Belong To LGBTQ+
Youth Ireland

Stand Up Awareness Week

14—18 Nov

Information Guide

Welcome

It's a new school year, and thanks to you, many LGBTQ+ young people are returning to environments where they feel more protected and respected. Here's why – research shows that even one dedicated staff member can increase an LGBTQ+ young person's sense of wellbeing and safety.[1]

At Belong To, a national organisation supporting LGBTQ+ youth across Ireland, we are proud to present our 13th annual Stand Up Awareness Week.

Stand Up Awareness Week will take place from November 14th-18th this year. Belong To's annual campaign gives second-level schools, Youthreach centres, and youth services the opportunity to celebrate and recognise their LGBTQ+ community. This is a great first step in reducing homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia and creating a safe, supportive space for LGBTQ+ young people.

Inside, you will find information about the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth, the challenges they can face, and the actions you can take to support them. We have outlined seven steps to running a successful Stand Up Awareness Week. You can also see outstanding examples of activities from schools, Youthreach centres, and youth services across the country.

This year, we are focusing on LGBTQ+phobic language use, for example the phrase 'that's so gay'. We break down this phrase and provide advice on recognising and tackling homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic language, which can have devastating effects on the mental health of LGBTQ+ youth.

Additional guidance and advice can be found in the resource *'Being LGBT in School'*, published by GLEN and the Department of Education. *'Being LGBT in School'* provides guidance for school staff in supporting LGBTQ+ students across a range of key areas. You can download the resource from our website www.belongto.org
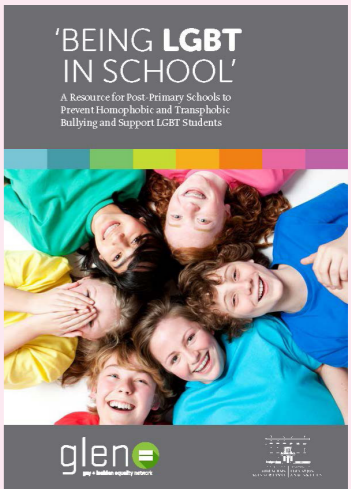
Thank you for taking part in Stand Up Awareness Week and joining Belong To in our mission to create a safer, more supportive Ireland for LGBTQ+ young people.

Moninne Griffith (she/her)
CEO, Belong To

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Stand Up Awareness Week

What is Stand Up Awareness Week?

Stand Up Awareness Week is an LGBTQ+ anti-bullying week facilitated by Belong To, and run in second-level schools, Youthreach centres, and youth services across Ireland in November. We are proud to now be in our 13th year of running Stand Up Awareness Week, and to have steadily increased the number of young people taking part year-on-year. Stand Up Awareness Week is a time to acknowledge the harms of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, and to make clear to young people that this behaviour is both serious and unacceptable.

More importantly, Stand Up Awareness Week is when we celebrate LGBTQ+ youth in all of their diversity. During Stand Up Awareness Week, LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ young people learn about LGBTQ+ identities, take part in LGBTQ+ solidarity actions, and come together to create a safe and supportive environment for all young people.

Why We Need To Stand Up

In 1982, a gay man named Declan Flynn was killed in a homophobic attack in Fairview Park in Dublin. Five men were found guilty of killing Declan, but were spared jail time by the judge in the case. The inconsistency in sentencing for such a brutal crime sparked outrage across Ireland, and the LGBTQ+ community quickly mobilised. Eleven days later, Ireland's first large-scale demonstration for gay rights took place in Dublin, laying the foundations for Ireland's modern LGBTQ+ Pride movement.

LGBTQ+ activists and our allies in Ireland have made huge strides for equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination in the 40 years since our first major LGBTQ+ demonstration. This is why 2022 has been such a difficult and painful year for many members of the LGBTQ+ community. The murders of two gay men, Aidan Moffitt and Michael Snee, in April of this year, and violent assaults on LGBTQ+ people in towns and cities across the island have shocked the entire community.

