

RYA policy and process to support an RYA zone, junior or youth squad sailor who wishes to identify in a different gender to that assigned at birth, or who does not identify as either male or female

Introduction

Sailing is a mixed-gender sport, but at continental or world championship and Olympic level the different classes or fleets are often defined as male, female or mixed. In order to ensure equal numbers of talented male and female sailors progressing into the Olympic programme, the RYA's junior and youth squad programmes are divided into boys' and girls' squads, although they may train together. Applicants for squad places must therefore state whether they are applying for a boys' or a girls' squad.

People who feel that the sex they were assigned at birth does not match their gender identity often describe themselves as 'trans'. The RYA recognises that there has been an increase in the number of young trans people and a tendency for them to 'come out' at a younger age. Trans adults and young people are protected by law from all forms of discrimination and harassment. Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

It is also increasingly recognised that some people don't identify as either male or female, but experience their gender identity as being somewhere on a spectrum. They may use terms such as 'non-binary' or 'gender fluid' to describe themselves.

The purpose of this policy is to explain how the RYA aims to support young trans or non-binary sailors in RYA squads.

Policy

The RYA's policy is to ensure that a sailor who has a genuine and serious desire to identify in a different gender to that assigned at birth ('trans sailor') or a sailor who does not identify as either male or female ('non-binary sailor') is treated fairly, sensitively and with respect. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that a trans or non-binary sailor is able to participate in the RYA squad programme appropriate to their acquired or identified gender and is protected from discrimination, bullying or harassment.

Other relevant RYA policies are:

RYA Equality Policy

Inclusivity is one of the RYA's core values.

The RYA is committed to the principle of equality of opportunity and aims to ensure that all present and potential participants, members, instructors, coaches, competitors, officials, volunteers and employees are treated fairly and on an equal basis, irrespective of sex, age, disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment or social status.

Racing Charter

The RYA Racing Charter aims to ensure that the sport of sailboat racing welcomes all people and treats them equally. Foul or abusive language, intimidation, aggressive behaviour or lack of respect for others and their property will not be tolerated.

Process

Squad applications

Whether the sailor is applying to join a squad for the first time, or has already been a member of a squad but now wishes to apply in a different gender, they should apply to join a squad appropriate to their acquired gender. The sailor or their parents* are encouraged to make the RYA aware at an early stage that the sailor is trans or non-binary so that we can discuss what support we are able to provide.

If a sailor wishes to identify in a different gender whilst selected within one of the RYA squads, the RYA will take all reasonable steps to facilitate this.

For fitness profiling, the sailor will be profiled against the benchmarks appropriate to their squad.

Communication and support

The sailor or their parents should initially speak either to the Head Coach for the relevant class/squad, who will contact the relevant RYA Manager, or directly to the RYA Manager, or contact the RYA's Safeguarding and Equality Manager, Jackie Reid (equality@rya.org.uk, 023 8060 4104). The Youth Racing Manager will be kept informed.

The Safeguarding and Equality Manager will make contact with the sailor's parents, and if possible arrange to meet with them and the sailor, to gain an understanding of the sailor's current situation with regard to their home, school and social life.

If the sailor has not yet come out to their parents, the Safeguarding and Equality Manager will endeavour to meet the sailor at a training camp or sailing event, accompanied by their coach or another appropriate adult. The RYA will not tell the sailor's parents anything without the sailor's agreement, but we have to recognise that sailors are very reliant on their parents to transport them to training camps and events where they naturally get to know the other sailors and parents. It would be difficult for a sailor to participate in a squad programme in their acquired gender without their parents being aware of this and supporting them.

If it becomes clear that the sailor is meeting with resistance or lack of understanding at home, a conversation should take place with the sailor's parents to encourage them to seek professional advice and support in order to protect the sailor's wellbeing. There are some sources of support for both young people and parents listed at the end of this document.

It is likely that a young trans sailor is going through the same process in other aspects of their life, at home, socially and probably also at school/college, although they may be progressing at different speeds in different environments. Wherever possible the RYA would wish to take an approach that is consistent with the sailor's school, unless the sailor has not yet raised their wish to identify in a different gender with the school. The relevant Class Association and/or Club should also be informed, with the sailor's consent, so that the sailor is treated consistently in all of their sailing activity.

