

You belong here

**Your Guide to Stand Up
Awareness Week 2026**



Belong To LGBTQ+
Youth Ireland





Stand Up Awareness Week is a hugely important event for LGBTQI+ young people in Ireland. In a world that is becoming ever more polarised, as educators, youth workers and teachers we play a significant role in setting the right example for young people. Stand Up Awareness Week is not just a once off, token of support for the LGBTQI+ youth in Ireland. If done right, it is a consistent and continued form of active inclusion and allyship. It opens the conversation with young people around gender and orientation, and build bridges between those within the community and those outside. Therefore, I believe it is a crucial aspect of our work as educators, youth workers and teachers, to help foster a community of inclusion, acceptance and respect within our schools and centres so that everyone may feel welcomed and respected!”

— Timo Sanctorum, Youthreach Tutor, Kilrush Youthreach

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:



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Fáilte

Stand Up Awareness Week 2026 will be my first as CEO of Belong To – LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland, and it is such an enormous honour. For the past number of years, I have watched with admiration and pride as schools, Youthreach centres and youth services stand up in communities right across the country.

I am proud of the country we have become – a place where we can collectively come together in youth spaces to loudly say no to LGBTQ+ bullying, and yes to inclusion. Ireland hasn't always been this way, and there has been a long road to this point.

So, as we approach Stand Up Awareness Week 2026, I want to thank every one of you across Ireland who champions this work on behalf of the young people you support. You continue to reshape a modern, welcoming Ireland for all young people.



We all want to feel part of something bigger than ourselves. We all need to feel that community – to know that we matter, that we are seen and that we have a place where we belong. Your dedication means that this is a reality for LGBTQ+ young people in your community. The impact of your work should not be underestimated.

At such a pivotal time in young people's development, the sense of belonging you foster has lifelong impacts on wellbeing and sense of self.

It is that contribution we must focus on and protect. As we continue to see a loud minority attempt to stoke fear, spread misinformation and roll back progress, we can find strength in the tangible impact you are having. You are making young people the length and breadth of the country feel welcome and safe in their education and youth spaces.

This year's theme has been chosen for its simplicity and its power as a sentiment: **You Belong Here.**

That is what Stand Up Awareness Week is truly about. It is making sure that all young people, no matter who they are, know that they are supported, included, and valued.

While Stand Up Awareness Week brings us together every November, the culture of inclusion you build lasts all year. Thank you for ensuring that every day, in every classroom and youth group, LGBTQ+ young people know they belong.

In Pride,



Kieran O' Donovan (he/him)
CEO, Belong To - LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland

01

Stand Up Awareness Week 2026



What is Stand Up Awareness Week?

Stand Up Awareness Week is Ireland's flagship national LGBTQ+ bullying prevention initiative for post-primary schools, Youthreach centres, and youth services across the country.

Held every November, 2026 marks our 17th campaign. Over nearly two decades, it has grown from a simple awareness week into a core moment in the education and youth work calendars - helping communities right across the country build spaces that promote inclusion and wellbeing for all young people.

At its heart, Stand Up Awareness Week gives schools, Youthreach centres, and youth services a moment to move away from just reacting to bullying, and move toward something much more powerful. By taking part, you are actively fostering a culture of respect, solidarity and belonging across your whole community. It is a time to celebrate LGBTQ+ youth in all their diversity, and to show them that they are seen, supported and valued - not just during this week, but every single day of the year.

This Stand Up Awareness Week guide gives you a practical, ready-to-go toolkit to prevent and tackle bullying, while looking after the wellbeing of your whole community. Throughout the week, students, learners, staff and your wider school or service communities will come together to learn, share and take part in age appropriate activities that celebrate inclusion. By taking part, you aren't just running an event - you are helping to create a welcoming environment where every single young person feels respected and safe to be exactly who they are.

It is important to remember that LGBTQ+ students are not a homogeneous group. LGBTQ+ students encompass a diversity of backgrounds and identities, including disability, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, which can shape their experiences.

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+ young people by other young people.
- Increasing awareness of LGBTQ+ young people among other students, learners, teachers, principals, youth workers and others in your school, Youthreach centre or service community.
- Increasing respect for diversity and LGBTQ+ identities.
- Increasing the likelihood that LGBTQ+ young people will report bullying.

When developing activities for the week, consider how each initiative supports one or more of these objectives. For example:

- Collaborative projects such as a solidarity mural or inclusion noticeboard can help build a visible symbol of belonging increasing respect for diversity and LGBTQ+ identities.
- Classroom or group discussions on the impact of bullying can reinforce your wellbeing policies and encourage respectful behaviour.

