Play Proud

Providing safe spaces for LGBTQ+ communities

THE GOAL

To create safe sporting spaces for LGBTQ+ communities across the world.

THE STRATEGY

To implement an LGBTQ+ inclusivity training program that works with all stakeholders in soccer to create inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ youth and communities.
Globally, LGBTQ+ communities face discrimination both on and off the pitch. LGBTQ+ discrimination comes in many forms—ranging from homophobic chants in the stands to laws that criminalise LGBTQ+ identities.

Play Proud is a grassroots-driven program that works with all stakeholders in soccer to make communities and stadiums a safer space for the LGBTQ+ community. Play Proud transforms soccer clubs and organisations around the world by equipping coaches and staff with the skills and knowledge to ensure that LGBTQ+ inclusion is championed, on and off the pitch.

Play Proud recognises that everyone has the ability to provide allyship and support to LGBTQ+ people. The programme seeks to equip coaches, staff, and club representatives with the skills and knowledge to be mentors to LGBTQ+ youth, allies in their workplaces, and champions of inclusion in their communities.

Since the pilot project, Play Proud has expanded globally, training 50 coaches from 13 countries around the world. In 2020/2021, Play Proud trained 23 coaches from 7 countries across Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. In 2022, Common Goal is bringing together grassroot soccer organisations, fan groups and professional soccer clubs from the MLS, NWSL, USL, Liga MX, and CPL to UNITE the North American continent and promote LGBTQ+ inclusion ahead of the FIFA Men’s Football World Cup in 2026.
Leadership Development
Implement LGBTQ+ inclusivity training to staff.

LGBTQ+ Knowledge Acquisition
Deliver a methodology to give participants the tools and knowledge to create safe spaces for in their organisations and programmes.

Train the Trainer Theory
Increase advocacy of LGBTQ+ inclusion in sport.

A. Enabling coaches and staff to create more inclusive and safer sports environments for LGBTQ+ youth

- **Using appropriate terminology** shows respect and acknowledges the team as a unit and as individual members.
- **Being informed** and staying up-to-date on LGBTQ+ inclusion topics that impact your players, coaches, and community.
- **Being proactive** about communicating commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion in a structured way.
- **Being consistent** in words and actions, challenging homophobic behaviour and using inclusive language, on and off the pitch.
- **Amplifying allyship** is a sign of support and respect towards the LGBTQ+ community and reinforces that anyone is welcome.

B. Training Play Proud coaches and staff to become community leaders

1. Coaches & staff identify and commit to addressing the problem.
2. Coaches & staff learn more inclusive language and behaviour.
3. Coaches & staff’s programmes become more safe and inclusive.
4. Coaches & staff become LGBTQ+ champions in their communities.

- More inclusive coaches and staff welcome LGBTQ+ youth to sports.
- More supportive coaches and staff create inclusive sports for participants.
- Trained coaches and staff create a safe and inclusive space for participants.
- Sport becomes more inclusive, safe and welcoming to all young people.

C. Implementation Model

- **Content Development** (PHASE 1)
- **Leadership Training** (PHASE 2)
- **Inclusion Training** (PHASE 3)
- **Action Leadership Projects** (PHASE 4)
- **Production of deliverables** (PHASE 5)

**Impact**

As a result of implementation, the impact and outcomes of Play Proud are felt in the short, mid and long terms:

- **Staff become inclusion advocates**
  - Coaches & staff use the skills and knowledge they learnt to make their programmes more inclusive.
- **Organisations become more inclusive**
  - Participants use the newly gained skills to make organisations more intentional about inclusivity through programmatic and policy changes.
- **Sports become safe and inclusive for all**
  - Youth from all backgrounds benefit from inclusive sport for development programmes.

**Challenge**

There are a lack of inclusive and safe spaces for young people to participate in football, which leads to:

- **Reduced Participation**
  - Reduced participation in sports of young people from LGBTQ+ community.
- **Feelings of Alienation**
  - LGBTQ+ young people are often alienated and rejected from sports with 4 out of 5 LGBTQ+ youth not out to their coaches.
- **Increased Vulnerability**
  - LGBTQ+ youth that lack mentors have a greater chance of exposure to drugs and alcohol at a young age, lower academic performance, and suicide.

**Solution**

To make all football spaces safe, inclusive and welcoming to all, regardless of one’s gender identity and/or sexual orientation.
13 countries reached
25 implementing organisations
50 coaches trained
200+ hours of training delivered

1st Quarter >> Jan - Mar 2021
Play Proud Online Implementation

ACTIVITIES
▷ Online lectures for coaches.
▷ Self-paced assignments.
▷ Community mapping exercises for the learning acquisition phase of Play Proud.
▷ The Play Proud Toolkit used in tandem with online teachings.

OUTCOMES
▷ Design and implementation of an 'action learning project' by each of the 10 implementing organisations.

2nd Quarter >> Apr - Jun 2021
Trained Organisations Implement Projects

ACTIVITIES
▷ LGBTQ+ training for coaches.
▷ Community mapping exercises in conservative areas.
▷ LGBTQ+ webinars to young people and staff.
▷ Inclusion policy implementation.

OUTCOMES
▷ All 10 organisations trained in 2020/2021 implemented LGBTQ+ inclusion projects geared towards addressing specific challenges in their local communities.
▷ All coaches completed 100+ hours of LGBTQ+ inclusion training.

3rd Quarter >> Jul - Sept 2021
Play Proud concept for 2022 is developed

ACTIVITIES
▷ Subject Matter Expert consortium identified.
▷ Concept for new Play Proud programme finalised.

OUTCOMES
▷ Stonewall UK, Inside Inclusion, and Impact International brought on as Subject Matter Experts.
▷ Programme delivered to 8 community organisations, 8 fan groups, 8 professional clubs.
▷ Angel City FC and Tigres to host residencies in 2022.
▷ Theory of change developed to account for clubs, fan groups, and community organisations.

4th Quarter >> Oct - Dec 2021
Play Proud United cohort is finalized

ACTIVITIES
▷ Clubs, fan groups, and community organisations selected.
▷ Play Proud materials reviewed and developed for new cohort.
▷ Theory of change reviewed and developed for new cohort.

OUTCOMES
▷ Play Proud United 2022 cohort is finalized.
▷ Theory of Change is developed.
10 organisations across 7 countries integrated LGBTQ+ inclusion as part of their curricula.

22 coaches trained to create an open, safe, and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ youth.

85% of coaches agreed that Play Proud gave them the skills to implement inclusion training.

70% of coaches indicated they learnt new training methods to combat homophobia, biphobia, transphobia.

75% of the participants taking part in the ‘action learning projects’ phase felt satisfied with their projects.

10 inclusion projects created by the implementing organisations, to reflect the inclusion needs of their communities.

75% of the participants taking part in the ‘action learning projects’ phase felt satisfied with their projects.

“Play Proud is a programme that directly supports and empowers us to learn and make things happen for LGBTQ+ communities.”

CRAIG
Sport 4 Life UK