It has been a particularly stressful and fearful time for the LGBTQ+ young people we work with. Young people who may be considering whether to 'come out', or who have recently done so, have been left wondering whether being openly themselves will make them a target of discrimination, harassment, or even violence.
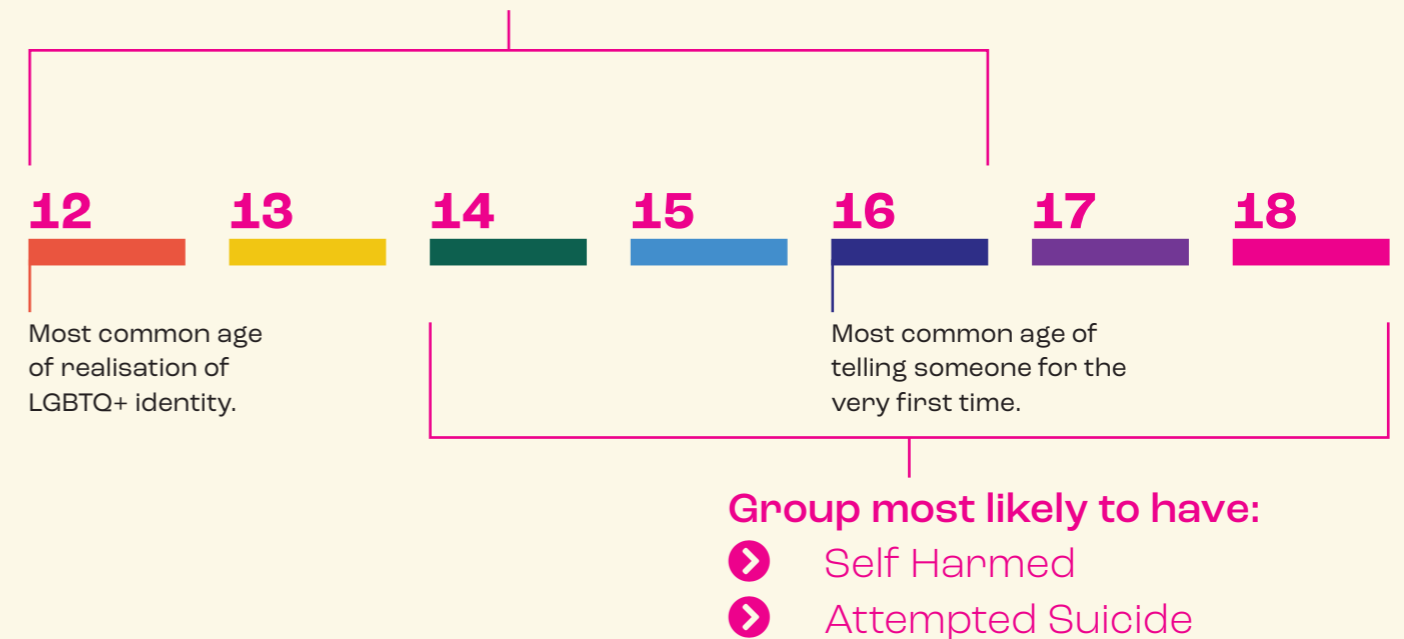
With this in mind, it has never been more important for LGBTQ+ young people to have access to spaces where they feel valued, supported, and safe to be themselves.

Research shows between 6–10% of any group of young people may identify as LGBTQ+.[2] Whether it's in your classroom, youth group, or sports team, you are likely working with at least one young person who identifies as LGBTQ+ or is questioning their identity. It is important to remember that LGBTQ+ young people are more likely to experience mental health challenges than their non-LGBTQ+ friends for a variety of reasons, including a fear of coming out, living in an unaccepting home environment, anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, and anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes in society.[3]

According to the *LGBTIreland Report*, on average, LGBTQ+ young people become aware of their identity at age 12.[4] However, the most common age to tell someone that you are LGBTQ+ is 16. The intervening years of silence can be a lonely and isolating time for LGBTQ+ youth. The period leading up to telling someone, or 'coming out', can be particularly stressful as people struggle with anxiety and a fear of rejection.

LGBTQ+ young people's mental health

Experiences of homophobic and transphobic bullying, isolation, fear, and embarrassment.

12 13 14 15 16 17 18

Most common age of realisation of LGBTQ+ identity.

Most common age of telling someone for the very first time.

Group most likely to have:
- Self Harmed
- Attempted Suicide

Being LGBTQ+ can be challenging; particularly when someone is hiding their sexual orientation or gender identity. For LGBTQ+ young people, discovering and beginning to accept their identity is often associated with a sense of isolation, fear of rejection, and confusion. Many LGBTQ+ young people do not feel safe to come out, or to share their sexual orientation or gender identity with people in their life. By making your school, Youthreach centre, or youth service LGBTQ+ inclusive, LGBTQ+ young people can take refuge from stress and anxiety in a safe and supportive space.

Difficulties Facing LGBTQ+ Youth

The *LGBTIreland Report* indicates that LGBTQ+ young people experience higher levels of self-harm, suicide, depression, stress, and anxiety (see chart below).[5] Alongside higher incidence of mental health challenges, recent research also shows that LGBTQ+ people in Ireland continue to face on-going difficulties,[6] including:

- ❯ Discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
- ❯ School bullying and higher rates of school dropout;
- ❯ Family rejection;
- ❯ Difficulties with professionals failing to understand LGBTQ+ issues;
- ❯ Discrimination in accessing services;
- ❯ Lack of access to appropriate healthcare for trans and non-binary people; and,
- ❯ Poorer physical and sexual health.

Compared to their non-LGBTQ+ friends
LGBTQ+ Young People Experience

Twice the levels of self-harm
Three times the levels of attempted suicide
Four times the levels of extreme stress, anxiety, and depression

"A growing body of research supports the theory that negative experiences resulting from LGBT stigma can lead to chronic stress that contributes to emotional distress among LGBT adolescents and adults."[7]

LGBTQ+ Students' Experiences

In 2019, we spoke to 788 LGBTQ+ young people as part our *School Climate Survey* with Columbia University in the USA.[8] Findings indicate that in the 2018-2019 school year, an alarming 73% of LGBTQ+ second-level students felt unsafe at school. Sadly, 45% of LGBTQ+ students reported that staff did not intervene when homophobic remarks were made in their presence, and a concerning 48% of LGBTQ+ young people reported hearing a homophobic remark from a teacher or school staff member.

