

**Submission in relation to The Department of Children, Equality,  
Disability, Integration and Youth Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023  
November 2020**



**Supporting LGBTI+  
Young People in Ireland**

BeLong To is Ireland's national organisation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Non-Binary (LGBT+) young people. BeLong To's youth services provide vital supports to LGBT+ young people across Ireland. BeLong To also works with government and other partners so that Ireland will be safe, equal and welcoming for LGBT+ young people. BeLong To is pleased to make a submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on its Statement of Strategy 2021 - 2023.

We refer to the Programme for Government – Our Shared Future, 2020, recent research findings and the experiences of children and young people as a result of COVID-19.

We respectfully submit that the following as the top three Priority Goals for the Department within the next strategic period:

**Priority Goal Number 1:**

Implement the National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy to create a safe, supportive and more inclusive Ireland.

**Strategic actions under Goal Number 1:**

- I. Establish an oversight / advisory committee with young LGBTI+ people and LGBTI+ and youth experts (e.g. those who sat on the oversight committee to develop the Strategy) to work in partnership with officials on implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.
- II. Document evidence and agree measure of success / impact on LGBTI+ young people's lives in relation to implementation of each action in the strategy.
- III. Provide mechanism to ensure a coordinated approach to the delivery of effective LGBTI+ services and funding of services for young people through inter-agency cooperation e.g. forum for service providers, funders and young LGBTI+ people to discuss ideas as part of departmental funding rounds
- IV. Publish annual impact report highlighting evidence and impact on young people's lives

**What would be the measure of success if we achieved this goal?**

- LGBTI+ young people would feel visible valued and included in schools, youth services, healthcare services, communities, and their homes. A follow up online survey and qualitative focus groups would be carried out to gauge the improvement in young people's lives since the pre-strategy survey and consultations.
- Rates of mental health challenges including anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicide ideation will have reduced amongst young LGBTI+ people ([see LGBTIreland report, 2016](#))
- Rates of young people skipping or leaving school early will have reduced ([see School Climate Report, 2019](#))
- Numbers of LGBTI+ young people feeling safe and that they belong in schools will have increased ([see School Climate Report, 2019](#))
- Rates of LGBTI+ bullying will reduce in schools ([see School Climate Report, 2019](#))
- All schools are supportive and inclusive environments for LGBTI+ young people (need to agree a national standard e.g. completion of the Safe and Supportive Schools programme and accreditation).

- All Youth services are inclusive of LGBTI+ young people and provide accessible LGBTI+ youth services nationally (need to agree a national standard e.g. completion of the Safe and Supportive Services programme and accreditation).
- LGBTI+ young people have access to LGBTI+ expert family support workers to help with challenges that may arise in the family or for the family because of the young person, reducing rates of LGBTI+ Youth Homelessness ([See Focus Ireland Report, 2020 on LGBTI+ Youth Homelessness](#))
- LGBTI+ training, CPD initiatives and guidelines targeted at professional service providers and youth services are available to all professionals working with young people.
- Recommendations from the Pathfinder and Youth Mental Health Task Force including the introduction of same day referrals and consideration of age of consent for access to mental health services and supports are achieved.
- Inclusive and age appropriate RSE and SPHE curricula is being delivered across primary and post-primary levels, including an inclusive programme on LGBTI+ relationships
- National Gender Clinics and Multidisciplinary Teams for children and adults are operating in Ireland based on a best practice model for care in line with the World Professional Association of Transgender Healthcare (WPATH)

### **Priority Goal Number 2:**

Ensure that young LGBTI+ people are aware of and have access to services to meet their needs, online and offline, in accordance with public health guidelines as we continue to live with COVID-19 in our communities.

### **Strategic actions under Goal Number 2:**

1. Increase funding for LGBTI+ youth work to combat loneliness, isolation and mental health challenges.
2. Fund and promote LGBTI+ community events to help replace experiences of isolation with connection and community.

3. Promote LGBTI+ youth services online and offline so that all young people are aware of what supports are available.
4. Provide access to free counselling for LGBTI+ young people in accordance with their needs.
5. Provide access to family supports to reduce family conflict and rates of homelessness amongst LGBTI+ young people.
6. Continue to recognise and acknowledge the frontline role that youth workers are playing in supporting young people across Ireland and providing much needed supports and safety nets.
7. Provide practical supports to youth workers to address the huge pressure they are under on the frontline.

**What would be the measure of success if we achieved this goal?**

- Reduced numbers of young LGBTI+ people experiencing mental health challenges (including self-harm and suicide ideation), loneliness, isolation and feeling unaccepted at home ([see LGBTI+Lives in Lockdown Report, May 2020](#)) & [How's Your Head | Young Voices During COVID-19 \(October 2020\)](#)
- Increased number of LGBTI+ youth events taking place to promote community and connection.
- Supports for LGBTI+ youth workers in place during COVID-19.

**Priority Goal Number 3:**

Reduce the rate of COVID amongst young people in Ireland

**Strategic actions under Goal Number 2:**

1. Consult with young people and the youth sector on the impact of COVID-19 on their lives and ways to reduce the spread of COVID amongst young people
2. Provide and promote national, regional and local events to help replace experiences of isolation with connection and community.

**What would be the measure of success if we achieved this goal?**

- Reduced rates of COVID-19 amongst young people

- Increased mental health and wellbeing amongst young people (see [How's Your Head | Young Voices During COVID-19 \(October 2020\)](#))

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