It is important to clearly communicate the purpose and objectives of the week to staff, students and learners at the outset, and to keep them central to all activities. This shared understanding helps ensure a consistent and meaningful approach across the school or service.

You may also find it useful to gather anonymous feedback from young people before and after the week. This can provide valuable insights into the impact of activities and inform future planning

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

To accompany 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
- Preventing Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying Through the Implementation of your Bí Cineálta Policy
- Senior cycle LGBTQ+ inclusive lesson plans
- 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

Over recent decades, Ireland has made significant and proud strides toward equality for LGBTQ+ people. A decade ago, during the 2015 marriage equality referendum, Irish society demonstrated incredible allyship and affirmed a beautiful vision of a more open, inclusive country. The promise we made to LGBTQ+ young people was simple: it is safe to come out, it is safe to be yourself, and you belong here.

Since then, schools, Youthreach centres, and youth services across the country have worked tirelessly to turn that promise into reality. Our education and youth work system are one of the most important resources we have in keeping that sense of belonging alive.

But today, we can no longer take that progress for granted. We are seeing a growing presence - both globally and at home - of voices seeking to restrict the visibility and inclusion of LGBTQ+ people, particularly within education and youth spaces. There is a coordinated effort to test that promise and roll back the rights, progress and equalities that have been gained.

Evidence continues to highlight these challenges. The 2022 *School Climate Survey*¹¹ found that 76% of LGBTQ+ youth in Ireland still do not feel safe at school. This stark reminder shows us that efforts to limit representation in our curricula and youth spaces require our continued vigilance.

Thankfully, across both the education and youth sectors, there is guidance and support available. National frameworks have evolved to assist you with this work within your setting:

- **Bí Cineálta & Anti-Bullying Policies:** While schools and Youthreach centres are now embedding their *Bí Cineálta*² policies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying and challenge discrimination.
- **Inclusive Learning & Spaces:** Whether it is in the redeveloped SPHE curriculum in classrooms, or the non-formal education programmes, group work, and drop-in spaces run by youth workers, LGBTQ+ identities are being woven into the places young people learn and socialise so that all young people see themselves reflected.

Stand Up Awareness Week is designed to align with these requirements, providing a practical, supportive toolkit that supports you in delivering this work on the ground. It is about upholding the core values of education and youth work: respect, dignity, equality, and the wellbeing of every young person. These steps matter greatly because they directly contribute to better mental health and life outcomes for the young people in your care.

This moment offers teachers, school leaders, youth workers, and Youthreach staff a valuable opportunity to make a real difference. The progress of the past decade must be protected and built upon in our everyday interactions. Inclusive practice in teaching, in policy and in daily routines remains essential. Creating environments where LGBTQ+ young people feel visible, valued and safe is as important now as it has ever been.

At a time when inclusion is being questioned in some quarters, your role in modelling kindness, respect, and belonging is critical. By continuing to be proactive, informed, and proudly visible in your commitment, you can ensure that all young people - including those who are LGBTQ+ - experience your environment as a safe space where they can truly thrive.

What Life is Like for LGBTQ+ Young People

Growing up is a time of incredible discovery, change, and development for every teenager. For those who are LGBTQ+, however, this stage can bring an extra layer of navigation. Many young people face periods of isolation, uncertainty, and a quiet fear of rejection as they figure out who they are and how the world will receive them - especially before they have shared their identity with anyone else.

National research tells us that between 6% and 10% of young people in Ireland identify as LGBTQ+. This means it is highly likely that every classroom, Youthreach group, and youth club in the country includes LGBTQ+ youth, whether they are open about it yet or not.

The latest Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland³ study (2024) gives us a very clear window into this journey:

- **Age 12** is the most common age young people realise their identity.
- **Age 14** is the most common age they find the courage to tell someone else.

This two-year window represents a critical turning point and a heightened vulnerability. Age 14 is the most common point where LGBTQ+ young people report experiencing self-harm or suicidal thoughts, with age 15 being the most common age for to first attempt suicide.



When compared to their peers, LGBTQ+ young people experience significantly poorer mental health outcomes. Between the ages of 14 and 18, rates of severe anxiety and depression are three times higher. They are also three times more likely to self-harm and twice as likely to experience suicidal thoughts and five times more likely to attempt suicide. These patterns highlight the importance of timely and appropriate support during the early years of second-level education.

