

# 2024 National Forest School Conference policy on Sex and Gender-based spaces

## Background:

Following comments and concerns raised in previous years, we have produced a policy on sex and gender-based spaces at the conference.

1. This policy only applies to accommodation, toileting and hygiene facilities at Danbury Outdoors in Essex in 2024.
2. Conferences will have their own accommodation, toileting, and hygiene policies, which will be created to maximise the number of spaces available for the varying needs of conference attendees.
3. Explanation of Terminology (Appendix see below)
4. Due to the timeline under which this policy was written, the FSA is aware and regrets that full consultation from affected groups was not sought.
5. The FSA aims to improve by seeking consultation with wide-ranging organisations and encouraging members to offer suggestions on improvements that could be made to future policies.
6. Information will be collected from the post-conference questionnaires sent out to attendees.

## **2024 National Forest School Conference Sex and Gender Policy**

**Objective:** This policy is designed to ensure a respectful, safe, and inclusive environment for all participants of the 2024 National Forest School Conference, acknowledging the diversity of gender identities and the preferences of attendees.

## **Accommodation Arrangements:**

- **Individual Accommodation:** Anyone who does not wish or who feels unable to share can choose from a range of individual accommodation options, including camping, tent hire, campervan, and offsite accommodation.
- **Mixed-Sex Accommodation:** Two dorm rooms will be available for mixed-sex use, accommodating all gender identities.
- **Single-Sex Accommodation:** Most indoor accommodations will be single-sex. If opting for single-sex accommodation, participants are expected to choose accommodation that aligns with their biological sex (except when booking a twin room with a friend).

### Toilets and Showers:

- **Provision for all genders:** Individual toilet and shower facilities will be available for anyone, regardless of gender identity, who may not wish to use the single-sex facilities or prefer more privacy.
- **Single-Sex Facilities:** There will be toilets and showers designated for use by individuals based on their biological sex.

### Policy Guidelines:

1. **Respect for Choice:** All participants are expected to respect the choices of others in their use of dormitory and bathroom facilities. Harassment or discrimination based on sex or gender identity will not be tolerated.
2. **Privacy and Safety:** Efforts will be made to ensure privacy and safety for all attendees while using any of the conference facilities.
3. **Inclusivity:** This policy is crafted to be inclusive, allowing everyone who wishes to attend the conference the ability to do so comfortably and safely regardless of their gender identity or views on gender separation in accommodations.

4. **Feedback and Adaptation:** Feedback on this policy is welcome and will be collected during and after the conference to adapt future arrangements to better meet the needs of all attendees.

### **Implementation:**

- Clear signage will be placed at all dormitory and facility entrances, indicating the designated use as outlined in this policy.
- Conference staff will be trained on the policy details and available to assist attendees and ensure compliance with respect for all individuals.
- Any complaints regarding breaches of this policy should be directed to conference staff, who will address them promptly and confidentially.
- Participants violating the respect and safety of others may be subject to appropriate action, including removal from the conference to maintain a safe environment for all attendees.

## Appendix

### **Explanation of Terminology**

This section clarifies the specific terms used in this policy to ensure a clear understanding of the language and its implications for all attendees.

#### **Sex:**

The term "sex" refers to the biological differences between males and females, defined by physical characteristics such as chromosomes, reproductive organs, and secondary sexual features. In legal contexts, particularly under the Equality Act 2010, "sex" is a protected characteristic, meaning individuals are legally protected from discrimination based on whether they are male or female. The use of "sex" in this policy is intended to

align with legal definitions and ensure that facilities like accommodation, toilets, and showers are organised in a way that respects these biological differences, particularly when it is necessary to ensure privacy, safety, or dignity.

### **Biological Sex:**

"Biological sex" is a more specific term to describe the physical and anatomical attributes distinguishing males from females. This term is used in the policy to clearly define spaces or facilities that are separated based on these inherent biological characteristics. The choice of this term is crucial in contexts where physical differences may impact the privacy or comfort of individuals, such as in shared living spaces or personal hygiene facilities. While we recognise and respect that gender identity may differ from biological sex, the use of "biological sex" in this policy ensures compliance with legal requirements and caters to the needs of those who may require single-sex spaces based on these physical characteristics.

### **Gender Identity:**

Gender identity refers to an individual's deeply held sense of their gender, which may or may not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Unlike "sex," which is biologically determined, "gender identity" is a personal and often complex experience that can include identifying as male, female, both, neither, or somewhere along the gender spectrum. Gender identity is also recognised as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, meaning individuals are legally protected from discrimination based on their gender identity. This policy acknowledges the diversity of gender identities and strives to provide accommodations that respect and include all participants, regardless of how they identify.

### **Protected Characteristics:**

Protected characteristics are specific attributes defined by the Equality Act 2010 that are legally protected from discrimination. These characteristics

include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. This policy specifically addresses the protected characteristics of sex and gender reassignment (which relates to gender identity) to ensure that all attendees are treated with respect and dignity. By recognising these protected characteristics, the policy aims to create an inclusive environment that complies with legal standards and meets the diverse needs of all participants.