

# LGBTQ+ ADVOCATES PROGRAMME

IMPACT REPORT 2025





## **LGBTQ+ Advocates Programme | Impact Report**

A Clare Local Sports Partnership initiative in collaboration with Sporting Pride and other community partners, including QuareClare LGBTQIA+ Community Group and Kilkenny Sports Partnership. This initiative has been supported through Sport Ireland's Dormant Account Funding 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion'

**Date:** October 2025

**Report compiled by:** Karina Murray, Sporting Pride,  
on behalf of Clare LSP

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## OVERVIEW

The LGBTQ+ Advocates Programme was a pilot initiative developed to increase awareness, visibility and inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in sport across County Clare. Led by Clare Local Sports Partnership (Clare LSP) in collaboration with Sporting Pride and key community partners, the programme aimed to support sports clubs to create safer, more welcoming environments for LGBTQ+ participants, members and allies.

Funded through Sport Ireland's Dormant Accounts Fund under the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strand, the programme combined targeted training with visible community action. It engaged clubs, sporting bodies and local organisations in practical conversations about inclusion, allyship and respect, while encouraging tangible actions that made LGBTQ+ inclusion visible at local level.

In total, 29 participants from 23 clubs, National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships took part in the programme, representing a broad range of sports including football, swimming, cycling, basketball, rugby, tennis and mixed community activity providers.

## RATIONALE

Sport plays a central role in community life in County Clare. However, national and international research consistently shows that LGBTQ+ people are more likely to experience exclusion, discrimination or discomfort in sporting environments. This can lead to reduced participation, poorer mental wellbeing and a loss of the social and health benefits that sport provides.

The LGBTQ+ Advocates Programme was designed to address this gap by:

- Increasing understanding of LGBTQ+ experiences in sport
- Equipping club representatives with inclusive language, confidence and practical tools
- Encouraging visible actions that signal safety, welcome and allyship
- Strengthening connections between sports clubs and the wider LGBTQ+ community

The programme aligned closely with Clare LSP's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as national policy objectives under Sport Ireland's Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

## PROGRAMME DESIGN AND DELIVERY

The programme was delivered through a series of 1.5-hour interactive training sessions facilitated by Sporting Pride. Training was offered in a blended format, with one in-person session held in Ennis and two online sessions delivered via Zoom to maximise accessibility.

### Training content focused on:

- Understanding LGBTQ+ identities and terminology
- Inclusive and respectful language
- Allyship in practice
- Practical steps clubs can take to promote inclusion

Participants were encouraged not only to reflect on their own club environments but also to take visible, community-facing actions following the training.

## KEY OUTPUTS

- 3 training sessions delivered
- 29 participants engaged
- 23 clubs and organisations represented

### Following the training, clubs and partners implemented a range of visibility and engagement actions, including:

- Displaying inclusion posters and rainbow symbols in club facilities
- Sharing allyship messages across social media platforms
- Participating visibly in the Clare Pride March
- Establishing internal LGBTQ+ working groups within clubs

### In addition, three inclusive sports events were organised to coincide with Clare Pride:

- An inclusive swim and dip in Ballyvaughan
- A Pride-themed football match in Shannon
- A community Pride cycle linking Clare and Cork

These events provided alcohol-free, accessible opportunities for LGBTQ+ community members and allies to come together through sport.

## OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The programme delivered meaningful outcomes at both individual and organisational levels.

For participants, the training increased confidence, knowledge and willingness to engage in conversations about LGBTQ+ inclusion. Many participants described feeling better equipped to challenge discriminatory language, support LGBTQ+ members and initiate inclusive actions within their clubs.

For clubs and communities, the programme helped translate learning into action. Visibility initiatives sparked conversations locally, generated positive engagement online and demonstrated that LGBTQ+ inclusion in sport is both achievable and welcomed outside of large urban centres.

Participant feedback highlighted several recurring themes:

- The importance of equity rather than simple equality
- The power of visible allyship in creating safer spaces
- The value of community-led, respectful dialogue
- The need for follow-up and accountability to sustain momentum

Case studies from swimming, football and cycling clubs illustrated how even small-scale initiatives can have a ripple effect, strengthening community ties, re-engaging lapsed participants and normalising LGBTQ+ presence in local sport.

## LEARNING AND FUTURE POTENTIAL

The pilot programme generated valuable learning to inform future delivery. Key insights included:

- The need for stronger pre-training promotion to boost participation
- The importance of timing delivery around club calendars
- The value of pairing training with immediate, visible action
- A strong appetite for practical toolkits and ongoing support

Participants consistently described themselves as acting as allies rather than advocates, informing a recommendation to adopt this terminology more consistently in future phases.

There is clear potential to scale the programme through:

- A blended delivery model combining in-person and online learning
- Short introductory awareness modules for wider club membership
- Practical event and visibility toolkits for clubs
- A train-the-trainer approach to support sustainability and reach

## CONCLUSION

The LGBTQ+ Advocates Programme demonstrated that targeted training, delivered in partnership with community organisations and paired with visible local action, can create meaningful cultural change within sport.

By empowering clubs to act as visible allies, the programme helped normalise LGBTQ+ inclusion, strengthen community connections and ensure that sport in County Clare is more welcoming for everyone.

The learning from this pilot provides a strong foundation for future expansion within Clare and offers a replicable model for other counties seeking to advance equality, diversity and inclusion in sport.

# 1. OVERVIEW

The LGBTQ+ Advocates Programme was developed to increase awareness, visibility and inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in sport across County Clare.

29 participants from 23 local clubs, National Governing Bodies and other Local Sports Partnerships took part in this pilot initiative. The training equipped club representatives with knowledge, language and confidence to create more welcoming spaces for LGBTQ+ members.

