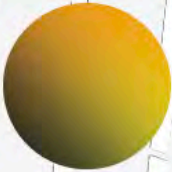


THE

# PRIDE PLAYBOOK



# PRIDE 2026 PLAYBOOK

## **4. An Introduction to the Pride Playbook**

Foreword by Zander Murray

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICIAL LGBT+ TEAMS AND THE NEED FOR THE PRIDE PLAYBOOK

Fitba' has given me a lot. Growing up on a council estate in Glasgow, it also exposed me to things that stayed with me for years. Travelling across the city for training, matches and academy sessions, the environment was intense, competitive, and often unforgiving.

Coming through academies at Airdrie and Motherwell, I heard homophobic language all the time. In dressing rooms. From the sidelines. From the stands. It was so normalised it almost blended into the background. But when you're a young player trying to understand yourself, it doesn't just pass you by. It shapes how you see yourself.

That's where my own internalised homophobia began. When being gay is used as an insult, over and over again, you start to associate it with something negative — even if you don't fully realise it at the time. It creates silence. And in football, silence can be a heavy thing to carry.

From the age of 13 to 29, I lived with that. Sixteen years of it. I wouldn't want anyone else to go through that. It wasn't just on the training ground. Going to Celtic with my dad, hearing the same language in pubs before matches — it all reinforced the same message. Football didn't feel like a place where you could be open. It felt like something that couldn't be challenged.

Becoming the first openly gay Scottish male professional footballer, and one of very few in Britain, is something I'm proud of. Not just for me, but for what it represents. I've had people reach out to say that my story helped them. In some cases, saved them. That puts everything into perspective. It shows what visibility can do. That's why spaces like LGBT+ teams matter. They give people something I didn't have growing up. A place where you don't have to filter yourself. Where you're not managing who you are. That changes how people feel. And it changes how they play.

This Playbook matters because it turns that idea into something practical. It shows clubs how to build environments where people can be themselves — not just in words, but in how football is experienced day to day. Creating LGBT+ teams isn't about separating people from the game. It's about opening it up. So that anyone who loves football can feel part of it — without fear, without hesitation.

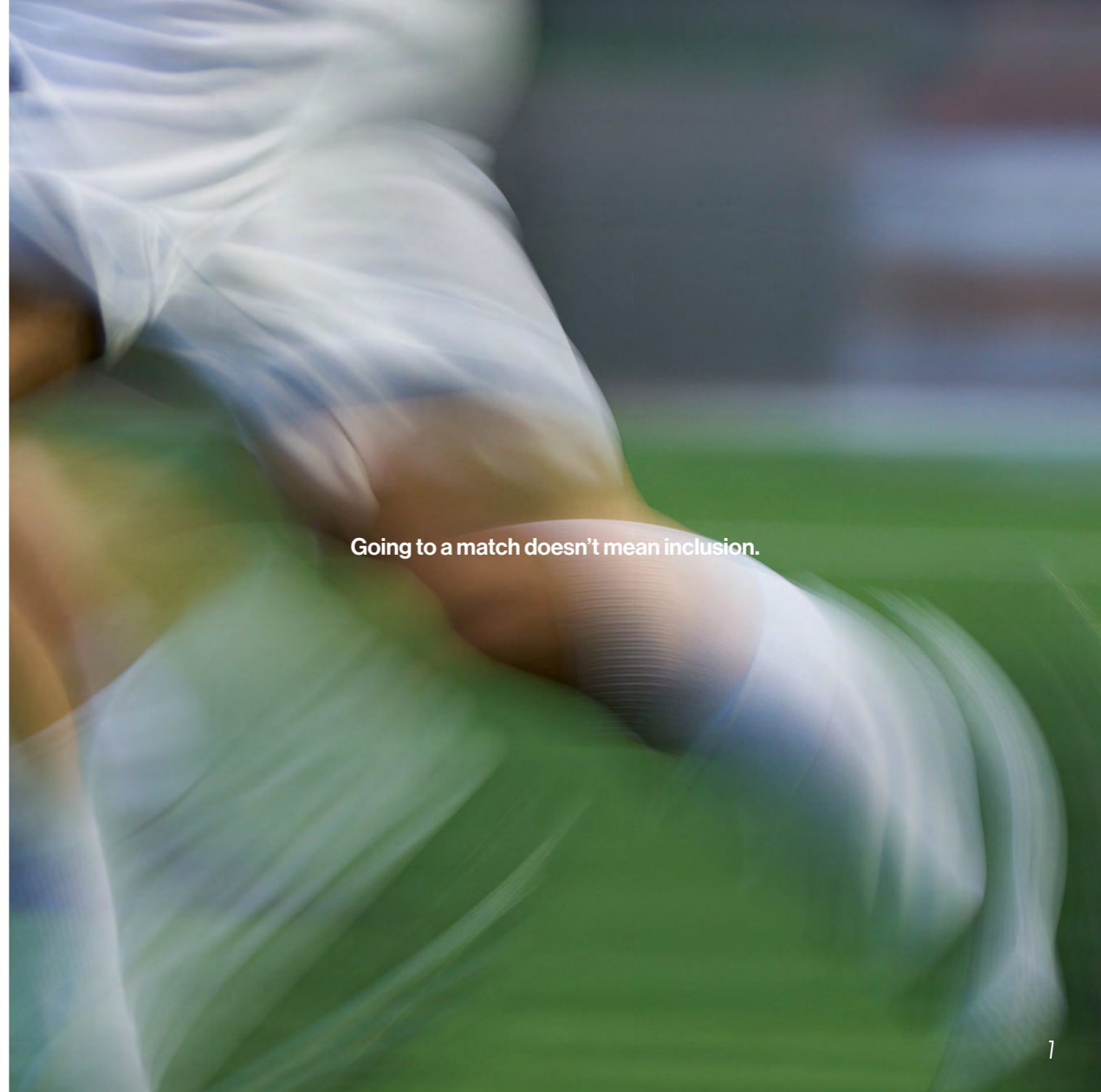
**Zander Murray, Former Professional Footballer, Presenter, Campaigner**

