

# B E L O N G T O Y O U T H



## BeLonG To Youth Services Annual Review 2011

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

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# BeLonG To Vision - Mission - Theory of Change Action!

## Introduction

BeLonG To Youth Services is the national organisation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) young people in Ireland. We believe that LGBT young people need to be respected and cared for on the same basis as all other young people, and that when they are safe and supported in their families, schools and society they will thrive as healthy and equal citizens.

To get there, we provide direct youth work services to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender young people across Ireland. These are spaces where Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender young people can meet each other, get involved in activities and see that their identities and selves are valued and important.

Because we believe that the problems which Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender young people experience are largely due to negative societal attitudes, we also work to change these attitudes. This is done by training teachers, youth workers and other professionals who work with young people; by running awareness campaigns in schools and youth services and advocating and working with government departments, politicians and non-governmental organisations to ensure that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender young people are heard so that positive social change occurs.

## Vision

BeLonG To's vision is for an Ireland where Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender young people are empowered to embrace their development and growth confidently and to participate as agents of positive social change.

## Mission

To provide safe and fun services to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender young people in Ireland which:

Facilitate them through exploration, development and growth;

Enable them to access all their rights as equal citizens; Empower them to participate as agents of positive social change;

and to provide an advocacy and campaigning voice so that society respects Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender young people as full and valued members.

## Theory of Change

When Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender young people are safe and supported in their families, schools and society, they will thrive as healthy and equal citizens.



## Overview of 2011

### Executive Director - Michael Barron

2011 was an extraordinary year for BeLonG To and our work to make Ireland a safe and equal place for LGBT young people. It was a year when we had the opportunity to place our work in a global context and a year when we had the opportunity, with the support of the One Foundation, to reflect on our progress to date and to set out our strategic vision for the coming years.

Our Stand Up! Don't Stand for Homophobic Bullying Campaign went to every second-level school in Ireland, and its accompanying online advert went viral around the world. As I write this overview, the ad has been viewed almost one million times. Feedback has shown that people from many parts of the globe responded enthusiastically to our positive approach to tackling homophobic bullying. Stand Up! is about homophobia and transphobia being everyone's concern, and about how collective action against it NOW can really improve the lives of LGBT young people. The Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe, Thomas Hammarberg, and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, both agree with this message, singling out our work for recognition in 2011.

I had the great privilege to represent BeLonG To and Ireland at the first UN level global consultation on homophobic bullying in December 2011. Organised by UNESCO, participants drafted the 'Rio Statement on Homophobic Bullying and Education for All' and supported the development of UNESCO's groundbreaking manual 'Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying'. Closer to home, 2011 was another year of huge growth in the numbers of LGBT young people being supported by BeLonG To. Our national Network of LGBT youth groups grew from 8 to 14, the largest growth of any year, with new groups opening in Sligo, Mayo, Tallaght, Kilkenny, Tralee and Wexford. Over 2,500 young people accessed a BeLonG To youth group in 2011 which represents a huge 28% increase on 2010. When we reflect on the fact that in 2003, our first year of service, a total of 52 young people came to BeLonG To, we can gauge the phenomenal rate

of growth that we are presently experiencing. 2011 was also a year of significant national policy development. In March, the Programme for Government contained a strong commitment to action on homophobic bullying in Irish schools. Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn, went on to announce the establishment of a working group to develop a "roadmap towards the elimination of homophobic bullying from our schools", a group which BeLonG To is now a member of.

We continued our commitment to supporting the most marginalised LGBT young people in our community by opening a specific LGBT youth mental health promotion project; beginning drugs education and street outreach work in Dublin City Centre; and launching an innovative LGBT Asylum Seekers and Refugees Project. We also continued to develop the capacity of teachers and youth workers to better support LGBT young people by conducting LGBT Awareness Training for 1,300 people across these sectors.

In 2011, the One Foundation agreed a further very significant investment in BeLonG To. I would like to thank them for their remarkable support and belief in our work. This investment is needed now more than ever, particularly in light of the cutbacks in state funding to our direct supports to young people. These cutbacks, when combined with the massive increase in the numbers of young people accessing our services, means that the state's investment per young person at BeLonG To has decreased by almost 400% in the four years since 2008. I would like to signal out the dedication and innovation of our Direct Youth Work Team in making the almost impossible possible and ensuring that no vulnerable young person is ever turned away from BeLonG To.

As Executive Director, I am so often humbled by the dedication of all the staff, board and volunteers at BeLonG To who believe so passionately in our vision. It is also my privilege to work in partnership with so many motivated, brave and socially conscious young people. Working together we made 2011 a landmark year in our collective mission to create an Ireland where LGBT young people's human rights are upheld and where their identities are valued and celebrated.

# The young LGBT people who use our services remain at the heart of everything we do, as it is through their lives and experiences that we learn how to keep our services relevant and appropriate to their needs.

## Overview of 2011

### Chair of the Board of Directors, Anna Quigley

As Chairperson of BeLonG To Youth Services, it gives me great pleasure to present this Annual Review for 2011. It tells the story of a year of remarkable achievement for the organisation, and for all those who are involved in it and support its work. This achievement is all the more significant given the current economic climate and the rowing back on public service provision that inevitably impacts on those in our society who most need public services.

