

the **GIRLS'**
BRIGADE
ENGLAND & WALES



Gender Guidance

Quick guide for leaders

The Girls' Brigade aims to create a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment for all girls and young women. As an inter-denominational Christian organization, we work with a diverse range of churches, each with different theological views. This diversity means that while we respect various perspectives, our priority remains providing a person-centred, inclusive space where everyone feels welcome.

This guidance is designed to help GB leaders foster safe, inclusive environments through biblical teachings, legal obligations, and best practice.

The Girls' Brigade is built on values of

Fun! Sound! Friendship! Living it! Yes! and Discovering Jesus!

Our approach for gender guidance is rooted in these values.



Reflecting on Biblical Teachings

While GB does not take an explicit theological position on issues of gender, the following passages can help guide your approach:

- Genesis 1:26 'Let us make male and female in our image and in our likeness,' God is neither male nor female but transcends gender. Equally, we are called to value each individual as they are created in the image of God.
- Galatians 3:28: Emphasizes the unity of all people in Christ, breaking down divisions based on gender, race, or social status.

We also reflect importantly on Jesus' mother, Mary. A woman who was of no regard in society, lived a life on the margins in a forgotten town. A woman who changed the course of history by saying Yes! to God.

Practical guidance for leaders

The following advice is designed to help GB leaders ensure that all girls and young women feel valued, respected, and safe:

1. Creating a welcoming environment

- **Language matters:** Use inclusive and affirming language when addressing groups. Avoid making assumptions about gender identities or experiences.
- **Visibility of inclusivity:** Display clear signage or posters indicating that all are welcome, regardless of gender identity or expression. This simple step can help reinforce a sense of belonging.
- **Personal introductions:** Respect each individual's preferred name and pronouns. If you're unsure, ask politely or give space for introductions where participants can share their pronouns if they wish.

2. Understanding and addressing gender barriers

- **Be aware of gendered expectations:** Challenge gender stereotypes when they arise and encourage girls to pursue their interests without restriction.
- **Support confidence building:** Facilitate activities that allow girls to build confidence, practice leadership, and voice their opinions. Highlight their strengths.

3. Handling sensitive conversations

- **Provide a listening ear:** If a participant shares concerns about gender identity or experiences discrimination, listen without judgment and offer support.
- **Know when to seek support:** Some issues may require additional support or intervention. Familiarize yourself with GB's safeguarding policies and procedures.

4. Be aware of unconscious bias

- **Reflect on your own potential biases** and how they may affect your interactions. Consider training sessions on gender sensitivity and inclusivity as part of ongoing development.

5. Responding to theological differences

- **Respecting diversity of beliefs:** Be mindful that theological views on gender and sexuality may differ among your group and partner churches. However, the primary focus must always be on creating a safe, inclusive space for every participant.
- **Focusing on shared values:** Emphasize shared biblical values of love, justice, and inclusion. Ensure all activities reflect GB's commitment to welcoming everyone, irrespective of background or identity.

Legal and Policy Framework

Understanding and complying with legal requirements is crucial for providing a safe and equitable environment:

- **Equality Act 2010 (UK):** This legislation prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, gender reassignment, and sexual orientation, among other protected characteristics. As a youth organization, we are legally required to uphold these standards.
- **Safeguarding Policies:** GB leaders must adhere to safeguarding policies designed to protect all children and young people from harm, including those who may be vulnerable due to gender identity or expression.

If you encounter situations where you need additional guidance, reach out to the GB Support Centre. Additionally, consider connecting with local LGBTQ+ support organizations for resources or training on best practices for inclusion.

Creating a gender-inclusive environment is an ongoing process. It requires continuous reflection, learning, and adaptation.

Leaders are encouraged to:

- **Review and Implement:** Regularly review this guidance and make necessary adjustments in your group.
- **Engage with Training:** Participate in available training sessions (online and face-to-face) to deepen your understanding of gender inclusivity.
- **Seek Feedback:** Actively seek feedback from participants and young leaders, especially those with lived experience, to ensure your approach remains responsive and relevant.

Additional Resources

Downloadable document: Access to the longer guidance can be obtained from The Girls' Brigade.

Training video: Watch the supplementary video for practical tips and examples on implementing this guidance in your group sessions.

This guidance aims to help you foster a warm, inclusive, and safe environment that reflects The Girls' Brigade's core values. By championing equality and embracing diversity, you are helping empower the next generation of confident and resilient young women.