

# For Inclusion For Equality For Everyone



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## Support Services



Helpline and online chat service responded to 1,855 calls and online chats.

People were supported through email.

Support calls, chats and emails responded to in 2019.



People visiting our website [lgbt.ie](http://lgbt.ie).

We ran 60 peer support group meetings in 2019.

Is Rainbow Muid support group was established in 2019 for LGBTI+ people seeking International Protection here in Ireland.

We continued to run two First Out groups, the Married Women's group, and the Straight Spouse group.

# Training



Total of 1,581 people trained.



Health and social care professionals trained.



NGO staff and volunteers trained across a range of services.



Company employees and managers trained.



University officers, staff, and student leaders trained.

## Additional key Training Activities:

- We developed the first national eLearning module on LGBTI+ awareness for the HSE.
- Rolled out LGBT Champions Programme, to over 100 health and social care professionals working with older people.

# Advocacy



Written submissions.



3 Meetings with Government Ministers & 1 Meeting with the Taoiseach.



Presentation to Oireachtas Committees



Press statements on a wide range of issues on LGBTI+ rights.

## Additional key Training Activities:

- We advocated for the full implementation of the **Children and Family Relationships Act 2015** and for the development of legislation on Assisted Human Reproduction (AHR) to cover all LGBTI+ families.
- We worked with the Department of Justice and Equality to hold community consultations on **National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019**, and on the **Incitement to Hatred Act** review.
- We worked with the **National Garda Diversity Unit** to support the rollout of the **Garda National Diversity and Integration Strategy 2019 to 2021**.

# Welcome message from Chairperson and CEO

**2019 was a year of growth for LGBT Ireland. It was a year where we set up new peer support groups, broadened our reach in training, expanded our team, and advocated for greater rights and recognition of LGBTI+ people in all aspects of Irish society.**

Our frontline services remain at the heart of what we do, and with more people contacting us through online means than ever before, we were able to provide support and information to thousands of LGBTI+ people, their family members, health professionals, teachers, and many others, on a range of issues relating to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. While much progress has been made in achieving greater visibility, rights and inclusion of LGBTI+ people, overcoming stigma and discrimination remains the greatest challenge for those who contacted us. Many still

struggled to accept themselves, or be accepted by family members or peers, while others faced discrimination in the workplace, in accessing services, or in their local communities.

Listening to LGBTI+ people's experiences, needs and challenges, helped us to support them. It also drove our policy responses, informed our training programmes, and shaped our strategic priorities. In 2019, much of our focus went to LGBTI+ people who face additional marginalisation and discrimination, particularly older members of our community, LGBTI+ people seeking International Protection here in Ireland, and LGBTI+ members of the Travelling Community. This led us to expand our Champions Training programme aimed at improving access to healthcare for older LGBTI+ people, to develop the Is Rainbow Muid group to support and advocate for those living in Direct Provision, and to play an active role in the National Action Group on LGBT+ Travellers & Roma.

As we witnessed the further regression in rights and protections of LGBTI+ people in many countries across the world including several European

Member States, we welcomed and supported the development of the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy by the Irish Government in 2019. This Strategy provides a great opportunity to tackle the prevailing stigma and discrimination faced by LGBTI+ people living in Ireland and increase the capacity of LGBTI+ organisations to provide sustainable services. But to do this the plan must be fully implemented and resourced, and this will be our top priority 'Ask' of the next Government.

Moving into 2020, we will continue to strive to make a positive and lasting impact on the lives of LGBTI+ people. We will campaign for legal reform that provides safety, security and inclusion for all. We will provide training and education that grows awareness and understanding of the needs of our diverse community. And we will reflect on what we've learned, as we begin the process of developing our new Strategic Plan.

Most of all we will be here to listen to those who need us and support them to be who they are.

We would like to thank the staff, volunteers, board members, network members, donors, partners, and supporters who help us to achieve greater visibility, rights and inclusion of LGBTI+ people across Ireland. We are enormously grateful to all of you for your support and dedication to equality.



**Paula Fagan**  
CEO



**Bernardine Quinn**  
Chairperson



# Who We Are

LGBT Ireland is a national charitable organisation which provides quality services to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex + (LGBTI+) people across the country. Informed by the issues and experiences raised through our frontline services, we also undertake extensive training and advocacy work to enhance the visibility, inclusion and rights of the LGBTI+ people living in Ireland.