The Executive Director Introduction to the report highlights some of the most significant achievements during the year and it also serves to illustrate how BeLonG To carries out its work on a number of interlinking levels, including providing direct services for young people, advocating on their behalf, influencing and developing policy at both national and international level and campaigning for social change. It has been particularly heartening during 2011 to see the work of BeLonG To acknowledged at the highest international level through the UN, as a model of good practice in working with LGBT young people and in particular, in eliminating homophobia. It is also very heartening that the commitment in the 2011 Programme for Government on tackling homophobic bullying has been followed through by the Department of Education with the establishment of the Working Group to address this issue. BeLonG To believes that this model of partnership and cooperation between the state and NGOs is of particular importance during the current economic crisis, as it represents the most effective and efficient means of bringing about positive change in our society.

The young LGBT people who use our services remain at the heart of everything we do, as it is through their lives and experiences that we learn how to keep our services relevant and appropriate to their needs. It is also from their lives and experiences that key issues are identified on which we need to advocate and campaign for change. Young people have spoken on behalf of BeLonG To at many public fora

and in the media during 2011 and we have continued to strengthen our commitment to developing and supporting youth leadership and facilitation throughout the organisation. Well done to all the young people in BeLonG To for continuing to drive, inspire and challenge us all in our work during 2011.

I would like to pay tribute to the extraordinary dedication and commitment of the staff of BeLonG To, who carry out their work with professionalism, common sense and good humour. Their work throughout 2011 under the exceptional leadership of the Executive Director, Michael Barron, has been outstanding and I very much welcome this opportunity to acknowledge them publicly. I would also like to pay tribute to the members of the Board of BeLonG To who give so generously of their time and expertise, and as Chair I would like to thank them for their ongoing kindness and support. Our work in 2011 has been enhanced by the contributions of a number of excellent volunteers, and we express our sincere appreciation to them. We also extend our thanks to all those who have engaged in fundraising activities for BeLonG To during 2011, and those who support us in fundraising on an ongoing basis.

Finally I would like to thank all of our funders - without your support our work in 2011 would not have been possible: One Foundation, HSE Office for Suicide Prevention and HSE Health Promotion Office Dublin North East, NICDTF, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the European Refugee Fund with the support of the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration in the Department of Justice and Equality and Pobal, Community Foundation of Ireland, Dublin City Council, The Iris O'Brien Foundation and Google Ireland.

To all our friends, colleagues and supporters, we look forward to continuing to work with you during the coming years to ensure that Ireland becomes an equal and inclusive society for all of our LGBT young people.

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creating positive  
understanding  
of lesbian, gay,  
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## BeLonG To - 2011 At a Glance

### Direct Youth Services

#### Dublin

- BeLonG To Youth Service runs five weekly youth groups in Dublin.
- Over 2,500 young people attend.
- Launch of Drugs Outreach Initiative.
- LGBT Asylum Seekers & Refugees Project commences.
- National support through email and telephone to parents, young people and professionals - over 2,000 contacts in 2011.

#### National

- Support and development of 14 LGBT youth services across Ireland.
- Facilitation of national Youth Leadership programme.
- National Youth Pride residential.
- Sexual Health Campaign in partnership with Gay Health Network
- Mental Health Project commences.

### Advocacy and Training

- Second Annual Stand Up! Don't Stand for Homophobic Bullying campaign - expanded to all secondary schools and youth services in Ireland, with the endorsement of the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals.
- BeLonG To continues work with SPHE to develop a comprehensive new resource for post-primary schools, 'Growing Up LGBT'.
- Establishment of LGBT Asylum Seekers and Refugees Project.
- In-Service course for primary teachers is launched, in partnership with Educate Together.
- Training provided to over 1,300 professionals who work with LGBT young people.
- All-Day Training Workshops are delivered in Galway, Mayo, Donegal and Cavan for teachers and youth

workers, in conjunction with HSE Health Promotion Office.

- Ongoing membership of the Steering Committee of LGBT Diversity.
- David Carroll, Director of Services, became Chairperson of the parents group Loving Our Out Kids (LOOK), which also began to meet at BeLonG To's premises.
- Michael Barron, Executive Director, was awarded the University College Cork LGBT Human Rights Award.

### Policy and Strategy

- Programme for Government commitment to tackle Homophobic Bullying
- BeLonG To completes a second major strategic planning process with The One Foundation and secures a significant new investment.
- Through ongoing membership of the National Youth Work Advisory Committee, our Executive Director works to ensure the inclusion of equality based measures in plans for the future direction of the youth sector in Ireland.
- Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, calls BeLonG To's work 'indispensable' in his influential 'Viewpoint' on homophobic bullying in Europe.
- Executive Director invited to the first UN level international consultation on homophobic bullying, where our work is presented as a model of good practice.





## BeLonG To - Highlights of 2011

**January** - Annual National Youth Leadership programme held in Dublin, young people in attendance from seven groups around the country.

**February** - ChillOUT LGBT Youth Group in Waterford achieves BeLonG To accreditation.

**March** – Third Annual Stand Up Campaign launched and reaches out to every post-primary school in Ireland.

**March** – Programme for Government contains explicit commitment to combating homophobic bullying in Irish schools.

**April** – LGBT Asylum Seekers and Refugees Project commences.

**May** – Over 500,000 people have watched the Stand Up! video on YouTube.

**June** - Executive Director Michael Barron awarded Grand Marshall of Dublin Pride and leads the 2011 parade, joined by over 2,000 young people.

