



## **Press Release**

### **Youth Work Ireland and BeLong To**

Saturday June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017

#### **Largest ever single group of young people marching in Pride Dublin 2017**

Thousands of LGBT+ young people will march at Dublin's LGBTQ Pride Parade this weekend - many of whom will be coming out as part of the LGBT+ community for the first time.

BeLong To Youth Services and Youth Work Ireland will facilitate the largest ever single group of young people marching under one banner 'Transforming LGBT+ Lives' with some 300 young people expected to march. Prior to the march the young people will gather in the historic surrounds of Trinity College for a PRIDE Breakfast.

A recent report commissioned by BeLong To Youth Services highlighted that LGBT+ young people are becoming aware of their identity and coming out at a younger age in comparison to previous generations. According to the 2015, LGBTIreland Report, the average age for a young person to realise they are LGBTI is 12 years old, and the most common age of sharing this with someone is 16 years old. During this vulnerable interim period, young people can experience significant mental health challenges. Youth Work Ireland and BeLong To Youth Services host LGBT+ support groups around Ireland providing essential spaces where young LGBT+ people are equal, safe, valued and have access to the support they need.

#### **Speaking about Dublin Pride 2017, Moninne Griffith, Executive Director of BeLong To Youth Services said:**

*"Every time I hear someone say that we no longer need Pride in Ireland, my heart sinks. I think of the young LGBT+ people who pace outside our building, sometimes for months, before they work up the courage to walk through the door and access one of the BeLong To youth groups. Coming out was the bravest thing I ever did, and for many LGBT+ young people, it sadly goes hand in hand with fear of rejection, isolation and sometimes even bullying. As a result, the frightening truth is LGBT+ young people are 3 times more likely to attempt suicide, and twice as likely to self-harm, compared to the general population of young people. I see the reality of these stark statistics at BeLong To. This Pride, I want to say to these LGBT+ young people and their families, 'you are not alone'. We are working hard to create a safer, more supportive Ireland for LGBT+ youth and to dismantle LGBT+ stigma and harassment people face because of who they are, or who they love."*

#### **Reflecting on the contribution youth services make to young LGBT+ people, Patrick Burke, CEO of Youth Work Ireland, said:**

*"Reflecting on Pride in 2017 several years after Youth Work Ireland members began providing services to LGBT+ young people, I'm struck by how far we've come but how much there is still to do. Working with BeLongTo we have been able to offer a space and a place for young people coming to terms with their identity, often in areas where this was very difficult and still remains so today. In*

*many respects, we want the need for this work to disappear but we are a long way from that. In fact, we now have other issues, in some areas we are finding it hard to keep up with the demand for services for young LGBT+ young people. Today is a day of celebration but in the future, we plan to advocate for additional resources for this important area particularly with the new LGBT+ Youth Strategy and particularly in more isolated communities"*

**Josh/Amanda of the BeLonG To accredited youth group 'Chill Out', based in the Waterford and South Tipperary Community Youth Service, marched with the organisations for the first time in 2016:**

*"I started in my LGBT+ youth group about two years ago and it has been the best experience of my entire life. I finally came out as Trans, my family are slowly getting there and it has just been the best experience. Without Chill Out, my life would be so different. It has made my life so much better. It was my first Pride as well! Preparing for this we didn't know what to do, but I think we are all prepared now just to be out there, and to have the confidence to be out and parade in front of so many people."*

**Blake Coleman, Youth Work Ireland Tipperary**

*"Pride 2016 was my first pride, I was really nervous when I was heading up on the bus but once I got to the breakfast morning in Youth Work Ireland I saw everyone smiling and happy and at that moment I knew we we're all there for the same reason.....to celebrate being able to be who we are. It was an amazing experience and I really enjoyed pride 2016"*

**Tony McMahon, Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Trinity College**

*"We are delighted to partner with Youth Work Ireland and BeLonG To Youth Services and in hosting their 2017 PRIDE Breakfast. The LGBT+ young people will be joined at the breakfast by a number of the Trinity PRIDE delegation, comprising members from the LGBT student society QSoc, and the Trinity LGBT Staff Network.*

*We understand from the LGBTIreland report 2015, authored by Professor Agnes Higgins and her research team in Trinity, the importance of being able to fully be oneself in school, in College and in employment. We would hope that, through this event, we can both reassure and inspire, particularly the teenage young people in relation to the inclusion of LGBT+ people at University, and in the workplace".*

**Notes to editors:**

To arrange an interview please contact Sinead Keane, BeLonG To Youth Services | 087 7680389 or Gina Halpin | 087 6828045 Youth Work Ireland Ends

**Notes:**

\* Click here to view the collaborative Youth Work Ireland and BeLonG To Youth Services video from Pride 2016 <https://youtu.be/ibC5shTzG2A>

[<https://i.ytimg.com/vi/ibC5shTzG2A/maxresdefault.jpg>]<<https://youtu.be/ibC5shTzG2A>>

Youth Work Ireland & Belong To PRIDE Dublin 2016<<https://youtu.be/ibC5shTzG2A>>  
youtu.be

On June 25, 2016 Youth Work Ireland and Belong To brought over 250 young people to Dublin to march together in Pride Dublin Parade. The two organisations hav...

\* Funded by the National Office of Suicide Prevention (NOSP), the LGBTIreland Report, 2015 is the national study of the mental health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in Ireland co-commissioned by BeLonG To & GLEN.

\* BeLonG To Youth Services is the national organisation supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people in Ireland. Since 2003, BeLonG To has worked with LGBT+ young people to create a world where they are equal, safe and valued in the diversity of their identities and experiences. The organisation also provides training to professionals who work with young people, advocacy, campaigning and a specialised LGBT+ youth service with a focus on mental and sexual health. E: [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)<<http://www.belongto.org>> T: 01 670 6223

\* Youth Work Ireland is the largest youth work organisation in Ireland. Across the country our 22 Member Youth Services work with local communities to deliver quality supports and services with and for over 116,060 young people every week. We do this with the support of 900+ staff and 7,000 volunteers who deliver programmes, youth clubs, youth projects, one-to-one services, information centres and targeted youth work. We provide safe spaces where young people are listened to, can make a difference, reach their potential, have their voices heard and have fun!  
[www.youthworkireland.ie](http://www.youthworkireland.ie)<<http://www.youthworkireland.ie>>

\* Q Soc, the LGBT society of Trinity College Dublin, is a society for people who identify as, or are allies to the LGBT+ community. Q Soc is Ireland's oldest and largest LGBT society. Trinity won a Special Recognition Award for trans inclusion (2015) and was named Public Sector Employer of the Year (2016) at the GLEN Workplace Equality Index Awards. The Trinity LGBT Staff Network was established in 2016.

\* Images from 2016 Youth Work Ireland & BeLonG To Breakfast event can be downloaded from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/youthworkireland/albums/72157667624073003> Credit: Ruth Medjber Photography [www.ruthlessimagery.com](http://www.ruthlessimagery.com)<<http://www.ruthlessimagery.com>>

\* Images to accompany this release to follow Saturday June 24th from Marc O Sullivan photography <http://www.marcosullivan.ie/>