It is vital to understand that these outcomes are not an inevitable part of being LGBTQ+. Instead, they are the direct result of the heavy emotional toll of navigating bullying, exclusion and microaggressions. Research shows a direct line between experiences of bullying and high levels of depression, anxiety, and eating disorders.

This is where you come in. The data shows the challenge, but it also reveals a massive opportunity for early intervention. As young people navigate identity during their early years in post-primary education and youth services, a supportive culture can make a meaningful difference to their wellbeing.

Schools, Youthreach centres, and youth services are uniquely placed to disrupt these negative statistics. When you provide a safe, affirming, and visible space, you act as a protective buffer against the pressures of the outside world.

Young people between the ages of 14 and 18 are:

x3

times more likely to suffer from severe anxiety and depression.

x3

times more likely to self-harm.

x2

times more likely to experience suicidal thoughts.

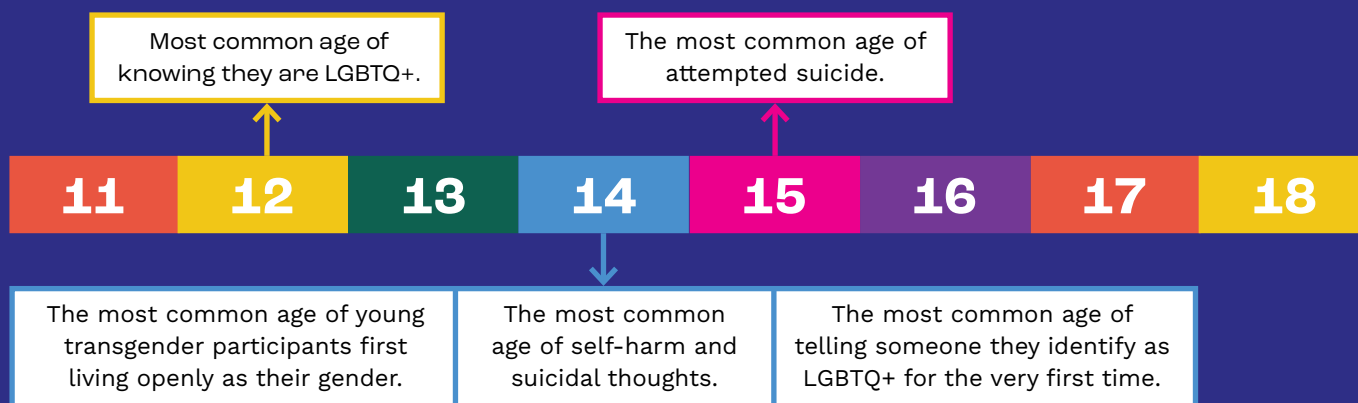
x5

times more likely to attempt suicide.

By fostering an inclusive culture, actively preventing bullying, and leaning into initiatives like Stand Up Awareness Week, you are doing far more than just running a campaign. You are working towards lowering those anxiety and self-harm statistics, and helping to build the long-term confidence and resilience every single young person needs to thrive.

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 most recent *School Climate Survey*¹ (2022), over 1,200 LGBTQ+ students attending post-primary schools across Ireland shared their experiences of school life. The findings highlight significant concerns for school leaders and educators. During the 2021 to 2022 school year, 76% of LGBTQ+ students reported feeling unsafe at school. A substantial 69% said they had heard homophobic remarks from other students.

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.

While bullying unfortunately remains a challenge in many settings, research consistently shows that LGBTQ+ students are disproportionately impacted, experiencing higher levels of harassment and exclusion than their peers.

For educators and youth workers, these findings underscore the importance of fostering a culture of inclusion, respect and safety. Creating inclusive and welcoming learning and development environments is essential not only for students' academic and developmental success but also for their overall wellbeing and sense of belonging. Taking proactive and informed steps to address the experiences of LGBTQ+ students can have a meaningful and lasting impact on their educational outcomes, as well as their long-term mental health and wellbeing.

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.

Protective Factors and LGBTQ+ Inclusive Youth Environments

We know LGBTQ+ young people can face additional challenges in education and youth settings, and so leaders and staff play a crucial role in addressing these issues by fostering a supportive, inclusive environment. Even small, deliberate actions can make a significant difference in ensuring that LGBTQ+ young people feel safe, respected and included.

