



Belong To LGBTQ+
Youth Ireland



A Step-by- Step Guide

to Stand Up
Awareness Week




Getting Started

Hosting Stand Up Awareness Week in your school, Youthreach centre or youth service is the first step towards creating a safe and inclusive space that acts as a protective factor for LGBTQ+ young people.

Recent research on LGBTQ+ youth in Ireland and across Europe identified five emerging themes on improving school for LGBTQ+ students:

- The creation of safe spaces or support groups which include allies, and address bullying.
- Affirming LGBTQ+ identities.
- Formal education on LGBTQ+ themes in class.
- Promoting inclusion, diversity and equality.
- Training for teachers.¹

Seven Steps to Stand Up

Our 'Seven Steps to Stand Up', provide best-practice guidelines designed to support you in coordinating and running Stand Up Awareness Week. You can download additional resources and ideas from **our website** .

Stand Up Awareness Week should be run in partnership with young people. Involving and engaging young people during the process of devising, planning and reflecting on Stand Up Awareness Week is just as important as implementing the week. Positive engagement from young people will help to create a safe and inclusive space before the official week has even begun.

Online Education Hub

We host our support materials on an online education hub on our website. These resources will provide ideas and activities to support you in designing and rolling out Stand Up Awareness Week.

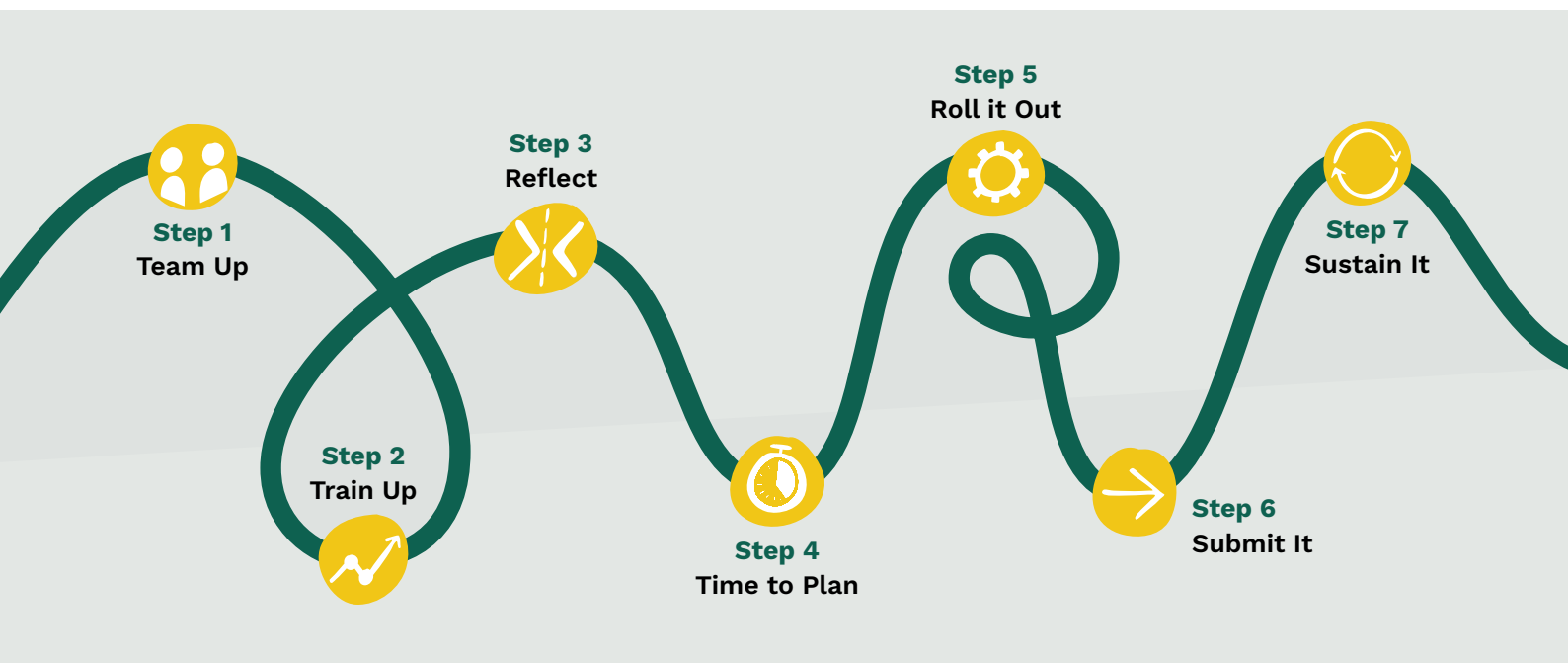
Whenever you see this icon , you will find additional related resources on the **online education hub**. You can access the education hub on our website www.belongto.org.