Following the programme, several clubs ran Pride-themed events, displayed inclusion posters and shared messages of allyship on social media, helping to make LGBTQ+ inclusion visible across the sporting community.

While titled the LGBTQ+ Advocates Programme, participants consistently described their role as acting as allies within their clubs. This insight has informed recommendations for future delivery.

The programme demonstrated that targeted training, combined with visible community action, can generate meaningful cultural change within local sport.

## 2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Sport plays a central role in community life in County Clare, yet research <sup>[1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]</sup> shows that LGBTQ+ people often feel excluded or unwelcome in sporting environments.

The LGBTQ+ Advocates Programme was created to:

- Support Clare's sports clubs to build more inclusive cultures.
- Align with Clare Sports Partnership's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Contribute to national goals under Sport Ireland's Diversity & Inclusion Policy and Sporting Pride's vision for inclusive sport in Ireland.

## 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of the programme were to:

Raise awareness of the experiences and needs of LGBTQ+ people in sport.

- Equip participants with practical tools to promote inclusion in their clubs.
- Build a network of local allies.
- Encourage visible actions and community events that celebrate diversity in sport.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2022-05/Sport%20Ireland%20Policy%20on%20Diversity%20and%20Inclusion%20in%20Sport.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.out-sport.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Recommendations-Working-Party-on-Sport-.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://outonthefields.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/USA-Out-on-the-Fields-Final-Release.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://outonthefields.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Summary-of-Irish-Results-Out-on-the-Fields.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.out-sport.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OUTSPORT-Report-Relevance-of-SOGI-in-Sport-in-Europe-3.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://outonthefields.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Ireland-Out-on-the-Fields-Final-Release.pdf>

## 4. PROGRAMME DESIGN AND DELIVERY

The pilot programme, funded through Sport Ireland's Dormant Account Funding 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion', was commissioned by Clare LSP and supported by Sporting Pride, Kilkenny Sports Partnership and QuareClare LGBTQIA+ Community Group.

**FORMAT:** 1.5-hour interactive training session.

**DELIVERY:** One in person session in Ennis and two online sessions, delivered via Zoom.

**CONTENT:** Understanding LGBTQ+ identities, inclusive language, allyship and practical steps for clubs.

**FACILITATORS:** Karina Murray, Sporting Pride

**PARTICIPANTS:** 29 representatives from 23 local sports clubs, National Governing Bodies and other Local Sports Partnerships. A variety of sports were represented, including:

- Basketball
- Canoeing
- Cycling
- Football
- Hockey
- Martial Arts
- Rugby
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Mixed sports and activities, e.g. representatives from Clare and Waterford Local Sports Partnerships, autism services, disability services, schools and Scouts.

**GEOGRAPHICAL REACH:** participants from various parts of Clare took part (Shannon, Ennis, Ballyvaughan, Newmarket on Fergus) as well as representatives from other counties (Limerick, Kilkenny, Waterford and Cork).

## 5. OUTPUTS

### CLUBS ENGAGED

23

### VISIBILITY ACTIONS

- Pride posters displayed in club facilities
- Flags and symbols of allyship made visible
- Clare LSP's participation in Clare Pride March
- Formation of an LGBTQ+ sub-group within one club

### EVENTS ORGANISED

Inclusive dip for LGBTQ+ community and allies, football tournament for LGBTQ+ women, non binary people and allies, a social cycle for LGBTQ+ community and allies (more details on each event is available under 'Case Studies').

### TRAINING SESSIONS

3

SESSIONS

29

PARTICIPANTS

### SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

15 different posts created across Instagram showcasing the programme (replicated on Facebook). The posts focused on the events, promoting the clubs who took part and the advocates, and photos + videos of the events when they were finished. The programme received a high level of engagement, with posts receiving hundreds of likes across Instagram and Facebook.



CEO of Clare LSP John Sweeney and Board Member, Brian Mc Manus, taking part in the Clare Pride March.

## 6. OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The programme led to tangible outcomes at both individual and club levels.

### 6A. PARTICIPANT VOICES – EXPERIENCES AND REFLECTIONS

The following quotes from participants highlight key themes that emerged through the LGBTQ+ Advocates Programme: community building, inclusion, visibility, empowerment and ongoing action.

#### BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

##### Anna – Queer Bike Rides Cork

**“It was great, creating the community, creating the space, the collaboration, what me and QBR got out of this was amazing as well. More people can now copy this, create their own clubs in their own cities... great to see that you can make it a positive space.”**

**“For the regular clubs... it’s important that those clubs can show who they really are.”**

##### Amie – Queer Bike Rides Cork

**“I really do think inclusion in sport is so important for so many reasons. If I can do anything to help I will.”**

**“Integrating with non-LGBTQ+ people and the wider population is important as well for education, along with many other reasons, as we all share the world together.”**

**“I actually don’t have words to describe how brilliant that weekend was”** (referring to the weekend of Clare Pride when the social cycle took place).

These reflections capture the dual benefit of the programme - empowering LGBTQ+ participants while providing an opportunity for broader community connection through sport.

## EQUITY, LEARNING, AND AWARENESS

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### Rory Ryan – Shannon Masters Swim Club

“Sport needs to be equitable, not just equal. You need to make sure that it’s right for the people who are trying to do it and I think that little bits of training like this are really valuable.”

“What was most impactful was the fact that, as a member of the community, I learned a lot through the training.”

“I’m an out gay man and I have been for nearly 30 years. For me doing the programme, I got a lot of new information that I didn’t have before I did the programme, so there was certainly a lot of value that I took from it.”

“I think that it is something that when you think of kids in sport you do not want them to have any blocker, you don’t want that throwaway comment to stop them from wanting to participate.”

