

A Guide to Stand Up Awareness Week

3–7 November 2025



Belong To LGBTQ+
Youth Ireland



This is a week that demonstrates that all pupils, regardless of their sexuality or gender, are welcome here, are respected and are safe — all year round. It is a focus point, which gives us an opportunity as a school to signal to all of the students in our community that we stand with them and that no bullying will be tolerated. Simple actions like staff wearing rainbow pins demonstrates we're safe to talk to, and we support you. For LGBTQ+ young people, prior to coming out or just after can be a very lonely experience, so this demonstration of support is crucial.”

— Liam Walsh, Principal of Coláiste Pobail Setanta, Dublin 15

Thank you to our Stand Up Awareness Week funders:



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth



Stand Up Awareness Week is endorsed by:



Belong To
13 Parliament St
Dublin 2, D02 P658

info@belongto.org
www.belongto.org
01 670 6223

Belong To is a registered charity in the Republic of Ireland
Registered Charity Number: 20059798. ©Belong To, 2025

Fáilte

Now in its 16th year, Stand Up Awareness Week has grown to a countrywide initiative embraced by schools, Youthreach centres and youth services to support all young people to feel safe, included and that they belong. We know from research that LGBTQI+ students who enjoy a higher level of staff support for LGBTQI+ identities are more likely to feel that they belong.

This work is crucial – and the support of whole school communities to make this happen is essential. We are so grateful to you and your colleagues for joining us for our annual campaign to create welcoming and inclusive spaces for LGBTQI+ youth.

Unfortunately, at present, we are seeing targeted, coordinated attempts to roll back on inclusion and equality here in Ireland and internationally. A rise in hate and in misinformation designed to provoke fear is a growing challenge. To overcome this, we must come together and stand up for the open and compassionate country that we are.

Education settings and youth services play a critical role in this regard. We know from research that bullying results in long-term negative outcomes. And LGBTQI+ young people are particularly vulnerable to bullying, as demonstrated in the *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* research published last year.¹ In fact, since 2016 the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQI+ young people has declined. Key statistics from that report show that in Ireland today, compared to the general youth population, LGBTQI+ young people experience three times the level of severe or extremely severe symptoms of depression and anxiety, three times the level of self-harm and five times the level of suicide attempts.

These statistics are stark and upsetting. However, they are also a rallying cry to all of us to stand up. To do all we can to ensure that future generations of LGBTQI+ young people grow up knowing that they are valued, that they are welcome and that they do belong.

That is our mission, in collaboration with every teacher, principal, coordinator and youth worker this Stand Up Awareness Week, 3 to 7 November 2025.

Stand Up Awareness Week is a time to focus not only on decreasing homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, but on preventing it. Our vision is a society where anti-LGBTQI+ bullying is eradicated, and that is what you contribute to when you stand with us for the week.

We are proud that the Department of Education and Youth has funded and supported Stand Up Awareness Week for many years.

This year, the theme of Stand Up Awareness Week is preventing homophobic and transphobic bullying through the implementation of your *Bí Cineálta* policy. One of the core principles of *Bí Cineálta* is preventing bullying from occurring, with the understanding that education and empathy generation are the foundations for knowledge, respect and inclusion.²

This guide sets out all the information you need to host Stand Up Awareness Week to develop that knowledge, respect and inclusion in your school, Youthreach centre or youth service, including lots of ideas on activities that you can run linking back to the theme.

You can also download lots of practical resources from our **online education hub** ➔.

Again, we are grateful to every school, youth service and Youthreach centre that joins Belong To for Stand Up Awareness Week and comes together to create a safer, better and more inclusive Ireland for LGBTQI+ young people, helping them to feel sure that they belong.



Moninne Griffith

Moninne Griffith (she/her)

CEO, Belong To – LGBTQI+ Youth Ireland



01

Stand Up Awareness Week 2025



What is Stand Up Awareness Week?

Stand Up Awareness Week is a nationwide initiative dedicated to addressing anti-LGBTQ+ bullying in post-primary schools, Youthreach centres and youth services across Ireland every November. 2025 marks the 16th year of the campaign, which has grown steadily year-on-year.

Stand Up Awareness Week is a time to uplift and celebrate LGBTQ+ youth in all their diversity while fostering solidarity and support. It is about not only reducing anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, but preventing it. It serves as a vital reminder that anti-LGBTQ+ bullying is serious and unacceptable.

Throughout Stand Up Awareness Week, LGBTQ+ young people and their friends, educators and communities explore LGBTQ+ identities, participate in actions that promote inclusion and work together to create safe, welcoming spaces for all young people.

Stand Up Awareness Week Objectives

When planning Stand Up Awareness Week in your school, Youthreach centre or youth service, it is helpful to keep the campaign's key objectives in mind:

- **Increasing friendship and support of LGBTQ+ students by other students.**
- **Increasing awareness of LGBTQ+ students among other students, teachers, principals and others in the school-wide community.**
- **Increasing respect for diversity and LGBTQ+ identities.**
- **Increasing the likelihood that LGBTQ+ students will report bullying.**

When planning activities for Stand Up Awareness Week, it's useful to consider how each initiative supports at least one of these key objectives. For example, encouraging students to create a solidarity mural or noticeboard can help foster friendships and promote allyship for LGBTQ+ young people among their peers.

A class discussion on the impact of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, for example, can reinforce your school's zero-tolerance approach and empower LGBTQ+ students to feel safe reporting concerns.

Make these objectives clear to staff and young people at the start of the week and keep them at the heart of activities throughout, ensuring a shared understanding of what Stand Up Awareness Week aims to achieve. Gathering anonymous feedback through surveys before and after the week can provide valuable insight into the impact of your work.

Check out our online education hub ➡ for sample surveys you can adapt and use in your setting and a host of other resources that you can use in your Stand Up Awareness Week activities.

Additional Stand Up Awareness Week Resources

In addition to this guide, we have a number of supplementary resources available online in both English and Irish to support Stand Up Awareness Week, including:

- **A Step-By-Step Guide to Hosting Stand Up Awareness Week**
- **Language and Terminology**
- **Allyship in Action**
- **Stand Up Awareness Week Activities and Actions**

You can find these resources and more at **www.belongto.org**

Anywhere throughout the guide that you notice this icon ➡, it means that we have additional resources available with more information about these topics on our website for you to use.