93%

of LGBT+ fans  
feel comfortable  
attending matches.

72%

have witnessed  
or experienced  
homophobic behaviour.



Going to a match doesn't mean inclusion.

# CLUBS: 92

Let's kick things off by addressing the elephant in the changing room. There are 92 professional clubs in the English game but only one official LGBT+ team. They are the Millwall Romans and they are proof that it can be done, and done properly.

## IT'S TIME TO LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD.



Across the professional game, clubs have built real pathways for women, for people with disabilities and for young players. But LGBT+ teams are still being left sidelined.

Some clubs have supporters groups, some wear the laces and others fly the flag. But very few have stepped up to the spot and put LGBT+ players where they count: on the team sheet.

Right here, right now, is where that changes.

# OFFICIAL LGBT+ TEAMS: 1

# 410%

of all fans believe clubs should have an LGBT+ team.

*There's only 1.*  
**THE GAP IS BIGGER THAN PEOPLE THINK.**

83%  
believe clubs should support or adopt an LGBT+ team.

*The fans have spoken.*

**NOW IT'S ON THE CLUBS TO ACT.**



# MAKING IT OFFICIAL CHANGES EVERYTHING.

Creating an official LGBT+ team is where equality becomes part of the culture. It supports players and strengthens the club. And the benefits are beautiful.



## **You reflect your local community**

Represent the diversity that's thriving in your area, reach out, embrace it, be part of it.

## **You create belonging people can see**

Inclusion is something everyone sees, week in, week out, not just for 90 minutes. Make the change visible. Because when people see it, they feel it, they know they belong.

## **You build closer local relationships**

When councils, organisations and community groups work together in harmony, new doors open.

## **You challenge outdated perceptions**

Show what your club is really made of - how it speaks, how it chants and who it's for today.

## **You show commitment**

Your beliefs exist beyond events, campaigns and words. They become part of everything you do.



“At Millwall, the thinking was simple: if you’re serious about representing your community, you don’t pick and choose which parts of it count. Lewisham and Southwark are diverse. This was just the next, obvious step.”

**Sean Daly,  
CEO of Millwall  
Community Trust**

910%

SAY MORE LGBT+ TEAMS  
WOULD LEAD TO MORE  
OPENLY GAY PLAYERS.



IT'S ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE GAME

HOW TO  
OFFICIALLY  
ONBOARD



A TEAM

# YOU'VE GOT TO FIND YOUR FIT.

So, you're ready to step up and start an official team? Here's the gameplan that worked for us.



## Don't start from scratch, start a conversation and partner up.

You may not know it but there are LGBT+ teams, leagues or communities kicking about right there in your back garden. So why make the mistake of trying to start something new, when there are teams already warmed up, ready and raring to go? Reach out to them, start a conversation and really listen. Shared values and ambitions make all the difference. If things like trust, inclusion and excellence are what you're aiming for, hook up with a team with a similar mindset.

## Talk with your local FA

They'll point you in the direction of credible teams, leagues and people already active in your area.

## Reach out to GFSN

Existing networks like the Gay Football Supporters Network are invaluable - they've already done the work.