Results of 2019 School Climate Survey[9]

73% of LGBTQ+ students feel unsafe at school.

77% of LGBTQ+ students are verbally harassed.
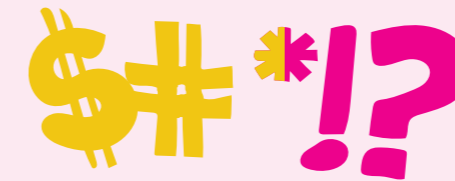
68% of LGBTQ+ students hear homophobic remarks from other students.

1 in 3 LGBTQ+ students reported that other students are not accepting of LGBTQ+ identities.

48% of LGBTQ+ students hear homophobic remarks from teachers/ staff members.

Running Stand Up Awareness Week is the first step to creating a school, Youthreach, or youth service where LGBTQ+ young people feel safe. It is important to note the positive outcomes when a school's staff, policies, and curriculum are inclusive of LGBTQ+ identities. There are remarkable teachers and staff members across Ireland saving lives by creating safe and supportive spaces for LGBTQ+ students. Findings from the *School Climate Survey* indicate that, where such support exists, LGBTQ+ students are more likely to feel accepted by their peers, have an increased sense of belonging, and are less likely to miss school to avoid victimisation.

It is vitally important for education and youth services to create an environment where all young people can be themselves and feel welcome, celebrated, safe, and supported. For some LGBTQ+ young people, this may be their only safe space to relax, feel comfortable in their identity, and be their true selves.

Getting Started

Hosting Stand Up Awareness Week in your school, Youthreach, or youth service is the first step towards creating a safe and inclusive space that acts as a protective factor for LGBTQ+ young people. A world first, Ireland's *LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy*, informed by the views of thousands of LGBTQ+ young people and those who support them, recognises that "young LGBTI+ people can flourish when they have consistently positive interactions with those around them, and supportive experiences in the services with which they most engage".[10]

Recent research on LGBTQ+ youth in Ireland and across Europe identified five emerging themes on improving school for LGBTQ+ students:[11]

- ❯ the creation of safe spaces or support groups, and addressing bullying;

- ❯ affirming LGBTQ+ identities;

- ❯ formal education on LGBTQ+ themes in class;

- ❯ promoting inclusion, diversity, and equality; and,

- ❯ training for teachers.

Seven Steps to Stand Up: Our 'Seven Steps to Stand Up', outlined on pages 13-19, provide best-practice guidelines designed to support you in coordinating and running Stand Up Awareness Week. This year we are providing training and resources much earlier to give you time to work with your students to design and implement Stand Up Awareness Week. Engaging young people in the process of reflection, brainstorming, and planning is just as important as the activities that take place during the week itself.

Online Toolkit: Our online Toolkit has 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 in the Toolkit.

You can download the Toolkit on our website www.belongto.org/standup

2022 Theme: Tackling LGBTQ+phobic Language: For Stand Up Awareness Week 2022, we are encouraging you to challenge the use of everyday homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic language to create more inclusive spaces for the young people you work with. You can read more about this on page 20.

Inclusivity Themes: True LGBTQ+ inclusion is about making LGBTQ+ inclusivity part of everyday life. In our online toolkit, you can find information on how to create inclusive school environments, an inclusive curriculum, and inclusive policies and practices.

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Getting Started

Meet the Education and Training Team

Our Education and Training Team are here to provide guidance to ensure you feel equipped to run Stand Up Awareness Week in your school, Youthreach centre, or youth service. Sharon (she/her) and Stephen (he/him) are available to chat if you have any questions or if you would like to discuss ideas or work through challenges.
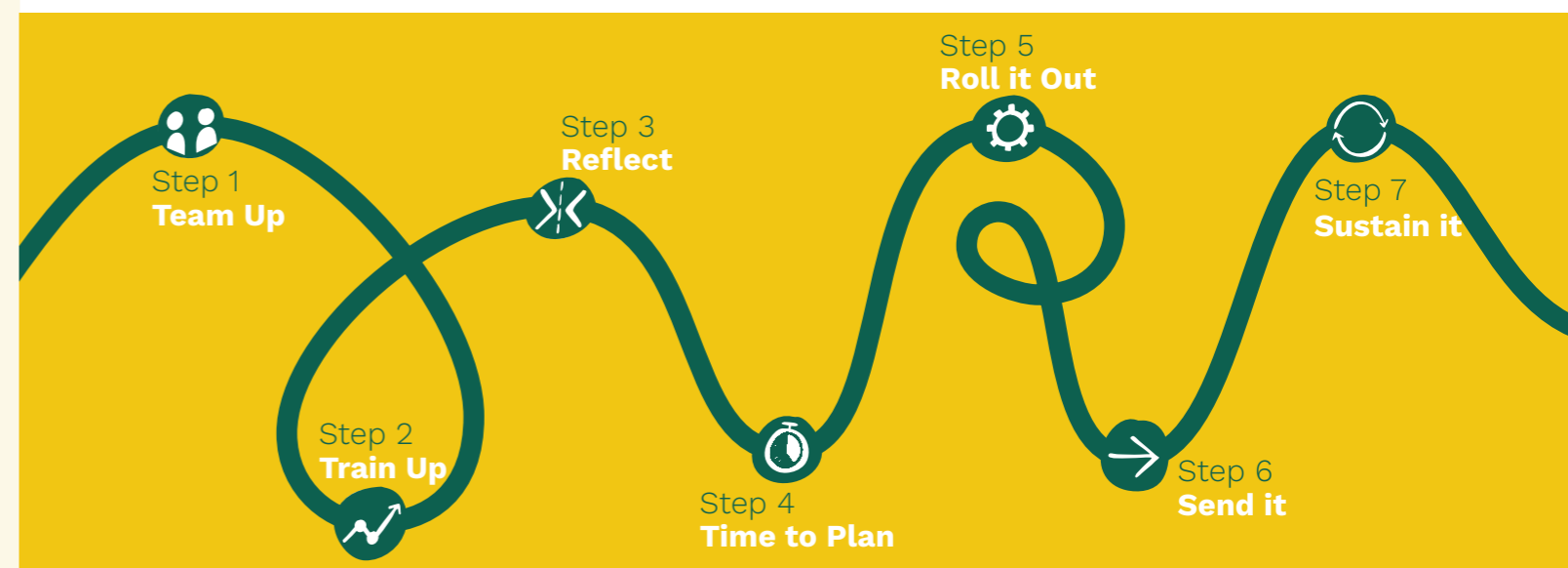
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Seven Steps to Stand Up

