



Youth Work Ireland

Press Release

Youth Work Ireland

September 23rd, 2024

**Youth Work Ireland launch a new evidence-based model of LGBTQI+ youth work practice to support young LGBTQI+ people in rural Ireland who, despite progress, continue to face isolation, discrimination and exclusion.**

Youth Work Ireland today launched a new model of LGBTQI+ youth work practice to respond to the needs of young LGBTQI+ people growing up in rural communities in Ireland. Youth Work Ireland and its 20-member youth services are the largest providers of LGBTQI+ youth work services in rural Ireland and provide safe and inclusive spaces for young LGBTQI+ people, who despite progress, continue to face isolation, discrimination and exclusion in their communities. The model 'Creating Proud Spaces in Rural Communities' is an initiative developed by Youth Work Ireland and supported by the Dept. of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth through its LGBTI+ Community Grant Scheme 2023.

Over the last two years the Proud Spaces team have been meeting with, speaking, and listening to young LGBTQI+ people to find out what life is like as a young LGBTQI+ person growing up in rural Ireland. They have told us about the struggles, challenges and discriminations they face, but also about the supports they get from being part of a youth service. The project has evidenced the youth work practices and activities young LGBTQI+ people say help them feel included, safe and equal in rural communities. It also sets out the values, practices, and competencies that if implemented, will help to create more proud spaces for youth LGBTQI+ people small towns, villages and farm in Ireland.

**Here is what some of those young people had to say**

*"My proud space is somewhere where everyone is free and safe to be themselves. Somewhere where everybody is welcome, and no one is judged no matter what."*

*"My proud space would be a place where I could exist without judgement, and I wouldn't have to pretend to be something or someone I'm not. I could be me, and that'd be enough."*

**Speaking in advance of the launch, Dr Patrick Burke, CEO of Youth Work Ireland said:**

*"Youth work plays a significant role in accompanying LGBTQI+ young people on their individual journeys to self-actualisation. Youth work delivered in an integrated way provides a whole range of services to all young people and can create a more inclusive, open and caring society. This work is critical, ongoing and unfortunately still underfunded. We call on government to commit to providing significant increases in funding for the youth work sector so every young LGBTQI+ person in the country has immediate access to supports and services."*

ENDS