

Child Safeguarding Statement

Name of Service: Belong To LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland

Office Location: Belong To, Parliament House, 13 Parliament Street, Dublin 2 D02 P658

Youth Groups Location: Dublin Pride Hub, 44 Clarendon Street, Dublin 1, D02 YK66.

Ombudsman for Children's Office, Millennium House, First Floor, 52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1, D01 F5P8.

Nature of Service & Principles to Safeguard Children from Harm

Belong To is the national organisation supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTQ+) young people in Ireland. Since 2003, we have worked with LGBTQ+ young people between 10 and 23 years, to create a world where they are equal, safe, and valued in the diversity of their identities and experiences. As part of that work, we strive to ensure that children who access our service are safe from harm.

Belong To provides a number of services to LGBTQ+ young people to have access to safe, high-quality youth work groups, services and supports. Our services to young people include the following groups and programmes:

- **Over 18s Group:** this weekly group is for LGBTQ+ young people 18-23
- **Under 18s Group:** this weekly group is for LGBTQ+ young people 14-17.
- **IndividualiTy - Over 18s:** this weekly group is for Trans and non-binary young people 18-23,
- **The Ladybirds:** this weekly peer support group is for lesbian, bi and trans gals and their non-binary pals 14-17.
- **New Young Person's Project:** This group occurs both online and in-person on a monthly basis. It is designed for newcomers interested in participating in the projects, offering both virtual and face-to-face opportunities each month 14-23.
- **Specialised and Seasonal Programmes:** we host a number of different short-term projects and preventative programmes throughout the year with young people involved in the service. These programmes also include day trips and overnight residential trips.
- **Counselling Service with Pieta:** Pieta provides a free crisis counselling service for LGBTQ+ young people who are based in Ireland.
- **Education and Training:** We provide education and training opportunities within a community, youth and school setting – both primary and post-primary. These services provide direct support to staff and employees to make their organisation/ schools inclusive of LGBTQ+ young people. Programmes such as the Quality Mark are targeted at staff members and young people are engaged directly in the evaluation process.

- **Research and Advocacy:** Young people 14-23 are involved in research and advocacy through focus groups, youth advisor panels and media representation.
- **10-13 projects:** We deliver programme-based workshops to young people from the ages of 10-13.

This statement has been developed to safeguard children and young people in our service, as well as families, staff and volunteers who engage with Belong To. We also set out a commitment that all children will be equally protected from harm regardless of race, ability, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. The document is based on, and adheres to, the following from Tusla – the Child and Family Agency:

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children Guidance 2017 and Children First Act 2015

As an organisation, we:

- Recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
- Comply fully with our statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and other relevant legislation relating to the protection and welfare of children;
- Co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters;
- Adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children, and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
- Respect in full confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.
- This Safeguarding Statement is displayed prominently on the Belong To website, our premises and at locations in which we run our groups.

The Safeguarding Statement applies:

- To all staff, interns, students on placement, volunteers, board members, and young people accessing our services.
- When working in any premises utilised by the organisation for its activities and for all when working on behalf of, or representing, Belong To.

Risk Assessment

Belong To defines risk, as per Section 11 (i)(a) of Children First Act 2015, as “*any potential harm to a child while availing of the service.*”

Section 2 of the act defines harm as follows:

harm means in relation to a child –

(a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects the child’s health, development or welfare or

(b) sexual abuse of the child, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstances or a series or combination of acts, omissions, or circumstances or otherwise.

Belong To maintains a risk register, which we regularly review. A Risk Register is a risk management tool that is used to identify potential risks that could affect the organisation. We have processes in place where we regularly assess any potential for harm to a child/ young person while availing of our services. Our standard risk assessment is available on request. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

Overall Mitigating Procedures in Place Relating to All Risks	Risk identified	Policies and Procedures to Mitigate Risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Safeguarding Statement • Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Welfare Policy • Recruitment Policy- both staff and volunteers • Belong To Code of Conduct for Staff • Belong To Code of Conduct Young People and Adults • Vetting Policy 	1 Belong To stakeholders' lack of knowledge about internal Child Protection practices and procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DLP/ Mandated Persons Training • Children First training for all staff and volunteers. • Risk assessments for each group and each event held.
	2 Working with External Service Providers/ partnership with other youth organisations when engaging child/ young person in service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Training • Residential/ Day-Trip Policy • Risk Assessments • Belong To LGBTQ+ Inclusive Schools and Youth Services Training
	3 Risk of harm of a child/young person by a member of staff/volunteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and Supervision Policy • Children's First/ Mandated Persons Training • Risk Assessments • Belong To's feedback, compliments and complaint procedures and policy
	4 Risk of harm caused by lack of supervision of child/young person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One to One working procedure • Risk Assessments
	5 Risk of harm to child/ young person by a visitor to the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations Manual • CCTV
	6 Risk of harm of child/ young person by another child/ young person in the service;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Contracts • First Aid Training/ Other training including ASIST
	7 Risk of harm of a child/ young person on outings/ overnights/ groups or at a Belong To event by a member of staff/volunteer/stranger/peer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registrations Forms • Residential Policy • Risk Assessments • Consent Forms
	8 Risk of harm to child/ young person through access to ICT / unauthorised photography (e.g., social media or web access, electronic contact, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Protection Policy • Online Safeguarding Training • Data Retention and Erasure policy
	9 Risk of harm to child/ young person through one-to-one support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-One Working Policy
	10 Risk of harm to a child/young person by an adult group member due to mixed age range group activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk Assessments • Group Contracts/ Rules • Registration Forms • Child protection training

Procedures

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017), and Tusla's *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*.

In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our commitment to safeguard children while they are availing of our service:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service;
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children;
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm;
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to TUSLA;
- Procedure for maintaining a list of personnel in the service who are mandated persons;
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person.

All procedures listed are available upon request.

Implementation

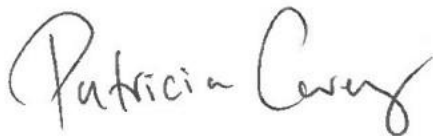
We recognise that implementation is an on-going process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support it.

Our Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is our Youth Services Manager, Carmel Walsh, carmel@belongto.org, 0871743019.

Our Deputy DLPs are our CEO Moninne Griffith, moninne@belongto.org, 0872290987, and Senior Youth Worker, Brenda Kelly, 0861086548.

For queries in relation to the Safeguarding Statement, please contact Carmel Walsh, our Relevant Person as required under the Children First Act, 2015, at the contact details above.

Signed: _____



Patricia Carey, Chairperson of the Board

Date: 21/05/2025

Our Child Safeguarding Statement is reviewed at least every 2 years:

Child Safeguarding Statement	Reviewed	April 2020
Child Safeguarding Statement	Reviewed	July 2022
Child Safeguarding Statement	Reviewed	October 2023
Child Safeguarding Statement	Reviewed	December 2023
Child Safeguarding Statement	Reviewed	March 2024
Child Safeguarding Statement	Reviewed	March 2025