**July** - ID: A monthly alcohol free club night for LGBT young people commences.

**August** - BeLonG To works with Gaze LGBT Film Festival on programme of youth content.

**September** - LOOK Parent Support Group commences on Thursday evenings

**October** – An evening with BeLonG To takes place in New York at the Irish Arts Centre.

**October** - Drugs Outreach Programme commences.

**November** - The 3rd Gay Prom is hosted in the Mansion House.

**November** – One Foundation agrees major reinvestment in BeLonG To.

**November** – Over 800,000 people have viewed Stand Up! video ad on YouTube.

**December** - UNESCO cites BeLonG To's work as model of good practice.

**783,969 People  
View Stand Up  
Video Advert  
LGBT Asylum  
Seekers &  
Refugee  
Project Starts  
Drug Outreach  
Commences**

# Increased numbers of younger people accessing services

## As LGBT young people become more visible

### 2011 Developments

#### Increased numbers of younger people accessing services

As LGBT young people become more visible than ever before in Irish society, more and more young people are seeking the support and services of BeLonG To. There has been a nearly 50% increase in the number of participants accessing our service in the period 2009 -2011.

#### A significant rise in HIV infections among Gay and Bisexual young men

HIV statistics for 2011 have shown that young men are the most 'at risk' group for testing positive to HIV, with a 33% overall increase in gay and bisexual young men testing positive during 2011. Our youth work programmes and collaboration with organisations such as the Gay Health Network have ensured our response to this worrying development has been swift and effective.

#### Homophobic Bullying

Tackling homophobic bullying remains a core objective of the work of BeLonG To. In 2011, our work to eliminate this significant barrier for LGBT young people included:

- The Stand Up! campaign in second level schools and youth services across Ireland.
- Contributing to SPHE's new resource, 'Growing Up LGBT', with the Department of Education's SPHE Support Services, the HSE and GLEN. This curriculum will be taught in every year of secondary school.
- Named by UNESCO as a model of good practice in tackling homophobic bullying, at the UN's first consultation on homophobic bullying in Rio de Janeiro.
- In May 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn, announced that he would establish a Working Group on 'the elimination of homophobic bullying'. His commitment to consultation and collaboration with community groups is strongly welcomed by BeLonG To.

### Mental Health

In 2009, 'Supporting LGBT Lives' was published, a major research report co-initiated by BeLonG To, and funded by the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention. It documented the significant impact of homophobia on LGBT young people, correlating with shocking levels of suicidality, self-harm and other serious mental health outcomes. BeLonG To works to address these issues in a number of ways:

- We strive to provide LGBT youth services to the broadest possible number of young people, who find learning, resilience and empowerment by linking with peers who may share the same experiences of marginalisation.
- We are also committed to offering individual support to young people who may be especially in need. In 2011, in our Dublin youth service, the number of LGBT young people accessing individual support from youth workers in relation to mental health issues rose significantly in 2011. Youth workers facilitated over 300 one-to-one sessions, many of them focussed on mental health issues.
- In 2011, BeLonG To also initiated a new mental health project, supported through the National Office for Suicide Prevention, this will offer training on mental health issues across the national network in 2012. In 2013, the Mental Health project will develop an awareness campaign to LGBT young people across Ireland that will be aimed at having a positive impact on their mental health.

**It is also a loss for the entire human family when promising lives are cut short...**

**Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General, 2011.**

Increase in numbers facing multiple marginalisation  
Since our foundation in 2003, BeLonG To has worked with significant numbers of LGBT young people who experience multiple marginalisation on the basis of homelessness, disability, or membership of an ethnic or racial minority, for example. We became more aware of the needs of LGBT young people who are asylum seekers or refugees as a result of our direct work with this group. In 2011, BeLonG To initiated a pilot project to support LGBT Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Ireland. The objective of the project is to improve the safety and quality of life of LGBT asylum seeking and refugee young people, through training, mainstreaming and direct support to young LGBT asylum seekers and refugees.

Increase in demand for National Network services.  
Since 2006, BeLonG To has worked to develop LGBT youth services around the country. In 2011 the number of new initiatives waiting to avail of the 'Start-up' services of the network rose to 9. This is in addition to the established services in 14 sites around the country.

#### **Ban Ki-moon**

In December 2011, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, called homophobic bullying *"a moral outrage, a grave violation of human rights and a public health crisis"*. He went on to say. *"It is also a loss for the entire human family when promising lives are cut short"* and called on governments throughout the world to act to protect LGBT young people.



# Dublin Youth Service

## Youth Leadership

## Drugs Education

## & Outreach Service

### Changing profile of participants

In 2011 we witnessed several major shifts in the profile of participants in our direct youth work services in BeLonG To in Dublin.

- The age profile of young people accessing our service dropped again, and youth workers are now supporting young people and their families at 12-13 years of age.
- There has been a nearly 340% increase in the number of participants accessing our service since 2009.
- There has been a notable increase in transgender young people participating in BeLonG To; Individuality went from a 3 – 5 member bi-weekly group in 2010, to a 10 – 15 member weekly group in 2011.
- The Stand Up! campaign within schools and youth services has had a significant impact, playing a pivotal role in increasing demand for LGBT youth services.
- We saw a dramatic increase in the on-line support we provide to LGBT young people, parents and professionals. In 2011, over 3,000 young people were provided on line support nationally.
- There was an increase in the number LGBT young people facing multiple marginalisation. The number of LGBT young people experiencing homelessness due to their sexual orientation or gender identity has risen dramatically in 2011.

