

Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual &
Trans Young People in Ireland



BeLonG To Youth Services Pre-Budget Submission 2019



Ensure LGBTI+ Young People Are Equal, Safe And
Valued In Their Communities, Schools And Homes.

August 2018

In May 2015, voters changed what it means to grow up lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI+) in Ireland voting for same-sex marriage. However, we still have a lot of work to do to address the isolation, exclusion, and bullying that many young LGBTI+ people experience, which in turn leads to greater risks of mental health problems, self-harm and suicide. Marriage equality sadly did not end homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in homes, schools and communities across Ireland.

In June 2018, Minister Katherine Zappone and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs launched the *LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy*. This three-year strategy aims to make sure LGBTI+ young people are visible, valued and included. The strategy's goals for 2020 are to:

1. Create a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for LGBTI+ young people;
2. Improve the physical, mental, and sexual health of LGBTI+ young people; and,
3. Develop the research and data environment to better understand the lives of LGBTI+ young people.

The strategy sets out an action plan with 15 objectives and 59 actions to be taken over three years. It identifies the lead Government Departments for each action, and those who may partner with them on these actions. All the actions set out in the strategy are important and must be delivered upon to ensure we create an Ireland where young LGBTI+ people are equal, safe, and valued.

This submission puts forward a number of key policy proposals designed to address urgent issues for young LGBTI+ people. As well as the *LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy*, this submission also takes into account the commitments in the *Programme for Government*, *the National Youth Strategy*, *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures*, *Connecting for Life*, *Vision for Changes*, *Action Plan for Education* and our obligations under International Human Rights law. In implementing these proposals, the Government will not only be supporting young LGBTI+ people to reach their full potential but will be meeting its own existing commitments and obligations.

Youth and Family Services and Supports

- Adequately fund LGBTI+ youth groups nationally to build resilience, tackle isolation, and provide specialist support.
- Increase LGBTI+ family and helpline supports (e.g. LOOK, LGBT Helpline, Family Support Workers).
- Develop an LGBTI+ inclusion campaign within the sports sector.
- End direct provision and develop models of working with LGBTI+ youth refugee and asylum seekers that are appropriate and responsive to their specific needs.

Safe and Supportive Schools

- Resource the full roll-out of existing Irish best practice models for tackling LGBTI+-related bullying: LGBTI+ Safe & Supported Schools, Stand Up LGBTI+ Awareness Week, and All Together Now.
- Provide LGBTI+ training for all student teachers and as part of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD).
- Produce national guidelines for Primary and Second Level schools on the full inclusion of transgender and non-binary students.
- Include monitoring of anti-LGBTI+ bullying in school inspections.
- Include LGBTI+ content across all subject areas in school curricula, including but not exclusively in SPHE/RSE in both primary and second level schools.
- Treat bullying as a child protection issue.

Better Health Care

- Provide LGBTI+ training to all health care workers and LGBTI+ proof healthcare policies and practices.
- Develop clear health care pathways for transgender and intersex youth.
- Open a wraparound psycho-social model health and well-being clinic.
- Fully implement the National Sexual Health Strategy, including tackling homophobia in Ireland.
- Provide access to sexual health care services including screening for STIs, provision of information, and education.
- Provide for better sex education in schools to include issues such as LGBTI+ sexual health, consent, and relationships.

- Amend mental health legislation to enable young people under 18 to access mental health services.
- Resource national drugs and alcohol services to meet the specific health needs of LGBTI+ youth.
- Tackle homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying as major cause of mental health problems.
- Decriminalise use of drugs for personal use – treat this as a health issue.
- Run high-profile campaign to address anti-LGBTI stigma and violence
- Set up cross Government initiative to scope the situation of intersex children people in Ireland including consulting with stakeholders, considering international best practice, and create recommendations about their health and human rights.

Legal Recognition

- Amend the Gender Recognition Act, 2015 to provide for legal recognition of transgender people under 18 and non-binary people.
- Commence the remaining parts of the Children & Family Relationship Act, 2015 to provide same sex families with legal protections.
- Introduce hate crime legislation.
- Criminalise gay conversion therapies.

Irish people have demonstrated that they want to shape a better Ireland for this generation and for future generations of young LGBTI+ people. Together we can ensure that the constitutional change we achieved in May 2015 has a real and lasting impact on LGBTI+ young peoples' everyday lives.

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