## Meet more than one team

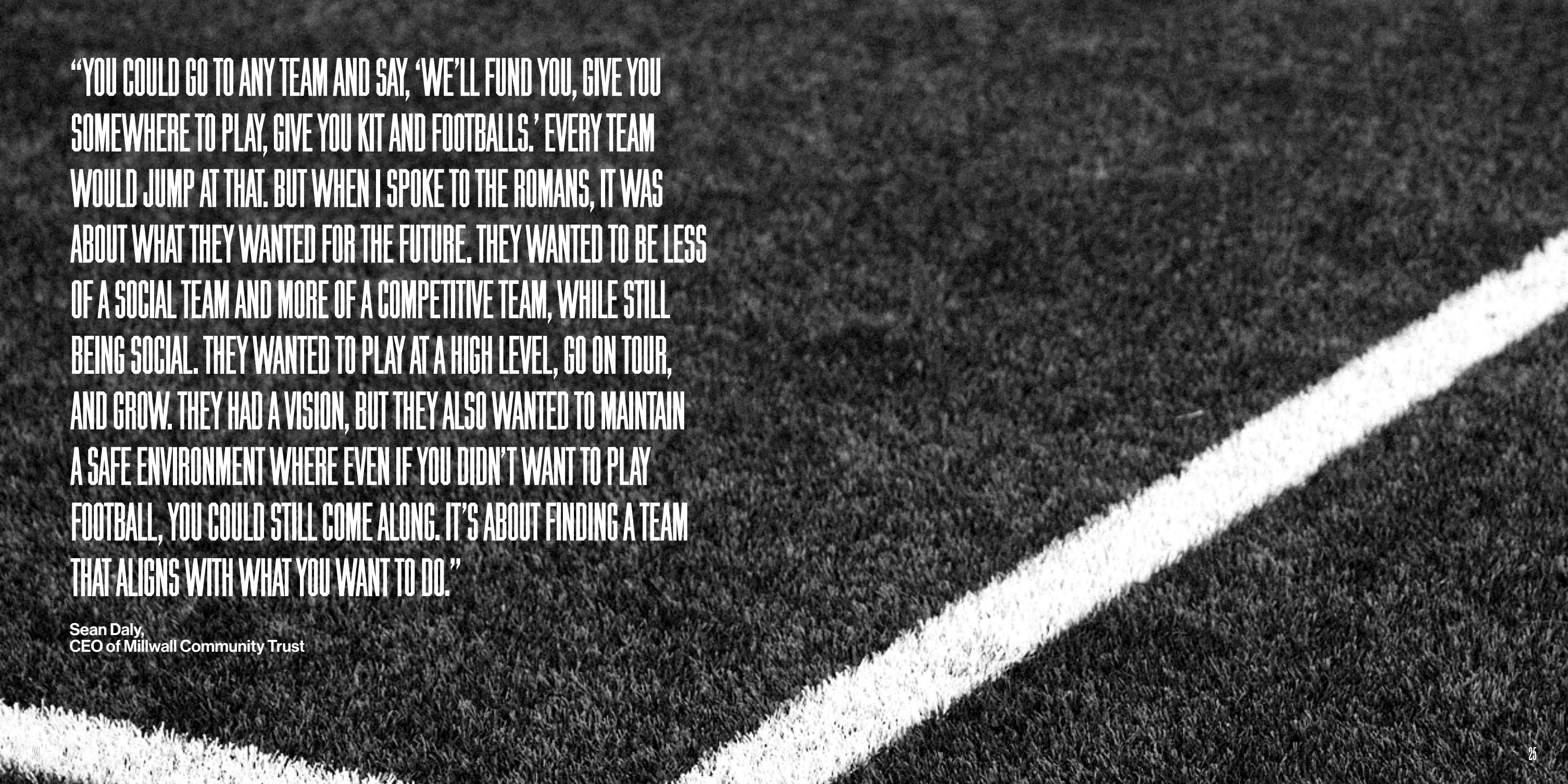
Play the field, speak to the teams in your area and find the right fit for both sides. Don't rush this.

## Shared goals, values and ambitions

Ask the important questions to understand where the team wants to go. You're building a partnership not just offering support, so align on standards and levels of commitment, for now and in the future.

## Ask what they really, really want

This is a two-way street, don't go to a potential team and tell them what you're willing to give. It's about understanding their needs and supporting their journey on their terms.



**“YOU COULD GO TO ANY TEAM AND SAY, ‘WE’LL FUND YOU, GIVE YOU SOMEWHERE TO PLAY, GIVE YOU KIT AND FOOTBALLS.’ EVERY TEAM WOULD JUMP AT THAT. BUT WHEN I SPOKE TO THE ROMANS, IT WAS ABOUT WHAT THEY WANTED FOR THE FUTURE. THEY WANTED TO BE LESS OF A SOCIAL TEAM AND MORE OF A COMPETITIVE TEAM, WHILE STILL BEING SOCIAL. THEY WANTED TO PLAY AT A HIGH LEVEL, GO ON TOUR, AND GROW. THEY HAD A VISION, BUT THEY ALSO WANTED TO MAINTAIN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT WHERE EVEN IF YOU DIDN’T WANT TO PLAY FOOTBALL, YOU COULD STILL COME ALONG. IT’S ABOUT FINDING A TEAM THAT ALIGNS WITH WHAT YOU WANT TO DO.”**

**Sean Daly,  
CEO of Millwall Community Trust**

# WELCOME TO

You've found your team. Get in! Now bring them into the fold. Don't delay, don't hesitate, don't take your eye off the ball. Make sure everyone is on the same page - they are the team and they are a valued part of the club.



# THE FAMILY



## **Embed it in the structure**

Don't think of your team as an external group, they are now formally part of the club.

## **Get leadership on side**

It's got to have backing from the top, otherwise play stops before it's even started.

## **Give it an identity, a badge, a home**

Your team is now part of the family. If they have a name already, ask them if they want to keep it. Include them in the big decisions. Then get them in the kit, on the pitch and integrate them with the club.