Although Stand Up Awareness Week is just one week in the 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, or youth service.

Step 1 **Team Up**

Step 2 **Train Up**

Step 3 **Reflect**

Step 4 **Time to Plan**

Step 5 **Roll it Out**

Step 6 **Send it**

Step 7 **Sustain it**

Step 1: Team Up

Bring likeminded staff and students together to create your Stand Up 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/subjects and invite young people to lead this with you in your school, Youthreach, or youth service. A youth-led approach will empower the young people in your organisation to effect positive change in their own community. You might like to elect a Stand Up 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 your team and don't hesitate to get in touch!

Toolkit Resources

❯ The Importance of Stand Up Awareness Week - information for Senior Management and the Board of Management.

❯ Stand Up Awareness Week Team Posters.

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 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 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 – September 2022

Register for our online or in-person Stand Up Awareness Week training this September.

Belong To offer specific training on how to plan and rollout Stand Up Awareness Week. We will bring you through the steps to run Stand Up Awareness Week in detail and provide you with guidance and activity ideas. This year we are offering 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 whether LGBTQ+phobic language is used by young people or staff in your organisation.

What impact does this have on LGBTQ+ young people? Is the phrase "that's so gay" used? Does it go unchallenged? How could your organisation be more LGBTQ+ inclusive? Youth voice is so important in this step – you might choose to survey young people in your schools and review the results.

1. The Stand Up Awareness Week Toolkit and training will give you guidance and ideas on how to approach discussing LGBTQ+ topics within your school, Youthreach, 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 terminology and language 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, 'How to Tackle LGBTQ+phobic language' on page 24. Invite feedback and keep notes as you go.

5. Based on the answers 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 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 pictures in this Guide from pages 30-31.

Toolkit Resources:

- Respectful Communication
- Introducing LGBTQ+ Topics
- Reflection Questions
- Sample Survey Questions

Step 4: Time to Plan

Once you have considered some potential actions and ideas, it is time to get planning. It's time to think about the what, how, who, where and when. You might have some great ideas, but you have to be realistic and consider:

What What do we want to do? Have a clear idea and potential impact

How How are we going to do it? Put clear steps in place.

Who Who do we need to get involved to make this happen? Do we need permission/help?

Where Where will it be held?

When When will it be held? And how long will it take?

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/ 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,[12] 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.

Toolkit Resources:

❯ Stand Up Awareness Week Planning Template

❯ Stand Up Awareness Week Activity Ideas

Step 5: Roll it Out

After all the planning, it's time to roll out Stand Up Awareness Week from November 14th-18th or at another time that suits your organisation. Spread the word and engage as many people in your community as possible. Photograph and video your events and consider engaging your local media. 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.

Toolkit Resource:

❯ Media Guide

Step 6: Send It

Now that all the hard work is complete, congratulate yourself on a successful Stand Up Awareness Week! We would love to hear from you about how it went and see your photographs and videos. Visit **www.belongto.org/sendit** to fill in an evaluation form and upload your pictures and videos.

Upon completing the online Sent It evaluation form, your organisation will receive a Stand Up Awareness Week certificate and a small token to recognise your hard work.

The 'Send It' form will ask for details of the actions you carried out, as well as any photos or other media you captured during the week.

We will print your school name in a regional newspaper, letting everyone know that your organisation takes a stand for LGBTQ+ young people.

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 this feeling of safety and reduced peer discrimination continues beyond this week and throughout the year. Here are some suggestions:

Create an LGBTQ+ 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+ Club or what's known as a Gender and Sexualities Alliance (GSA). GSAs foster connections between LGBTQ+ and allied young people and builds community. A GSA brings young people together to have fun, connect, receive support and campaign to make changes about issues important to them. Learn more about setting up a GSA or LGBTQ+ club in our toolkit resource!

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. All staff should be clear on how to intervene and document any breaches of these policies. This should continue after Stand Up Awareness Week. See the Inclusivitiy Themes section in our Toolkit for help creating lasting LGBTQ+ inclusivity through inclusive policies, an inclusive environment, and an inclusive curriculum.

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.

Toolkit Resources:

❯ Setting up an LGBTQ+ Club/GSA

❯ Posters and Image Bank

❯ Inclusivity Themes

creating a safe and inclusive space
creating a safe and inclusive space
creating a safe and inclusive space
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creating a safe and inclusive space
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creating a safe and inclusive space
creating a safe and inclusive space

03
LGBTQ+ Language and Terminology

LGBTQ+ Terminology and Language

LGBTQ+ language can feel confusing. What can help is realising that you don't need to know it all. Most people want to use LGBTQ+ inclusive language, but they are not sure where to begin. A good place to start is to learn some of the key concepts and understand what the letters in LGBTQ+ stand for.

Terms change over time and some people prefer certain words to others. The terms here are relevant and accurate at the moment. Their meaning and definition will gradually change, and new terms will be introduced.

For example, in previous years we used the 'LGBTI+' acronym in our work. This year, we have changed this acronym to 'LGBTQ+'. The 'I' in LGBTI+ stood for intersex. We changed this based on feedback from the LGBTQ+ young people we work with as there is a larger representation of young people identifying as queer than interex. Many young people prefer to identify themselves as 'Queer' and they wanted to see themselves reflected in our work. Intersex and other identities are still represented in the '+'.

If a term comes up that you aren't familiar with, it's ok to ask what this means or to ask an individual what term they prefer they use.

Everyday Language

We can support LGBTQ+ young people by becoming more mindful of the language we use every day. Due to the fact that society tells us that being cisgender and heterosexual is the norm, we can often use gendered language without seeing other options. Consider the following word replacements:

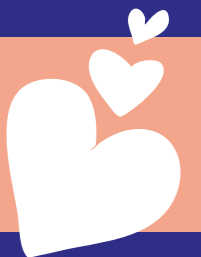"Have a nice weekend guys"
"Have a nice weekend everyone/folks"
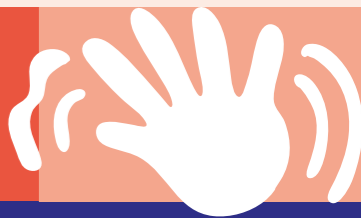
"Turn to the boy/girl beside you and discuss…"
"Turn to the person beside you and discuss…"

"Your girlfriend/boyfriend"
"Your partner"

"Do you have brothers or sisters?"
"Do you have any siblings?"

Pronouns

A pronoun is the way in which you refer to yourself or others. It is often connected to the way a person experiences their gender. Pronoun examples include he/him, she/her, and they/them. To be inclusive and respectful of gender diversity, use the gender-neutral pronouns, they/them/theirs, when referring to any person whose pronouns you do not know until you have a chance to find out what they are. If you are not sure of someone's pronouns, it's best to ask rather than making an assumption.

By using your own pronouns in your email signature, Teams/Zoom account, on forms, and anywhere else you see an opportunity, you are sending a clear message to young people and your colleagues that you understand the importance of pronouns and are an ally.

Use Words That Heal, Not Hurt #ComeIn 2022

Language is powerful! As part of this year's #ComeIn campaign, with 2FM, we are focusing on words that heal instead of hurt. We wouldn't use derogatory or homophobic language on TV, radio, or across print yet many people still use these words casually every day. Through this year's #ComeIn campaign and posters, we want to encourage people to realise this is harmful to LGBTQ+ people. Addressing harmful language plays a significant role in creating a safe environment for LGBTQ+ young people. Hang our #ComeIn posters and use this to start conversations on both everyday language (see page 21) and harmful language with young people in your school, Youthreach, or youth service.

Toolkit Resource

> LGBTQ+ Terminology

LGBTQ+ Terminology

LGB
Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual
About Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation	Our sexual and romantic attraction to other people.
Lesbian	A woman who is attracted to other women. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.
Gay	Someone who is attracted to people of the same gender.
Bisexual	Someone who is attracted to more than one gender *e.g. both men and women.*

Related Terms

Pansexual	Someone whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex assignment, gender identity, or gender expression.
Asexual (Ace)	Someone who experiences limited or no sexual attraction.

T
Trans
About Gender Identity

Gender Identity	Our personal sense of our own gender.
Transgender or Trans	A term describing a person's gender identity that does not match their assigned sex at birth. This word is also used as an umbrella term to describe some groups of people who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression.

Related Terms

Sex assigned at birth	The designation of a person at birth as male or female based on their anatomy (genitalia and/or reproductive organs) or biology (chromosomes and/or hormones).
Non-Binary	People whose gender identity is neither exclusively woman or man or is in between or beyond the gender binary.
Pronouns	The words used to refer to a person other than their name, e.g. he/she/they.
Cisgender	Someone whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.
Gender Expression	How we show our gender through our clothes, hair etc. This is different to gender identity. Gender identity refers to how we feel inside, and gender expression is how we present ourselves outside.