Supportive Staff Create Belonging

Findings from the 2022 *School Climate Survey*¹ are encouraging in highlighting the positive impact of staff support. In the post-primary school context, half of LGBTQ+ students reported being able to identify ten or more staff members who are supportive of LGBTQ+ identities, while almost all (99%) could identify at least one such staff member. Where high levels of staff support is present, LGBTQ+ students are:

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

These findings reinforce the importance of visible and consistent staff support. Initiatives such as Stand Up Awareness Week offer a valuable opportunity for all educators and youth workers to demonstrate this commitment. Simple actions - such as attending events, displaying a Pride flag in a classroom or youth group space, or adding a small rainbow sticker to a laptop - can send a powerful message that LGBTQ+ young people are recognised, valued and supported.

Inclusive Curriculum

The survey also highlighted the positive impact of inclusive teaching. LGBTQ+ students who learned about LGBTQ+ topics in school reported feeling a greater sense of acceptance and were less likely to miss school due to safety concerns.

However, gaps remain. Half of LGBTQ+ students reported that they had not encountered LGBTQ+ topics in their learning during the 2021 to 2022 school year, and only 35% had received LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE lessons.

This presents a practical opportunity for schools to strengthen inclusion through the curriculum. Stand Up Awareness Week can act as a starting point for engaging staff in this work. Introducing LGBTQ+ themes in an age- and stage-appropriate way across subjects, whether in SPHE or more broadly, can help ensure students see themselves reflected in their education in meaningful, everyday ways.

Staff Intervention Matters

Research shows that identity-based bullying, including homophobic and transphobic language, can have a particularly harmful impact on young people's wellbeing¹. It is essential that staff consistently and confidently address such behaviour when it occurs.

The *School Climate Survey*¹ found that 69% of LGBTQ+ students had heard homophobic remarks from other students. Importantly, where staff intervened in these situations, LGBTQ+ students were:

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

Establishing clear, whole-school, centre or service approaches to challenging and recording instances of homophobic, biphobic or transphobic language or bullying is key. Providing staff with appropriate training can support this work. Encouraging participation in professional learning - such as e-learning modules on supporting LGBTQ+ young people - can help build staff confidence and ensure a consistent response.

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 their doors, sending a visible message of their commitment to and support of all young people.



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Youth Services and Stand Up Awareness Week

Youth Services and Stand Up Awareness Week

Stand Up Awareness Week is a powerful opportunity for youth services across Ireland to come together to challenge anti-LGBTQ+ bullying and create more supportive environments for all young people. It is a week to stand up, take action and make inclusion visible.

As a youth worker, you are central to this work. The relationships you build and the spaces you create lay the foundation for meaningful engagement for the young people you serve. Stand Up Awareness Week strengthens that work, bringing focus, energy and visibility to inclusion in your service.

This year's theme, 'You Belong Here', reminds us that belonging does not happen by chance. It is created through intentional actions, inclusive practice and young people standing up for one another.

On pages 14 to 17, you will find practical activities to support you in bringing this message to life. These are designed to engage young people, build allyship and promote respect in ways that are meaningful to your setting. Stand Up Awareness Week can also be a starting point. It can spark conversations, build confidence and act as a launchpad for deeper work, whether that is increasing awareness, strengthening inclusive practice or setting up an LGBTQ+ youth group.

To celebrate this impact, we have introduced the brand new dedicated Stand Up Awareness Week Youth Service Award dedicated to the impact of youth services, recognising the difference you make during the week and beyond. See page 22 for details.

Together, Stand Up Awareness Week is about creating youth services where every young person feels safe, valued and respected and where they know, without doubt, they belong.



Youth Service Spotlight - Brú Youth Service

Brú Youth Service began working towards achieving the Rainbow Award in 2023, using Stand Up Awareness Week as an opportunity to strengthen LGBTQ+ inclusion across their service in Dublin 12. While an LGBTQ+ group already existed, they wanted to see more young people using the service, so the week focused on raising awareness and encouraging participation.

The team delivered tailored information events across three age-specific drop-ins, ensuring they reached the widest number of young people. Each session began with a clear staff message outlining the service's commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion, ending anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, and the importance of allyship. They followed this by signposting to the LGBTQ+ group available at Brú Youth Service.

Interactive and creative activities, including karaoke, art competitions, dress-up, and photo opportunities created a positive and engaging atmosphere. Young people also designed anti-bullying posters, which were displayed throughout the service.

The week increased awareness, sparked conversations about allyship and led to greater engagement from LGBTQ+ young people. It also supported staff to confidently challenge homophobia and promote more inclusive practice.