### Youth Leadership

Youth Leadership is core to our work in empowering LGBT young people to act as agents of positive social change. In 2011 our youth leadership programmes excelled and produced:

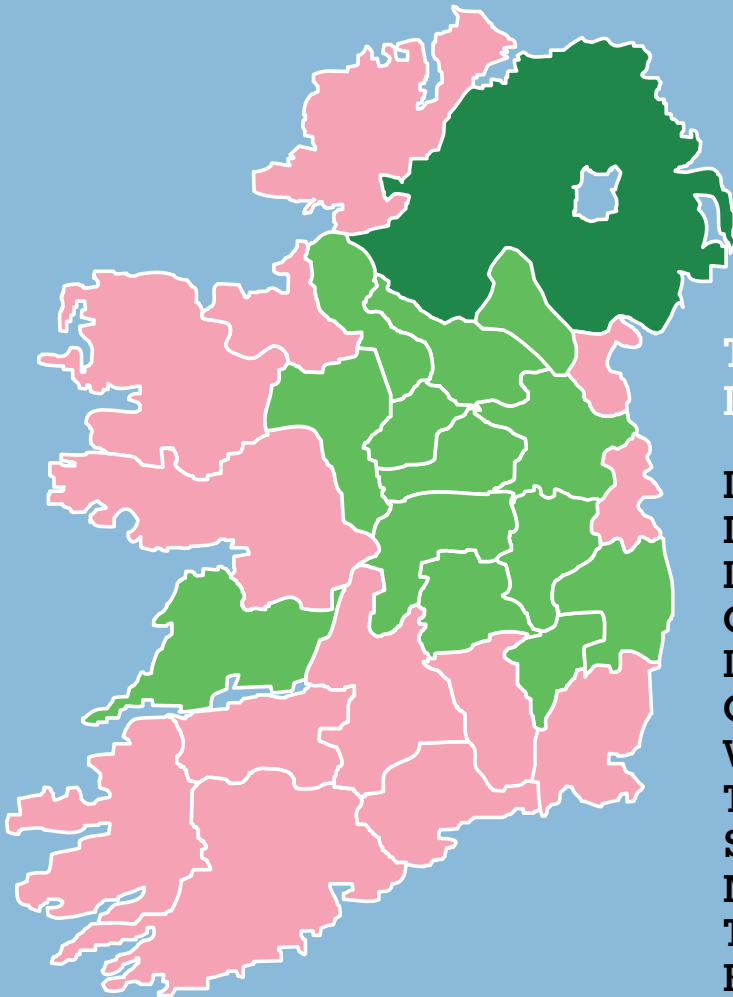
- The first national LGBT over 18s Youth Advocacy and Activism Training residential, a project that was youth led, from the sourcing of funding, to planning and facilitation training.
- 37 New Peer Facilitators (Educators) were trained across the country, having an impact on over 2,000 LGBT young people within youth services.
- Internal capacity building programmes that also create systems of participation externally. 2011 saw LGBT young people self represent at over 34 openings, forums, committees and consultations.

- Peer Resource Development: 2011 saw LGBT young people engaged in equal partnership with youth workers in the development of four new resources, the Services leaflet, the Coming Out booklet for Parents and Young People, and the Drugs and Alcohol Outreach and Asylum Seekers and Refugees leaflets. Over 10,000 resources were disseminated nationally, which is phenomenal in these difficult economic times.
- LGBT young people's representation in the Media. 2011 was a record breaking time for LGBT young people's self representation within the media nationally and internationally. Over 20 interviews took place on TV, radio and online. It has been very beneficial for LGBT young people to have the opportunity to tell their own stories and this can have a very positive effect on mental health and well being of young LGBT people.

### Drugs Education and Outreach Service

- Supported by the North Inner City Drugs Task Force, this remains the only LGBT drugs awareness service in Ireland. BeLonG To's drugs service falls under the Education and Prevention Pillar within the National Drugs Strategy, 2009 – 2016.
- The street outreach service was established in October 2011, in order to engage with young LGBT drug and alcohol users who were not accessing BeLonG To services. This takes place on Saturdays within Dublin's North/South Inner City. Over 100 young people engaged with and were supported by the Drugs Worker. This development has seen BeLonG To grow to a 7 day weekly service. This is quite amazing as the youth work team consists of a team of three!
- Education, information and prevention programmes facilitated by the Drugs Worker had an impact on over 500 LGBT young people in Dublin in 2011.
- The Drugs Worker provided information and training to over 100 professionals within mainstream drugs services in 2011.





The National Network is made up of LGBT youth services in:

- Dublin**
- Dundalk**
- Donegal – Letterkenny & Buncrana**
- Galway**
- Limerick**
- Cork**
- Waterford**
- Tipperary**
- Sligo**
- Mayo - Ballina**
- Tallaght**
- Kilkenny**
- Kerry - Tralee**
- Wexford – Wexford town & Gorey.**

## BeLonG To's National Network

The National Development Project at BeLonG To Youth Services assists mainstream youth services and LGBT communities to develop specific projects for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Young People. We aim to ensure that LGBT Young People throughout the country have access to safe supports in their locality. Fifty-three percent of the country now have access to an LGBT youth group – a 22% increase since 2011. The numbers of young people accessing supports and services (face to face) has increased by 264% nationwide.