## **And above, all... appoint a champion**

Someone's got to drive it. Someone with the vision and the determination to move mountains and tear up the old rule book. A person, or a tight committee, with a goal to bring change to the club, who won't hesitate when action is needed. Outline a structure with defined roles and ownership - these are key for making it work day to day

**“THE ROMANS DON’T WANT SPECIAL TREATMENT. THEY WANT TO BE INTEGRATED INTO THE CLUB. WE CELEBRATE WHAT THE ROMANS DO, BUT WE DON’T MAKE IT FEEL LIKE THEY’RE SEPARATE OR DIFFERENT.”**

Luke Wilson,  
CCO of Millwall



**“IT’S VERY IMPORTANT THAT THEY DON’T FEEL SEPARATE. WE TREAT THE ROMANS EXACTLY THE SAME AS EVERY OTHER TEAM IN THE ORGANISATION.”**

Sean Daly,  
CEO of Millwall Community Trust

# THE TEAM NEEDS WHAT A TEAM NEEDS.

No surprises here, these are the basics any team needs to find their feet. At the end of the day your LGBT+ team is a football team like any other, so don't forget the simple things.

## **Good facilities**

Access to the proper pitches and changing rooms.

## **A fancy fresh kit**

Remember, the crest unites the team.

## **A coach that cares**

Someone to develop the players and improve performance.

## **A schedule**

Sorting regular training, regular fixtures and a regular local, for a post match pint.

## **Off-pitch logistics**

Don't drop the ball on the little things like admin, emails and transport.



# EXPECT

At Millwall, we expected some pushback. It can come from the fans, from within the club and from people who don't understand it or don't like change. But it's not a reason to stop. We kept moving forward and we focussed on all the positives that we were seeing, which far outweighed the negatives.

# RESISTANCE

## HERE ARE OUR THREE DON'TS:

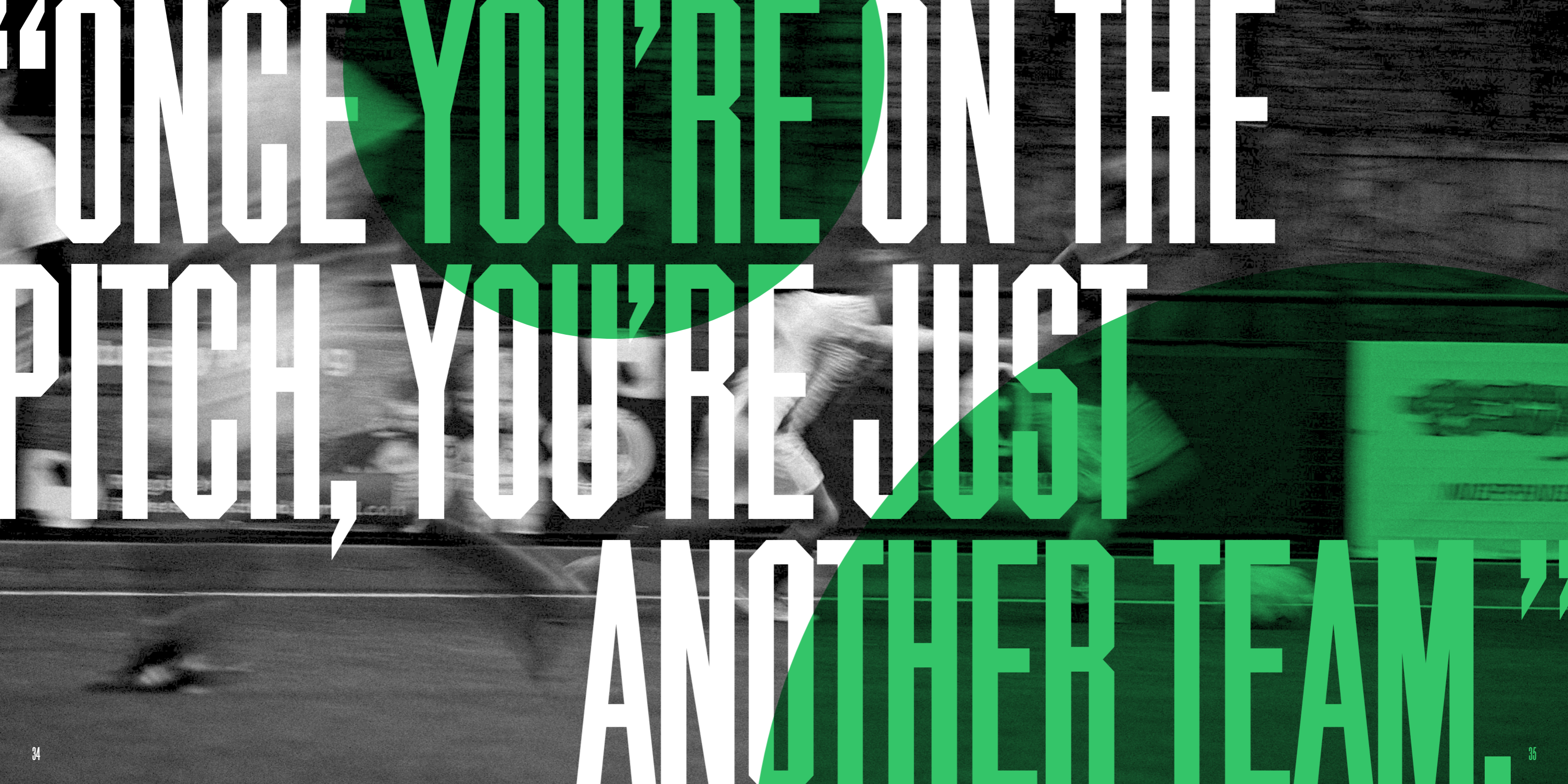
1. DON'T debate endlessly
2. DON'T wait for everyone to agree
3. DON'T dilute the idea



# KEEP PUSHING FORWARD.

"There is always going to be a section of the community that's not going to be happy with what you do, whatever it is. It's not just the Romans or Pride. Whatever I do, there will be people that will not be happy about what I try to do. But if I don't put my head above the parapet and look for change, it's never going to happen."