While some challenges arose, particularly around mixed attitudes, these were addressed through open discussion and reflection.

Overall, Stand Up Awareness Week became a meaningful way to promote inclusion, strengthen practice, and connect young people to supports.

Youth Service Spotlight - GOSHH

To emphasise the importance of partnership and community, the team at Limerick based GOSHH shared their experience of working with local schools and Youthreach centres during Stand Up Awareness Week.



Youth Services - Stand Up Awareness Week Activities

In addition to the activities outlined on pages 14 to 17, the following are suggested ideas that may be particularly relevant for youth services.

It is recommended that services begin by consulting young people across the organisation to identify the types of activities or campaigns they would like to see during Stand Up Awareness Week.

“ Each year, GOSHH (Gender, Orientation, Sexual Health, HIV)

partners with schools, Youthreach centres and community organisations to support Stand Up Awareness Week. Our work is informed by the lived experiences of young people and focuses on creating safer, more inclusive environments. During Stand Up Awareness Week 2025, we delivered LGBTI+ inclusion workshops to 430 students and staff across the midwest, fostering conversations on identity, allyship, bias, language and inclusion. We also saw strong commitment from schools, with ongoing visibility of inclusion initiatives and growing student leadership.”

Suggested activities:

- ④ Co-create a visual display that reflects what ‘belonging’ means to them. This may take the form of a mural, noticeboard, posters or flag designs.
- ④ Storytelling activities through a range of creative formats, including spoken word, poetry, quotes, audio recordings or zine creation.
- ④ Design badges or stickers based on the theme ‘You Belong Here’.
- ④ A quiz or myth-busting activity to increase awareness of LGBTQ+ identities, allyship and LGBTQ+ history.

03

**Stand Up Awareness
Week 2026 Theme:
You Belong Here**



Stand Up Awareness Week 2026 Theme

You Belong Here

In 2023, Belong To introduced the rainbow design poster with a simple message: ‘You Belong Here’.

They were printed out and posted in classrooms and corridors across Ireland, and many remained in place long after November. Some faded over time, and some were replaced with freshly printed versions. Years later, young people and staff still inquire about where to find them. The familiar rainbow symbol that promises safety and a reassuring message of inclusion are a comfort that shows that every person, regardless of who they are, is welcome and has a place in the community.

This year, we are going back to the root of what inspires every Stand Up Awareness Week and have chosen ‘You Belong Here’ as our 2026 theme.

Belonging is both a feeling and a practice—something we experience personally and something we create collectively.⁴

The rainbow stripes on **this poster** ➡ reflect that our variety and diversity make our communities richer, and like with any rainbow, the different colours make the whole brighter. Everyone deserves to feel welcome and included in their communities, and often the simple things we can do every day can often mean the most.

Why is a sense of belonging important?

Findings from the 2022 *School Climate Survey*¹ demonstrated that when it comes to school absenteeism, the root cause for many students is a lack of a sense of belonging. Those who experience regular harassment or assault at school are more likely to skip school to avoid such situations.

Results from the 2024 *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland*³ report showed that 26% of students reported missing or skipping school due to bullying, and 32% had considered leaving school altogether due to negative treatment regarding their sexual orientation or gender expression. Sadly, 7% of respondents left school for the same reasons.

As educators and leaders, we want all young people to feel when they walk through the doorway, that they are seen, welcomed, and accepted. That sense of belonging is not something that can always be experienced passively; in every community, we need to intentionally demonstrate that LGBTQ+ young people are valued and respected. The good news is that there are lots of ways to do this, and it can be incredibly rewarding and fun!

A sense of belonging to and connecting with a school, centre or youth service is fundamental to the wellbeing of all pupils. By creating an LGBTQ+ supportive physical and social environment, schools and centres are acknowledging the existence of an LGBTQ+ community, within and beyond the gates, as well as fostering a broader culture of respect and acceptance of diversity. Promoting diversity sends a message that everyone is welcome, accepted and supported in the school, centre or youth service, including LGBTQ+ young people, LGBTQ+ parents, guardians, and caregivers, and LGBTQ+ staff.

The Department of Education’s Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice⁵ draws particular attention to whole-school climate and culture. The framework specifically discusses the need for children, young people and staff to experience a “sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported”. This is vital for LGBTQ+ young people.



Suggested Stand Up Awareness Week 2026 Activities

How can we show young people that they belong?