The BeLonG To Start Up Pack and accreditation scheme continued to be used as a template for the development of new youth services around the country in 2011. Using the pack, the National Network Manager and the National Development and Training Officer continued to offer existing groups on-going support, and new groups a template on which to build safe and appropriate youths services. In 2011, six new groups opened their doors in Sligo, Mayo, Tallaght, Kilkenny, Tralee and Wexford. The National Network of LGBT youth services met

four times during 2011, offering workers from around the country the opportunity to meet up for support, information exchange and to work on projects together. Two national youth events were facilitated, a residential leadership course which was held in Dublin, and groups from around the country descended on Sligo for a special youth-friendly Pride festival, run in conjunction with Northwest Pride.

Training on issues for LGBT young people and the logistics of an LGBT youth group is delivered to youth workers, volunteers and steering committee members involved in the LGBT youth group, and constant support and assistance is provided.

BeLonG To works with Youth Work Ireland, Foroige and different LGBT community organisations around the country to deliver these services, as well as with NGOs and statutory organisations all over Ireland. We are deeply grateful for the work that so many people from different parts of Ireland carry out on behalf of LGBT young people.



## Advocacy and Campaigning

### BeLonG To at Dublin LGBT Pride 2011:

The co-founder and Executive Director of BeLonG To, Michael Barron, was chosen to be Grand Marshall and to lead the 2011 LGBTQ Pride Parade in Dublin. The parade took place on Saturday June 25th and is second in scale only to the St. Patrick's Day Parade in annual celebrations in the Capital.

Over 2,000 young people from all over Ireland marched behind the Grand Marshall on the parade route, adding their colour, pride and passion to the parade through dance and costume. Many thanks to the Youth Work team, the staff of BeLonG To and Eddie McGuinness for coordinating the day.

*"This is a huge honour! I will use the opportunity that being Grand Marshall provides to highlight what is going on for LGBT young people in Ireland today, the progress that has been made and the social change that is still necessary to ensure that our young people are safe and treated equally. I see this honour as an endorsement of the work of BeLonG To so I am taking on the role on behalf of all the young people, staff, board and volunteers who work tirelessly to make Ireland a better place for LGBT young people."*

**Michael Barron, ED, BeLonG To**

## Rio Statement on Homophobic Bullying and Education for All:

BeLonG To was one of the participants who drew up the globally significant "Rio Statement on Homophobic Bullying and Education for All" on 10 December 2011. Based on Education for All, a global movement led by UNESCO, the Rio Statement concludes:

"We, the participants gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for the first-ever United Nations consultation on homophobic bullying in educational institutions, organized by UNESCO, are here to review the scope and impact of this urgent problem and discuss best practices in programming and policy to address it. We come from countries on all seven continents and represent non-governmental organizations, education ministries, UN agencies, academia and other development partners. Among us are current learners including young people, teachers, and parents. We call upon all governments to live up to their responsibility to provide universal access to a high quality education by eliminating the barriers created by homophobia and transphobia, including the unacceptable and devastating prevalence of anti-LGBTI bias and violence in elementary, secondary and tertiary levels and settings of education around the world. Education for All must be realized through measures to ensure:

- Safe school climates free of anti-LGBTI bias and violence;
- Access to accurate health and sexuality information relevant to the needs of all learners, including LGBTI people;
- Teachers and school staff prepared and willing to maintain learning environments truly accessible and productive for all; and
- Mechanisms of periodic review by which educational institutions, systems and governments consult with development partners and all education sector stakeholders in order to hold themselves accountable to these principles."



## International praise for BeLonG To and Stand Up 2011:

**EU:** Council of Europe Commissioner on Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, signalled out BeLonG To's Stand Up! Campaign (the only work of an NGO in Europe to be mentioned in his 'viewpoint' on the issue), calling it "indispensable" as a way to tackle homophobic bullying.

**UNESCO:** BeLonG To was one of a small number of NGO's invited to participate in the first UN level global consultation on homophobic bullying. BeLonG To's work and approach is highlighted as good practice at this consultation in Rio, Brazil.

**UN:** Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights first ever report on LGBT Human Rights notes BeLonG To's Stand Up! Campaign as an example of a positive response to homophobia.

### International Feedback:

**We'd like to use the Stand Up video for mandatory training of 35,000 professionals in south Australia.**

## Are you expanding to the States?

**We want to publish the German version**

**We use it in Espirito Santo University, Brazil**

## Programme for Government Pledge to Combat Homophobic Bullying

In 2011 the Programme for Government included a specific commitment to develop strategies to address homophobic bullying and to support Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender students for the first time.

BeLonG To Youth Services strongly welcomes this commitment, which is a critical step forward in improving the lives of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) young people in Ireland.

