

Volleyball England Policy for Transgender Participation

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Introduction

Volleyball England is the recognised National Governing Body for volleyball, beach volleyball and sitting volleyball in England and is responsible for the development, promotion, and delivery of volleyball across England. Inclusion is a core value of Volleyball England, recognising diversity and valuing everyone's individual differences. Volleyball England is committed to ensuring that we provide services fairly and without discrimination to all who want to participate in the sport of volleyball.

Following guidance from the Equality Group of the five UK Sports Councils, we reviewed the options for considering the participation of transgender people in English volleyball based on inclusion, fairness, and safety. For competitions in particular, we have considered the gender-affected nature of volleyball and the provisions that Volleyball England will make for a fair, safe, and inclusive competition structure for all players. This policy aims to facilitate the participation in England of transgender and gender diverse people as players, coaches, officials, and volunteers in volleyball.

We will review this policy on a regular basis.

Policy Summary

Volleyball is a gender-affected sport with different categories of competition to ensure fairness and, to some extent, safety. As a result, fairness cannot be reconciled in female competitions with self-identification in the female category. Therefore:

A transgender woman can still play in the male category of competition.

A transgender woman cannot play in the female category of competition.

A transgender man can continue to play in female competition, unless testosterone hormone treatment has commenced.

A transgender man can play in male competition as there is no physical advantage that would make the competition unfair.

Volleyball England welcomes and supports all coaches, officials and volunteers who identify as transgender and does not tolerate transphobic behaviour.

Volleyball Competition

The fair play principle is long established in sport. Grouping people into different competition categories such as male, female, junior and adult has ensured fairness and, to some extent, safety. While sports can be inclusive, fairness determines that players in many cases cannot choose the category in which to participate.

Our sport is organised with specific competition categories and features rules designed to ensure fairness and to attract more people to play and continue to play. In volleyball, height gives players an advantage in activities near the net. The height of the net is therefore modified according to the height and physical prowess of players and the different categories of competition. Without this, competition would be uneven because of the disparity between the relative strength, stamina and physique of male and female competitors and adult and junior players.

Participation in Volleyball England Competitions

Regarding gender, the segregation of volleyball by biological sex does not account for transgender persons whose gender identity differs from their sex recorded at birth. However, there are significant differences in physical capacity between male and female players. The biological sex determines inherent differences in athletic advantage, with the performance gap and general height advantage between males and females becoming significant at puberty and have lifelong effects.

In volleyball, a spike is the most efficient way of scoring a point. The success of this action depends on height of contact, ball direction, and ball speed. The main factors that determine the height of contact are standing height reach (body height and arm length), and the ability of a player to jump and reach to perform technical elements in the most efficient way using explosive muscular power. Male players are taller, heavier, leaner, have greater standing reach height, speed, agility, and muscular power, than female players. Therefore the net is 19cm higher than in the women's game. In its review of available research, Sport England found that, with or without testosterone suppression, there was no appreciable loss of mass, muscle mass, or strength in transitioning males. Therefore, based on the current volleyball competition formats, fairness cannot be reconciled with self-identification in the female category.

Volleyball England, recognising male advantage, will therefore continue with its current competition structure to protect women's volleyball and maintain fairness and safety. This policy applies at all ages for official competitive volleyball. For recreational and social volleyball where fairness is not the main component, the competition-specific elements of this policy do not apply. A transgender woman during the process of transitioning can still play in the male category of competition. A transgender man can continue to play in female competition, unless testosterone hormone treatment has commenced. A transgender man can play in male competition as there is no physical advantage that would make the competition unfair.

In terms of self-disclosure of sex, the approach must be that of trust until there is further requirement to change the approach in response to publication of this policy. We expect that players will follow the provisions of this policy and enter the appropriate competition.

Mixed Competition

Playing rules are often adapted to include male and female players within the same competition, particularly local, regional, and in sitting volleyball. In these competitions, it is accepted that the net height is set at men's height. Sport England guidance proposes that modified versions of a sport could be created to allow for inclusion, in Volleyball, this comes in the form of our mixed competition, in which all players may participate as the gender they identify as.

Players in the Performance Pathway

All players in the Performance Pathway must register and play in international competition based on their sex registered at birth, as per the FIVB regulations.

Player Eligibility

Players may be required to provide a copy of their Birth Certificate as proof of eligibility to play in a competition or to join the Performance Pathway.

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 Volleyball England via email to info@volleyballengland.org.

Coaches, Officials, and Volunteers

Volleyball England welcomes and supports all coaches, officials and volunteers who identify as transgender and does not tolerate transphobic behaviour.

If the behaviour and/or actions of any Volleyball England employee, member or Club are inappropriate and/or offensive towards any trans person, Volleyball England will investigate that matter and, where appropriate, discipline the Club or relevant individual according to the Code of Conduct and disciplinary policies.