Why We Need to Create LGBTQ+ Inclusive Spaces

Why We Need to Stand Up

In recent decades, Ireland has made remarkable progress toward LGBTQ+ equality. This year marks 10 years since the marriage equality referendum in 2015 – a historic moment for Ireland when the country stood in allyship with LGBTQ+ people. That year, we told young people that it was safe to come out, safe to be themselves and that Ireland was a new, progressive country. Within education, substantial efforts have been made to create safe, inclusive and supportive environments for LGBTQ+ students in schools nationwide.

Sadly, 10 years on, there is a small but loud minority who are trying to undo progress, rights and equalities gained. There is still a lot of work to do.

The 2022 *School Climate Survey* by Columbia University, in collaboration with Belong To, found that 76% of LGBTQ+ youth in Ireland don't feel safe at school.³

This research also shows that, in the 2021/22 academic year, only 35% of LGBTQ+ students were taught SPHE in a way that is representative of LGBTQ+ identities. The absence of LGBTQ+ identities from the curriculum was also highlighted in a review of Relationship and Sexuality Education published in 2019.⁴ The review found that the lack of representation of LGBTQ+ identities in the curriculum was the most important topic highlighted by young people, and was mentioned frequently by parents and school staff.

In response, the SPHE curriculum redevelopment for junior and senior cycle integrates LGBTQ+ identities across a number of areas, including relationship and sexuality education (RSE) and teaching on students' understanding of themselves and others.

As part of *Cineáltas*, the action plan on bullying, the Department of Education and Youth mandated that all primary and post-primary schools would create a *Bí Cineálta* policy.⁵ These are due to be ratified and in place in schools by September 2025. As part of these policies, schools set out specific strategies for preventing bullying behaviour, including homophobic and transphobic bullying as appropriate. Belong To's Stand Up Awareness Week initiative is listed in the Department of Education and Youth's resource guide as a suggested strategy to support schools to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying.⁶

As detailed in the following sections, this progress is hugely important in ensuring the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ young people during their school years.

Despite significant progress in LGBTQ+ inclusion over recent decades, education has increasingly become a focal point for opposition over the past number of years, with coordinated efforts to restrict the visibility and representation of LGBTQ+ lives in Irish schools. These challenges have extended beyond the classroom, affecting communities where libraries have faced anti-LGBTQ+ disruptions and local Pride celebrations have encountered serious security concerns.

This resistance to LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools and communities is part of a broader international movement that seeks to undermine human rights. Its aim is to shift focus away from our shared mission of building an Ireland where every LGBTQ+ young person feels equal, safe and supported. So today, fostering welcoming spaces where LGBTQ+ students can freely express themselves has never been more crucial. Now is the time to be both proactive and visible in ensuring they feel valued and secure.

What Life is Like for LGBTQ+ Young People

Growing up can be a challenging time for all young people. Growing up LGBTQ+ can be even more difficult — particularly when a young person has not told others about their sexual orientation or gender identity. For LGBTQ+ young people, discovering and beginning to accept their identity can be a time of isolation, fear of rejection and confusion. By making your school, Youthreach centre or youth service LGBTQ+ inclusive, LGBTQ+ young people can take refuge from stress and anxiety in a welcoming and inclusive space.

Irish research shows that between 6 and 10% of young people identify as LGBTQ+,⁷ meaning that you are likely working with at least one LGBTQ+ young person in your classroom or youth group. They may or may not have come out to others about their LGBTQ+ identity.

Published in 2024, the *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* research shows that, among 14 - 25 year olds in Ireland today, the most common age to realise their LGBTQI+ identity is 12.¹ The most common age for this group to first tell someone about their LGBTQI+ identity, or 'come out', is 14. Among 14–25 year old LGBTQI+ people in Ireland, 14 was also the most common age at which a person experienced self-harm or suicidal thoughts. The most common age of attempting suicide for this cohort was 15.

The *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* research shows that, compared to the general youth population in Ireland, LGBTQI+ young people aged 14–18 experience three times the level of severe or extremely severe depression and anxiety, three times the rate of self-harm, twice the rate of suicidal thoughts, and five times the rate of suicide attempts.¹

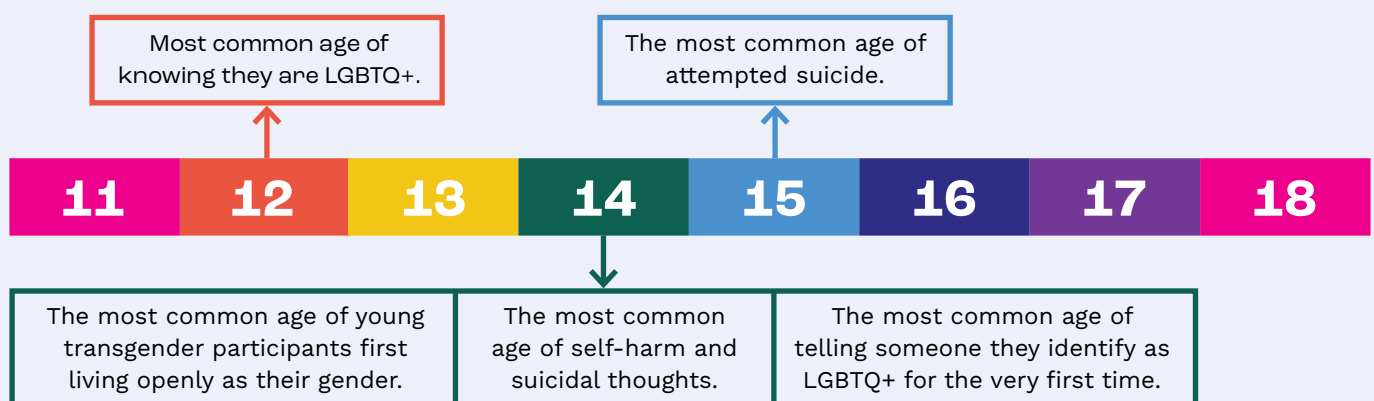
Over the course of LGBTQI+ people's lives, the research also found a correlation between those who had experienced bullying and poorer mental health outcomes. LGBTQI+ people who had been bullied had statistically significantly higher symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress; higher rates of self-harm, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts and eating disorders; and lower scores for happiness, self-esteem and resilience.¹

However, we can change this together. As an educator or youth worker, you have incredible influence on the environment in which LGBTQ+ young people grow up. Schools, Youthreach centres and youth services can provide a space of acceptance and safety, where LGBTQ+ young people can embrace themselves and express themselves freely. This is at the very core of Stand Up Awareness Week and your support and commitment to Stand Up Awareness Week is vital and incredibly impactful.