The decision to identify in another gender and to tell family and friends is a huge step for a young person, at an age when life is already stressful. They are likely to fear that they will be excluded or bullied because they're 'different'. They will need the support of their family, teachers, coaches, friends and fellow sailors.

* Throughout this document the term 'parents' includes carers or guardians.

Practical matters

Informing other sailors and parents

If a sailor wishes to identify in a different gender when already part of the squad programme, the RYA will discuss with the sailor and their parents the preferred timing and method of communication with other squad sailors and their parents. This communication should not take place until discussion has taken place with the sailor on issues such as changing facilities. All sailors, parents, coaches and staff should be asked to refer to the sailor by their chosen name and pronoun (he/she/they).

Personal data

RYA and class association/club databases, squad lists etc should be updated to show the sailor's chosen gender and name.

Changing rooms and toilets

A trans sailor should be able to use the toilets, showers and changing rooms of their acquired gender if they wish. However other sailors or their parents may have concerns about a trans male to female sailor using the girls' changing rooms, or vice versa, and the trans sailor may want greater privacy than a typical sailing facility changing room can provide. The RYA will discuss the most suitable arrangements with the sailor and their parents, taking account of their right to fair treatment under the Equality Act and also the feelings of other sailors. This may include offering alternative changing facilities to other sailors if they are not comfortable sharing with the trans sailor. These arrangements will be kept under regular review.

Residential accommodation

As for changing rooms and toilets, the most appropriate arrangements for residential accommodation, if relevant, will be discussed on a case by case basis.

Bullying

Transphobic behaviour is as unacceptable as racism, sexism, homophobia or any other form of bullying. Any bullying of a trans or non-binary sailor should be reported and will be addressed in accordance with the British Youth Sailing Anti-Bullying Policy which can be found on the RYA website:

<https://www.rya.org.uk/racing/youth-junior/info/Pages/policies.aspx>

Clothing

All squad sailors of any gender can choose whichever squad clothing sizes they feel most comfortable wearing.

Competition

National events

A trans or non-binary sailor should be able to compete in their chosen gender at club, class association or national level.

International events

Eligibility to compete at international events, including events with 'World Sailing' in their title and world and continental championships of World Sailing classes, is governed by Appendix 3 (Eligibility Code) of the World Sailing Regulations. The Code is largely concerned with nationality and does not contain any specific reference to gender. Eligibility to compete is likely to be decided on a case by case basis with reference to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) guidelines.

The objective of the IOC guidelines is the guarantee of fair competition. Those who transition from female to male are eligible to compete in the male category without restriction. Those who transition from male to female are eligible to compete in the female category under the following conditions:

- The athlete has declared that her gender is female. The declaration cannot be changed, for sporting purposes, for a minimum of four years.
- The athlete must demonstrate that her total testosterone level in serum has been below 10 nmol/L for at least 12 months prior to her first competition (with the requirement for any longer period to be based on a confidential case-by-case evaluation, considering whether or not 12 months is a sufficient length of time to minimize any advantage in women's competition).
- The athlete's total testosterone level in serum must remain below 10 nmol/L throughout the period of desired eligibility to compete in the female category.
- Compliance with these conditions may be monitored by testing. In the event of non-compliance, the athlete's eligibility for female competition will be suspended for 12 months.

It may therefore not initially be possible for a young trans female sailor to compete at international level.

For further information and support:

Support for young people who feel at odds with their birth gender, and their parents
www.mermaidsuk.org.uk

Information for young people and parents/carers
<http://genderedintelligence.co.uk>

Advice for young gay, lesbian, bi or trans people
www.youngstonewall.org.uk www.lgbtyouth.org.uk (Scotland)

Dealing with bullying – advice for young people and parents
www.kidscape.org.uk

Mental health and wellbeing
www.youngminds.org.uk

ChildLine free 24-hour helpline
 Tel: 0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk