

Talking Rainbow Laces with Fran Lever, City Matter's LGBTQ + representative

The theme for this year's Rainbow Laces campaign is "Inclusion has no off season". What do you think is everyone's role in playing their part to support LGBTQ+ communities and help make sport everybody's game?

I have been asked this question so many times, both directly or indirectly because many people are worried about saying the wrong thing and offending someone or just not being aware enough.

I always say it is better to ask those questions because it is not always the context, it is the intention. It is okay to be curious but it is not okay to be rude with it.

That is the first thing I'd highlight as an important factor to playing their part. Don't be afraid and ask if you don't know. We can educate each other. Then it is about being approachable and knowing what is right and then what is wrong so in turn, you can help someone else.

Terminology, acceptance and the community is forever changing so for me, it is as simple as being willing to be educated and understand. I believe that the stories themselves are compelling enough to want to help the community and be a voice.

That being said, it is sometimes the small gestures that can mean the world. So if you are just wearing rainbow laces today or sharing a post on social media, as long as you are understanding why and listening to the community, that is enough and we thank you.

I know it can be overwhelming not knowing what to do. It is a big fight, not just for the LGBTQA+



Fran Lever

community but sometimes the small steps are just as important as the big ones.

With that, helping create that safe space to have open conversations, it will help people feel like sport is everyone which of course it is.

As City Matter's LGBTQ+ representative, how are you helping to make Manchester City even more inclusive?

I always make sure that if something comes to my attention, that the Club is aware. I make sure I am always up to date with the procedures in place to help battle discrimination. Sometimes, it is good to know there is someone there who can be a voice for you.

Why is it so important we regularly hear from LGBTQ+ voices?

People want to feel represented and can relate to someone else. Especially for the younger generation, it is important to see and hear people they see themselves in either achieving and succeeding or hearing their highs and lows to know they aren't alone. That there are people

like them in the world.

Many of our supporters may not necessarily be a part of the LGBTQ+ community, but why is the role of Allyship so important?

Sometimes, the only voices that are listened to are the allies because they have a bigger platform. It also reduces isolation and helps people not feel alone. It empowers everyone involved. If you believe in equality and fair treatment of everyone, then naturally you are already an ally.

You might be the only person your friend, relative, neighbour etc has. Sometimes, being a part of the community can feel lonely, so having someone they can talk to and feel like that you understand, can be more life changing and important than you realise. It is just as important as trying to change the world. Just being a friend is enough.

If it prompts you to want to make bigger changes, then great, but a queer person wants to feel like someone is in their corner and sticking up for them. That their voice is being heard and they are accepted for just being themselves.

Be a good listener, be open minded and be willing to talk. Don't put pressure on yourself. We don't expect you to go out and change the world in a day. We just want to know we have a friend who will always be there for us and not judge us for who we love or who we are inside.