This is work not only about improving daily life while in education. This work can impact these young people for the rest of their lives.

LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health

A critical time of change and development of sense of self for young people at home, in school and in their social lives.



The Impact of LGBTQ+ Inclusion

LGBTQ+ Young People's School Experiences

In the last iteration of our *School Climate Survey*³, conducted in 2022, we spoke to over 1,200 LGBTQ+ second-level students living in Ireland. This research revealed that, in the 2021-2022 school year, a shocking 76% of LGBTQ+ students felt unsafe at school. 69% of LGBTQ+ students reported hearing other students making homophobic remarks, and a concerning 58% of LGBTQ+ post-primary students reported hearing a homophobic remark from a teacher or school staff member.

Sadly, bullying is a reality for many students during their school years. However, research highlights that LGBTQ+ young people are disproportionately affected, facing higher rates of bullying compared to their non-LGBTQ+ peers.

As post-primary educators and youth workers, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment is essential to ensuring all students feel safe and reach their potential, both academically and personally. Addressing the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ students with proactive measures can make a huge difference in the immediate future and in their long-term mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

Among second-level LGBTQ+ students in Ireland:



76%

feel unsafe at school.



69%

heard other students make homophobic remarks.



1 in 10

are unsure of whether they will complete the Leaving Certificate.



86%

have been deliberately excluded by peers.



3 in 10

missed at least one school day in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.



58%

heard a school staff member make a homophobic remark.⁴

Compared to the general Irish youth population, LGBTQ+ students are:

x4

times more likely to feel lonely at school.

x3

times more likely to feel disliked by other students.

x3

times more likely to feel like an outsider at school.

x2

times more likely to have difficulties making friends at school.⁴

Protective Factors and LGBTQ+ Inclusive Education

While LGBTQ+ young people encounter challenges, post-primary staff, Youthreach centres and youth services can play a vital role in tackling these challenges head on through fostering a supportive environment. Staff members and community leaders can take simple but meaningful actions to ensure that LGBTQ+ students feel safe, valued and included.

Supportive Staff Create Belonging

The 2022 *School Climate Survey* revealed that half of LGBTQ+ students could identify ten or more school staff members who are supportive of LGBTQ+ identities. 99% of LGBTQ+ students in Ireland could identify at least one school staff member supportive of LGBTQ+ students. Our findings show that LGBTQ+ students who enjoy a higher level of staff support for LGBTQ+ identities are:

- **More likely to feel accepted by the student body.**
- **More likely to feel like they belong in school.**
- **Less likely to miss school days because they feel unsafe.³**

Stand Up Awareness Week provides an important opportunity for all staff in schools, Youthreach centres and youth services to visibly show their support for LGBTQ+ young people.

Staff participation in Stand Up Awareness Week activities, such as attending events, displaying a small Pride flag in a classroom or adding a rainbow sticker to a laptop or tablet, can send a powerful message of solidarity. These small yet meaningful actions help foster an environment where LGBTQ+ students feel seen, valued and supported.

Inclusive Curriculum

The 2022 *School Climate Survey* showed that LGBTQ+ students who had learned about LGBTQ+ topics in school felt more accepted within their school community and were less likely to miss school due to concerns about their safety.³ However, the survey also revealed significant gaps in LGBTQ+ education, with half of LGBTQ+ students reporting that they had not been taught

any LGBTQ+ topics during the 2021–2022 school year. Only 35% of the students surveyed had received LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE lessons. This is another simple and effective area where small changes can effect major change.

Stand Up Awareness Week provides an ideal opportunity to engage colleagues in delivering lessons on LGBTQ+ topics. To support this, our online education hub offers guidance on integrating LGBTQ+ themes in an age- and stage-appropriate way into lessons across 14 Junior Cycle subjects, ranging from business studies to geography. Encouraging staff to explore these resources can help to ensure that students feel seen and included in meaningful but subtle ways.

Staff Interventions

Research shows that identity-based bullying, including bullying associated with someone's LGBTQ+ identity, is particularly harmful to their wellbeing.⁸ It is crucial that school staff and leaders intervene when homophobic or transphobic language or remarks are used.

Our School Climate Survey research found that 69% of LGBTQ+ students had heard homophobic remarks from other students.³ However, when school staff proactively intervened when overhearing homophobic remarks, LGBTQ+ students were:

- **More likely to feel accepted by the student body.**
- **More likely to feel like they belong in school.**
- **Less likely to miss school days because of school safety.**

Explore our online education hub ➡ for guidance on working with your colleagues to establish a clear process for addressing, documenting and reporting homophobic, biphobic or transphobic language in your school, Youthreach centre or youth service. As part of your preparations for Stand Up Awareness Week, consider encouraging staff to complete our free **e-learning training module, 'Educators and Youth Workers supporting LGBTQ+ young people'** ➡. Upon completion, staff could display their certificates on classroom doors, sending a visible message of their commitment to and support of all students.

Marriage Equality in Ireland

A Resource for Schools and Youth Services

Friday, 22 May 2015 marked the historic day when Ireland became the first country in the world to achieve marriage equality by public vote.

The impact of the vote was felt not just in Ireland but across the world, and provided momentum and inspiration for LGBTQ+ rights movements internationally. The successful vote represented the culmination of many decades of activism, and a particularly strong, coordinated campaign in the final months, weeks and days leading up to the vote.

Young people played a key role in the campaign, showing great courage and determination in speaking at public events, canvassing members of the public on the doorstep, being active on social media and many other ways. The voices of young LGBTQ+ people demanding to be treated equally under the law, and describing the importance of one day being able to marry the person they love, was a powerful decider for many people choosing to vote yes.

