



Youth Work Ireland Meath

Meath's LGBT+ Young People Survey & Information Booklet



Supported by Meath County Council Cllr Maria O'Kane

Youth Work Ireland Meath was first approached by a young LGBT person in 2013 looking for support services. A year later, from that initial contact, the organisation established a youth LGBT+ group which has met every week since.

The group has grown in numbers and now records over 80 members with young people across Meath as well as surrounding counties. The ethos of the group is inclusiveness and encouragement, where young LGBT+ people can simply be themselves and take part in activities and projects within their own peer group.

This booklet is a result of their 5 month long research and collaboration project which included a county wide survey, the results of which are included in the central pages.

The results will inform and shape the direction of the group going forward and help staff and volunteers to meet the constantly evolving needs of this diverse and wonderful gathering of young people.

All at Youth Work Ireland Meath have experienced the joy and the successes of the LGBT+ group and express our gratitude to the young people for allowing us to empower them with the skills, confidence and knowledge to meet their many and varied needs.

Is mise le bród
Nicky McDonnell
Youth Worker

Our Stories

Safe and friendly

The most important
2 hours of my week

I've learnt who I am

When I first joined the group I was terrified of calling myself Queer. So much so I would intentionally make sure people believed I was straight. The group helped me to learn to accept myself as I am. With the support of the other members and Youth Workers I think spaces like this are super important LGBTQI+ young people as it gives them a safe space to simply be themselves.

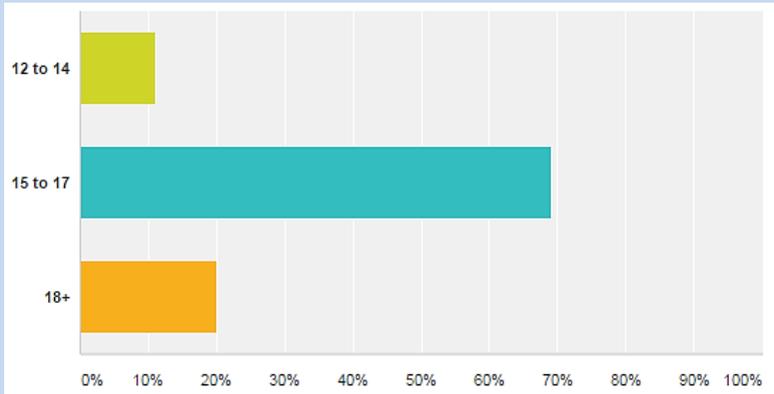
This is my
classroom

I really feel like I
belong, I have a
place

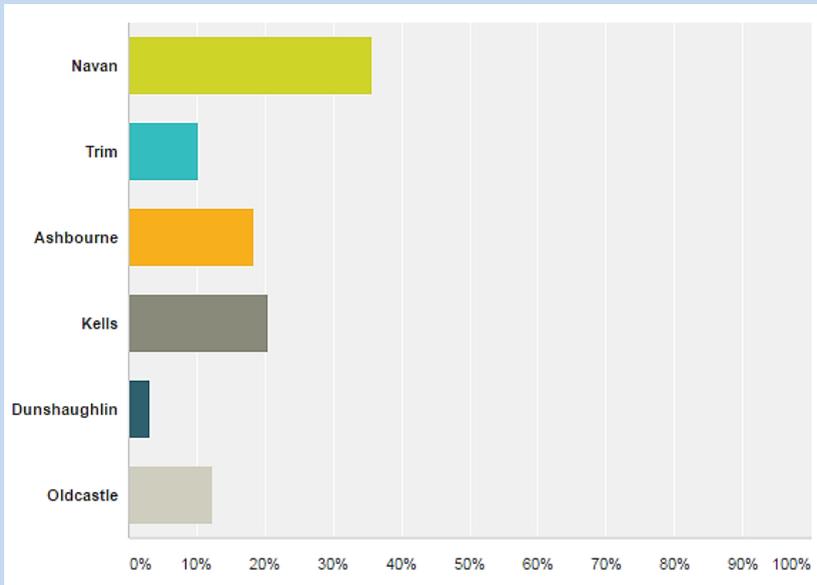
When I came out to my friends, my then girlfriend brought me to Youth Work Ireland Meath's LGBTQ+ group. This was in late 2014. I was terrified out of my wits but everyone was friendly and welcoming. 3 years later and it hasn't lost its warmth. I look forward to seeing everyone each week. We are one big family and it means everything to me as it helped me accept myself and not feel alone.