# What We Do



## Our Services

**LGBT Ireland provides confidential and non-judgemental listening, support and information by phone, online, and face to face.**



Our services are accessed by LGBTI+ people, their family members, and a host of professionals who contact us for support and information on a range of issues relating to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

**The services we provide are:**

- **The National LGBT Helpline: 1890 929 539**
- **Online chat support through: [lgbt.ie](https://lgbt.ie) ↗**
- **[Peer to peer support groups](#) ↗**

In partnership with TENI we run the Gender Identity Family Support Line TENI, which is a confidential support and information helpline for family members of people who are Trans. All the volunteers on the support line have a family member who is Trans.



All our services operate to LGBT Ireland's national quality standard, which includes an extensive training programme and vetting procedures for all volunteers.

## Training and Education

LGBT Ireland provides training and education programmes to a range of public, voluntary and community and private services. In 2019, we developed the first national eLearning module on LGBTI+ awareness for the HSE and rolled out a specialist training programme for health and social care professionals working with older people.

Supporting those within our community who experience intersectional discrimination has been a key focus this year and we were delighted to have been part of the National Traveller and Roma action group to develop specialist training for Traveller and Roma organisations.

Rolling out these programmes will continue in 2020 alongside supporting other sectors to develop LGBTI+ education initiatives. This will include working with An Garda Socháná to develop training that will enhance their capacity to support and protect the LGBTI+ community.

## Advocacy

Informed by the issues and experiences raised in our frontline services, LGBT Ireland advocates for the equality and inclusion of all LGBTI+ people living in Ireland.

In 2019, we worked hard to highlight the lack of legal rights and protections for LGBTI+ families. Through public meetings, information events and detailed submissions to Government we advocated for the full implementation of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 and for the development of legislation on Assisted Human Reproduction (AHR) to cover all LGBTI+ families.

We were also proactive on calling for the development of robust Hate Crime legislation and worked with the Department of Justice and Equality to hold a consultation with members of the LGBTI+ community to feed into their review of the Incitement to Hatred Act. We advocated for better conditions for LGBTI+ Asylum seekers living in Direct Provision, for targeted measures to support LGBTI+ Travellers and for the inclusion of older LGBTI+ people in older people's services.

# Statistics from our Support Services for 2019

## Helpline and online support and information

Being able to talk to someone who will listen without judgement can be a lifeline for people who are confused or struggling with their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Our helpline volunteers are trained to deliver confidential, non-judgemental, listening, support and information on the phone and online.

Open daily, for 30 hours each week, our helpline and online chat service responded to 1,855 calls and online chats in 2019, with a further 276 people supported through our info email.

While the support and information offered from our helpline and online chat service are the same, the age profile and top issues of concern of those contacting each service, do vary.

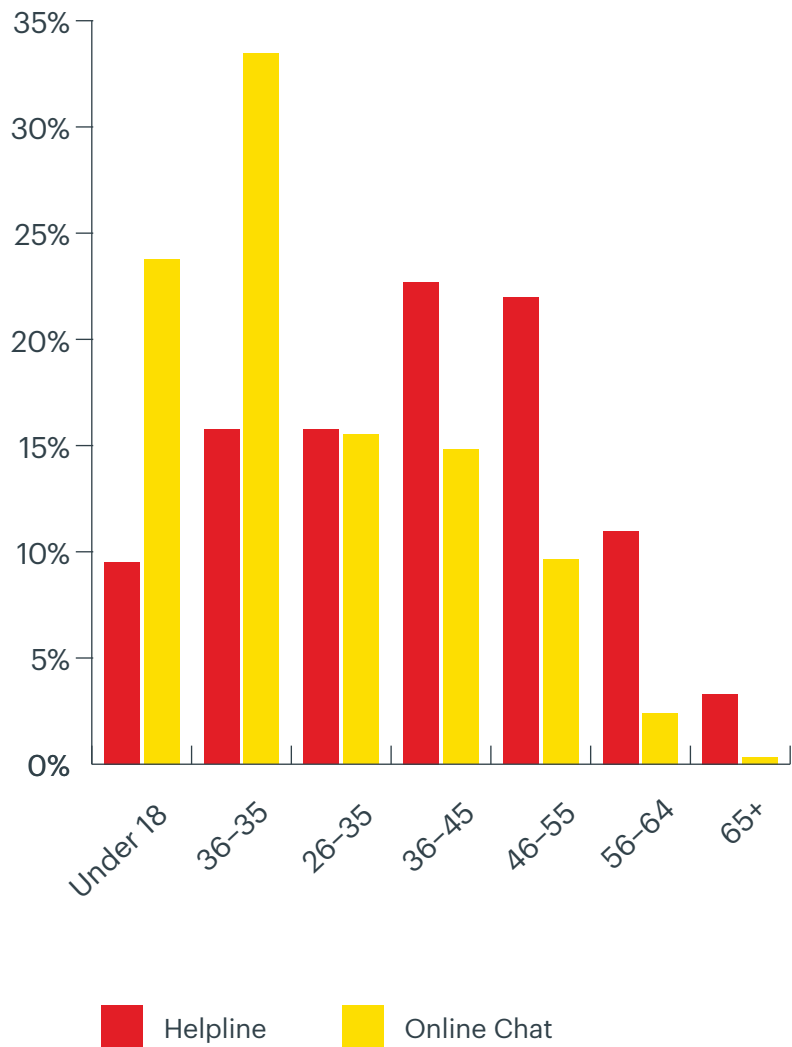
On the online chat support service, for those whose age was known, 73% were under 35 years of age