For young people in schools and attending youth services today, they have grown up in a country where equal marriage has been a reality for most of their lives. They may have vague memories of the campaign or none at all.

To mark 10 years since marriage equality was introduced, we have created a resource, **'Marriage Equality in Ireland'** ➡, designed to support young people in schools and youth services to learn more about this period in Irish history – how it unfolded, and what it meant for LGBTQ+ people then and now.



The resource, which is available on our website, contains three suggested activities which can be carried out with young people in any setting — in school, in a youth service or elsewhere. We suggest using the additional resources for these activities, also available on our website at www.belongto.org/marriageequality ➡.

The Marriage Equality campaign succeeded through the determination and concerted efforts of individuals and groups across the country. Since then, there have been many changes for the LGBTQ+ community and for Ireland as a whole. We hope that these activities will help to inform and inspire the young people you work with to envisage the kind of society they want to live in, and their limitless potential to make that vision a reality.



02

Preventing Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying

– Stand Up Awareness
Week 2025 Theme

**Evidence-based strategies to support the
implementation of your *Bí Cineálta* policy.**



Preventing Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying

Evidence-Based Strategies to Support the Implementation of Your *Bí Cineálta* Policy and Create an Environment Where Everyone Belongs

In 2024, the Department of Education and Youth published the *Bí Cineálta* procedures to support primary and post-primary schools to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The procedures act as a roadmap to support school communities to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour, recognising in particular how changes in technology and the diversity of our society are being reflected in schools.

The timing of these procedures could not be more important. We know that 76% of LGBTQ+ young people feel unsafe in school.³ One of the core principles of *Bí Cineálta* is preventing bullying from occurring, with the understanding that education and empathy generation are the foundations for knowledge, respect and inclusion.² When students feel that they belong within a school community, and that everyone else in the school community belongs there, a culture of kindness is formed. There are many practical ways to foster this sense of ‘belonging’ and Stand Up Awareness Week is a great opportunity to do so, especially as it relates to LGBTQ+ young people.

Over the past 16 years, schools, youth services and Youthreach centres have been celebrating LGBTQ+ youth in all their diversity during Stand Up Awareness Week and all year long. In 2025, we are inviting you to use Stand Up Awareness Week as an opportunity to foster understanding and friendship between LGBTQ+ students and their peers, preventing bullying behaviour — especially homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour — before it occurs.

Strategies for preventing homophobic and transphobic bullying can be aligned with the Department of Education and Youth’s Four Key Areas of Wellbeing Promotion.⁹ These key areas emphasise that the promotion of wellbeing for young people requires a whole-school approach, which also applies to measures for addressing bullying.

Four Key Areas of Wellbeing Promotion:

- 🔗 **Culture and Environment**
- 🔗 **Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)**
- 🔗 **Policy and Planning**
- 🔗 **Relationships and Partnerships**

Within each of these key areas there is a number of practical, evidence-based actions that you can implement in your school, centre or service to promote understanding and empathy, foster a sense of belonging and prevent bullying behaviour.

While these actions relate specifically to preventing homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, the underlying principles can be adapted and applied to promoting inclusion for the young people you work with, particularly those from minority backgrounds or who may be targeted for identity-based bullying.

Section 1: Culture and Environment

All members of school communities should feel a sense of connectedness and belonging. When a culture of inclusion and kindness is fostered and articulated, it helps convey the message that negative behaviours like bullying will not be tolerated. This can help create a so-called ‘telling environment’, where young people who experience or witness bullying behaviour are more likely to report it, as they have confidence that it will be dealt with effectively, and that they should not worry about reprisals for making the report. Here are some things to consider in terms of Culture and Environment.

A. Increasing the **visibility and representation** of some of the minority groups that make up the school community can foster a sense of belonging. When it comes to being visible in your support for your LGBTQ+ students, a little can go a long way! Studies show the importance of LGBTQ+ visibility as key to acceptance and comfort with being open about one's identity.¹ Small gestures such as posters and flags can contribute to an environment where LGBTQ+ young people feel that they belong. Representation on a larger scale, such as raising the Pride flag on a flagpole, or having a dedicated noticeboard for LGBTQ+ information, can send a powerful message to the entire community that this school is a welcoming place for everyone, including LGBTQ+ people, and that homophobic and transphobic bullying will not be tolerated.

B. **Trusted adults** play an important role in preventing bullying behaviour by increasing the likelihood of young people reporting bullying incidents. You and your colleagues can mark yourselves as trusted adults by being visible about your support for LGBTQ+ people through the use of stickers on your computer device, or other suggestions as above. You could also complete Belong To's free **eLearning course 'Educators and youth workers supporting LGBTQ+ young people'** ➔. Upon completion of the course, you will receive a certificate of completion, which you could display on your classroom door or wall, as another indication that you are a safe adult with whom a young person could discuss concerns around homophobic or transphobic bullying.

C. **Safe spaces** are vital in creating a positive environment that prevents bullying behaviour. Toilets and changing rooms can feel unsafe for all young people in school, not just LGBTQ+ young people. There is generally less potential for staff supervision in these areas, and students may congregate together in groups here, which can be intimidating for others. Where possible, accessible, single-occupancy options should be provided for students who need them.

Section 2: Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Representation of all types of identities, including LGBTQ+ identities, in the curriculum is a highly effective way of promoting tolerance for difference and the value of diversity in our society. If LGBTQ+ topics are never discussed in the classroom, then the only source of information or beliefs about LGBTQ+ people for students is what they hear in the school yard or read about online. This may not always be accurate or truthful. By including these identities in your teaching, it sends the message that LGBTQ+ people, just like people with disabilities and those from different ethnic backgrounds, are members of our communities and part of our society.

A. **Curriculum resources** can support you in introducing LGBTQ+ topics to your teaching and demonstrating that LGBTQ+ people belong in our schools and in our society. Stand Up Awareness Week is a great opportunity to bring a focus on LGBTQ+ perspectives in the curriculum. Often during Stand Up Awareness Week, teachers might prepare a lesson featuring LGBTQ+ musicians, LGBTQ+ history or LGBTQ+ authors in relevant subjects. However, as with the visibility elements, smaller-scale and more frequent representation can be just as effective in creating a sense of belonging for LGBTQ+ students. These also help all students learn about diversity and inclusion.