This year's Stand Up Awareness Week theme, 'You Belong Here', is about creating environments where every young person feels safe, valued and like they truly belong. Whether you're a school, youth service or Youthreach centre, every conversation and activity can help foster a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ young people.

Below you will find a variety of ideas and inspiration to help you bring the 'You Belong Here' theme to life. From creative projects and reflective discussions, to setting up an LGBTQ+ and Allies Group and making your spaces

visibly supportive, there are plenty of ways to engage your young people, spark meaningful conversations about inclusion and belonging, and encourage everyone to stand up against LGBTQ+ bullying.



A helpful note: It is important to remember that directly asking young people you either know or assume are LGBTQ+ to participate in activities or join a club may cause feelings of discomfort. Some young people may not be out yet, or some may be out and coming to terms with their identity. It is best to open the invite to all so everyone feels welcome and that they belong.



Visible Representation in the Building

Display Pride flags, posters that include LGBTQ+ families or information about local LGBTQ+ groups where available can help create an inclusive environment.

LGBTQ+ and Allies groups

Launching an LGBTQ+ and Allies Club during Stand Up Awareness Week is a great way to show solidarity with your LGBTQ+ young people and their allies. Groups like this 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.⁶ Hosting an assembly or group session and allowing staff and young people to talk about the club is a great way to spread the word.

You may also want to include posters on a noticeboard to highlight the times and days that the club runs. These are great ways to allow young people 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. Learn more about setting up an LGBTQ+ and Allies Club on our website ➔.

Pride Playlist

With the help of young people, create a playlist of youth-friendly LGBTQ+ artists or songs with LGBTQ+ themes. This is a great way to get young people involved while also highlighting the contributions of the LGBTQ+ community. You might consider playing selections from the playlist at key times or at the end of the day. It's a fun way to keep the energy up!

LGBTQ+ Friendly Films and TV Series: Lights, Camera, Inclusion!

Stories can help us feel seen, understood and connected. To mark Stand Up Awareness Week, we've put together a list of films and series that include LGBTQ+ themes that young people may enjoy. These stories can spark conversation, reflection and a sense of belonging. After viewing, you could facilitate a discussion with the questions below to encourage young people to reflect on the characters, themes and experiences they have seen on screen.

Here are some prompts for reflection and discussion:

- Which character did you connect with the most, and why?
- What challenges did the characters face, and how did they overcome them?
- What did this story teach you about inclusion and belonging?
- How can we help create spaces where everyone feels respected, valued and included?

Please note: The films and TV series below vary in age rating and content. They are offered as suggestions and guidance rather than definitive recommendations and should be considered alongside the film's age rating. As always, educators and youth workers are encouraged to use their professional judgement when selecting and sharing resources.

Suitable for approximately 12+

- Heartstopper (12+)
- Love, Simon (12A)
- Love, Victor (12+)
- Handsome Devil (12A)
- Bonus Track (12A)

Suitable for approximately 15+

- Dating Amber (15A)
- Pride (15A)
- The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson (15+)

Pride Noticeboard

Choose a dedicated noticeboard, whiteboard or wall to display messages of LGBTQ+ inclusivity for the week, or all year round. This can include:

- 📌 Details of your local LGBTQ+ youth group.
- 📌 Contact details for national LGBTQ+ support services such as Belong To.
- 📌 The names of staff members leading on wellbeing, guidance and LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

During Stand Up Awareness Week, you could invite allies to sign their name on the Pride noticeboard or to leave messages of support and solidarity for the LGBTQ+ community.

Using Correct Names and Pronouns

When someone shares their pronouns with you, they are asking that you use them. When you do, it demonstrates respect and support to that person. As an educator or youth worker, simply introducing yourself by saying your name and pronouns is an effective way to show you understand pronouns and that they can vary. Adding your pronouns to your email signature is another way to achieve this. Continuously and intentionally using incorrect pronouns and names for young people can evoke feelings of invalidity and invisibility. If you make a mistake, it's ok! Acknowledge it, apologise and move on – these are the three simple steps to take.

Read the Rainbow

Stand Up Awareness Week is a great time to launch a new or updated LGBTQ+ library section in your school, centre or youth service. Part of your week could include a 'Read the Rainbow' activity, with young people invited to suggest books with LGBTQ+ themes that they have enjoyed or would like to read.



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 use these photos when submitting your awards nomination!