“You made an exceptionally good analogy or you asked a very appropriate question within the group that we were at and it was ‘do you allow racism on the pitch?’ and we were like absolutely not - so why is it ok for someone to make a homophobic slur? And they (the club that reported homophobic slurs happening regularly) did not have an answer to that question.”

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Rory’s reflections underscore the importance of equity over equality and the power of inclusive dialogue in challenging harmful norms within sport.

## VISIBILITY AND REPRESENTATION

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### John and Lizzy – Clare LSP

**“It’s always about trying to break down the barriers, to get people involved in sport and physical activity, and if we remove the barrier people can be active and that’s what our end goal is – for people to be active.” - John**

**“I think seeing the vast array of events that were put on and the different options there were between walking in the Pride march, there was soccer, there was cycling, there was swimming... I think the visibility aspect, what the programme brought, especially on social media, was really good and it was great that we were able to be involved. The engagement that we got on some of the posts would suggest that more people were like ‘oh, these kinds of things do happen in my community in Clare’ as opposed to always seeing it happen in Dublin or somewhere else.” -Lizzy**

**“Why it wasn’t challenging to take part as heterosexual male, is because a safe space was created so it was easy, it was good to have the conversation.” - John (on the training environment)**

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This feedback highlights the value of visibility and safe spaces in creating momentum for inclusion across the county.

## LOCAL ACTION AND CLUB GROWTH

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### Ger and Janice – Shannon Town United FC

**“Genuinely I think you could strike with this, do you know what I mean, I genuinely do think that if it gains momentum it could be a success.” - Ger**

**“We don’t have the women’s team at present and we’re trying to get it back up and running. The programme hit two things for us - it had the LGBTQ+ side but then hopefully we’ll benefit as a club as well.” - Janice**

**“I actually really enjoyed the game on the day. I thought it was a great success... there must have been 26 girls that turned up altogether... it has the potential to get bigger in my opinion. I know it was a success; talking to a lot of the girls afterwards they really enjoyed it... it might open doors for us to get the girls back involved with the club again.” - Ger**

**“From start to finish I thought it was excellent... we’re a bit more informed about what else is out there and what some of the girls are going through... it was a pleasure to be a part of and I definitely would recommend it... I’d love to hold it again next year should the opportunity arise again.” - Ger**

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These reflections demonstrate how inclusion efforts can also support broader club development and community engagement.

## CONFIDENCE AND EVERYDAY IMPACT

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### Deirdre – Ballybathers Swim Club

“What we did have afterwards was lots of questions, both in the supermarket and in the post office where we had posters up, and then people just walking up afterwards, or in the pub - one of the pubs carried the poster because they really did want to carry it and they have said to me subsequently that they did have questions about it... I think overall it did its job, didn't it?”

“Did I find the training useful? I mean yeah, I feel more confident now in blundering into things. You know the way, before you think ‘I really better not ask things’ or ‘I really better not raise this’ because there has been so much pushback recently... whereas now I would feel much more confident in just being natural about it and asking questions, even inviting people to join swimming.”

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Deirdre's account illustrates how small visibility actions can generate meaningful conversations and shift local culture toward openness.

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUSTAINED ACTION

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### Beth – Shannon Jets Basketball

“Because I think it’s just really important for us as a club. I’m the child protection officer and there’s a lot of young people who are part of the LGBTQI+ community and they are either in the club or want to be in the club and don’t know how to approach the club... I really feel it is essential, if we are truly inclusive, that we know how to include everybody in a way that isn’t patronising or condescending.”

“I think that the programme in and of itself is very valuable but I think it’s very good to have follow-up as well because you might intend to do something but life gets in the way, whereas when you have somebody kind of saying ‘look, are you going to do this’ or ‘when are you going to do it’, it makes you follow through.”

“I’m somebody, not just me but there’s a lot of us in the club, who really believe in this and still it’s hard to find the time to make it happen and make sure that we do what we intend to do and would like to do in theory, but I think that the follow-up action is really important to make sure that you go ahead and do it... it kind of makes you accountable.”

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Beth’s reflections stress the need for ongoing support, follow-up and accountability to ensure inclusion efforts move from intention to sustained action.

## 6B. EMPOWERING LGBTQ+ LEADERSHIP – A STANDALONE REFLECTION

### Diarmaid – Limerick Lawn Tennis Club

“So what we did in the tennis club was we put a very discreet post out there, within our newsletter, and we said if people would like to come forward we’d love to do an event or make ourselves welcoming... how can we do it... we ran it for a couple of weeks (for people) to come, talk, put your name forward anonymously, and then... I ended up speaking to each of the individuals so we’ve kind of got the bones of a group... I spoke to each of them anonymously... to get their ideas and thoughts but also (to find out), would they be willing to get in a group with others in their community, and then would they be willing to put on an event or to start thinking about it, so it’s at that point where they’re actually talking and I’ve left that open to them: would they want to put something on our club website or do they want to run an event, however they feel comfortable, to come up with some thoughts and recommendations and come back to me, and then I can go to the management committee... but leaving it up to them what they want to do.”

This example highlights the power of empowerment - enabling LGBTQ+ members to shape their own visibility and inclusion within their sporting spaces. By taking a community-led, consultative approach, Diarmaid’s club is creating sustainable structures for inclusion driven by those most impacted.

### SUMMARY OF THEMES:

- Across all participant voices, several key themes emerge:
- **Community Creation:** Shared ownership and belonging through inclusive spaces.
- **Education and Equity:** Deepened understanding of what true inclusion looks like.
- **Visibility:** Pride events and local actions making inclusion tangible.
- **Empowerment:** LGBTQ+ members leading change in their own clubs.
- **Sustainability:** The need for ongoing support, follow-up and accountability.

## 6C. IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- Increased understanding and confidence among participants in addressing LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- Stronger visibility of allyship within local clubs and organisations.
- Greater connection between clubs and the LGBTQ+ community.