**Sean Daly,**  
CEO of Millwall Community Trust



“ONCE YOU’RE ON THE  
PITCH, YOU’RE JUST  
ANOTHER TEAM.”



“The culture is a live conversation.  
It’s woven through everything.”

**Andy Dolan,  
Millwall Pride Manager**

# EVERYONE SPEAKS THE SAME LANGUAGE.

To get the culture right, you've got to set the right tone from day one. It's the words you use, it's how you speak about the team - out in the open and behind closed doors. It's how the team is treated and how seriously it is taken.

At Millwall, the team wasn't positioned as different. It was positioned as equal. Held to the same standards and given the same respect. Here's how we got everyone singing from the same sheet and the common thread is consistency.

## 01 Set the benchmark for behaviour

Define clear boundaries of what is and what isn't acceptable. Encourage mutual respect and keep it up. And fans expect it - 52% say stronger policies against homophobic abuse should be a priority.

## 02 Tackle small issues early

Have an open dialogue and be vocal. Small things can become big things if they're not addressed on the spot.

## 03 Accountability

When words or actions cross the line, it has to be called out, accountability must be taken.

# SUPPORT YOUR PEOPLE.

Don't forget that beneath the crest, under the kit, is a human trying to find their way.

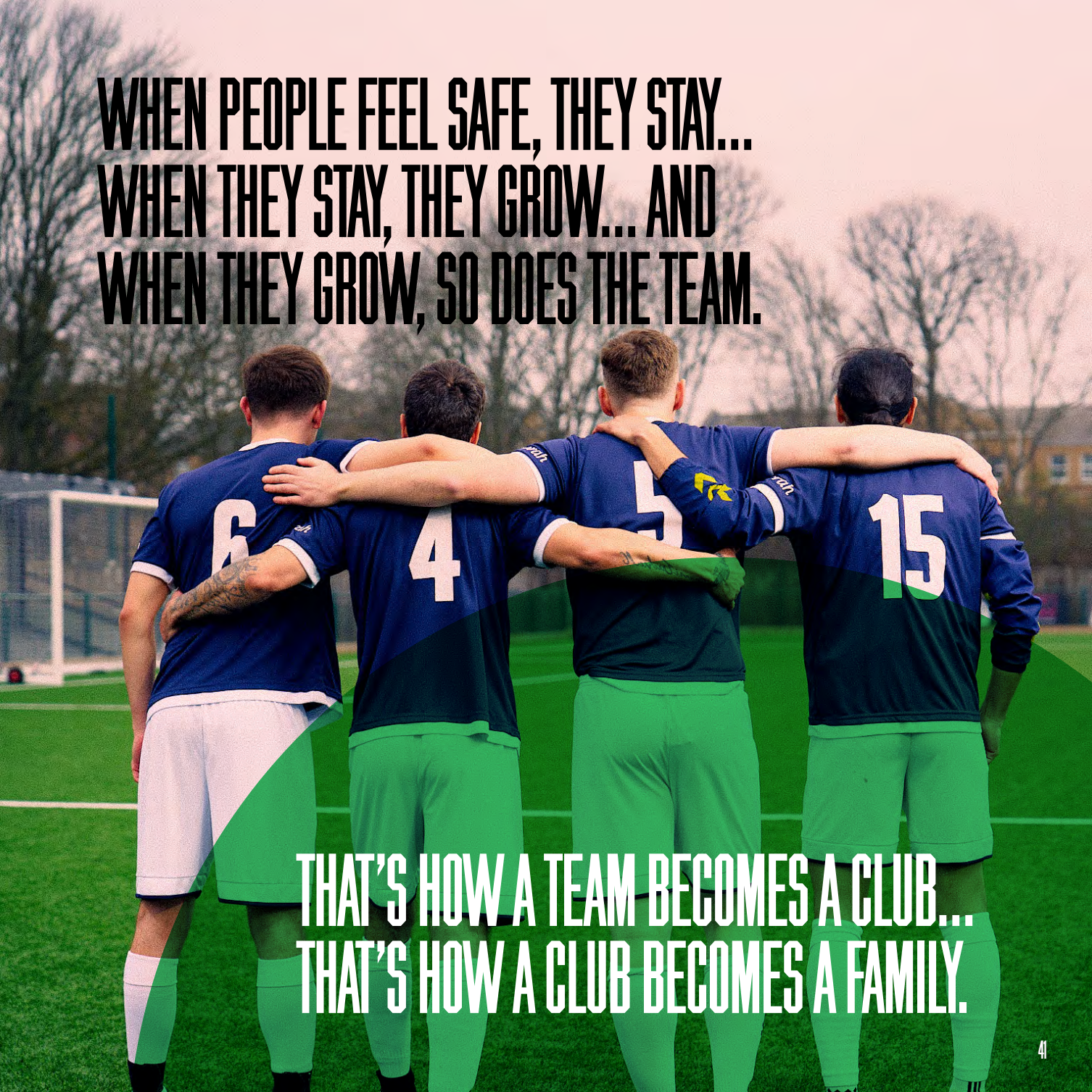
Everybody's experience is different. Joining an LGBT+ team can be the most freeing and rewarding thing, but it can bring up complex emotions too.