Q
Queer

Queer	An umbrella term used to describe people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender. Queer was used as a slur against the LGBTQ+ community for many years and still can be. However, the word has been reclaimed by LGBTQ+ communities and many now embrace the term. Check if someone is comfortable with this term before referring to them as queer.

+

+	The 'plus' is used to signify all of the gender identities and sexual orientations that are not specifically covered by the other five initials.

Tackling LGBTQ+phobic Language

This year, for Stand Up Awareness Week, we are focusing on the theme of tackling LGBTQ+phobic language. Our *School Climate Survey* told us that 68% of LGBTQ+ students reported hearing other students regularly make derogatory remarks at school.[13] These remarks, often dismissed as harmless banter, can have serious impacts on LGBTQ+ young people and escalate to bullying.

Is It Really 'So Gay'?

LGBTQ+phobic language connects the idea of someone's sexual orientation or gender identity with something negative, embarrassing, or shameful. For example, the use the word fag or gay. It can be intentionally directed at someone and rooted in homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia, or it can be intended as a joke or banter and not considered LGBTQ+phobic by the person using it. However, it can still cause real harm. The use of LGBTQ+phobic language can quickly turn into bullying.

LGBTQ+ young people commonly have their gender identity or sexual orientation used as a weapon against them. One of the most common examples of casual homophobic language is the use of 'so gay' to mean something is bad, uncool, or embarrassing. As this language targets a core part of who a person is, it can be particularly harmful. These insults can be directed at anything or anyone, even those who are not known or thought to be LGBTQ+. This is often why it goes unchallenged. However the phrase is almost always used in a negative or pejorative way. If an LGBTQ+ young person hears this every day, multiple times a day, the incessant negativity towards their identity (whether intentional or not) can impact their mental health.

Transforming Norms

Young people tell us that in communities of young people, such as schools and colleges, much use of LGBTQ+phobic language such as 'that's so gay' is not rooted in actual LGBTQ+phobic beliefs, but because it is a behavioural norm within the group. Like any norm, they can become deeply embedded and resistant to change. For some young people, use of these terms is not meant as an insult to LGBTQ+ people. For them it is just another term for something negative or bad. However, as discussed earlier, for young people who identify as LGBTQ+, or are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, hearing this can negatively affect their mental health.

When 'gay' is equated with bad, uncool, feminine, or embarrassing, and this remains unchallenged by those in authority, young people assume they have permission to use the term in that way[14]. This can create an environment where LGBTQ+ young people feel unsafe to be themselves, or can lead to an environment where LGBTQ+ bullying is more difficult to detect by educators and youth workers.

GAY = Bad / Uncool / Feminine / Embarrassing

I AM GAY = Does that mean I am Bad / Uncool / Feminine / Embarrassing?

The environment can feel hostile and unwelcoming. Young people feel they will not be supported by staff and their peers if they were to 'come out'. As a result, LGBTQ+ youth may not come out. The average age a young person realises they are LGBTQ+ is age 12 which means they are often in First Year of secondary school.[15] The average age they tell someone for the first time is 16. During these four years, LGBTQ+ youth are left to think about their identity by themselves, while absorbing the attitudes and opinions of those around them. During this time in an LGBTQ+ young person's life, they experience four times the level of anxiety and stress as their non-LGBTQ+ peers. Unfortunately, from age 14 to 18 this translates into experiencing twice the levels of self-harm and three times the level of attempted suicide.[16]

Much like sexist or racist remarks, often made by people who would not consider themselves sexist or racist, everyone has a responsibility to be mindful of both the intention of their words and their impact. Therefore, it is important for school staff to understand how to challenge this language, and to be consistent in challenging it.

It is important to note that if an individual is being repeatedly victimised or harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, including verbally, then they are being bullied and you should follow the process set out in your organisation's Anti-Bullying Policy.

Toolkit Resource:

> Tackling LGBTQ+phobic Language

How to Tackle LGBTQ+phobic Language

1.   Assess The Environment

Some staff feel that LGBTQ+phobic language is not a major issue in their school, Youthreach, or youth service, while young people report that it is used frequently. It may be that staff genuinely are not aware of it happening. When students feel that the issue isn't being tackled by staff, it may make them less likely to report other forms of victimisation or bullying. To really understand the experiences of young people, share a short, anonymous survey with them to find out what type of LGBTQ+phobic language is used, and how often they encounter it. You can use or adapt our sample survey questions in our Toolkit. Review the results with Senior Management and share them with your staff so they are aware of what is happening.

Toolkit Resource:

❯ Sample Survey

2.   Create a Clear Process

A major challenge in trying to tackle LGBTQ+phobic language is that it is often treated differently from one classroom or group to the next. When some staff decide to call out every instance they hear – and others choose to ignore it – young people soon learn that they only need to modify their language in some settings.