## 6D. MEDIUM-TERM IMPACT

Clubs initiated inclusive actions such as:

- Hosting Pride-themed events.
- Sharing inclusion messages on social media.
- Displaying posters and rainbow symbols in club facilities.

Participants reported feeling more confident challenging discrimination or exclusion.

## 6E. COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES - INCLUSION IN ACTION

The LGBTQ+ Advocates Programme inspired a series of local actions across Clare that turned learning into tangible community impact. Clubs and groups who took part in the training brought their ideas to life through inclusive events, visibility campaigns and collaborative initiatives.

The following three case studies highlight how clubs of different sizes and sports translated the programme's principles into practice - strengthening community ties and making LGBTQ+ visibility part of everyday sporting life in Clare.

From a sunrise swim in Ballyvaughan, to a Pride football match in Shannon, to a reflective post-Pride cycle connecting Clare and Cork, these examples show that inclusion can take many forms - each one creating a ripple of belonging, visibility and allyship across the county.

## CASE STUDY 1: BALLYBATHERS SWIM CLUB “MAKING WAVES FOR INCLUSION”

On the morning of September 13th, just one week before Clare Pride, Ballybathers Swim Club in Ballyvaughan hosted an Inclusive Swim and Dip to celebrate LGBTQ+ inclusion and allyship in sport.

The event drew approximately 30 swimmers to Bishop’s Quarter, a popular local swimming spot known for its welcoming atmosphere. Participants included members of Ballybathers as well as swimmers from neighbouring coastal groups, such as the Flaggy Shore Swim Group, who came to show their support and solidarity.



*Swimmers from the Ballybathers swim club, Kinvarra Alive and LGBTQ+ community members gathering at Bishop's Quarter for the swim.*

Alongside the swimmers, representatives from Kinvarra Alive, a local suicide prevention organisation, attended to show their backing for the initiative. Their presence underscored an important connection between mental health, visibility and belonging - recognising that LGBTQ+ people continue to face higher rates of mental health challenges and suicide compared to the general population.

After the swim, participants gathered onshore for tea, coffee, cupcakes and biscuits, turning the morning into a warm and social community event. Conversations flowed easily between local residents, club members and visitors - creating a genuine sense of connection and shared purpose.

The event was noted by participants as both uplifting and meaningful, providing a visible demonstration that inclusion in sport can be celebrated in simple but powerful ways. It also reinforced how outdoor and recreational clubs can play a vital role in creating safe, supportive environments for LGBTQ+ people to participate freely.

This case study highlights how small-scale, community-driven actions can ripple outward to spark conversation, visibility and inclusion far beyond the event itself. The Ballybathers’ leadership also demonstrates how local clubs can take ownership of inclusion, using creativity and authenticity to embed it into their culture.

Given the success of the initiative, plans are already underway to repeat the event in future years, potentially expanding it with new features such as a mobile sauna and a partnership with a local café to encourage more community participation and local engagement.

What began as a simple swim has become a symbol of local pride and allyship, showing that even modest actions can make meaningful waves for inclusion in sport and community life.

## CASE STUDY 2: SHANNON TOWN UNITED FC “KICKING OFF INCLUSION”

As part of the LGBTQ+ Advocates Programme, Shannon Town United Football Club hosted an inclusive friendly football match on the morning of Saturday, September 20th, coinciding with the celebrations of Clare Pride.

The match was open to LGBTQ+ women, non-binary people and allies, and saw an enthusiastic turnout of 28 players along with a supportive crowd of spectators. For Shannon Town United, the event carried particular significance - it provided a unique opportunity to reconnect women from the club's former women's team, which had been inactive for some time. The event was described by many participants as joyful and energising. Beyond football, it became a celebration of belonging, visibility and allyship, demonstrating how sport can bring people together across communities and identities.

Following the match, players and supporters gathered for tea, coffee, sausage rolls and cupcakes, turning the pitch-side morning into a friendly, community-centred get-together. Several of the attendees later travelled to Ennis to join the Clare Pride March, further amplifying the visibility of inclusion in sport.

The club's participation marked a first-of-its-kind moment in Shannon - a local football club publicly standing for LGBTQ+ inclusion and equality. The event not only strengthened relationships within the club but also sparked new conversations about restarting women's football and creating more inclusive opportunities for participation across the community.

Given its success and the positive feedback received, Shannon Town United are very much open to making this Pride Match an annual tradition, exploring options to partner with other clubs to engage more players in the event.

This case study shows how inclusion initiatives can reinvigorate community sport, strengthen local ties, and inspire clubs to take practical steps toward diversity and equality - both on and off the pitch.



*Players from Shannon Town United, Soccer Sisters Ennis, Phoenix Tigers Football Club and allies gather for a group shot before their friendly football match.*

### CASE STUDY 3: CLARE LSP & QUEER BIKE RIDES CORK “PEDALLING FOR PRIDE”

On the morning of Sunday, September 21st, the day after Clare Pride, Clare LSP partnered with Queer Bike Rides Cork (QBR) to lead an inclusive Pride Cycle for LGBTQ+ community members and allies.

Setting out from Ennis, the small but enthusiastic group of six cyclists rode together through scenic local routes, proudly displaying rainbow flags and visibility gear as they pedalled. While it was the quietest of the weekend's events, it was described by participants as *a beautiful and grounding experience*, bringing together people from different counties who share a passion for cycling and community.

The cycle served as both a symbolic and literal continuation of Clare Pride, carrying forward the spirit of visibility and connection into a calm, reflective Sunday morning. The Cork-based cyclists had joined the Pride March the previous day, making the event a meaningful way to extend their support to Clare's growing LGBTQ+ sports community.