*"Homophobic bullying is the most common form of bullying experienced by young people in Ireland today, and it can have particularly devastating effects on LGBT young people, and can contribute to suicide and self harm. We are really heartened to see that government parties are showing from the outset that they value LGBT young people fully"*

*We highlighted the urgent issue of homophobic bullying in submissions to the government parties and we look forward to working with the new government to end this torture of young people once and for all.*

*We have worked for many years to combat homophobic bullying and advances have been made, with many schools doing a very good job in the area. This central commitment from government will help ensure that this good practice becomes the norm and that all schools are safe and supportive for all LGBT young people."*

**Michael Barron ED BeLonG To**





## BeLonG To - Get On Board

Was a joint campaign involving BeLonG To, Inspire, Foroige and Headstrong, the campaign was a call to action to get the issue of youth mental health on the agenda - to get young people asking for it, to get voters voting for it, and to get politician's committing to it. We started this campaign because mental health issues affect everyone. One in five young people in Ireland are experiencing a mental health difficulty today - that probably includes someone you know. We believe that mental health support is a basic right of every person, and we have a responsibility to ensure our young people have the support they need to protect theirs.

We launched the campaign during the general election in February 2011, where we had great success in making youth mental health a real election issue within the campaigns of the mainstream parties. The Campaign was brought back into action for the Presidential campaign with six out of the seven presidential candidates getting on board, each making their own commitments to Youth Mental Health. Now we are working to support President Michael D. Higgins to deliver on his commitments during his time in the Áras.

## Sexual Health Campaign in partnership with GHN

The 2010 European MSM Internet Survey (the EMIS Project) highlights that in Ireland gay and bisexual men were least likely to have been tested for HIV if they were 24 years or younger, or if they were residing outside of urban centres; for example, 50% of 20 to 24 year olds had never been tested. In 2011, BeLonG To joined forces with the HSE and the Gay Health Network to raise awareness of these issues among young men. A group of Over-18s, facilitated by BeLonG To, developed key messages regarding HIV prevention, testing, condom use, and HIV-related stigma; worked to increase access to condoms and lube; and developed health promotion workshops.

## BeLonG To's LGBT Asylum Seekers and Refugees Project

In 2011, BeLonG To initiated a pilot project on LGBT Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Ireland. The project is the first of its kind in Ireland, and one of the few in Europe. The project aims to improve the safety and quality of life of LGBT asylum seeking and refugee young people, many of whom face isolation and vulnerability on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Following a needs analysis of the situation of LGBT asylum seekers and refugees, BeLonG To developed training modules for organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees, or LGBT communities, to raise awareness of the challenges encountered by LGBT asylum seeking and refugee youth. These trainings will be rolled out to statutory and voluntary agencies in 2012. Outreach and one-to-one support to asylum seeking and refugee young people is being provided, and a dedicated drop-in service has been established.

*"This is the truth: I don't think I'd be here right now if it wasn't for this service. I really wanted to kill myself, I just really wanted to die and get away from this. But then after talking to people from this service, encouraging me and constantly telling me that everything would be ok, and still giving me room to express myself all the time... They have helped me a lot, I have grown, and I have learned how to accept myself". -*

**-Young gay asylum seeker at BeLonG To's Asylum Seeker and Refugee Project.**



## BeLonG To's LGBT Youth Mental Health Project, 2011

The BeLonG To co-commissioned research 'Supporting LGBT Lives' found a number of worrying statistics regarding LGBT young people and their mental health:

- 27% of LGBT people have self-harmed.
- 50% of LGBT people under 25 have seriously thought of ending their lives.
- 20% of LGBT people under 25 have attempted suicide.

Building on this research, BeLonG To has developed a mental health project to deliver an effective national plan to meet the specific needs of LGBT young people. The Mental Health Project began in late November 2011, funded by the National Office of Suicide Prevention. The project aims:

- To conduct a needs assessment, through BeLonG To's National Network, with both youth workers and LGBT young people.
- Based on the identified needs and gaps, the project will run a skills - based mental health training programme for adults and stakeholders working with LGBT young people.
- The project will engage and support the LGBT young people to organise and get involved in an advocacy programme, to promote the mental health of LGBT young people and reach out to LGBT young people not already engaged with LGBT youth services.

## Stand Up! Don't Stand for Homophobic Bullying - Awareness Campaign, 2011

Homophobic bullying is the most common form of harassment experienced by all young people across Ireland, causing young people to be particularly vulnerable to early school leaving, depression, self harm and suicidal ideation. Stand Up! was first launch in 2010, and aims to tackle

homophobic bullying by building positive awareness of LGBT young people and encouraging all young people to support their LGBT friends. We developed this approach because LGBT young people told us that peer friendship is a key support to them when dealing with homophobic bullying and in stopping such bullying.

In 2011, the Stand Up! LGBT Awareness Campaign was held 4 – 15th April, and was launched by Dominic Hannigan TD. The messages of the campaign were: 'Show your support for your LGBT friends', and, 'Don't Stand for Homophobic Bullying'.

As part of the campaign over 1,600 secondary schools and youth organisations throughout Ireland were issued Stand Up! packs which include information on homophobic bullying for teachers and youth workers, lesson plans for education activities to raise awareness of LGBT issues, education DVDs, a discussion guide and fundraising activity suggestions for secondary schools and youth organisations to support future campaigns.

The campaign was supported by several Irish celebrities including the cast of hit RTE series RAW and Pure Mule, RTE presenter Bláthnaid Ní Chofaigh, comedian Katherine Lynch and model Vogue Williams, all of whom created videos of support to encourage young people to get behind the campaign.