Stand Up Awareness Week Theme

Each year for Stand Up Awareness Week there is a newly selected theme for your school or centre to promote. There are accompanying resources to support the roll out of Stand Up Awareness Week.

Seven Steps to Stand Up

Although Stand Up Awareness Week is just one week in the school calendar, a lot of preparation and planning happens in advance of this week. Below are seven steps you can take to run a successful week in your school, Youthreach centre or youth service.



Step 1: Team Up

Bring like-minded staff and students together to create your Stand Up Awareness Week team. Involve your Senior Management Team, as they can offer great support and advice as you consider various Stand Up Awareness Week ideas and activities. Encourage other staff to get involved through their roles or subjects and invite young people to lead this with you in your school, Youthreach centre or youth service. A youth-led approach will empower the young people in your organisation to effect positive change in their own community.

Stand Up Awareness Week is about bringing people together and creating a sense of belonging, so think of ways that you can empower each other to take part in your preparations. You might like to elect a coordinator on your staff, who will lead the week and be the main point of contact for young people, staff, parents and local youth groups getting involved with Stand Up Awareness Week. Remember the Education and Training Team at Belong To are always here to support you. Know that we are part of your team and don't hesitate to get in touch!



Step 2: Train Up

E-Learning Module: Creating LGBTQ+ Inclusive Schools and Youth Services

A great way to get started is to register for our free 90-minute e-learning module. This is designed for educators and youth workers. This will give you a strong foundation in the LGBTQ+ basics and an understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people in school. This interactive training includes videos, exercises and quizzes to equip you in effectively listening to, understanding, responding to, and supporting LGBTQ+ young people. Sign up to our free e-learning module which will give you a foundation in the following:

- Terminology and Language
- LGBTQ+ Mental Health
- Managing our Own Attitude and Bias
- Gender and Young People: Nonbinary and Transgender Identities
- Coming Out
- Improving your Practice

This free 90-minute e-learning module is available from training.belongto.org

Stand Up Awareness Week Training

Register for our online or in-person Stand Up Awareness Week training each September. Belong To offers specific training on how to plan and roll out Stand Up Awareness Week. We will take you through the steps to run Stand Up Awareness Week in detail and provide you with guidance and activity ideas. We offer both virtual and in-person training sessions across the country. A €10 charge will apply to all online and in-person training sessions. This small fee is to support our work with LGBTQ+ youth across Ireland.

To book your place, visit www.belongto.org/standup, email standup@belongto.org, or call 01 670 6223.



Step 3: Reflect

Set up a time and space for your team to meet, so that you can begin to discuss and reflect on how LGBTQ+ inclusive your organisation is. This could happen over one or several meetings, depending on the time you have available. Take this time to think about the allies in your setting. Youth voice is so important in this step, as is engaging with allies – you might choose to survey young people in your school and review the results.

1. The Stand Up Awareness Week **online education hub** ➔ will give you guidance and ideas on how to approach discussing LGBTQ+ topics within your school, Youthreach centre or youth service. Start by talking to the team about respectful communications. This will help to create a safe space for all involved.
2. Explain what Stand Up Awareness Week is to everyone at the meeting and why it is important.
3. Talk through the language and terminology poster to make sure everyone understands what the various terms mean. You don't have to be an expert – the poster is there to help everyone become familiar with LGBTQ+ language.
4. Bring your team through the theme for this year's Stand Up Awareness Week, and invite feedback from them and keep notes as you go.
5. Based on the outcomes of your planning meetings, which will be unique to you and your school, Youthreach centre or youth service, brainstorm potential action and activity ideas. Keep referring back to the desired outcomes – by the end of Stand Up Awareness Week, what will be different? You can use some of the suggested ideas or design your own. Draw inspiration from other schools by looking at the activity ideas and gallery in our Activities and Actions guide within the **online educational hub** ➔.



Step 4: Time to Plan

Once you have discussed some potential actions and ideas, it is time to get planning! Think about the what, how, who, where and when. You might have some great ideas, but you have to be realistic and consider each of the questions in the graphic on the right:

This is your Stand Up Awareness Week, so it's important you consider what will work best for you, the young people, and the staff within your organisation.

If this is the first time you are organising Stand Up Awareness Week, you may choose to focus on one area or activity and build from there in future years. If you are more experienced, you might create your own activities and events. You can structure your Stand Up Awareness Week in a way that suits you.