After the ride, the group gathered for tea and coffee, sharing stories and reflections on the Pride weekend and discussing how to keep building links between Cork, Clare and the wider sporting community.

Though modest in numbers, the event made a visible impact and strengthened regional collaboration. It demonstrated that inclusion in sport is not only about large crowds but about partnership and visibility in everyday spaces.

The Pride Cycle ultimately showcased the power of collaboration between counties and communities, and the importance of maintaining connections beyond Pride weekend - ensuring that visibility and inclusion continue to move forward, one pedal stroke at a time.



L-R: Amie (Queer Bike Rides Cork), Aoife, Karina Murray (Sporting Pride), Pat Sexton (Clare Sports Partnership), Anna (Queer Bike Rides Cork), a representative from an Garda Síochána's BikeSafe Team, and Orla Vaughan (QuareClare) gather for a pre cycle get together.

## 7. CHALLENGES, LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following points reflect feedback gathered from Clare LSP, the programme facilitator and participants involved in the LGBTQ+ Advocates Programme. Together, they provide valuable insights into the challenges experienced during delivery and the key learnings that can strengthen future iterations of the initiative.

### CHALLENGES:

- **Participant Recruitment:** The biggest challenge was getting people in the room for the initial training sessions, especially for the in person session.
- **Timing of Delivery:** The programme may be better scheduled in November or February, when clubs are less busy with competitions and seasonal demands. Of course, this will always depend on the sport.
- **Limited time (1.5 hours)** restricted the depth of discussion.
- **Continued engagement post-training** requires dedicated follow-up. If we want clubs to take meaningful action a connection needs to be made soon after training.
- **Strategic Timing for Follow-Up:** Future engagement could be aligned with key visibility moments such as National Pride Month in June or local Pride events (e.g., Clare Pride in mid-September) to build momentum.
- **Event Promotion and Messaging:** Communication around events should make it clear that activities are open to everyone - not only LGBTQ+ participants - to encourage broader allyship and community involvement.
- **The online training we hosted with the Kilkenny Sports Partnership** did not take place until mid October 2025. As the pilot programme was due to finish on October 31st we were limited in terms of what follow up actions we could take with the participants.

## LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Use Allies rather than Advocates as the programme name, and apply this terminology consistently across all materials. This distinction reflects how the programme was understood and discussed in practice.
- There is a strong appetite for practical, locally relevant training.
- Dedicated Pre-Training Campaign: Launch a communications campaign in the weeks leading up to training sessions to raise awareness, encourage sign-ups and highlight the benefits for clubs.
- Emphasise the Value of Respect: The theme of respect and belonging should be woven more consistently throughout the training, ensuring participants connect inclusion to broader sporting values.
- Incentivise Participation and Inclusion through Grant Schemes: Clare LSP (and other Sports Partnerships) could integrate LGBTQ+ inclusion into their grant assessment matrix, awarding additional marks or percentage weighting to clubs that have completed the training - using a “carrot rather than stick” approach to encourage participation.
- Introduce an Online Awareness Module: Offer a short online introduction to LGBTQ+ inclusion for all club members, followed by in-depth ally training for those interested in leading inclusion work.
- Visibility actions (posters, Pride events) are powerful entry points to wider cultural change.
- Develop an Event Resource Package: Create a practical toolkit with templates, checklists, and case studies to support clubs in planning and delivering inclusive events confidently.
- Regular Countywide LGBTQ+ Events: Counties could host bi-monthly or quarterly LGBTQ+ inclusion events, rotating between different clubs and sports. Partnering with local LGBTQ+ organisations would help expand reach and strengthen community connections.

- **Empower Clubs as Allies:** Position the club itself as the visible ally, rather than relying solely on individuals. This makes it easier to share inclusive messages and imagery publicly without placing pressure on specific members.
- **Provide a Menu of Inclusive Actions:** Develop a broader list of suggested activities for clubs - such as hosting events, running social media campaigns, updating club policies or participating in Pride initiatives.
- **Combine Training with Immediate Action:** Consider structuring delivery as a one-hour in-person session followed by a practical event, helping to translate learning into visible community engagement straight away, e.g. free training for all members of Ballybathers swim club before the swim / dip.
- Ongoing support networks are needed to sustain inclusion efforts. The question of “what happens next” is one that a few of the clubs asked.
- The programme should be delivered in a cost-effective way and offered through a blended model that includes both in-person workshops and an online training option, allowing organisations to participate regardless of budget, location or capacity.
- To support long-term sustainability and wider reach, future phases of the programme could include a train-the-trainer approach, enabling local facilitators or staff within participating organisations to deliver the training themselves over time.
- Sporting Pride remain as the lead delivery partner for the programme, with Karina Murray continuing as the primary facilitator, ensuring consistency and quality across all training delivery.
- These learnings provide a practical blueprint for scaling LGBTQ+ inclusion training across other counties, while retaining local relevance and community ownership. Sporting Pride welcomes enquiries at any time of year to discuss this programme and our training offerings. Please get in touch at [info@sportingpride.ie](mailto:info@sportingpride.ie) for more information.

## 8. PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

This project demonstrated the strength of partnership between Clare LSP and Sporting Pride. Additional collaboration from local clubs and community advocates enhanced reach and visibility throughout the programme.

The programme was also closely aligned with QuareClare, a local LGBTQ+ community group and the organisers of the annual Clare Pride event. The three in-person activities - the inclusive swim, football match, and community cycle - were scheduled to coincide with Clare Pride, ensuring strong community engagement and visibility.

QuareClare's support and local networks were invaluable in connecting with participants and promoting inclusive sport during this key celebration.

In addition, Kilkenny Sports Partnership contributed during the early planning stages of the programme, helping to shape its design and delivery. One of the online training sessions was also delivered to their community, extending the programme's reach beyond Clare and laying the groundwork for potential regional collaboration in the future.