Check out our resource hub for curriculum resources for both junior and senior cycle ➔.

These provide suggested topics and themes in which you might include representation of LGBTQ+ identities.

B. Full implementation of the **SPHE** curriculum gives students a strong awareness and understanding of the different groups that make up our society. It promotes empathy and appreciation of people who are different to ourselves, and this is foundational in preventing bullying behaviour from occurring.⁴

Section 3: Policy and Planning

Inclusive policies are foundational in creating a positive school climate and culture where all young people feel welcomed, supported and encouraged. A significant policy development impacting schools in 2025 is the introduction of the *Bí Cineálta* policy, and there are many actions that can be taken in conjunction with this to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

A. A student-friendly version of your school's *Bí Cineálta* policy must be developed and the Department of Education and Youth has provided a template as the basis for this, which can be amended as deemed appropriate. Schools can consider including information on homophobic and transphobic bullying, as appropriate, along with other types of bullying behaviour, as well as clear information on how to report a concern or bullying incident. This helps contribute to the 'telling environment', where students are given easy access to information on how to make a report.

B. Consider **other policies and procedures** that support the implementation of *Bí Cineálta*. These might include your school's Code of Conduct, and particularly how it relates to the use of homophobic or transphobic language. The use of 'casual' homophobic or transphobic language such as "that's so gay" and similar phrases can have a destructive effect on school environments and seriously damage feelings of belonging and safety for LGBTQ+ students. Agreeing a consistent approach that will be implemented by all staff can effectively tackle this issue.

Check out our online hub for resources on tackling homophobic or transphobic language using our suggested 'Educate, Recognise, Intervene, Explain, Record' (ERIER) approach ➔.

C. Staff training can help you and your colleagues support your LGBTQ+ young people and promote inclusive schools and services. Often, staff feel unequipped to talk about LGBTQ+ topics because they feel they do not have the knowledge or skills to do so. *Belong To's* 'Educators and youth workers supporting LGBTQ+ young people' is a free eLearning module that covers the basics of LGBTQ+ terminology, some of the challenges that LGBTQ+ young people face in school and how to support a young person coming out.

To register for a free account and take the e-learning course, visit <https://training.belongto.org/learn> ➔.

Section 4: Relationships and Partnerships

Building and nurturing positive relationships is at the heart of measures to improve feelings of understanding and empathy, foster a sense of belonging and prevent bullying behaviour. Important relationships include peer-to-peer relationships, staff-student relationships and relationships between the school, families and outside support services.

A. LGBTQ+ and Allies Clubs are a very effective way of fostering positive peer support relationships, as well as building positive relationships between students and supportive staff.¹⁰ There is no 'one size fits all' approach to setting up and running an LGBTQ+ and Allies Club, but there is strong evidence that young people having a safe space to be themselves in school, even if for only one lunchtime a week, can be a significant protective factor in terms of their mental health and wellbeing, and feeling that they belong in school. As well as offering opportunities to build relationships with other LGBTQ+ students, it also allows connections with allies to form, which enhances feelings of safety and belonging and can reduce homophobic and transphobic bullying.

For more information on the impact of LGBTQ+ and Allies Clubs, read Tara's experience of her school's club on page 22 of this guide.

B. Awareness initiatives are suggested as a strategy for increasing feelings of belonging and preventing bullying behaviour. There are many themed weeks and initiatives for different groups within school communities and Stand Up Awareness Week is a great opportunity to increase awareness and visibility of LGBTQ+ identities. The greater the participation of the entire school community, the more impactful the awareness initiative will be, so think about ways to include all staff, students and families in events where possible.

C. Consider your **local youth services** and other support services in your community. The young people in your setting may or may not be aware of the services that are available, or how they would make contact with them. You could invite a youth worker or other person from the service to come to the school and give a talk to students during Stand Up Awareness Week and continue to develop the relationship from there.

Bullying, when not addressed effectively, can have lifelong impacts on those who experience it, and bullying associated with a minority characteristic can be particularly harmful⁸. The introduction of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures offers educators an important and useful framework to align prevention strategies with wellbeing, and to take a whole-school approach to preventing bullying behaviour.

At the heart of these strategies is the idea that fostering understanding, empathy and solidarity among all young people, whether they are similar or very different to each other, is of fundamental importance. By implementing these simple, evidence-based actions, we have the potential to create diverse, inclusive communities inside and outside of school, where everyone feels that they belong.²

“

It is not just the people in the LGBTQ+ community that help us, it is also our allies who help us not be alone in everything we do. We see it every year at Pride — allies showing up and showing us how supported we are, which makes me feel so proud and safe.”

— **Lea** (they/them), member of Belong To's Youth Advisory Panel



New this Year: Senior Cycle Curriculum Resources

Brand New Resources Now Available, in Time for Your Stand Up Awareness Week 2025

These senior cycle curriculum resources will help in the planning and delivery of lessons which include LGBTQ+ families and identities.

The 2022 *School Climate Survey* found that half of LGBTQ+ students reported that LGBTQ+ related topics were not covered at all in the previous school year.³ When LGBTQ+ identities are never discussed in the classroom, the only sources of information about LGBTQ+ people may be what is shared online or discussed in the school yard, and this may not always be accurate or positive. By bringing representation into your subject teaching, you can send the message that LGBTQ+ people belong in our communities and society as a whole, and that they belong here as much as anyone else.

Including LGBTQ+ representation in subject teaching can be as simple as using a wider range of identities when using examples or case studies. So, if using a case study of a business owned by a married couple in business studies, rather than calling the couple 'John and Mary', you could name them 'Eimear and Mary' instead.

This same approach applies to all kinds of groups and identities within our school communities — young people with disabilities, from different ethnic backgrounds and all other groups should also be able to see themselves represented in the classroom.

Our junior cycle curriculum resources cover 14 subjects and have been supporting educators with integrating LGBTQ+ identities into their subject teaching for a number of years. Some examples from the resources are below:

Geography

Discuss the factors causing population segregation in urban areas. For example, why might certain cities/towns have LGBTQ+ friendly neighbourhoods or streets? Discuss how the location of services, support and social activities in rural and urban areas affects LGBTQ+ people.

Mathematics

Devise and swap their own mathematical problems inclusive of LGBTQ+ voices and identities. Depending on your class, you might want to prompt them with an example, such as: An adult cinema ticket is €9.50; a child ticket is €9.00. A family of two mothers and three children go the cinema, how much do they spend on tickets?

Music

Explore how different genres of music have been informed by culture and tradition, particularly in relation to gender and sexual orientation.



JUNIOR CYCLE GEOGRAPHY



In 2025, we are publishing companion resources which will take the same approach but at senior cycle level. The subjects covered include:

- **Business Studies**
- **English**
- **Geography**
- **History**
- **Mathematics**
- **Modern Foreign Languages**
- **Politics and Society**
- **Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)**

The resources are available to download on our website ➡.



SPS

03

Stand Up Awareness Week 2025 Awards



Stand Up Awareness Week Awards Process

Launched in 2024, the Stand Up Awareness Week Awards were created to celebrate the diversity of inspiring and impactful actions that are carried out in schools, Youthreach centres and youth services all over the country. These awards recognise the lengths that staff in schools, centres and services go to in order to create supportive and inclusive environments for young people during Stand Up Awareness Week.

How to Participate

Nominations for the 2025 awards can be submitted through the official Stand Up Awareness Week page on the Belong To website. Detailed instructions and nomination forms will be available online, so keep an eye on our website and social media for further details.

Awards Ceremony

Award winners will be announced at an online ceremony in December 2025. Winners will receive a Stand Up Awareness Week trophy to celebrate their achievements. Let's celebrate the schools, Youthreach centres and youth services that are making a difference!

Award Categories

The Stand Up Awareness Week Awards celebrate the ways in which students and staff come together for LGBTQ+ inclusion. The awards categories aim to shine a light on LGBTQ+ visibility, advocacy and education during Stand Up Awareness Week.

Stand Up Awareness Week Impact Award

Recognising impactful and well-organised Stand Up Awareness Week programmes of activities that meet the objectives of Stand Up Awareness Week.

Stand Up Awareness Week Theme Award

Recognising creative interpretation of the theme for Stand Up Awareness Week 2025.

Stand Up Awareness Week Visibility Award

Recognising efforts to increase the visibility and representation of LGBTQ+ identities in the school community during Stand Up Awareness Week.

Stand Up Awareness Week Creative Expression Award

Recognising the impactful use of art, music, writing or other creative outlets for Stand Up Awareness Week.

Stand Up Awareness Week Photography Award

Recognising the most impactful photographs captured of Stand Up Awareness Week activities.

Stand Up Awareness Week Youth Participation Award

Recognising high levels of youth involvement in the planning and running of Stand Up Awareness Week.

Last year, there were many incredible submissions to choose from. Another massive thanks and congratulations to all who entered. The quality and standard of award submissions was incredibly high across the board and showcased the amazing work happening across the country. We did have to narrow them down to a winner of each category, which was not an easy job — some categories had two winners!



Shining a Spotlight on the 2024 Award Winners

The 2024 Stand Up Awareness Week Awards celebrated outstanding efforts in creating supportive and inclusive LGBTQ+ environments. Right across the country, schools, Youthreach centres and youth services demonstrated exceptional creativity and commitment to make LGBTQ+ inclusion a reality for young people, tied in to the 2024 theme of 'Standing Up in Our Communities'. These winning entries reflect the heart of Stand Up Awareness Week, showcasing outstanding contributions to LGBTQ+ visibility, advocacy and education. Check out the 2024 winners below!

Winners of the Stand Up Awareness Week 2024 Awards

- ★ The Stand Up Awareness Week Impact Award:
Limerick Educate Together Secondary School
- ★ The Stand Up Awareness Week Theme Award:
Joint winners, Enniscorthy Community College and Mercy College Roscommon
- ★ The Stand Up Awareness Week Visibility Award:
Joint winners, St Mary's Secondary School Glasnevin and Sutton Park School
- ★ The Stand Up Awareness Week Creative Expression Award:
Bailieborough Community School
- ★ The Stand Up Awareness Week Photography Award:
Sutton Park School
- ★ The Stand Up Awareness Week Youth Participation Award:
Limerick Educate Together Secondary School



Students and staff from St. Mary's Secondary School, Glasnevin, joint winner of the Stand-Up Awareness Week Visibility Award 2024, at the annual Belong To Dublin Pride breakfast in 2025.

04

Stand Up Awareness Week Activities



Stand Up Awareness Week Activities

Each year, schools, youth services and Youthreach centres take part in a huge range of activities for Stand Up Awareness Week. This year's theme for Stand Up Awareness week is closely aligned with *Bí Cineálta*, promoting a proactive and whole-school approach to inclusion as a means to prevent bullying behaviour.² It is important to understand how each of the activities promotes an understanding of LGBTQ+ identities, increases awareness of anti-bullying procedures and involves the broader school community. When running activities over the course of Stand Up Awareness Week, reflect on how each of these activities promotes kindness, respect, empathy and feelings of belonging amongst the students within your setting.

Sample Timetable of Events

Monday, 3 November

— The Launch

Kick off by announcing Stand Up Awareness Week to your whole school and outlining what it is all about. This can take place during a morning announcement or a whole-school assembly. Share the purpose of Stand Up Awareness Week, highlighting the importance of the 2025 theme being closely aligned with *Bí Cineálta*. Bring *Bí Cineálta* to life! You could promote the importance of inclusion and highlight the impact of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. Following this, if you have a flagpole, you could arrange a raising of the progress pride flag as an opening ceremony.

Tuesday, 4 November

— Conversations and Creativity

It's time to get visible! How can you create an environment that is clearly LGBTQ+ inclusive? Get creative and decorate prominent noticeboards to create a welcoming and diverse school environment. Introduce a poster challenge with messages of kindness that can be displayed on a noticeboard throughout the week. These activities are a great way to get creative and provide opportunities to explore conversations around empathy, visibility and inclusion.

Wednesday, 5 November

— Learning from Lived Experience

Invite an external speaker to your school, youth service or Youthreach centre to talk about LGBTQ+ inclusion and the impact of homophobic and transphobic bullying. Perhaps you could follow the talk with a Q&A or a classroom discussion to provide space for the students within your setting to reflect on topics such as empathy and inclusion. When choosing a speaker to invite to your school or centre, it is always good to reflect on guidance from the Department of Education and Youth¹¹ and the NCCA¹² on good practice for the use of external facilitators.

