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**Press Release  
Monday 15th June 2020**

**Youth Work Ireland asks people to ‘Give the Gift of Pride’ to provide vital supports to young LGBTI+ people impacted by digital poverty**

* **Access to LGBTI+ youth services severely impacted during Covid-19 restrictions**
* **Digital poverty affecting thousands of young LGBTI+ people across Ireland**
* **‘Pay As You Go’ services are a lifeline for disadvantaged young LGBTI+ people**
* **€20 donation will provide phone credit for one LGBTI+ young person**

Youth Work Ireland, Ireland’s largest youth organisation, has today launched *Give the Gift of Pride*, an urgent appeal to raise funds to support vulnerable young LGBTI+ people impacted by digital poverty. Throughout Pride Month, people are asked to make a once-off €20 donation to provide phone credit for one LGBTI+ young person experiencing isolation, despair, and loneliness during Covid-19.

The global pandemic has been tough on everyone’s mental health and wellbeing, and particularly so for young disadvantaged LGBTI+ people who according to the My World Survey experience four times higher levels of stress, anxiety and depression in comparison to cis young people.

*“I can’t be myself and I’ve no one to talk to”*, *Young LGBTI+ Person, Laois*

Before the pandemic these vulnerable young people could drop into one of Youth Work Ireland’s Youth Services and access the support of professional youth workers. These physical youth spaces have been closed since lockdown and while youth workers remain available online, young people impacted by digital poverty cannot access this vital lifeline due to a lack of funds. This has been a real challenge, and has led to an acute sense of isolation, despair, and loneliness for these already vulnerable young people.

**Commenting on the urgency of the appeal, Patrick Burke, CEO of Youth Work Ireland said:** *“Youth workers around the country are reporting harrowing stories of young LGBTI+ people being locked down in homes where they have to hide their identity and revert back to being someone they are not, because their parents refuse to recognise their sexuality or gender orientation. In these situations, phones are a lifeline, but for young people without the means to buy credit, they cannot access vital services to support them get through this dire situation.*

*One donation of €20 will provide phone credit for one young LGBTI+ person, so while they may be physically isolated, they can stay in contact with their youth worker and friends, get the support they need and ensure they continue to feel connected, visible and valued.”*

We know that disadvantaged young LGBTI+ people tend to rely on ‘Pay As You Go’ services to stay in contact with friends and support services, but without the funds to buy credit, they have become more isolated and face greater challenges to connecting to the outside world.

Visit [www.youthworkireland.ie/supportourwork](http://www.youthworkireland.ie/supportourwork) to make a donation.

**ENDS**

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**Editor’s notes**

**About Youth Work Ireland**

Youth Work Ireland is a youth led and rights based organisation who deliver a wide range of innovative services, supports and programmes, with and for young people aged 10-25 years, including mental health supports, resilience building, anxiety programmes, drug and alcohol supports, LGBTI+ youth work, club development, employability programmes, counselling services and rural outreach services. We provide safe and fun spaces for young people to gather and each week we engage with over 76,000 young people across a network of clubs, projects and local youth services.