

Press Release

LGBTI+ YOUTH VOICES AT DUBLIN PRIDE

Over 500 LGBTI+ Young People will march with Belong To Youth Services and Youth Work Ireland at Dublin Pride

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - images to follow – see notes

Thursday, June 27th, 2019

Pride is a time to focus on LGBTI+ equality and rights, according to LGBTI+ young people as they prepare to march this weekend at Dublin Pride. With growing numbers of organisations, community groups, and corporations joining the event, we asked LGBTI+ youth what Pride means to them:

"Pride is about celebrating who I am and fighting for the equality for all LGBTI+ people. It is a space for us to embrace our community and identity," **says 19-year-old, Jayson Pope.**

Speaking in advance of Pride, 17-year-old, Deborah Fakeye says: *To me, Pride is the chance to exist loudly and proudly. LGBTI+ identities are not the standard in our society, and it can be easy to forget that we are such a massive network of strength, character, colour and courage all across the world. Pride is a reminder of the diversity and adversity that joins us. It is the perfect place for LGBTI+ people to be celebrated and visible. Representation matters.*

According to 22-year-old Michael Conway: *"Pride to me is a protest – it always will be. It is about feeling safe and seen, and having Pride in who we are."*

As part of this year's Dublin Pride, over 500 LGBTI+ young people from across Ireland will march under the banner 'Transforming Young LGBTI+ Lives' alongside BeLoNG To Youth Services and Youth Work

Ireland. Pride this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising – the birthplace of the LGBTI+ rights movement.

Moninne Griffith, CEO of BeLong To Youth Services says: *"The LGBTI+ community is made up of a rainbow of many communities and voices. Pride is a time for every LGBTI+ person to celebrate and protest however they choose. For many of the LGBTI+ young people who travel from all over Ireland for Dublin Pride, the parade is about being visible, valued and celebrating who they are with their community. We are excited to march with young people and youth workers from some of the 45 LGBTI+ youth groups we support across Ireland.*

It is positive to see so many allies supporting the LGBTI+ community and LGBTI+ young people in a meaningful way and showing their Pride. However, flying a rainbow flag for one day is not enough. LGBTI+ young people who face high levels of mental health challenges because of bullying, rejection and exclusion need support, safe spaces, and allyship today, tomorrow, and everyday. This Pride, let's commemorate the brave activists who paved the way for LGBTI+ rights in Ireland and around the world, and let's also recommit our efforts to the work we still have to do to achieve true equality."

Patrick Burke, CEO of Youth Work Ireland, says: *Youth Work Ireland is proud to co-host the Pride Breakfast with our colleagues from Belong To and thrilled this event has become a regular feature of the annual festivities. Our building located close to the start of this year's parade provides a great launch pad for young people taking part. In a similar way all our youth services around the country, particularly in more remote and rural areas, have acted for a number of years as launch pads for young people who have been coming to terms with their sexual identity.*

We must also remember that LGTBI+ youth work is not just about the Pride even, the real work happens in local communities all year around where our youth services provide safe and welcoming space for LGTBI+ young people in which they can grow and develop into who they are. This work continues to be underfunded - a real celebration of Pride would be for the Government to announce a significant increase in funding for LGTBI+ youth work.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

A panel of LGBTI+ young people, CEO of BeLonG To Youth Service, Moninne Griffith, and CEO of Youth Work Ireland, Dr Patrick Burke are available for interview. To arrange an interview, please contact:

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Ends**Notes:**

- Images to accompany this release to follow Saturday June 29th from Marc O Sullivan photography <http://www.marcosullivan.ie/>

BeLonG To Youth Services is the national organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI+) young people in Ireland. Since 2003, BeLonG To has worked with LGBTI+ young people to create a world where they are equal, safe, and valued in the diversity of their identities and experiences. BeLonG To offers advice, information, and crisis counselling for LGBTI+ youth, also supporting free, non-judgemental LGBTI+ youth groups across Ireland. www.belongto.org

Youth Work Ireland is the largest youth work organisation in Ireland. Across the country our 21 Member Youth Services work with local communities to deliver quality supports and services with and for over 100,000 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