YWIM LGBT+ Survey

Age Range of Survey Respondents

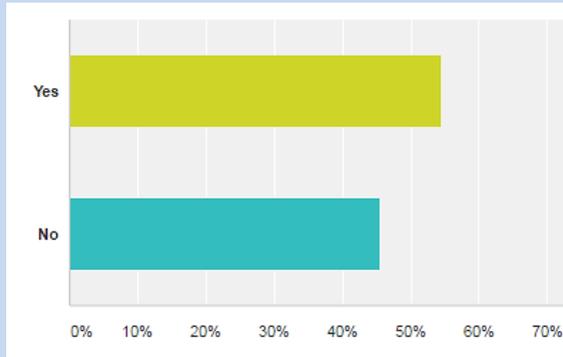


Nearest Meath Town

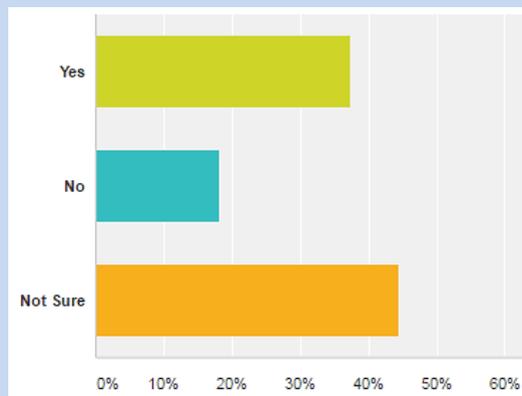


YWIM LGBT+ Survey

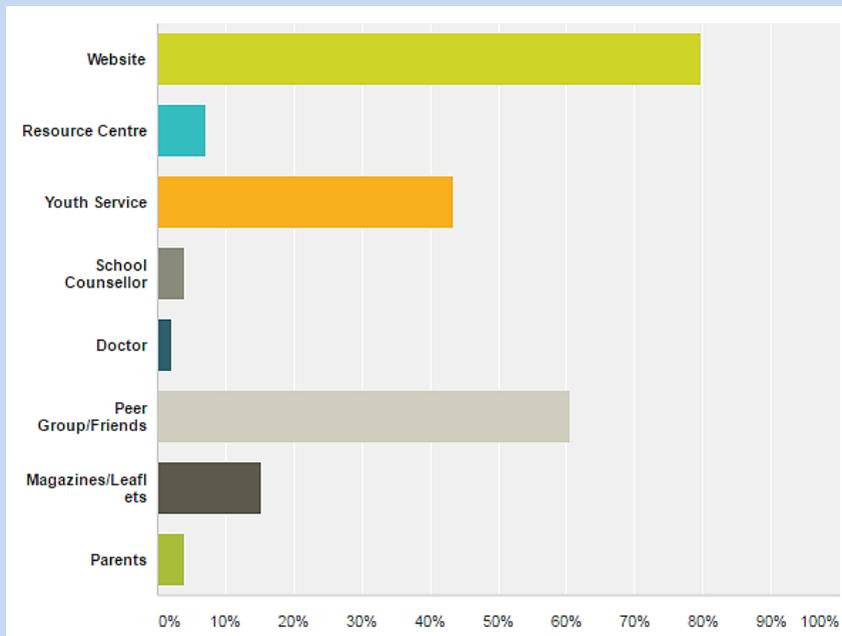
We asked “Do You Live in a Rural location?”



Is Your School Safe and Supportive for an LGBT+ Young Person?



Where Do You Access Information?



Notes

The above graphs are just a snapshot of the information we captured with the survey. As expected the majority of responses came from 15-17 year olds and mostly from the Navan area. Of interest is the number of responses from Oldcastle being more than Trim. This can't be read as Oldcastle having a larger LGBT+ community than Trim, but it does reinforce the importance of access to services for young people living in more rural and isolated areas of the county. Indeed, 54.55% of respondents stated they live in a rural location. Access to transportation links and basic services becomes a real struggle for people living outside urban centres.

