

# Sharing the Learning

## Strategic Plan

2019-2021



Supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual,  
transgender, and intersex young  
people in Ireland



# Introduction

BeLonG To Youth Services was established in 2003 as a space for LGBTI+ young people to find support and acceptance. Some 16 years later, we have celebrated many achievements, from bringing LGBTI+ issues into Irish classrooms to creating safe spaces for LGBTI+ youth across Ireland.

Throughout our history as an organisation, the voices and lived experience of LGBTI+ young people have steered our youth work, advocacy, and education. Their stories inform our policy positions, their needs advise our support services, and their words guide our training and resources. We watch, listen, and learn from LGBTI+ young people across Ireland, we learn from our dedicated stakeholders, and we learn from one another as a team.

With this Strategic Plan we're committed to bolstering this practice of learning, and integrate it across the organisation from this Strategic Plan to our individual work practice. We are dedicated to a culture of learning, reflection, and evaluation that supports us to continuously improve and develop as an organisation. We will share what we learn and how we do it with our partners, supporters, and stakeholders across Ireland so that LGBTI+ young people are supported in their homes, schools, communities, and workplaces.

Our 2019-2021 Strategic Plan identifies five strategic goals that we will focus our work plans and objectives on for the next three years. These goals are underpinned by our vision, mission, and values to create a world where LGBTI+ young people are equal, safe, and valued in the diversity of their identities and experiences.

Our theory of change behind this Strategic Plan identifies the underlying causes, systemic problems, and individual problems experienced by LGBTI+ young people in Ireland today. By designing our focus on five pillars of action, we are building our next phase of work on the experience and models of practice of the previous 16 years of the organisation. We realise the importance of working on the causes and the effects of the on-going issues of homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, and inequality to create a safe, healthy, and equal Ireland.

We know that our mission is ambitious, and we can't do this alone. Working in partnership with relevant organisations from the LGBTI+, youth work, mental and sexual health, and human rights fields will enable us to enhance our services and practices, so that we as a society, can meet the needs of LGBTI+ young people so they are visible, valued, and included as promised in the *National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy*.

The process of creating *Sharing the Learning* followed our model of engagement with young people, our community, and partners under the expertise of Patricia Prendiville. We are grateful to Patricia and to the young people, youth workers, board members, volunteers, team members, and stakeholders who contributed to our Strategic Plan. We listened carefully to your feedback and it has shaped our strategic approach for the next three years.

We will continue to learn, improve, and share our expertise to ensure Ireland is a positive and welcoming place to grow up LGBTI+.



*In Pride,*

**Moninne Griffith**

CEO,

BeLonG To Youth Services

# OUR Values

Our core values are those of **Inclusion**, **Integrity**, and **Respect**, in an environment of **Honesty** and **Openness**. Our purpose is to create a **Welcoming, Supportive, Safe, and Fun space for LGBTI+ young people**. We are committed to **Collaboration** and **Youth Participation**. We believe in **Solidarity and Intersectional Equality**, and our work focuses on **Human Rights** and **Social Justice**. We are dedicated to **Continuous Improvement** in everything we do.