Rainbow Walkway

Rainbow walkways are a visual representation of LGBTQ+ inclusivity and have been painted in many towns and cities in Ireland to recognise and include the LGBTQ+ community. These walkways are a sign that LGBTQ+ people are respected 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, centre or service is LGBTQ+ inclusive.

Pride Door Competition

Everyone loves a competition! This is a chance for educators and young people to collaborate in order to be as creative as possible while at the same time showing support with visibility. You might encourage teachers to work with their assembly groups to decorate their doors with posters, drawings, flags or other creative elements. The most creative door wins bragging rights.



Poster Contest

Like the pride door competition, a poster contest allows for young people to show off their creative skills and be recognised for their achievements while at the same time promoting inclusion and belonging. Young people love prizes, so you might organise a trophy or perhaps a voucher for a treat at a 'Spill the Tea' stand (details on the right!).



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, centres and services around the country hold bake sales, coffee mornings and bake-offs to raise funds to support Belong To's life-saving work with LGBTQ+ young people. Holding your 'Spill the Tea' event is a wonderful chance to connect with everyone in your community, including parents and guardians, siblings, members of your Board of Management and more all while having fun.

Visit our online hub to get your 'Spill the Tea' fundraising pack with everything you'll need to make your event fabulous ➔.



Post-Primary School Senior Cycle Curriculum Resources

New for
2026

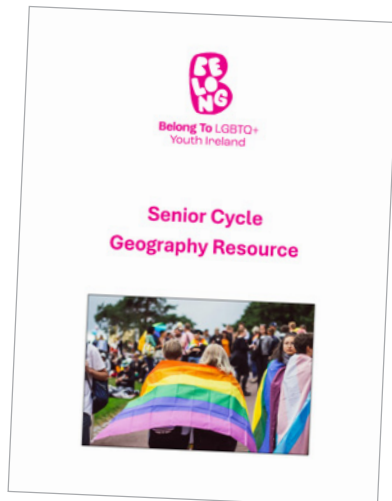
Representing LGBTQ+ families and identities in your classroom

Last year we published a new range of senior cycle curriculum resources which can be used for the planning and delivery of lessons which include LGBTQ+ identities.

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 a classroom or group.

The 2022 *School Climate Survey*¹ found that half of LGBTQ+ students reported that LGBTQ+ related identities were not mentioned at all in the previous school year. 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 on the playground, and this may not always be accurate or positive. By bringing representation into your subject teaching, you can send the message that LGBTQ+ people are a part of our communities and society as a whole, and that they belong 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.



The senior cycle resources ➡ have been developed for subjects including:

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

Our junior cycle curriculum resources also provide helpful suggestions for ways to make a range of subjects, such as science, business, maths, history and geography LGBTQ+ inclusive.

The resources are available to download on our website ➡.

Sample subject resources activities:

Geography

Discuss the factors causing population segregation in urban areas. For example, why might certain cities or 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.

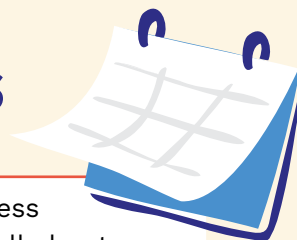
Mathematics

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.

Sample Timetable of Events



Monday, 2 November →	The Launch	Kick off by announcing Stand Up Awareness Week to everyone and outline what it is all about. This can take place during a morning announcement, assembly or group session. Share the purpose of Stand Up Awareness Week, highlighting the importance of the 2026 theme being 'You Belong Here'. Following this, if you have a flagpole, you could arrange a raising of the progress pride flag as an opening ceremony.
Tuesday, 3 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 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, 4 November →	Learning from Lived Experience	Invite an external speaker to your school, centre or service to talk about LGBTQ+ inclusion and the impact of homophobic and transphobic bullying. Perhaps you could follow the talk with a Q&A or discussion to provide space for the young people within your setting to reflect on topics such as empathy and inclusion. When choosing a speaker to invite to your school, service or centre, it is always good to reflect on guidance from the Department of Education ⁷ and the NCCA ⁸ on good practice for the use of external facilitators ➡.
Thursday, 5 November →	Making and Baking	Get baking and host a rainbow bake sale or a 'Spill the Tea' event! Belong To is a charity offering life-saving support services to LGBTQ+ youth across Ireland. Consider donating the funds raised to support the work.
Friday, 6 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 2026 Awards submission. Close out the week with a youth-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 young people reflect on what the whole week represents including the impact of everyone feeling like they belong here.