and almost 60% were under 25. For these young people support with 'coming out' as LGBTI+ was the most common reason for contacting the service, and relationship problems including with family members, also featured strongly as a reason for seeking support.

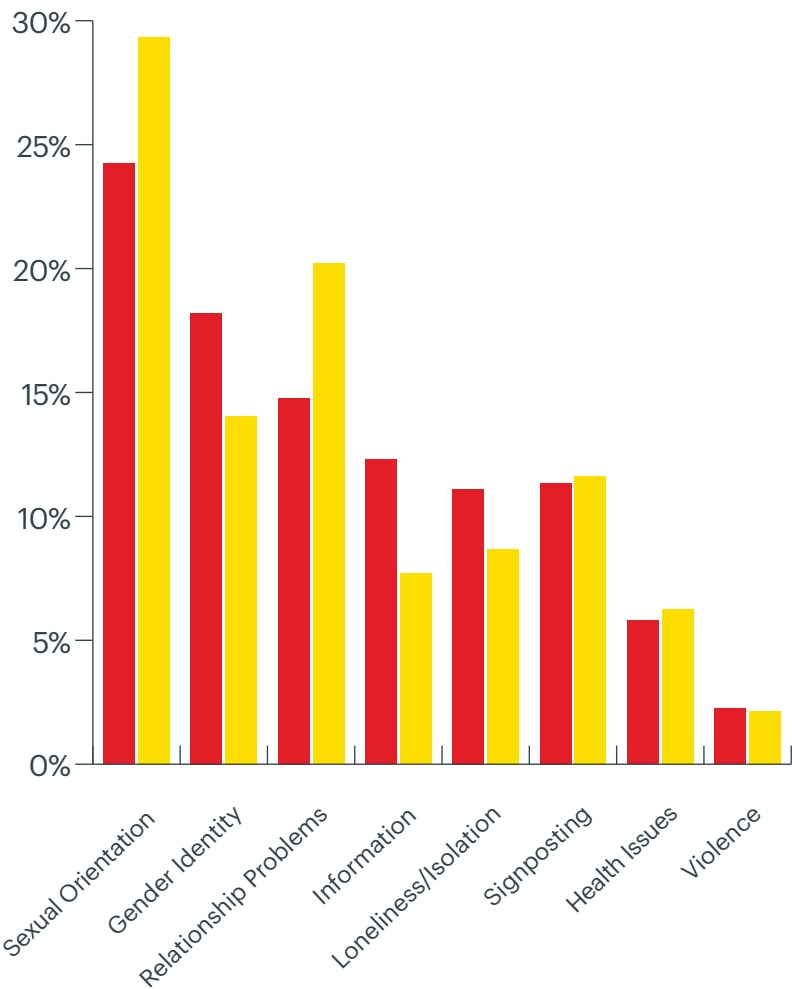
For those calling our helpline whose age was known, 67% were over 36 years with 14% over the age of 55. While the main reasons for calling were the same as for younger people, information on legal rights and dealing with loneliness and isolation featured more often in helpline calls.



**Table 1:** Age profile of people contacting our helpline and online chat service



**Table 2:** Reasons for contacting our helpline and online chat services



## Analysis of the main support and information sought

**“Often someone in this situation is likely to be afraid to talk to friends and family about this life-changing revelation, especially when we are uncertain and feel extremely vulnerable. Often the people that we are closest to... are the very people with whom we cannot dare to discuss this massive upheaval. In some cases, we tell the people closest to us and they are unsupportive.”**

— Member of Married Women’s Peer Support Group

Support with **sexual orientation** was the top reason for contacting the helpline and online chat service. People of all ages looked for support around the

discovery and acceptance of themselves, or a loved one, as being lesbian, gay, or bi+, or questioning of their sexual orientation. Many callers in this category had experienced mental health difficulties resulting from the stress of concealing their sexual orientation and from the stigma they had experienced or associated with being LGB+.