While it is encouraging to see 37.37% of young LGBT+ people say their school is a safe and supportive place, we cannot become complacent of the 44.44% who are unsure or the remaining 18.18% for whom it is not safe or supportive. Schools have worked hard to bring up their work practices in relation to LGBT+ issues but one of the most common responses to what can be done is the need for Teachers to be more approachable and honest. There is also a huge need for discussion on sexuality and gender particularly in CSPE and SPHE classes. To listen to the needs of the young people and what they are experiencing allows us the best chance of responding correctly.

“The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them.” Ralph G. Nichols

We must also be aware of how young people access information. The vast majority do so by using websites and reaffirming with peer groups and friends. Given the notable rise in “fake news” and misinformation, it becomes even more important to make sure relevant websites are providing accurate and responsible facts and resources and that young people are enabled to disseminate between fact and fake. This is the role that Youth Organisations like Youth Work Ireland Meath must take on. As a provider of an LGBT+ service it is our responsibility to listen to the young people and respond to the type of service and information they are telling us they want and need. This best places them to become positive role models in their community and a safe peer group with the correct information to pass onto those that will access the peer group model first.

A Young Person's Journey

I remember the first time I came to the LGBT group in Navan. My then other half had been trying to persuade me for weeks about coming along and I finally decided I would, just for one week and just to keep them happy. I was in dread, the apprehension of crossing through the door and seeing all those faces. I remember sitting in the corner and trying to sink into the squashy cushions. I took part in the check-in but immediately retreated into my safe cushion bunker. From here I could watch everyone and the set up. It was bright, despite being underground and everyone just seemed to be getting on with things. The chat was moving along and I was offered many cups of tea. Looking back I can see it was a very relaxed open space where anyone would be very welcomed in. Of course then I would never have admitted that to myself. I left assuring everyone I was just down for one week only and wouldn't be back.

That was 9 months ago and I can count on one hand the number of weeks I have missed. The confidence I have now is something I wouldn't thought I would have last year. I am a very different person. Through Youth Work Ireland Meath I have had the opportunity to explore other interests. I was involved in the IYMA's team in 2017 which saw us winning the Songwriters award as well as one member compering the entire event. My interest in media and art saw me take part in a national film making competition which was great fun and a great way to meet other young people in YWIM.

The biggest challenge I have accepted was when the Youth Workers offered me a position to join the national Equality team with Youth Work Ireland. I have the chance to mix with other young people from across the country as we prepare to put together and host the National Conference in Royal Kilmainham Hospital in October. It's cliché but this time last year there is no way I would have told you I would be involved in such an undertaking.