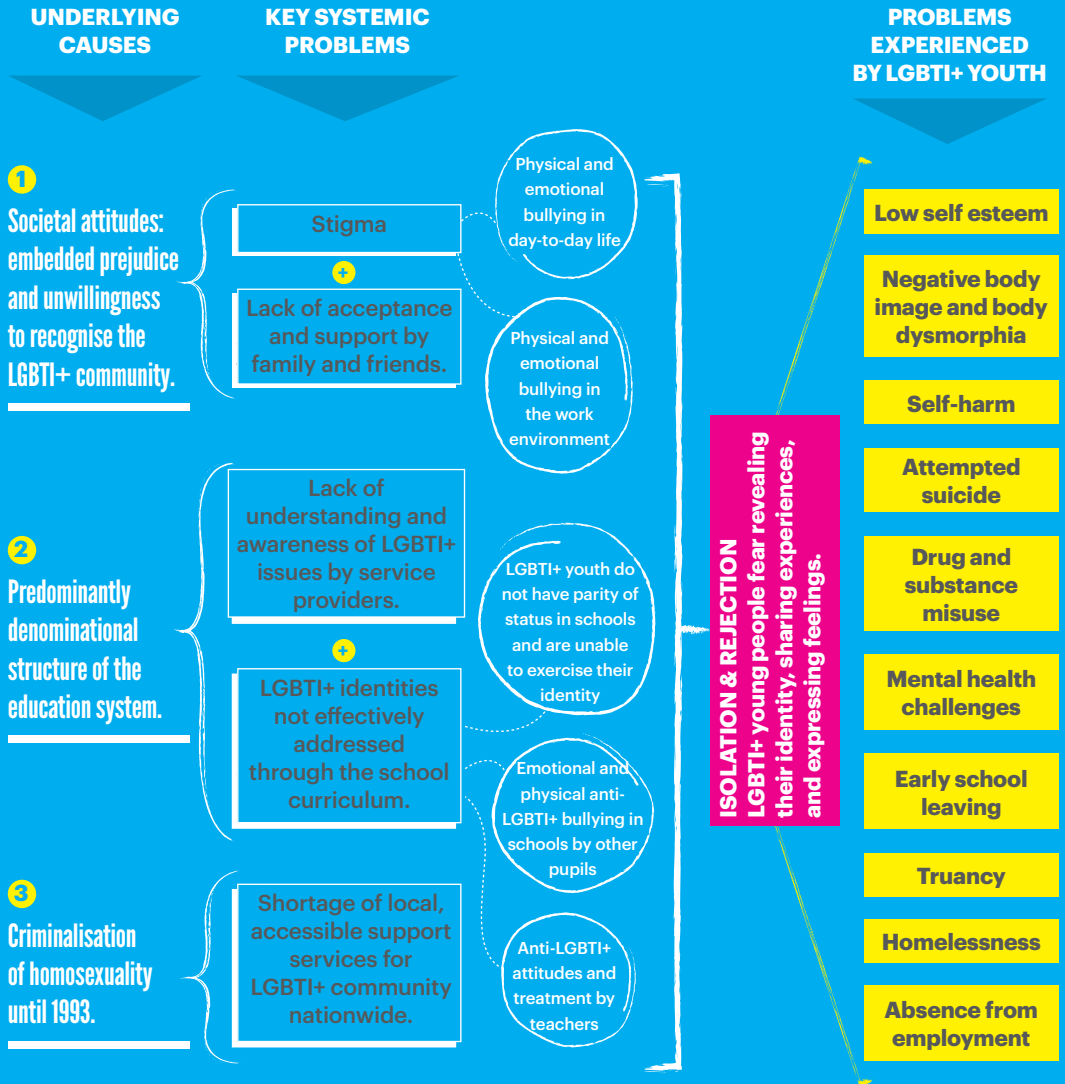
## our Vision

Our Vision is a world where LGBTI+ young people are equal, safe, and valued in the diversity of their identities and experiences.

## OUR Mission

Our Mission is to support LGBTI+ young people as equals to achieve our vision through youth work, changing attitudes, and research.

# Our Theory of Change





# Models of Practice

## Action Research

Our strategic framework for the next three years highlights our commitment to bringing our 'learning from practice' model to the forefront of our organisational development. Action research is a reflective process of problem solving that integrates research, action, and analysis. This model reflects our existing approach where knowledge and experiences from youth work contribute to policy positions and social change. Going forward, we will continue to pause and reflect on moments of learning. This requires a whole team approach to a cycle of reflection and learning that will flow from our strategic goals into our quarterly work plans.

## Equal Partnership

The voice of LGBTI+ young people truly informs all the work that we do at BeLonG To, from developing policy positions to informing the work of our front-line services. Listening to the lived experiences and voice of young people is at the core of our work in terms of engagement, involvement, and practice. We work from a value base of equality which we apply within and across the organisation.

This model of equal partnership informs how we strive to work as a team and with external stakeholders. We recognise the expertise, value, and importance of all of our areas of work and the necessity of working together as a team to achieve our shared goals and objectives.

## Youth Work

Our model of youth work is progressive, flexible, and responsive to the needs of LGBTI+ young people. We work from a theoretical framework called Critical Social Education which informs our Equal Partnership approach, programmes, and policies. Key elements of this model are:

- Critical analysis of situations, problems, and society.
- Value base of partnership and co-creating solutions.
- Equality in valuing contribution, experience, expertise.
- Learning by doing.
- Staff and young people find voice, argue, debate rather than 'telling'.
- Transparency in decision-making and engagement.
- Engagement with 'power' differentials.
- Expertise through lived experience as well as professional qualifications.

# Strategic Goals 2019-2021



## Goal #1

### Organisational Development & Learning

**Goal:** A sustainable, professional learning organisation with skilled staff and volunteers, and robust systems working to achieve our vision.

**Objective:** Develop an action research model of practice which informs our fundraising, governance, communications, and youth work.

**Impact:** A sustainable organisation delivering our mission to support LGBTI+ young people through youth work, changing attitudes, and research.

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## Goal #2

### Youth Work Matters

**Goal:** LGBTI+ young people are safe and supported through a quality youth work service led by equal partnership with young people.

**Objective:** Document our best practice model of youth work, while utilising research for evidence-based policy.

**Impact:** A sustainable model of youth work practice and policy change informed by the voices of LGBTI+ young people.

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## Goal #3

### Building Safe Spaces

**Goal:** A strong, expanding National Network of accredited LGBTI+ youth groups.

**Objective:** Expand consistent models of practice, training, and accreditation in collaboration with the National Network and our youth work partners.

**Impact:** A standardised model of LGBTI+ youth work and best practice across our National Network of youth groups.

## Goal #4

### Empowering Allies

**Goal:** To train and educate professionals, services, and organisations engaging with young LGBTI+ people.

**Objective:** Creation and provision of a suite of training and development resources for professionals engaged with LGBTI+ young people.

**Impact:** LGBTI+ young people are met by a growing number of professionals, services, and organisations trained and certified to meet and support their needs.

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## Goal #5

### Campaigning for Change

**Goal:** Champion the voice of LGBTI+ young people through advocacy and engagement to create an Ireland where LGBTI+ young people are equal, safe, and valued.

**Objective:** Strengthen engagement with national policy and public sector agencies to engage the voice of LGBTI+ young people in policy positions.

**Impact:** Promote focused policy engagement ensuring delivery on national strategies related to the wellbeing of LGBTI+ young people in Ireland e.g. *National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy 2018-2020*.



# BeLonG To reminded me who I am inside.

Being in a place that encourages you to stay true to who you are, helped me accept myself and grow.

— Sean



## BeLonG To Youth Services

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Charities Registration Number: 20059798



An Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthai Óige  
Department of Children and Youth Affairs



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Comhairle Cathrach  
Bhailie Átha Cliath  
Dublin City Council