## Stand Up 2011 video goes viral!

2011 was the year when Stand Up! went viral and global. Our 2011 Stand Up! ad against homophobic bullying hit a chord with many people. It was a moving four minute drama about the impact of homophobic bullying and the power of collective youth action. By the end of 2011 the video had been viewed over 750,000 times worldwide, had been translated into 6 different languages and was being shown at trainings and film festivals around the world. A huge thank you to Crossing the Line Films, Aoife Kelleher, Anna Rogers and Zlata Filipovic for bringing to life our concept of Stand Up! and to all the many thousands of people who shared the film and sent us such positive feedback.

# It's very important that homophobic bullying is tackled in primary schools because this is where it starts...

## Training

From May 2011 we trained over 1,300 professionals- mostly teachers and youth workers. BeLonG To's training is tailored to each particular group's needs. Participatory in approach, the training allows professionals the space to safely explore issues in regard to working with LGBT youth. The training covers topics such as language and terminology, mental health, coming out and dealing with homophobic bullying.

### Highlights and innovations of the training calendar in 2011:

- Successful completion of Department of Education approved primary school in-service training in conjunction with Educate Together and the INTO.
- Training delivered to over 1,300 professionals, including almost 600 teachers from schools all over Ireland.
- 3 booked- out training days in Dublin city for youth workers and teachers.
- Training Days in Galway, Mayo, Donegal and Cavan for teachers/youth workers in conjunction with HSE Health Promotion Office.
- Awareness workshops for almost 400 young people in schools.
- Inputs to teacher-training programmes in NUI Maynooth, Mary I, Marino, St Patrick's College and others.

### Some feedback from teachers/youth workers in 2011:

"Extremely informative and interesting" - Teacher  
"Very informative, and made me more aware of the importance of challenging homophobic slang" – Youth Worker  
"I feel very positive now going into class" –Teacher  
"This training should be standard on every teacher-training/youth work/social care etc course" Youth Worker  
"Feeling more empowered with ideas about what can be done" - Teacher

Email from young person who participated in an LGBT awareness workshop in 2011:

*"Since she talked with us a number of people in the school came out and have been accepted quite well... thank her for me on behalf of all of us :D Thanks Rebecca and Thanks BeLonG To :D"*

### Ireland's first course for Primary Teachers on Addressing Homophobia in Primary Schools

In 2011 Educate Together and BeLonG To Youth Services ran the first ever in-service course for Primary Teachers on addressing homophobia in primary schools. The course was approved by the Department of Education and Skills, as one of their Teacher Education Summer courses and supported by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO).

The course gave teachers the knowledge and capacity to address homophobia in primary schools, through, for example: developing whole school approaches; enhancing pastoral care of all pupils who experience homophobic bullying; curricular support for teachers; strategies for inclusion of pupils who may identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT); inclusion of pupils who have LGBT parents or family members; and, enhancing understanding of relevant equality legislation.

Carol-Anne O'Brien Advocacy Coordinator of BeLonG To Youth Services, said *'It's very important that homophobic bullying is tackled in primary schools because this is where it starts. Homophobic bullying is the most common form of harassment experienced by young people, including in primary schools. It can have really devastating effects.'*



## Fundraising: Trip to New York

As part of the fundraising strategy that BeLonG To devised in 2011, a clear need to make connections in the United States was recognised. A crucial step in this work was when New York City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn invited guests to spend an evening with her and BeLonG To at the Irish Arts Centre in New York.

The evening included a screening of the groundbreaking documentary *Growing Up Gay in Ireland* which was viewed by one in ten of the Irish population when it aired on TV in Ireland. Our Chair and Executive Director also outlined the work of BeLonG To to the invited audience. This was a very successful trip and the relationships built will be followed up in 2012.

**Stand up!**  
**viewed 783,969**  
**times in 2011**  
**online and**  
**being translated**  
**into different**  
**languages.**

## Media and Public Relations

BeLonG To has cemented itself as the leading expert on the issues faced by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender young people in Ireland and our staff contribute regularly in interviews for print and broadcast media. In 2011 BeLonG To gave a total of 120 media interviews.

While BeLonG To is not a public information service, it regularly receives queries from members of the public, government departments or researchers. Staff members strive to assist the enquirer to resolve their issue, through referrals within BeLonG To or externally. In 2011, BeLonG To responded to nearly 800 public queries, a significant increase over the previous year.

## Online Engagement

In 2011, we experienced a dynamic shift in our online engagement. Historically, online engagement had been informal once-off interactions, but in 2011 our online engagement shifted dramatically to a more regular and in-depth use of online resources and tools for support. In 2011, 51% of online visitors returned to our site more than once and spent on average 25% more time engaging with us online.

Within our campaigning work our social reach expanded significantly, culminating in the success of *Stand Up!* being viewed 783,969 times in 2011 online and being translated into different languages.

## Number Of People using BeLonG To LGBT Youth Groups

	Dublin	Network	Totals	No of Counties With LGBT Youth Group	% of the country served by a LGBT Youth Group	% Growth Cumulative			% Growth Year on Year		
						Dublin	Network	Totals	Dublin	Network	Totals
2008	732	232	964	5	19.23	0	0	0	0	0	0
2009	1163	352	1515	6	23.08	58.88	51.72	57.16	58.88	51.72	57.16
2010	1521	472	1993	8	30.77	207.79	203.45	206.74	30.78	34.09	31.55
2011	1823	722	2545	14	53.85	249.04	311.21	264.00	19.86	52.97	27.70

1. 53% of the Republic now has access to an LGBT Youth Group within their county, this represents 23% increase in nationwide coverage in one year.
2. In the last four years the numbers of young people accessing supports and services (face-to-face) has grown 264% nationwide.
3. The numbers of young people outside Dublin accessing supports has grown by 311% in four years.
4. When compared with 2010 the numbers of young people outside Dublin accessing supports and services have jumped by 53% compared to a 20% rise in Dublin.

