

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

1. Policy

Scottish Touch is committed to ensuring that Touch in Scotland is welcoming, fair and inclusive. Discriminatory behaviour, including direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, discrimination by association and discrimination by perception, is contrary to the law, to the values of Scottish Touch and to the standards of behaviour expected across our sport.

Scottish Touch will recognise, address and seek to remove barriers faced by people who participate in, volunteer for, work in, support or wish to access our sport. We will promote equality, diversity and inclusion through leadership, education, positive action and listening, and we will challenge practices or behaviours that unfairly exclude or disadvantage others. Our guiding principle is that Touch should be a sport for all.

Scottish Touch is committed to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion and to ensuring that no participant is unlawfully discriminated against because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (together, the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010). Scottish Touch will seek to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices comply with applicable equality legislation.

For Scottish Touch, equality, diversity and inclusion means taking reasonable and proportionate steps to ensure that players, coaches, referees and officials, staff, Board members, volunteers, parents/carers and others involved in the sport are welcomed and treated with dignity and respect. Everyone involved in Scottish Touch shares responsibility for understanding and embedding these principles in the way they behave, make decisions and deliver Touch activity.

Touch - A Sport for All

Scottish Touch believes that everyone who wishes to be involved in Touch should have a genuine and fair opportunity to participate and contribute to the full extent of their ambitions and abilities. Participants should be able to enjoy the sport in an environment where their rights, dignity and individual worth are respected and where they are free from intimidation, victimisation, harassment, discrimination and abuse.

2. Policy objectives

- Encourage affiliated clubs, leagues, competitions, event organisers and partner organisations to adopt and demonstrate a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Promote Touch as a sport for all, at all levels, regardless of background or protected characteristic, while recognising that some people may also experience financial, socio-economic, cultural, geographic or other practical barriers to participation.
- Ensure recruitment, appointment, selection and deployment procedures for staff, volunteers, coaches, officials and representative roles are fair, transparent and consistent with equality legislation.
- Provide or signpost appropriate equality, diversity and inclusion learning and development opportunities for Board members, staff, coaches, referees, officials and volunteers.
- Consider equality, diversity and inclusion when developing programmes, competitions, pathways, representative teams, the Youth Academy and other Scottish Touch activities.

- Identify appropriate measures and indicators that allow Scottish Touch to understand participation, representation and experience across the sport and to monitor progress towards becoming a sport that is accessible and welcoming to all.
- Listen to participants and stakeholders, particularly where they identify barriers, exclusion or unequal treatment, and use that feedback to inform organisational improvement.

Positive action and removing barriers

Scottish Touch recognises that equality and inclusion require more than simply avoiding unlawful discrimination. Where lawful and appropriate, we will take positive steps to identify and reduce barriers that restrict access to Touch or progression within the sport.

This may include supporting initiatives designed to increase participation by groups that are under-represented, improving accessibility, considering the affordability of participation, adapting communications or delivery methods, and reviewing practices that may unintentionally disadvantage particular groups.

3. Responsibilities and procedures

Scottish Touch regards discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation as serious matters. Conduct of this nature may amount to misconduct and may also bring Scottish Touch or the sport into disrepute.

- Concerns, incidents or complaints should be reported through the relevant Scottish Touch complaints, disciplinary, safeguarding or incident-reporting procedure, depending on the nature of the matter.
- Scottish Touch will consider concerns fairly, promptly and proportionately, and will take appropriate action where a breach of this policy or another Scottish Touch policy is established.
- Disciplinary action may be taken against any participant who discriminates against, harasses, bullies or victimises another person, in accordance with applicable Scottish Touch procedures.
- No person should be disadvantaged or treated unfairly because they have raised a concern in good faith, supported a complaint or participated in an investigation.
- Where a concern also raises safeguarding, criminal or statutory issues, Scottish Touch may refer or share information with appropriate external authorities where necessary and lawful.
- This policy will be made available to Scottish Touch participants and stakeholders and should form part of relevant induction and governance arrangements.

Expectations of affiliated organisations

Scottish Touch expects affiliated clubs, leagues, competitions and other recognised organisations to support the principles of this policy. Affiliated organisations should either adopt this policy or maintain their own equality, diversity and inclusion arrangements that are consistent with it.