In preparation for Stand Up Awareness Week, use the handy template in our Toolkit and your existing Anti-Bullying Policy to create a clear step-by-step process on how to recognise, intervene, and report LGBTQ+phobic language use. Simply telling someone to stop using the language will not have the desired impact, there are additional steps you need to take that we have outlined in detail in our Toolkit.

You will find a detailed process on how to tackle LGBTQ+phobic language use in four simple steps:

❯ Recognise   ❯ Explain

❯ Intervene   ❯ Record

Work with members of your Stand Up Awareness Week planning team so they can feed into this new process. This process should be agreed with the Senior Management Team, and explained to all staff members in a staff meeting, to ensure that everyone is clear on what to do if they overhear LGBTQ+phobic language. Staff need to understand the difference between using LGBTQ+ terms in a general way and using them in a derogatory way. Words like 'lesbian', 'gay', 'bisexual', 'trans', and 'queer' are terms that individuals might use to describe themselves and should not be taboo in schools, Youthreach, or youth services. However, when they are used to describe someone or something in a negative way, or as an accusation then this needs to be challenged. Check out the staff Powerpoint presentation in our Toolkit and adapt it to suit your needs.

Toolkit Resource

❯ Challenging LGBTQ+phobic Language

In the past the term 'Queer' was used as a slur. Today, many young people describe themselves as queer, although it can still be used as a slur. The best way to avoid any confusion is to refer to someone in the way they have asked to be identified.

3.   Educate

If you are going to change your approach to LGBTQ+phobic language use, it is vital that the young people are aware of this. Talk to young people in your school, Youthreach, or service to plan the most effective approach. Use Stand Up Awareness Week as an opportunity to hold lessons or groups where you explain the impact that LGBTQ+phobic language use can have. Talk about the new approach you are going to take and ask for input and feedback. By being clear on your expectations and the reasonings for your policy, you will be in a stronger position to address the issue if it persists.

4.   Consistency

Once young people have been educated, it is time for staff to consistently use the agreed process in tackling LGBTQ+phobic language use. Some staff may be resistant, but their engagement is key. While LGBTQ+phobic language use is not always rooted in active LGBTQ+phobia, it still has a serious impact on LGBTQ+ young people, their allies, and the environment as a whole. LGBTQ+phobic language can often escalate to bullying. Leadership from staff is vital in recognising and changing this.

LGBTQ+phobic Language

Language used with the intention or effect of discriminating against someone based on a person's actual or perceived LGBTQ+ identity.

Take action by following our 4-step process.

LGBTQ+phobic Bullying

Repeated victimisation or harassment of someone based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Take action by implementing your Anti-Bullying Policy.

Endnotes

1   Pizmony-Levy, O., BeLonG To Youth Services (2019). *The 2019 Irish National School Climate Survey Report*. Research Report. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

2   Dooley, B, O'Connor, C, Fitzgerald, A, & O'Reilly, A (2020). *My World Survey 2: National Study of Youth Mental Health in Ireland*. Jigsaw and UCD Schoolof Psychology.

3   Költő, A., Vaughan, E., O'Sullivan, L., Kelly, C., Saewyc, E. M., & 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.

4   Higgins A. et al. (2016). *The LGBTIreland Report: national study of the mental health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in Ireland*. Dublin: GLEN and BeLonG To Youth Services.

5   Ibid.

6   Költő, A., Vaughan, E., O'Sullivan, L., Kelly, C., Saewyc, E. M., & 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.

7   Almeida, J. et al. (2009), *"Emotional distress among LGBT youth: The influence of perceived discrimination based on sexual orientation", Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, Vol. 38/7, pp. 1001-1014.

8   Pizmony-Levy, O., BeLonG To Youth Services (2019). *The 2019 Irish National School Climate Survey Report. Research Report*.

9   Ibid.

10   Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2018). *National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy 2018-2021*. Dublin.

11   Költő, Vaughan, O'Sullivan, Kelly, Saewyc, Nic Gabhainn. *LGBTI+ Youth in Ireland and across Europe: A two-phased landscape and research gap analysis*.

12   Pizmony-Levy, *The 2019 Irish National School Climate Survey Report*. Research Report. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

13   Ibid.

14   Kibirige, H and Tryl, L. *Stonewall Education Guide: Tackling homophobic language*. United Kingdom.

15   Higgins A. et al. (2016). *The LGBTIreland Report: national study of the mental health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in Ireland*. Dublin: GLEN and BeLonG To Youth Services.

16   Ibid.

04

Stand Up Awareness Week Activities

Stand Up Awareness Week Activities

Here are some activity ideas to get you started. Check out our gallery for inspiration from Stand Up Awareness Week last year!

Fly the Flag

Do you have a flagpole at your school? If so, consider flying the Progress Pride flag for Stand Up Awareness Week or the entire school year. This flag is a symbol of LGBTQ+ pride and was created by an artist and activist called Gilbert Baker back in 1978. The flag is flown horizontally, with the red stripe on top. As well as the rainbow flag, there are Pride flags for many identities including trans, lesbian, and bisexual.

Connect to the Curriculum

During Stand Up Awareness Week, and throughout the year, integrate LGBTQ+ topics into the curriculum. We've created Junior Cycle curriculum resources covering a range of subjects, including Business Studies, Science, Maths, History, Home Economics, and Geography. These are available in our Toolkit.