Thursday, 6 November

— Making and Baking

Get baking and host a rainbow bake sale or a Spill the Tea event (see page 22)! *Belong To* is a charity offering life-saving support services to LGBTQ+ youth across Ireland. Consider donating the funds raised to this great cause.

Friday, 7 November

— Rainbow Jumper Day and Closing Celebration

Wrap up the week and create a rainbow flag with rainbow jumper day! Encourage everyone to wear a jumper making up the colours of the rainbow flag: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple. Remember, don't forget to take some photos and submit them as part of your Stand Up Awareness Week 2025 Awards submission. Close out the week with a student-led reflection or by sharing messages from the poster challenge displayed on the noticeboard. This is a great way to promote inclusion and to have students reflect on what the whole week represents including the impact of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.

Stand Up Awareness Week Activities

Looking for inspiration for your Stand Up Awareness Week? Check out some of the wonderful activities and actions undertaken by our schools, youth services and Youthreach centres across Ireland last year:

Launch your LGBTQ+ and Allies Club

Launching an LGBTQ+ and Allies Club during Stand Up Awareness Week is a great way to show solidarity with your LGBTQ+ students and their allies. They provide safe, visible and supportive spaces for LGBTQ+ young people and their allies, fostering connection and building a sense of community and belonging within your educational setting.¹⁰ Hosting a school assembly and allowing staff and students to talk about the club is a great way to spread the word. You may also want to include posters on your Pride noticeboard to highlight the times and days that the club runs. These are great ways to allow students that may feel nervous or apprehensive about asking for this information themselves. Already have an LGBTQ+ and Allies Club set up? Stand Up Awareness Week is the perfect time to share all of your wonderful work so far with staff and young people.

Host an LGBTQ+ Film Viewing

Once again, Belong To is partnering with the Irish Film Institute (IFI), Dublin to offer a limited number of free, online screenings of LGBTQ+ films for participating schools. Check our page www.belongto.org/standup ➡ in November to access details of the films available for 2025 and schedule a viewing into your Stand Up Awareness Week plans.

Connect to the Curriculum

During Stand Up Awareness Week, and throughout the year, integrating LGBTQ+ identities, experiences and perspectives into the curriculum is a great way to sustain LGBTQ+ inclusion within the classroom. Including LGBTQ+ identities within the curriculum can provide opportunities for students to reflect on LGBTQ+ inclusion, creating a welcoming classroom environment. Young people's work on LGBTQ+ themes can be displayed in your library, hall or entrance. Our junior cycle curriculum resources provide helpful suggestions for ways to make a range of subjects, such as science, business, maths, history and geography LGBTQ+ inclusive. For the first time this year, we also have senior cycle curriculum resources that you can use to bring LGBTQ+ identities into the classroom. Find out more about the senior cycle resources on [page 14 and 15](#) ➡.

Rainbow Walkway

Rainbow walkways in schools are a visual representation of LGBTQ+ inclusivity and have been painted in many towns and cities in Ireland to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community. These walkways are a sign that LGBTQ+ people are respected and celebrated in that community. Is there somewhere on your grounds or in your building where you could create your own rainbow walkway? Create the walkway with paint or chalk at your entrance gate, or decorate a corridor, hall or front door with rainbow colours to show that your school, Youthreach centre or youth service is LGBTQ+ inclusive.



Hold Your Own Spill the Tea Event



Pop the kettle on and support LGBTQ+ young people across Ireland today. Every year for Stand Up Awareness Week, schools, Youthreach centres and youth services around the country hold bake sales, coffee mornings and bake-offs to raise funds to support our life-saving work with LGBTQ+ young people. Holding your Spill the Tea event is a wonderful chance to connect with everyone in your school community, including parents and guardians, siblings, members of your Board of Management and more. You can use the event to share the importance of kindness, respect and allyship — and most importantly, have fun. Visit our **online hub** ➔ to get your Spill the Tea fundraising pack with everything you'll need to make your event fabulous.

Raise Funds

Through our frontline supports, youth groups, training and advocacy, Belong To works to create an Ireland where all LGBTQ+ young people are equal, safe and thriving. There are lots of ways to support our services during Stand Up Awareness Week, such as asking students to contribute €2 for Rainbow Jumper Day, holding a rainbow raffle or running an LGBTQ+ themed bake sale. For a fundraising pack, contact Chris (he/him) from our Fundraising Team: fundraising@belongto.org / 01 670 6223.

Rainbow Jumper Day

Create a rainbow flag! Encourage everyone to wear a jumper making up the colours of the rainbow flag: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple for Belong To's Rainbow Jumper Day. Don't forget to take some photos and share them with us and use these photos when submitting your awards nomination!



Read the Rainbow

Stand Up Awareness Week is a great time to launch a new or updated LGBTQ+ library section in your school, Youthreach centre or youth service. Part of your week could include a 'Read the Rainbow' activity, with young people invited to suggest LGBTQ+ novels that they have enjoyed or would like to read. The 'Rainbow Reads' list, put together by Children's Books Ireland and An Post, is another great place for inspiration. The list categorises a wide range of LGBTQ+ books by age group and is available at our **online education hub** ➔.

Pride Noticeboard

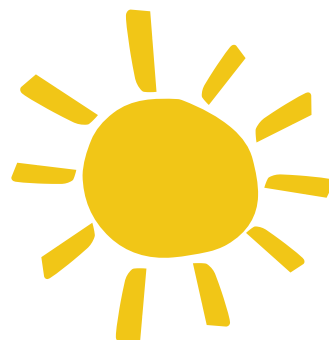
Choose a dedicated noticeboard, whiteboard or wall to display messages of LGBTQ+ inclusivity year-round. This can include details of your local LGBTQ+ youth group, contact details for LGBTQ+ support services such as Belong To and other local LGBTQ+ youth groups, and the names of staff members leading on wellbeing, guidance and LGBTQ+ inclusivity. During Stand Up Awareness Week, invite allies to sign their name on the Pride noticeboard or to leave messages of support and solidarity for the LGBTQ+ community.