- Promote open and inclusive access to membership, participation and volunteering.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that committees, members, coaches, officials and volunteers behave consistently with the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Take appropriate action where conduct within their responsibility is inconsistent with these standards.
- Support reasonable Scottish Touch initiatives designed to improve equality, diversity and inclusion across the sport.

Board and organisational responsibility

The Scottish Touch Board has overall responsibility for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and for ensuring suitable oversight of this policy. The Board may designate a lead individual or establish a working group to support delivery, monitoring and initiatives where this would be beneficial. The Board should receive an appropriate equality, diversity and inclusion progress or assurance update at least annually.

Touch-specific considerations

Because of the nature of Touch, Scottish Touch will pay particular attention to the following practical considerations:

- **Appropriate physical contact:** Physical contact is an inherent part of Touch, but all participants must respect the dignity and personal boundaries of others. Officials and coaches should be alert to repeated, unnecessary or inappropriate contact that could amount to harassment or misconduct.
- **Referees and officials:** Match officials must apply the laws and competition rules fairly, consistently and respectfully. Their authority must not be exercised in a discriminatory, intimidating or demeaning manner.
- **Children and young people:** This policy operates alongside Scottish Touch safeguarding arrangements. Children and young people must receive appropriate protection from discriminatory, bullying, harassing or otherwise harmful behaviour.
- **Faith, culture and participation:** Organisers should make reasonable efforts to understand and accommodate relevant religious and cultural requirements where possible, subject to participant safety, competition requirements and the integrity of the sport.
- **Disability and accessibility:** Scottish Touch will consider reasonable adjustments and practical adaptations that may enable disabled people to participate, volunteer, officiate, coach or otherwise contribute to the sport.
- **Financial and socio-economic barriers:** Scottish Touch will consider affordability and other socio-economic barriers when developing participation, development and representative opportunities and will, where reasonably practicable, seek ways to reduce avoidable exclusion.

4. Monitoring and evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the Scottish Touch policy review cycle and, as a minimum, at least once every three years, or sooner where there is a significant change in legislation, guidance or organisational need.
- Scottish Touch will periodically review relevant policies, procedures and practices to consider whether they support equality, diversity and inclusion effectively.
- Where appropriate and proportionate, Scottish Touch will use participation data, representation information, feedback, complaints, safeguarding information and other indicators to identify trends, barriers and areas for improvement. The Board will consider these matters at least annually as part of its oversight of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Material findings or recommendations arising from monitoring will be considered by the Board and communicated to relevant participants and partners where appropriate.

Appendix A - Definitions

The following definitions reflect concepts used in equality legislation and are included to support a consistent understanding of this policy.

Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic they have, are thought to have, or because of their association with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Associative discrimination

Associative discrimination is direct discrimination against a person because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Discrimination by perception

Discrimination by perception is direct discrimination against a person because others believe that they have a particular protected characteristic, whether or not they actually do.

Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur where a provision, criterion, practice, rule or policy applies to everyone but puts people who share a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. In some circumstances, indirect discrimination may be lawful where the measure can be objectively justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Discrimination arising from disability

Discrimination arising from disability may occur where a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability and that treatment cannot be objectively justified.

Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. A person may be affected by conduct even where it is not directed specifically at them.

Bullying

Bullying is behaviour that misuses power or position to intimidate, criticise persistently, humiliate, undermine or otherwise cause harm or distress to another person. Bullying may occur face to face or through digital or social-media channels.

Third-party harassment

Harassment or discriminatory behaviour may be carried out by someone who is not directly employed or appointed by Scottish Touch, for example a spectator, visitor, contractor, parent/carer or other third party. Scottish Touch will take reasonable steps to address such conduct where it arises within activities for which it has responsibility.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when a person is subjected to a detriment because they have made or supported a complaint, raised a concern, brought proceedings under equality legislation or are suspected of doing so. This protection does not extend to complaints that are deliberately false and made maliciously.

Related Scottish Touch policies and procedures

- Welfare & Safe Sport Strategy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Social Media & Digital Communications Policy
- Incident / Complaint Record and relevant complaints or disciplinary procedures
- Safeguarding policies and procedures

Contact

Questions about this policy, or concerns relating to equality, diversity and inclusion, should be directed to the appropriate Scottish Touch contact:

Role / Name	Chief Executive
Email	ceo@touch.scot