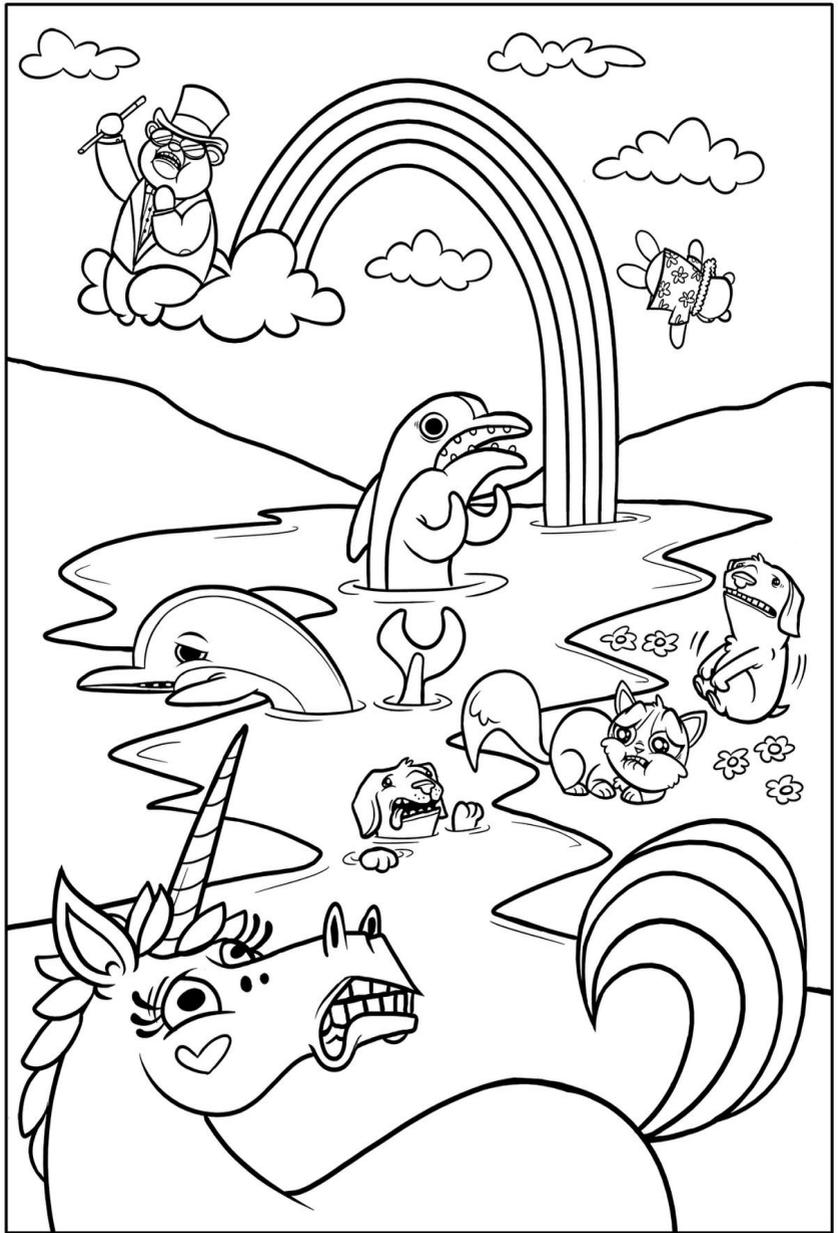
I know it is because of my confidence growing so much, from being a part of the LGBT group and being encouraged by the staff and volunteers of YWI Meath to push myself. They saw my abilities first and somehow made me see them too. I see the difference I can make locally and nationally.

Not bad from the person who was only here for one week!



Definitions

- Lesbian – a woman who is romantically, sexually and/or emotionally attracted to women
- Gay – a man who is romantically, sexually and/or emotionally attracted to men
- Bisexual – a man or woman who is romantically, sexually and/or emotionally attracted to people of multiple sexes
- Transgender – a person who's gender identity does not correspond to their identity given at birth
- Queer – an umbrella term used by a person who does not fall into a traditional gender role or sexual orientation
- Questioning – a person who is unsure of their sexual orientation and/or their gender identity
- Asexual – a person who may feel little or no sexual attraction to another person
- Pansexual – someone who is attracted to people regardless of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation



Contacts

LGBT National Helpline

1890 929 539

Garda LGTB Contacts Navan – 046 9079930 Kells – 046 9280820 Trim – 046 9481540 Ashbourne – 01 8010600	BeLonGTo Youth Services 11 Parliament St. Temple Bar Dublin 2 01 6706223 www.belongto.org
Jigsaw Meath 25 Brews Hill Navan Meath 046 9071702 www.jigsaw.ie	TENI 4 Ellis Quay Arran Quay Dublin 7 01 8733575 www.teni.ie
Outcomers 8 Roden Place Dundalk Louth 042 9329816 www.outcomers.org	HSE Mental Health Service Out Patient Clinic Navan Meath 046 9027266 www.hse.ie

Be Yourself. Everybody else is
already taken.

Oscar Wilde

"As an advocate for Young People in County Meath I was delighted to be able to support the LGBT+ group and Youth Work Ireland Meath with this project. I am committed to work which empowers and encourages young people to improve the quality of their lives and experiences and those within their communities. This project has opened a conversation as to the needs of young LGBT+ people across Meath and helps us plan out the best ways to support these needs in a positive, inclusive environment. Well done to the staff of Youth Work Ireland Meath and the members of the LGBT+ group for their time and dedication in producing such an excellent piece of work."

Cllr. Maria O'Kane



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Meath

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comhairle chontae na mí
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Supported by Meath County Council Cllr Maria O'Kane