

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION IN KARATE

Practical guidance for clubs and instructors



LGBTQ+ karateka do not need a separate version of karate. They need to know that they are welcome, respected and able to take part without discrimination. Club culture makes that visible.

Insight

BELONGING IS VISIBLE

In most day-to-day life, nothing needs to change. What matters is feeling safe, respected and confident that poor behaviour will be challenged.

A welcoming club is not defined by posters alone. It is defined by what happens when somebody joins, speaks about who they are, hears a joke, raises a concern or asks for privacy.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are personal. Do not assume them, demand disclosure or make somebody explain more than they want to.

Treat the person as a karateka first.

Pride Sports, UK Coaching and Stonewall

Barriers

- **Fear of judgement**
Previous experiences of prejudice can make someone cautious about joining a club or being open about who they are.
- **Language and “banter”**
Homophobic, biphobic or transphobic jokes, slurs or stereotypes can make a dojo feel unsafe even when no one is directly targeted.
- **Assumptions and disclosure**
Assuming relationships, pronouns or identity - or sharing personal information without permission can damage trust.
- **No visible welcome**
If a club says nothing about inclusion and never challenges poor behaviour, people may reasonably wonder whether they will be accepted.
- **Privacy and facilities**
Changing arrangements, toilets or forms may create practical concerns. Clear information and respectful options reduce uncertainty.
- **Unclear competition rules**
Trans karateka may be unsure how competition categories apply. Ad hoc decisions can feel personal and undermine confidence.

ASK YOUR CLUB

“Would an LGBTQ+ person know from our everyday behaviour that they are safe, respected and welcome here?”

FROM PRINCIPLE TO PRACTICE

Use these prompts as a starting point. The right response will always depend on the individual and the activity.

Breaking down barriers

Make welcome visible

Use clear inclusive language on your website, joining information and codes of conduct - then make sure everyday behaviour matches it.

Challenge discriminatory language

Do not dismiss slurs, jokes or stereotypes as banter. Set the standard calmly and consistently, whether or not an LGBTQ+ person is present.

Respect identity and privacy

Use the name and pronouns a person asks you to use. Do not disclose somebody's sexual orientation or trans status without their permission.

Avoid assumptions

Do not assume who somebody dates, what family they have, what changing space they want or how they describe themselves. Ask only what is relevant

Be clear about facilities

Describe what changing and toilet facilities are actually available. Where privacy is requested, discuss practical options without making the person feel singled out.

Separate belonging from eligibility

Training, grading, coaching and volunteering are different from sex-classified competition. Refer competition eligibility through formal competition rules, not personal judgement.

Put it into practice

"A member tells me they are gay, bi or queer."

Do not make it a bigger event than they want it to be. Listen, respond normally and keep personal information private unless they ask you to share it.

"Someone makes a homophobic joke in class."

Challenge it. Make clear that the language is not acceptable in the club. Do not leave the person affected to decide whether it was "serious enough".

"A karateka asks me to use a different name or pronouns."

Use them. Ask what they want recorded or shared and with whom. For children and young people, follow safeguarding and confidentiality procedures.

"A trans athlete asks which category they can enter."

Treat it confidentially. Explain that belonging and competition eligibility are different. Use the current competition rules, never appearance or personal opinion.

Quick club check

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| ☐ New members can see that LGBTQ+ people are welcome. | ☐ Discriminatory language and harassment are challenged. |
| ☐ We do not assume sexuality, relationships or gender identity. | ☐ Names, pronouns and private information are handled respectfully. |
| ☐ Staff understand that training and competition are different. | ☐ Members know how to raise a concern safely. |
| ☐ Adjustments preserve meaningful challenge and progression. | ☐ Competition questions follow the competition rules. |

Fair competition and inclusive participation are not opposing principles. Both matter, and both should be handled through clear rules and respectful processes.

Further resources

LGBTQ+ Sport England

[Open >](#)

Welcoming LGBTQ+ communities

[Open >](#)

Rainbow Laces - Move with Pride

[Open >](#)

LGBTQ+ junior club development

[Open >](#)