## **Give every player a space to speak**

Read the signs and make yourself available.

## **Take their welfare seriously**

Have an open dialogue and be vocal. Small things can become big things if they're not addressed there and then



WHEN PEOPLE FEEL SAFE, THEY STAY...  
WHEN THEY STAY, THEY GROW... AND  
WHEN THEY GROW, SO DOES THE TEAM.

THAT'S HOW A TEAM BECOMES A CLUB...  
THAT'S HOW A CLUB BECOMES A FAMILY.

MATCH

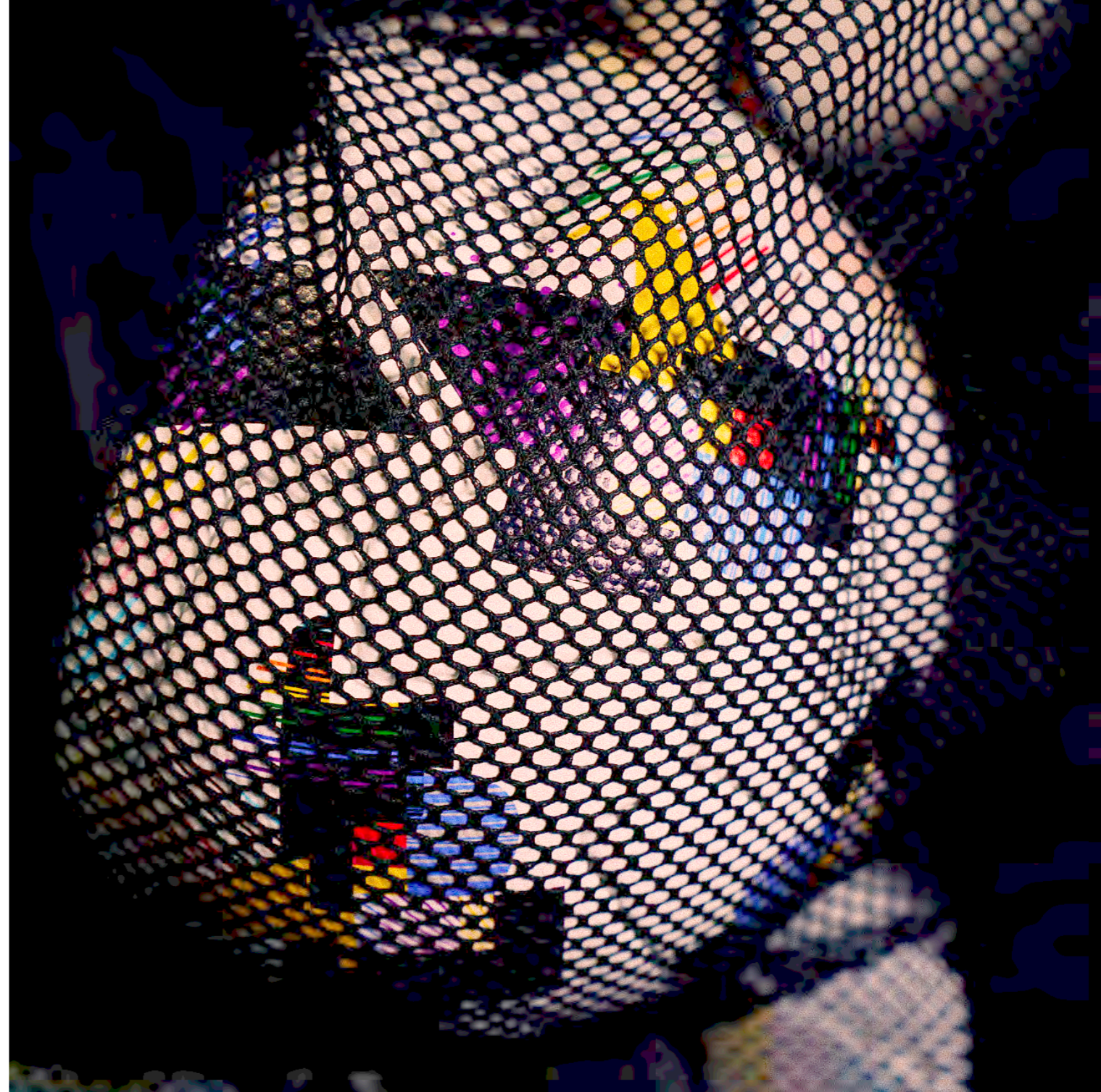
DAY

8

FAN  
SUPPORT

**“EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT THE TEAM IS ABOUT. WE DON’T ASK ABOUT SEXUALITY OR GENDER WHEN SOMEONE TURNS UP. AS LONG AS YOU RESPECT THE RULES OF THE CLUB, THAT’S WHAT MATTERS.”**

Sean Daly,  
CEO of Millwall Community Trust



# MAKE IT ABOUT FOOTBALL.

## MATCHDAY TACTICS:

### **Brief the stewards properly**

Not just about safety but about awareness, intent and pride.