These partnerships will continue to be central to promoting and sustaining inclusive sport across Clare and beyond.



*LGBTQ+ organisations and their Allies, including Clare LSP and Sporting Pride, gather outside glor in Ennis at the end of the annual Clare Pride March in September 2025. (Photo credit: Debbie Hickey)*

## 9. APPENDICES

### A. SUPPORTING RESEARCH (scan QR code or click title for hyperlink)



[Sport Ireland Policy on Diversity and Inclusion in Sport](#)



[SOGI Discrimination in Sport Recommendations to the Working Party on Sport of the Council of the European Union](#)



[Out on the Fields Report](#)



[Summary of Irish Results of Out on the Fields Report](#)



[The Relevance of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Sport in Europe - Findings from the Outsport Survey](#)



[Out on the Fields Ireland Report](#)

## B. POSTERS USED TO PROMOTE THE LGBTQ+ ADVOCATES PROGRAMME

**LGBTQ+ Advocates Training Programme for Sports Clubs**  
Creating Inclusive and Safe Spaces in Sports

**What is an LGBTQ+ Advocate?**  
An LGBTQ+ Advocate is any club member who takes active steps to promote inclusion, challenge discrimination, and support LGBTQ+ teammates and members. You don't need to be an expert—just someone who cares and is willing to learn.

**What You'll Do**  
As an advocate, you might:

- Speak up when you hear discriminatory language
- Be a point of contact for LGBTQ+ members
- Support someone who's coming out
- Encourage inclusive policies and practices

**What You'll Get**

- Free training (in person or online)
- Ongoing support and check-ins
- Resources and posters
- Connection with other advocates across Clare

**When and how long is the FREE training?**

- In person training will take place at the Clare Sports Partnership office in Ennis on Wednesday April 30th from 7.00pm to 8.30pm.
- A separate online training session will be delivered on Wednesday May 7th from 7.00pm to 8.30pm for those who cannot attend the in person session.

**How do I sign up?**  
To register, please go to [www.claresports.ie/advocates](http://www.claresports.ie/advocates)

Or You can Scan the QR to Register

Clare Sports Partnership CLG, c/o Clare Education Centre Government Buildings, Kilrush Road, Ennis, Clare, V95 F782

Be in with a chance to win a €250 cash prize for your club - All clubs that take part will be entered into a draw.

**BECOME AN LGBTQ+ Advocate!**  
Champion Inclusion. Celebrate Diversity. Make Sport Welcoming for All.

**What is an LGBTQ+ Advocate?**  
A visible ally in your club who promotes respect, equality and inclusion for LGBTQ+ members.

**As an LGBTQ+ Advocate, You Will:**

- ✓ Support LGBTQ+ teammates
- ✓ Create a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere
- ✓ Promote respectful language and behaviour
- ✓ Speak up against discrimination
- ✓ Help drive positive change in your club

**Let's build a sporting community where everyone belongs. Be the Difference. Be an Advocate.**

065 686 5434 | [john@claresports.ie](mailto:john@claresports.ie) | [www.claresports.ie](http://www.claresports.ie)

**LGBTQ+ Advocates Training Programme for Sports Clubs & Organisations**

**What You'll Do**

- Create Inclusive and Safe Spaces in Sport

**As an advocate, you might:**

- Speak up when you hear discriminatory language
- Be a point of contact for LGBTQ+ members
- Support someone who's coming out
- Encourage inclusive policies and practices

**What is an LGBTQ+ Advocate?**  
An LGBTQ+ Advocate is any club member who takes active steps to promote inclusion, challenge discrimination, and support LGBTQ+ teammates, members and friends. You don't need to be an expert—just someone who cares and is willing to learn

**What You'll Get**  
Free training (in person or online); Ongoing support and check-ins; Resources and posters  
Connection with other advocates

**FREE training ONLINE or IN PERSON - your choice?**

- In person training will take place at the Harry's Bar, Langtons, John Street, Kilkenny on Tuesday 21st of October from 7pm to 8.30pm

**OR**

- Online training session will be delivered on Tuesday, October 14th from 7pm to 8.30pm for those who cannot attend the in-person session.

To register for either the online or in person training programme you can use the QR code or follow this link:  
<https://krsp.ie/krsp-events/>

C. POSTERS USED BY PARTICIPANTS TO PROMOTE INCLUSION AND THEIR ADVOCATES



## HOCKEY IRELAND

### LGBTQ+ Advocate

**Katie Ryan**



“Allyship means creating a game where everyone feels safe to show up as themselves - that’s when we all win. We’re stronger when every player, coach, and supporter feels part of the team.”

Approach Katie for a chat, or email her at [katie.ryan@hockey.ie](mailto:katie.ryan@hockey.ie)

Visit Our Website [www.claresports.ie/advocates](http://www.claresports.ie/advocates)






## BEAM SERVICES

### LGBTQ+ Advocate

**Geraldine Nolan**



“When allies are visible, it reassures others and builds a community of belonging. Advocates lead by example, promoting respect and fairness that uplift everyone, not only LGBTQ+ members.”

Approach Geraldine for a chat, or email her at [Geraldine.nolan@beamservices.ie](mailto:Geraldine.nolan@beamservices.ie)

Visit Our Website [www.claresports.ie/advocates](http://www.claresports.ie/advocates)






## WATERFORD SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

Supporting Activity and Sport For All

### LGBTQ+ Advocates

**Jordan Kelly & Thomas Hamilton**



“Sport has the power to bring people together, and inclusion is at the heart of that. Completing LGBTQ+ awareness training helps us make sure everyone in Waterford can take part, feel supported and thrive as part of our sporting community.”