04

Stand Up Awareness Week 2026 Awards



Stand Up Awareness Week Awards 2026

Stand Up Awareness Week Awards Process

The Stand Up Awareness Week Awards were created to celebrate the diversity of inspiring and impactful actions carried out in schools, centres and services all over the country and recognise the work carried out by staff and young people to create supportive and inclusive environments for young people.

How to Participate

Applications for the 2026 awards can be submitted through the official Stand Up Awareness Week page on the **Belong To website** ➔.

Detailed instructions and application forms will be available online in mid-November, 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 2026. Winners will receive a Stand Up Awareness Week trophy to celebrate their achievements and highly commended certificates will be awarded to highly rated submissions.



Award Categories



New for 2026: Stand Up Awareness Week Youth Service Award

Recognising impactful and well-organised Stand Up Awareness Week programmes of activities at youth services. Youth services can also apply for all other awards below too!

All Award Categories

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 2026.

Stand Up Awareness Week Visibility Award

Recognising efforts to increase the visibility and representation of LGBTQ+ identities in your school, centre or service 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.

Stand Up Awareness Week Youth Service Award

Recognising impactful and well-organised Stand Up Awareness Week programmes of activities at youth services.

Shining a Spotlight on the 2025 Award Winners

In 2025, schools, centres and youth services demonstrated exceptional creativity and commitment to make LGBTQ+ inclusion a reality for young people, tied into the 2025 theme of 'Preventing Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying'. These winning entries reflect the heart of Stand Up Awareness Week, showcasing outstanding contributions to LGBTQ+ visibility, advocacy and education. Check out the 2025 winners:

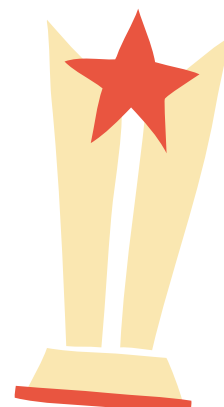


The goal of Ardscoil na Mara's Stand Up Awareness Week is to create an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ members of the school community. We were thrilled to win both the Impact and Photography Awards last year. We worked hard to bring our LGBTQ+ initiatives beyond the school community, and into the wider Tramore community via our Parents' Council, Tramore Library, and local businesses. To win two national awards is a celebration of the fact that Ardscoil na Mara is a safe space of inclusivity where every individual feels welcome and valued."

— Angeline Westcott, Ardscoil na Mara, Co. Waterford

Winners of the Stand Up Awareness Week 2025 Awards

- ★ The Stand Up Awareness Week Impact Award
Ardscoil na Mara
- ★ The Stand Up Awareness Week Theme Award
Limerick Educate Together Secondary School
- ★ The Stand Up Awareness Week Visibility Award
Kishoge Community College
- ★ The Stand Up Awareness Week Creative Expression Award
Causeway Comprehensive School
- ★ The Stand Up Awareness Week Photography Award
Ardscoil na Mara
- ★ The Stand Up Awareness Week Youth Participation Award
Ardscoil Rís



Stand Up Awareness Week Awards 2025 Submissions



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2. Department of Education (2024) *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. Dublin: Department of Education. Available [here](#).
3. 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](#).
4. What is Belonging? Othering & Belonging Institute, University of California, Berkeley. Available [here](#).
5. Department of Education and Skills (2019) Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice. Available [here](#).
6. 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](#).
7. Department of Education, Circular No. 0043/2018. Available [here](#).
8. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Considering the use and role of guest speakers in SPHE/RSE. Available [here](#).



Community is at the heart of our school and creating a safe and inclusive community drives everything we do. Every year, Stand Up Awareness Week reminds our students how they are valued members of our school community, regardless of how they identify. It highlights the importance of inclusion, acceptance and allyship. It sets a foundation of respect, equality and care for the rest of the school year. It shows all our students, especially those who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community, that they are supported, welcomed and seen in our school and we are here to support them. It helps them understand they are not 'other' but an important part of something bigger, where everyone belongs."

— Ellen McEnroe, Teacher, Blessington Community College, Co. Wicklow



Stand Up Awareness Week is an important week in the school calendar as it gives us an opportunity to send a clear message that our school community is a welcoming, understanding and supportive place for all. We also send the loud message that bullying will not be tolerated in any form. Colourful Friday is a particularly celebratory occasion that gives staff and students the chance to have some fun and wear their colours to make a very visual statement to LGBTQ+ members of our school community that we support them."

— Annette O' Neill, Special Education Teacher, St. Brendan's College, Killarney, Co. Kerry



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 young people 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