### **Support the team visibly**

How the club talks, acts and presents the team sets the tone for the supporters to follow suit. And people notice it. Over half of fans say visible matchday presence is important.

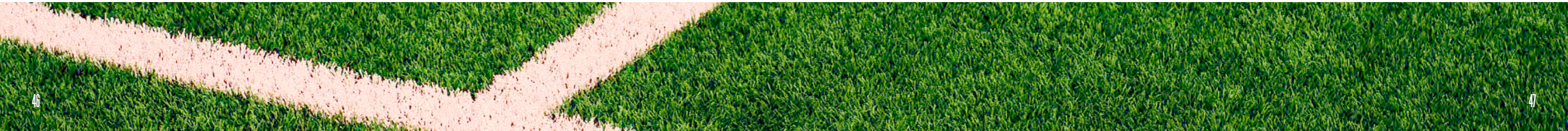
## SHOULD INCIDENTS ARISE:

### **Move fast**

Don't let bad behaviour linger or escalate, act immediately.

### **Use existing processes**

This is where the club's standards come into play, ensuring issues are dealt with properly, not performatively.





# COMMUNICATIONS AND CULTURE

**“THIS CAN’T JUST BE  
YOU SAY, IT HAS TO BE  
SOMETHING YOU DO.”**



# OUT IN THE REAL WORLD

So you've done it. You've found a team that feels right, your values are aligned, the fans are supportive and things are moving forward. You want to shout it out from the stands, share the good news with the world, tell everyone the good stuff you've achieved. We get it, but we recommend a simpler, subtler approach.



Introduce the team, stand behind it and just let it become part of the club. No special treatment. No fanfare, no big hoorah. It's too easy to get carried away like it's a one-off campaign. It's actually about long-term behaviour change. So save the spotlights for the end of the season. Your LGBT+ team doesn't need a song and dance, it needs consistency and commitment. Play it this way and the thing you've built grows stronger over the seasons. Before you know it, the team will be a valued part of the club.

## **Treat it like business as usual.**

Whether it's training, playing or showing up, your team should be treated just like any other.

## **Swerve tokenism.**

Don't wheel out the team to prove a point or make a statement.

## **Consistency beats celebration.**

Pride is more than a moment in the events calendar.

## **Let the team show the world who and what it is.**

Actions on and off the pitch build momentum more than any press release.



# DITCH THE JAZZ HANDS

# PARTNERSHIPS



# COMMUNITY & SUPPORT

# BIGGER THAN THE BEAUTIFUL GAME.

Create an LGBT+ team, and the opportunities for progress are almost unlimited. The team is a powerful asset that can drive change off the pitch and well beyond the stadium.



# SHOW & SPEAK UP

## 01 At schools

Schools welcome conversations and new learning opportunities. It's a chance for players to share their experiences and help young people feel seen and accepted.



## 02 In the community


Local Pride events, forums and workshops are a great way to spread awareness in meaningful ways. Fans want to see it embedded, with around half pointing to community programmes and coaching support as key.



## 03 Existing club initiatives

These don't have to be separate from the club and they don't always have to be pushing LGBT+ issues. The Romans have made big contributions to Millwall's existing initiatives and played a part in local initiatives too.

*It's about people connecting with people.*



**“WHAT’S COME OFF THE BACK  
OF THAT IS THEM GOING INTO  
SCHOOLS, REPRESENTING US  
AT FORUMS, ATTENDING PRIDE  
LONDON. I NEVER DREAMT  
THAT WOULD HAPPEN. I NEVER  
DREAMT WE’D BE TAKING**

**THE ROMANS INTO SCHOOLS  
AND THAT COUNCILS WOULD  
SAY, ‘THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT  
WE NEED,’ OR THAT THEY’D  
PICK UP AWARDS FROM  
THE COUNCIL.”**

Sean Daly,  
CEO of Millwall Community Trust

# Embrace the change. Everybody wins.

Start doing the right thing by your team and it spreads good through the whole community. At Millwall, we noticed deeper engagement and respect for what we were doing. The more we embraced change, the more the community embraced us. That opens the door to more discussion and deeper understanding, and that's when it starts to matter.

**Over 50% of fans say visibility of LGBT+ players would encourage more people to attend matches and play the game.**



**We helped more people  
feel represented**

**We built stronger  
connections in the  
community**

**We changed perceptions of  
the club, and the game**

"I think it's about gentle steps. It mustn't be seen as you coming in to take over. It's about partnership and then thinking about what you can wrap around that message to promote your professional club and the LGBT community."

*Sean Daly*

**WAIT.** ■ YOU KNOW NONE OF THIS HAPPENS OVERNIGHT, RIGHT?

● Play the long game

● Keep taking small steps, trust takes time to build.

● Stay consistent, don't try to scale too fast.

● Show up for the community.

● Let it grow naturally.