New this Year: Marriage Equality in Ireland Resource

The 'Marriage Equality in Ireland' resource for schools was launched in 2025 to celebrate 10 years since Ireland's historic marriage equality referendum result. This resource has three activities including creating campaigns, facilitating discussions and storytelling which can be used to explore how kindness, visibility and civic action helped to bring about social change in Ireland. Check out the resource at our **online resource hub** ➔.

Spotlight on Inclusive Education — Tara's Story

A Reflection Resource for Educators



Tara McCarthy (she/her) is a member of Belong To's Youth Advisory Panel. Here, Tara writes about her experience of being LGBTQ+ in school, and how much of an impact her school's Rainbow Club had on her.

Fighting on Two Fronts

"If exams are a battle, then school is a war. Every one of us hardened soldiers, traversing through the student life, completing the terms one by one and counting down the nights until the inevitable—the dreaded Leaving Cert. Well, that's what my routine consisted of, until I stepped on a landmine. KABOOM! I realised that I was queer. Though my mind was left rattled, shook and teetering from the shock of such a sudden dawning, outside everything was... still. Life continued on, the clocks kept turning, and unfinished essays continued waiting for me on my desk.

Speaking most humbly, that was my personal LGBTQ+ 'awakening'. My 'moment of enlightenment'. "Ah, this is why I feel this way". Hm. "Everything makes sense now—" NOT! But there simply wasn't time for such thoughts. School continues at 9am the oncoming morning, with teachers gawking at you as if you hadn't just had the largest epiphany of your life the night before. Yet this is the reality for queer students across the country, past, present and future; the unearthing of one's sexuality and/or gender amidst the warfare that is education.

So, an adjustment of life as you know it ensues. It's quickly detected that there are pros and cons to being an LGBTQ+ student in today's world. Suddenly questions arise. "Was it obvious the whole time? Who do I tell? Who do I stay clear of?"

And now you sit up straight in SPHE classes, trying to act nonchalant, but sweating profusely and listening intently as the educational content on sexualities now implies to you. “That’s me they’re talking about,” you deduce, praying people don’t notice the sweat forming on your hands. You begin to see different sides of your friends too. They drop a borderline offensive joke (as all ‘edgy’ teens do) about “those gays”, but this time you laugh nervously. “Was it meant for me?” Perhaps they’re not so funny now that you’re on the receiving end. Slowly, the tides begin to turn thanks to the newfound comprehension of who you are. The waves washing baggage ashore. Baggage that weighs you down, little by little.

But there is a light! There are perks to being queer. One being the community, and the sense of “we’re all in this together!”. I fully believe that once you ‘find your tribe’, you’re all set; able to surround yourself with those you truly like. That’s why when my school adopted an inclusion programme centered around LGBTQ+ topics, student life became a whole lot easier.

My school actively explored a variety of ways to create, improve and maintain a safer atmosphere, including the establishment of a ‘rainbow’ club – a weekly group catering just to ‘rainbow’ pupils, their friends, and allies. This establishment rendered the once stormy seas of school life calm for me. It helped ease the weight of the luggage I carried onboard, knowing that once I walk through that door, I am accepted. There is no worry in-between those four walls, and certainly no fear.

A rainbow club like this has no downside. Students can meet with others, those who are also coming to terms with who they are. Connections are formed and soon blossom into full-blown friendships. A ‘demilitarised zone’ is provided where no-one needs to hide, and everyone can be themselves. The club also denotes teachers who are supportive and kind, a key point to note for any student who is struggling and may need an adult to talk to in the future. The bottom line is, a rainbow club is fun. Games are played, debates are held, and even baked goods can be shared! A little nook of love hidden amongst the sobriety of school.

Mixing worry over study and anxiety over sexuality is a dangerous combination. But there are remedies and solutions just lying in wait. Find an outlet. Be it chatting to someone, visiting somewhere, or practicing something. Just remember; the ongoing drum of noise, ruckus, and negativity will subside, and soon we shall all emerge from the trenches, H1’s in hand.”

This article originally appeared in the June 2025 edition of GCN - Ireland’s queer media.



References

1. Higgins, A.; Downes, C.; O'Sullivan, K.; de Vries, J.; Molloy, R.; Monahan, M.; Keogh, B.; Doyle, L.; Begley, T.; & Corcoran, P. (2024) *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland*. Dublin: Belong To. Available [here](#).
2. Department of Education and Youth (2024) *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. Dublin: Department of Education. Available [here](#).
3. Pizmony-Levy, O. (2022) *The 2022 Irish National School Climate Survey Report*. Research Report. Global Observatory of LGBTQ+ Education and Advocacy. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University. Available [here](#).
4. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2019) *Report on the Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in primary and post-primary schools*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Available [here](#).
5. Department of Education (2023) *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying Implementation Plan 2023-2027*. Dublin: Department of Education. Available [here](#).
6. Department of Education (2024) *Bí Cineálta Resources for Primary Schools, Post-Primary Schools and Parents*. Available [here](#).
7. Dooley, B.; O'Connor, C.; Fitzgerald, A.; & O'Reilly, A. (2020) *My World Survey 2: National Study of Youth Mental Health in Ireland*. Dublin: Jigsaw and UCD School of Psychology. Available [here](#).
8. Department of Education (2016) *Being LGBT in School*. Dublin: Department of Education and GLEN. Available [here](#).
9. Department of Education and Skills (2019) Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice. Available [here](#).
10. Marx, R. A. and Kettrey, H. H. (2016) 'Gay-straight alliances are associated with lower levels of schoolbased victimization of LGBTQ+ youth: A systematic review and meta-analysis', *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 45 (7). Available [here](#).
11. Department of Education, Circular No. 0043/2018. Available [here](#).
12. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Considering the use and role of guest speakers in SPHE/RSE. Available [here](#).



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 and youth groups know about Belong To and what supports are available for them including LGBTQ+ youth groups, crisis counselling with Pieta and digital support services.

For educators, we offer online training, support and initiatives such as the LGBTQ+ Quality Mark. For youth workers, we support a National Network of LGBTQ+ youth groups and run the Rainbow Award – an action-focused accreditation programme that supports a whole-organisation approach to safe and supportive services for LGBTQ+ youth.

Learn more at www.belongto.org