Approach Jordan or Thomas for a chat, or email them at [jordankelly@waterfordsportspartnership.ie](mailto:jordankelly@waterfordsportspartnership.ie) or [tshawhamilton@waterfordsportspartnership.ie](mailto:tshawhamilton@waterfordsportspartnership.ie)

Visit Our Website [www.claresports.ie/advocates](http://www.claresports.ie/advocates)







## Graiguenamanagh Canoe Club

### LGBTQ+ Advocates

**Jimmy & Melinda**



“Everyone deserves to feel welcome on the water - that’s what being an ally means to us. Inclusion makes our club stronger, and we’re proud to be part of that change.”

Approach Jimmy or Melinda for a chat, or email them at [grauguacanoeclub@gmail.com](mailto:grauguacanoeclub@gmail.com)

Visit Our Website [www.claresports.ie/advocates](http://www.claresports.ie/advocates)







## Shannon Jets Basketball Club

### LGBTQ+ Advocate

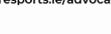
**Tommy Walsh**



“You never have to change who you are to be part of the game. Basketball, like life, is at its best when everyone feels safe to bring their whole selves.”

Approach Tommy for a chat, or email him at [cposhannonjetsbasketballclub@gmail.com](mailto:cposhannonjetsbasketballclub@gmail.com)

Visit Our Website [www.claresports.ie/advocates](http://www.claresports.ie/advocates)



## Shannon Jets Basketball Club

### LGBTQ+ Advocate

**Noelle O’Connell**



“Allyship is more than words. The best teams don’t just accept difference - they celebrate it as they know inclusion isn’t a substitute for excellence; it’s the foundation of it.”

Approach Noelle for a chat, or email her at [shannonjetsbasketballclub@gmail.com](mailto:shannonjetsbasketballclub@gmail.com)

Visit Our Website [www.claresports.ie/advocates](http://www.claresports.ie/advocates)






## Shannon Masters Swim Club

### LGBTQ+ Advocate

**Rory Ryan**



“Having visible allies provides reassurance and promotes a sense of belonging. Advocates set the tone for respect and fairness, which benefits all everyone, not just LGBTQ+ members.”

Approach Rory for a chat, or email him at [shannonmasters@hotmail.com](mailto:shannonmasters@hotmail.com)

Visit Our Website [www.claresports.ie/advocates](http://www.claresports.ie/advocates)






## Shannon Masters Swim Club

### LGBTQ+ Advocate

**Paul Horan**



“Seeing coaches, captains, or clubmates openly support LGBTQ+ inclusion reassures everyone in the club that they can be themselves without fear in this space.”

Approach Paul for a chat, or email him at [shannonmasters@hotmail.com](mailto:shannonmasters@hotmail.com)

Visit Our Website [www.claresports.ie/advocates](http://www.claresports.ie/advocates)






## SHANNON ADVOCACY

Shannon Advocacy Group

Proud To Have Completed The

### LGBTQ+ Advocate’s Training

“Having visible allies provides reassurance and promotes a sense of belonging. Advocates set the tone for respect and fairness, which benefits everyone, not just LGBTQ+ members.”

Approach us for a chat, or email us at [info@shannoncp.ie](mailto:info@shannoncp.ie)

Visit Our Website [www.shannoncp.ie](http://www.shannoncp.ie)




**D. LEAFLET FROM LIMERICK LAWN TENNIS CLUB ASKING FOR CLUB MEMBERS TO COME FORWARD**



**E. POSTERS USED TO ADVERTISE IN PERSON EVENTS**



## F. CLARE PRIDE SPORTS EVENTS FEEDBACK

LGBTQ+ Advocates organised three in person events to coincide with Clare Pride, supported by the Clare LSP and Sporting Pride - Swim (Sept 13), Football (Sept 20) and Cycling (Sept 21). Participants described their experiences as fun, positive, inclusive and community-building.

Respondents highlighted that these activities offered a wholesome, alcohol-free way to celebrate Pride, bringing people together in a relaxed and social atmosphere. Many mentioned feeling welcomed, safe and proud, with organisers and participants showing genuine inclusivity through respect for identity and shared enjoyment of sport.

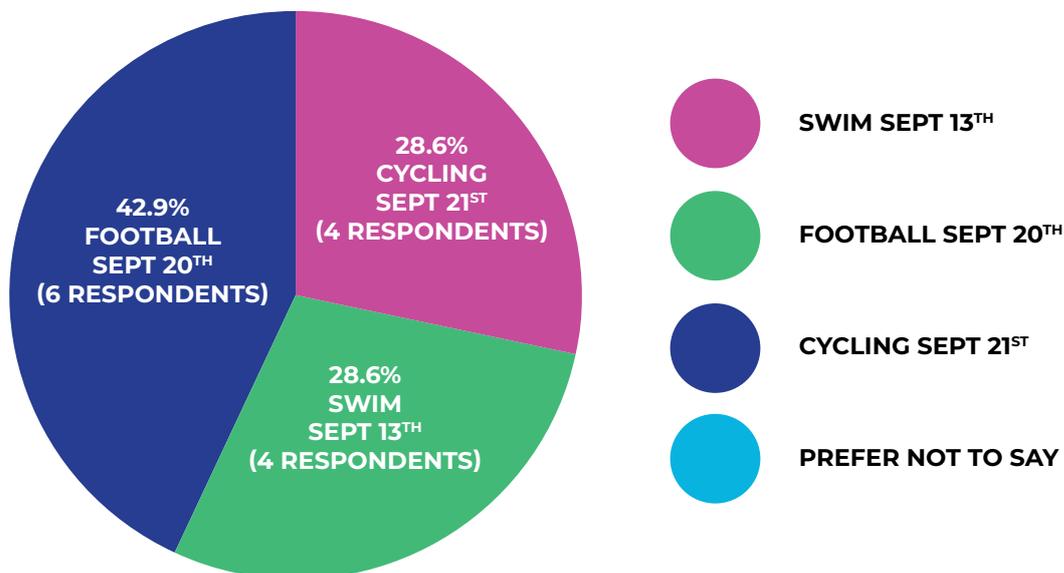
The events were seen as having a strong community impact - helping to increase visibility of LGBTQ+ people in sport, challenge stereotypes and promote belonging both within clubs and in the wider community. They were also praised for promoting mental and physical wellbeing, creating opportunities for new friendships and inspiring other local groups to consider similar initiatives.

