



Youth Work Ireland

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## Young and Trans in Rural Ireland

*First of its kind resource for young people launched today will help Ireland become more trans-inclusive.*

[Photography available here](#)

A new resource for young people and their educators called ***Young and Trans in Rural Ireland***, is launched today by Youth Work Ireland, the largest youth organisation in Ireland working with 116,000 young people every week. Attending the launch was trans actor Jack Murphy from Fair City.

The resource which is the first of its kind, will be used by those working with young people across the country, to help them become the best trans allies they can be and in turn help Ireland become a truly trans-inclusive society. The innovative resource will also be made available for schools across the country.

In recent years Ireland has become a more inclusive society with the passing of equality-based referenda and legislation. However, this inclusivity has not been experienced equally by all young LGBTI+ people, with trans people, particularly those growing up in rural Ireland, continuing to face high levels of transphobic bullying, social anxiety, discrimination and isolation. There is a lack of mainstream information on how professional workers can best support a young trans person, particularly those living in rural Ireland who are more vulnerable and have less access to supports and services than those living in urban areas. There is therefore a continuing challenge for society to better understand the needs of this group and to be aware of what actions can be taken to better support them.

According to Dr. Patrick Burke, CEO of Youth Work Ireland: "There is an added pressure on these young people to be the educators on trans issues, for them to be political and to change society. While those that rise to this challenge are some of the most impressive young people we have worked with, these are still young teenagers who are facing their own challenges and need to be supported. By highlighting the issues faced by young trans people and the supports they say are needed, we hope this resource will continue to bring us further along the road to true equality for all, irrespective of identity or gender.

Jack Murphy said: "I'm 100% behind this new resource that the very talented young people put together in Youth Work Ireland for trans people in rural parts of Ireland, I hope it succeeds and becomes a part of schools Relationships and sexuality education in schools for the future, I had an amazing time meeting the young people behind the booklet today and they have a very bright future ahead of them as they are extremely intelligent, hard working and most importantly passionate about the work that is being done by themselves and youth leaders. I wish I had these resources growing up, it would have made things so much easier"

### **Growing up trans in Rural Ireland**

- There is more of a chance of being ostracised from a smaller rural community than an urban one when people see you as being different from everyone else.

- It is harder to date in a rural community because there is a very small pool of people to choose from and everyone knows everyone, and because of this there is a tendency for young trans people to use dating apps which can lead to risky behaviour or unsafe experiences.
- Within rural communities you can find yourself becoming the piece of town gossip, and you have to learn to navigate local dynamics around who accepts you and who doesn't.
- There is a lack of amenities and very little services and supports in rural areas and some that are there, are not effective enough.
- There is a lack of transportation in rural towns which means if there are other groups you want to go to out of town, you have to have your own transport or rely on parents.
- There may be no other trans people in a rural area, so there is no peer support and you can easily be misunderstood, leading to isolation and depression.
- It can be lonely being trans in rural Ireland.

**What young trans people want youth workers and educators to know and do to support them:**

- Don't make assumptions about a person's gender based on how they present physically
- Respect non-conformity and individuality
- Educate yourself on trans issues, know, understand and use correct terms and language
- Normalise pronouns and have more respect for alternative pronouns, it would be good for youth workers to wear pronoun badges
- Have gender neutral bathrooms in youth centres where possible
- Support the young trans person even if you initially think it might be a 'phase' – they know themselves better than you do

Dr Burke continued: "Youth work is about working with all young people in an inclusive and welcoming way. Youth Work Ireland was at the fore in opening new LGBTI+ projects around the country when coming out was an issue in many remote areas. Through this we encountered many trans young people who felt they are not fully included even in a new and more tolerant Ireland. Many face high levels of transphobic bullying, social anxiety, discrimination and isolation. We are now responding to this need by facilitating youth work with trans young people and developing and resources to promote this as a normal mainstream part of youth work throughout Ireland. We were delighted to work with our friends in TONI to support and provide a safe space for young trans people to raise awareness of the supports they say are needed to help their community to be accepted, respected and valued."

Stephen O'Hare, Chief Executive of TONI said: "TONI is delighted to support Youth Work Ireland in producing such a timely and refreshing resource. We know from our work with the many peer and family support groups around the country, that being young and trans in rural Ireland brings particular challenges, often leading to feelings of increased isolation and exclusion" he said.

"The simple steps to being an ally provided in this resource should prove invaluable, not only for those working directly with younger members of our community, but for anyone wishing to make Ireland a more inclusive place for young trans people to live and work" he added.

The resource has been produced with funds received under the LGBTI+ Capacity Building Initiative of the Department for Children and Youth Affairs.

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For further information and to speak to case studies of young trans people (including photographs) who have grown up in rural Ireland, please contact [niallcowley@wethepeoplecomms.ie](mailto:niallcowley@wethepeoplecomms.ie)