For example, you might decide to plan:

- One LGBTQ+ action per day or the same action by different groups each day.
- Presentations to different groups followed by a whole school, Youthreach centre or youth service action.
- In-class actions or lunchtime actions.

Research has highlighted the potential cumulative positive impact of repeated events like Stand Up Awareness Week,² so there is value in taking your time and ensuring your actions have a strong and clear impact, rather than trying to do too much at once. Think quality over quantity. Discuss your plans with senior management as they might have some ideas or resources to help you. Perhaps some of the young people in your school or youth group could present their plans at a staff meeting and invite staff to support them. This is a great way to spread the word and encourage involvement.





Step 5: Roll It Out

After all the planning, it's time to roll out Stand Up Awareness Week. This is a time to bring together your school's LGBTQ+ and allies club, if you have one, and other allies to spread the word and engage as many people in your community as possible. Photograph and video your events and consider engaging your local media - check out the media guide on our **online education hub** →.

Keep in regular contact with your team members during the week to make sure everything is going to plan. At the end of the week, make sure to have a post-Stand Up Awareness Week meeting. Use this meeting space to recognise and celebrate what you have achieved. Invite the team to share their learnings and note recommendations for future years.



Step 6: Submit It

Now that all the hard work is complete, congratulate yourself on a successful Stand Up Awareness Week! In 2024, we launched an online awards ceremony to celebrate the achievements accomplished within your school, centre or youth service. We want to recognise the dedication that you have put into running a successful Stand Up Awareness Week and to celebrate your hard work!

We want to acknowledge the efforts of individuals and groups in creating and supporting an inclusive environment within your educational space. You can submit a nomination across a number of categories including the overall impact of your programmes of activities; how you interpreted the theme; students' participation; visibility; creative expression; and photography.



Step 7: Sustain It

Stand Up Awareness Week runs for a single week each year. To create a truly inclusive environment and support LGBTQ+ young people, we need to think about how we can ensure that a focus on safety continues beyond this week and throughout the year. Here are some suggestions:

Join the LGBTQ+ Quality Mark

The LGBTQ+ Quality Mark is an 18-month initiative for post-primary schools and Youthreach centres. Belong To launched this initiative in 2022, and since then, numerous schools and centres across the country have embarked on a journey to become an accredited LGBTQ+ safe and supportive school or centre. The LGBTQ+ Quality Mark is a whole-school approach which focuses on the four key areas of wellbeing promotion from an LGBTQ+ perspective. These areas include creating an LGBTQ+ inclusive culture and environment, resourcing an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum, nurturing LGBTQ+ inclusive relationships and partnerships, and supporting LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and planning. Once your school has demonstrated best practice across these key action areas, you can become a recognised LGBTQ+ safe and supportive school.

Start your LGBTQ+ Quality Mark journey today!
Visit <https://www.belongto.org/support-for-someone-else/at-school/post-primary/lgbtq-quality-mark/>


Create an LGBTQ+ and Allies Club

Some members of your Stand Up Awareness Week team may want to continue meeting up year-round. We can support you in setting up an LGBTQ+ and Allies Club. These clubs foster connections between LGBTQ+ and allied young people and build community. The clubs bring young people together to have fun, connect, receive support and campaign to make changes about issues important to them. Find out more in our **online education hub** →.

Continued Intervention by Staff

Stand Up Awareness Week gives schools, Youthreach centres and youth services the opportunity to really consider whether the anti-bullying policies, procedures, and Code of Behaviour are being followed. A major protective factor for LGBTQ+ young people is observing clear and consistent proactive intervention when any form of homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying is observed.³ All staff should be clear on how to intervene and document any breaches of these policies. This should continue after Stand Up Awareness Week.

Year-Round Representation

Continue to represent LGBTQ+ families, identities and relationships throughout your school, Youthreach or youth service in policies, the curriculum and the environment. Check out the poster and image bank available on our **online education hub** .

References:

1. Költő, A., Vaughan, E., O'Sullivan, L., Kelly, C., Saewyc, E. M., and Nic Gabhainn, S. (2021) *LGBTI+ Youth in Ireland and across Europe: A two-phased landscape and research gap analysis*. Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.
2. Pizmony-Levy, O. (2019) *The 2019 Irish School Climate Survey*. Research Report. Global Observatory of LGBTQ+ Education and Advocacy. Dublin and New York: Belong To and Teachers College, Columbia University.
3. Költő, A., Vaughan, E., O'Sullivan, L., Kelly, C., Saewyc, E. M., and Nic Gabhainn, S. (2021) *LGBTI+ Youth in Ireland and across Europe: A two-phased landscape and research gap analysis*. Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.



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