Create a Rainbow Flag #ComeIn

On Friday, November 18th, encourage your students to wear a jumper in their year's colours so that the whole school will make up the rainbow flag: 1st years red, 2nd years orange, 3rd years yellow, 4th years green, 5th years blue, and 6th years purple. Make sure to send all your photos and videos to us www.belongto.org/sendit

Raise Funds

Belong To is a charity providing life-saving support services for LGBTQ+ young people across Ireland. There are lots of great ways for your school to raise funds to support our services, including asking students to contribute €2 during the Rainbow Jumper Day on Friday, November 18th, or hosting a rainbow bake sale.

For a fundraising pack, contact Chris (he/him) from our Fundraising Team: fundraising@belongto.org / 01 670 6223.

Be Visible

Creating an environment that is clearly LGBTQ+ inclusive encourages young people to be themselves, and also to seek help when they need it. Display Stand Up Awareness Week Posters on prominent noticeboards in your school to create a welcoming and diverse school environment.

Solidarity Wall

Create a solidarity wall where allies can show support for the LGBTQ+ community by signing their name or leaving uplifting messages of support for the community. This can be on whiteboard in your classroom, in a shared space such as a canteen, or consider working within your community for example in partnership with your local library, bank, or credit union, spreading the positive messages of solidarity beyond the school gate.

Hallway art display created by Carrigaline Community School, Cork.
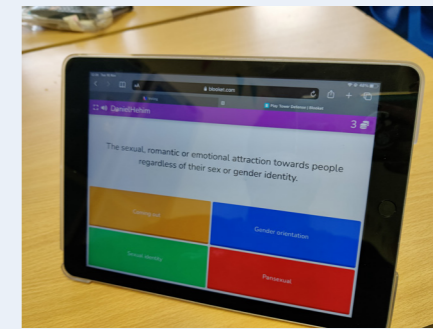

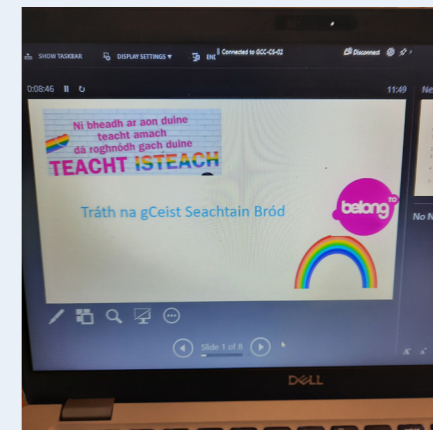Rainbow Jumper Day at Maria Immaculata Community College, Cork.

LGBTQ+ noticeboard during Stand Up Awareness Week at Colaiste Chomain, Mayo.

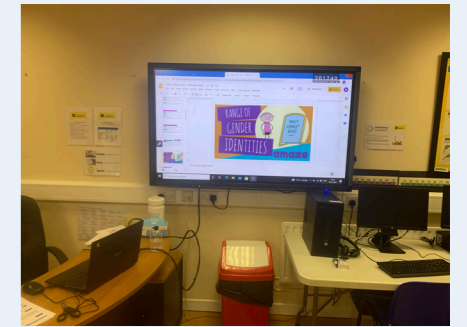Students created a lunchtime information booth at Bishopstown Community School, Cork.

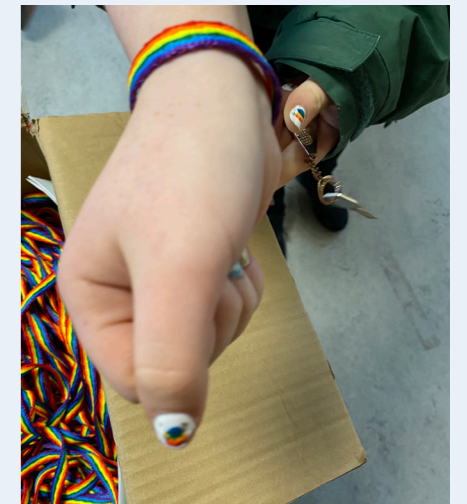Blooket game on LGBTQ+ terminology at Naas Community College, Kildare.

LGBTQ+ class presentation as Gaeilge at Gaelcholáiste Chiarraí, Kerry.

Staff on rainbow stairs at Moyle Park College, Dublin.

Gender Identity Workshop at Letterkenny Youthreach, Donegal.

Rainbow friendship bracelets created by students at Moville Community College, Donegal.

Pronoun and ally badges from Bishopstown Community School, Cork.

Belong To LGBTQ+
Youth Ireland

Belong To is a national organisation supporting LGBTQ+ youth.

Since 2003, we have worked with LGBTQ+ young people across Ireland offering safety and support through our services. Let your students know about Belong To and what supports are available for them including LGBTQ+ youth groups, crisis counselling with Pieta, and digital support services. Learn more at www.belongto.org

"Stand Up Awareness Week added an incredible energy to our school and left our students with a taste for social justice."

— Peter Fitton, Class Teacher at
Bishopstown Community School, Cork