## Number of Young People accessing BeLonG To support online

		2010	2011	% Change	Narrative
Unique Visits		34,208	36,001	5.24%	Modest growth in overall site traffic from 2010 - 2011.
% New Visits		71.23%	62.86%	-11.75%	A decrease in new visitors coming to our website, is consistent with young people finding out about our services through word of mouth, campaigns and public advocacy work.
Visit Count	Once	34,275	35,483	3.52	The number to of times someone return's to our website has increased significantly with 51.16% of visitors now returning to our website twice or more, demonstrating that young people, parents and professionals are using this as a key source of information, support and guidance.
	Twice	3,559	5,153	44.79	
	Three Times	1,470	2,270	54.42	
	Four Times	8,709	13,343	53.21	
Duration of the Average Visit		02:54	04:22	24:98	Length of an average site visit has gone up by 25% consistent with people engaging with the resources available to them more and more.

## Online Campaigning

		2010	2011	% Change	Narrative
YouTube Video Views		2,867	783,969	27,345	The monumental increase in viewership of our online campaign efforts speak for themselves. Our success is due to the creative content used in 2011 and the story it told which speaks for itself and resonates with people.
Social Engagement	Likes	21	14,656	69,790	
	Shares	0	5,536	100	
	Favourites	7	9,977	142,529	



## Governance

### Board Members 2011

BeLonG To continues to aspire to the highest standard of governance at every level in the organisation. There were 10 meetings of the board in 2011. BeLonG To extend its thanks to all board members for their work during the year and for their continued involvement and support.

**Anna Quigley** - Chairperson  
**William Rabbitte** (Company Secretary)  
**Aodhan Bourke** (Treasurer)  
**Maureen Looney**  
**Susan Donlon**  
**Emily Scanlan**  
**Aidan Harney**  
**Maurice Devlin**

In particular, BeLonG To would like to extend a special thank you to board member Billy Rabbitte, who retired from the board in 2011. As the longest serving board member, Billy was with the organisation from its inception, and worked tirelessly on behalf of LGBT young people.

## Staff

In 2011 staffing levels at BeLonG To expanded to their largest level yet. As part of our Executive Director's work on a new strategic plan and vision, the organisation underwent a staffing restructure. Changes were implemented in February and March 2011.

**Michael Barron** - Executive Director  
**David Carroll** - Director of Services  
**Carol-Anne O'Brien** - Advocacy Coordinator  
**Glenn Keating** - National Network Manager  
**Gillian Brien** - Project Leader, Youth Service  
**Oisin O'Reilly** - Office Manager  
**Marissa Ryan** - Project Coordinator, LGBT Asylum Seekers & Refugees (from April)  
**Rebecca Murphy** - National Development & Training Officer (from April)  
**Gerard Roe** - Drugs & Alcohol Outreach Youth Worker Officer (from July)  
**John Duffy** - Youth Worker  
**Ashling Flynn** - LGBT Mental Health Project Worker (from November)  
**Gordon Grehan** - Office Intern (from November)

In 2011, BeLonG To continued to facilitate Youth Work placements from the following colleges:

**NUI Maynooth** (two placements)  
**CYC Youth Studies Course**  
**Liberties College** (two placements)  
**Ballsbridge College.**

The **One** Foundation



## Affiliations

In 2011, BeLoNG To was affiliated with, or a member of, many national and international organisations, including:

- National Youth Council of Ireland**
- Gay Health Network**
- LGBT Diversity**
- National AIDS Strategy Committee - Prevention & Education Committee**
- Children's Rights Alliance**
- Volunteering Ireland**
- Citywide Prisons Forum**
- NWIC Drugs Working Group**
- NYCI Committee for Equality and Inclusion**
- NICDTF Education & Prevention Sub-Committee**
- Irish Association of Suicidality**
- LOOK – Loving Our Out Kids**
- The Wheel**
- NGO Forum on Direct Provision**
- ILGA - Europe** (International Gay & Lesbian Association - Europe)
- IGLYO** (International Gay lesbian Youth & Student Organisation)
- TENI - TransparenTcy** (Parent Support for Trans Youth)
- Pavee Point**
- Reel Youth**
- HSE North East Youth Health Promotion Strategy Committee**

## Funders

BeLoNG To would like to express appreciation for the generosity of our funders.

### Core Funders:

- The One Foundation
- The Department for Children and Youth Affairs
- Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
- Health Services Executive – National Office for Suicide Prevention
- North Inner City Drugs Taskforce
- European Commission's European Refugee Fund, supported by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration in the Department of Justice & Equality, and Pobal.
- Health Services Executive - Health Promotion Office, Dublin North East

### Project Funders:

- Dublin City Council
- Reel Youth
- Dublin LGBTQ Pride Festival
- Starbucks Community Fund
- Community Foundation Ireland
- Ben Cohen's Stand Up! Foundation
- The Ireland Funds
- Google Ireland
- The Iris O'Brien Foundation



## BeLonG To Youth Services Annual Review 2011

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

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