

News Release
June 24th 2018

LGBT Issues still Need Addressing 25 Years on
On the Day that Marks 25 years of the Decriminalisation of Homosexuality in Ireland

In the day that sees the Taoiseach host a State Reception in Dublin Castle to mark the 25th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality, LGBT Ireland welcomes the formal recognition of such an important, landmark legislation but states “a huge amount has been done over the past 25 years but there is a lot more to do.”

The national organisation points to 3 important areas that need to be addressed now for Irish LGBT citizens; 1) the full commencement of the 2015 Children & Families Relationships Act, 2) providing health and social supports for older LGBT people and 3), tackling rural isolation.

In regard to the Children and Families Relationship Act 2015, which was signed into law over 3 years ago, this was to provide vital legal recognition and rights for same sex couples with children but to date parts 2, 3 & 9 have yet to be commenced, leaving many same sex parents and their children in a legal limbo. In essence this means that when a couple have a child together it is still not possible for both to be recognised as the legal parents of their child and there are limits in place to guardianship for children under 2 years of age meaning that one of the parents has no legal relationship to the child, which means they can't consent to medical emergencies or attain passports etc.

In regard to Older LGBT citizens, 14% of calls to the LGBT Helpline last year were from older LGBT people citing lack of social supports, isolation and loneliness as the reasons for their helpline calls. Many of these callers are not ‘out’ and carry deep internalised fears about homophobia due to the stigma and discrimination of LGBT identity’s which they witnessed when they were younger pre-1993.

The Visible Lives Study of 2011 which looked at the experiences of older LGBT people found that many are reluctant to access health and social care because they fear discrimination from mainstream service providers. The study made a series of recommendations in relation to improving the health and social supports for older LGBT people but as yet, have still not been implemented and funding is urgently needed to improve supports for these people.

In regard to rural isolation, 77 % of the older people who contacted the LGBT Ireland Helpline lived in rural parts of Munster or Connaught. There are no LGBT specific supports in their surrounding areas which makes it impossible for people to build a support network of friends and means that LGBT people still have to travel to their nearest city to access LGBT supports and social events. According to Paula Fagan, CEO of LGBT Ireland, “there is a need for funding for accessible community based LGBT services, in areas of the country in which people live. This will both tackle rural isolation and will build a visible LGBT community in local areas which provides positive visibility and role models for younger LGBT+ people.

Ends

Paula Fagan is available for Radio News Sound bytes on the issues 25 years on; please contact Michelle Thomas, T: 086 2426733 or E: michelle.thomas@michcom.ie