# PUTTING IT

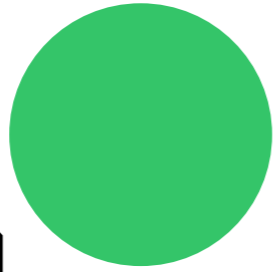


# INTO



# PRACTICE

**WE'VE  
LEARNED  
WHAT WORKS  
BY DOING IT**



**- AND WHAT  
DOESN'T.**

Sean Daly

# THE FIRST 90 DAYS

## 0-30 DAYS:

### Find the right team

- Speak to your FA.
- Meet more than one team.
- Choose based on alignment, not convenience.
- Start with regular training. Don't rush into competition.

## 30-60 DAYS:

### Make it a proper partnership

- Agree expectations on both sides.
- Define support clearly.
- Appoint a leader.
- Get internal buy-in.

## 60-90 DAYS:

### Make it real

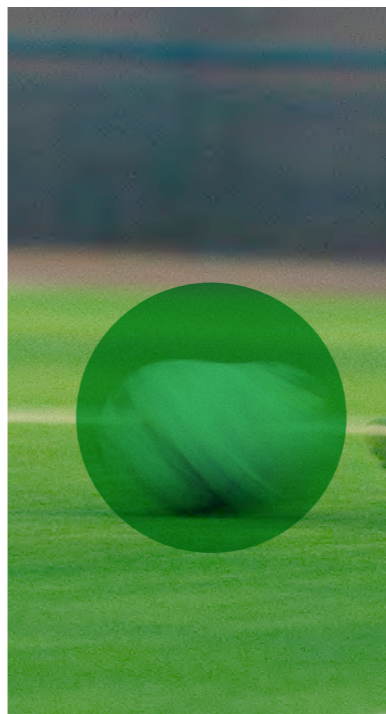
- Start training.
- Fixtures begin.
- Integration into the club.



# THE NEW RULES OF THE GAME.



- 01. Don't build it. Join it.**  
The right team is already out there. Go find it.
- 02. Put fit first.**  
The wrong partnerships will fail fast.
- 03. Ask before you act.**  
"How can we help?" is a great way to start.
- 04. Appoint a leader.**  
If everyone owns it, no one does.
- 05. Treat it like any other team.**  
Treat everyone the same. Simple.
- 06. Less announcements. More proof.**  
Long-term consistency beats campaigns



- 07. Expect resistance, move past it.**  
Not everyone will agree.
- 08. Take it beyond football**  
The real yards are made in the community.
- 09. Let it change you**  
Don't expect the club to stay the same.
- 10. Stay with it.**  
No looking back, this is just the start.
- 11. Listen, then listen again.**  
Ask what the team needs and keep checking in.
- 12. Measure what matters.**  
Focus on confidence, wellbeing and belonging.

# THE LAST WORD



# A PRIDE OF VERY PROUD LIONS

We're proud of what we've worked hard to build with the Millwall Romans. It's real. They are a part of our family. From South London to every corner of the country, as we look to the future of the game, it should be part of every club.



"Millwall Romans has been more than a team, it's a vital safe space where LGBTQ+ footballers can play with authenticity and pride. In a sport that hasn't always felt welcoming, it creates an environment built on respect, visibility, and solidarity. Its impact reaches beyond the pitch, strengthening the wider Millwall community by showing that inclusion makes the game better for everyone. It's not just about football it's about belonging, confidence, and the freedom to be yourself."

**Paul Loding**  
Captain and Chairman of Millwall

# LGBT TEAMS NEAR YOU

Bath LGBTQ+ Football Group  
Birmingham Blaze FC  
BLAGSS Unity FC  
Brighton BLAGSS Rocks  
Bristol City Panthers FC  
Bristol Inclusive Football Network  
Cardiff Dragons FC  
Chameleons FC  
Charlton Invicta FC  
Devon Rainbow FC  
East End Phoenix FC  
Exeter Pride Football  
HotScots FC  
Isca Apollo FSC  
Leicester Wildecats FC  
Leftfooters FC  
London Falcons FC  
London Freedom FC  
London Titans FC  
Mersey Marauders FC  
Millwall Romans FC  
Newcastle Panthers FC  
Newport Centurions  
Nottingham Lions FC  
Plymouth Pride Football  
Proud Baggies FC  
Rainbow Royals  
Saltire Thistle FC  
Soho FC  
Solent FC  
Stargazy FC  
Stonewall FC  
Swansea Galaxy FC  
Torbay Rainbow Football  
Trowbridge Tigers FC  
TRUK United FC  
Village Manchester FC  
Yorkshire Terriers FC



**WITH SPECIAL  
THANKS TO**

- Zander Murray, Former Professional Footballer, Presenter, Campaigner
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- Paul Williams, Chair of the GFSN
- Sean Daly, CEO of Millwall Community Trust
- Luke Wilson, CCO of Millwall
- Andy Dolan, Millwall Pride Manager
- Paul Loding, Captain and Chairman of Millwall Romans

Research carried out by 3GEM, surveying a nationally representative sample of 500 football fans aged 18+, and a nationally representative sample of 500 UK adult football fans who are members of - or identify as allies of - the LGBTQ+ community. Fieldwork carried out in January 2026.

Further research conducted by Censuswide, among a sample of 1000 UK LGBTQ+ respondents, aged 18+. The data was collected between in May 2026.