Participants encouraged organisers to continue and expand such events, suggesting broader outreach and partnerships with other clubs or counties to grow participation. Overall, the feedback reflects a powerful sense of connection, positivity and progress toward inclusion in local sport and community life.

The following responses were collected through post-event feedback surveys and are presented verbatim to reflect participant experience.

FULL SURVEY FEEDBACK IS AVAILABLE BELOW:

### 1: Which event did you take part in?



**2: How did you feel taking part in this event? (We'd love to know what stood out for you - positive or negative.)**

- Great, an active and wholesome way to celebrate pride!
- Very enjoyable swim, & cup cakes!
- I was really glad to take part. It was something different and a great way to meet people I hadn't met at other events. It was nice to finish off the weekend alcohol free
- The great sense of fun and excitement .
- I was very happy to take part! It was great to get everyone together and play for pride. Really enjoyed the match, showed lovely positivity for the community
- Great
- I was really happy that event like this is a part of Clare Pride. I love cycling. It's a great way to socialise a bit.
- i represented an invited mental health support group
- I felt very neutral and comfortable being on the cycle. The people were welcoming and kind. I had thought more people would be interested in going on the cycle. I was proud to be part of the group and very greatfull of the opportunity.
- It was very fun! Great energy on the pitch and on the sidelines
- Really good, it was a great atmosphere and lovely to get involved and meet new people
- it was fun
- I had a great day we all just laughed our way through

**3: In what ways, if any, did this event feel inclusive or welcoming for LGBTQ+ people?**

- It was organised as part of pride events so knew I'd be welcome
- Everyone welcome. Though I met many from the LGBT community who didn't attend
- It was put on for Clare Pride and most people wore a pride flag or colours so that was real cool.
- We advertised widely and thus in itself generated conversation and questions
- Anyone was welcome to join and play!
- The club having it and people that showed up was really welcoming
- It was hosted by Queer Bike Rides. It was one of the events for Pride in Ennis. Most of the participants were queer people and it was created for them.
- everybody was welcomed and my impression was they felt welcomed
- Being marketed around a Pride event is one way. Nobody was concerned about your gender or sexuality and maybe they asked your pronouns and interests however only in a respectful manner.
- Everyone was very welcoming and supportive of the players, the sidelines were very positive
- It felt great to come along with my girlfriend and to know that the sport and the fun was the focus, not who we are or how we identify everyone felt welcomed

#### **4: What impact do you think events like this can have on your club, team or the local community?**

- A great way to get to know other members of our community, without alcohol being the focus
- Positive, inclusive
- I think Pride events can be taken up with big social events. It's nice to do something like this as we're all in the same boat.....delighted to start and delighted to finish!!
- It opens the door for people to feel they can approach clubs and feel they will be included and feel safe .
- It's fun to get together for these events and celebrate.
- I think it shows great positivity for the community
- I believe that events like this help build visibility and connection. They also promote inclusivity, understanding, and a sense of pride in diversity. They do challenge stereotypes about who belongs in sport. They help reduce isolation within the LGBTQ+ community. And inspire others to create similar inclusive spaces.
- It can strengthen our club by attracting new members and spark collaborations with other community groups.
- I also believe that taking part in group rides can have a huge benefit for mental health alongside the physical wellbeing.
- It sends a positive message that everyone is welcome in sport.
- Inclusion is important and allows people to live productive independent fulfilling lives. The event is great for marketing and sharing of ideas. The events show others that we are not alone and have many friends which is a powerful.
- Makes people feel welcome no matter what their sexuality is, everyone is coming together for a fun time and to play social sports. A wholesome community activity
- I think it was really impactful for Shannon F.C to host this event. It says a lot about them as a club, and I think it was very inspiring for other local clubs
- it shows no matter who you are teams will do their best to have you feel included
- I think it would be great as it got people playing that haven't played in a long time

#### **5: What could we do to make future events even more inclusive or impactful?**

- I suppose getting more bums on bikes which is hard to do....you can offer all sorts of events but if people don't show up they don't show up. Maybe making it a permanent part of Clare Pride word of mouth might bring more in.
- Include/ Invite key people from other clubs or organisation locally . Encourage other swim groups to attend
- I'm not sure, more events like this
- Maybe reaching to even more groups, not even necessary sport ones. Like creating a walk for a local queer book club or just local book worms.
- advertise more widely as some events are on county borders and communities

- from the neighbour county might love to join if they knew about the event
- I think looking into the marketing. Inclusion of allies and questioning people. Naturally we do need to ensure people are looked after and people asking wrong questions to some people may not be good however we do need to allow people to realise we are all just making our way through this world we share and let's just get along as that can be fun.
- Would love to see the match become an annual event and grow!
- keep doing them
- More advertising

**6: If there is anything else you'd like to share about your experience please do so here:**

- It was lovely and I hope as I said above that events like this become a regular part of Clare Pride.
- If it could be shared a bit more or more businesses involved
- keep doing the good work
- I'm delighted to have been part of the event and thanks for organising the event.
- Well done to the organising team! Had a lovely day and was well worth the drive from Dublin
- no
- Just to say thank you to the organisers it really was such a fun morning



