather than a one-off activity.

Further information and learning is available on the FAW's PAWB website.

FURTHER SUPPORT

The language we use helps shape the culture of Welsh football. It can make people feel welcome and respected, or leave them feeling excluded and unsafe. Creating inclusive environments requires more than knowing the right terminology. It requires a willingness to listen, reflect, challenge discrimination and change our behaviour when needed.

Nobody is expected to know everything, but everyone is expected to treat others with dignity, take concerns seriously and contribute to a football culture where discrimination is not accepted. By making inclusive language part of everyday football, we can help create environments where everyone feels they belong.

Use What You Have Learnt in This Resource To:

- Choose your words thoughtfully, avoiding stereotypes, assumptions and discriminatory terminology.
- Respect people's identities and preferences, including the names and terms they use for themselves.
- Challenge harmful language, whether it happens on the pitch, in the changing room, on the touchline, in the stands or online.
- Learn from mistakes, listen to feedback and make changes without becoming defensive.
- Support people affected by discrimination, taking concerns seriously and following the appropriate reporting procedures.
- Educate others, helping teammates, coaches, volunteers, parents and supporters understand why inclusive language matters.
- Lead by example, demonstrating the standards of respect and inclusion expected.
- Keep learning, recognising that language and understanding evolve over time.

Together, we can help create welcoming, safe and inclusive football environments where everyone feels they belong.

Further information can be found at www.PAWB.Cymru. For further guidance or support, please contact PAWB@FAW.CYMRU.