**Gender identity** and gender expression was the second most common reason for people contacting our services. For many callers under this category, simply being able to express their true gender identity or gender expression to another person, in confidence, and without judgement, was very significant. Many callers were not out to anyone about their true gender identity or expression and as a result felt extremely isolated and battled with depression and hopelessness about their situation. For others, who could be more open, the issues that arose related to coming out to family members including children, seeking information on medical services, and on trans support groups.

**Family and relationship problems** also featured very strongly in contacts. A range of issues



arose under this category. People in same-sex relationships looked for support with relationship problems including information on LGBTI+ friendly couple counselling. Many calls came from people in heterosexual marriages phoning for support when they or their spouse had come out as LGBTI+. Younger people needed support to cope with difficult reactions from parents or other family members or to explore how to tell their parents about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Information** about family rights and on immigration status was a key feature of the information calls and messages received in 2019. And while our helpline volunteers don't provide legal advice they listen to each person's situation and signpost them to the appropriate services and supports. We also worked in partnership with FLAC to develop a legal clinic on LGBTI+ family rights for early 2020.

**Loneliness & Isolation** was the main reason for contacting our service for 11% of callers and 9% of people contacting us through the online chat service. For some in this category fear of rejection

or being discriminated against prevented them from being open about their LGBTI+ identity and left them feeling very isolated and alone. For others who were out, it was the lack of LGBTI+ specific social supports particularly in rural areas which exacerbated feelings of loneliness and isolation.

**Signposting** to specialist supports and services is also a significant part of our service. Like other years many contacts in this category were from people looking for LGBTI+ friendly counsellors and psychotherapists. We also frequently signposted to LGBTI+ youth groups, TENI, Transparenci and LGBTI+ social and sporting groups.

**Health problems** were the main reason for seeking support in 6% of contacts and included mental, sexual and general health concerns. However, it is important to note that mental health concerns featured in many of the contacts covered in other categories. Very often LGBTI+ people struggling with their sexual orientation or gender identity reported feeling depressed, anxious, isolated or hopeless and it is not uncommon for people to be struggling with suicidal ideation and/or self-harm.



Contacts in relation to incidents of **violence** included disclosures of homophobic and transphobic bullying and abuse have increased on the previous year. Violence featured more often in the online chat service, with 40 chats. The support and information sought by

callers under this category included an opportunity to discuss the impact of the abuse, to consider personal safety measures, and to get information on supports including counselling to deal with trauma.

**Tables 3 & 4:** Gender identity and sexual orientation of people contacting our services

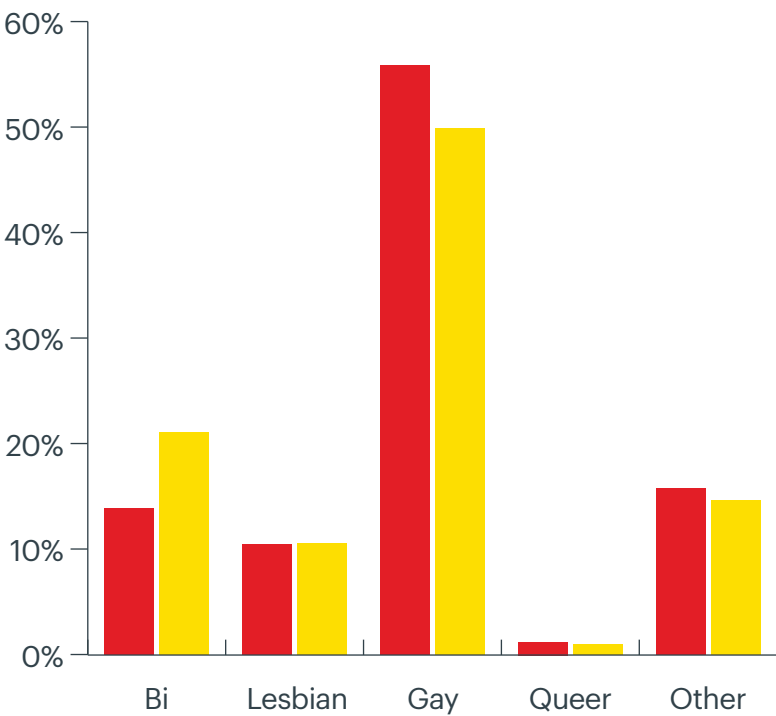
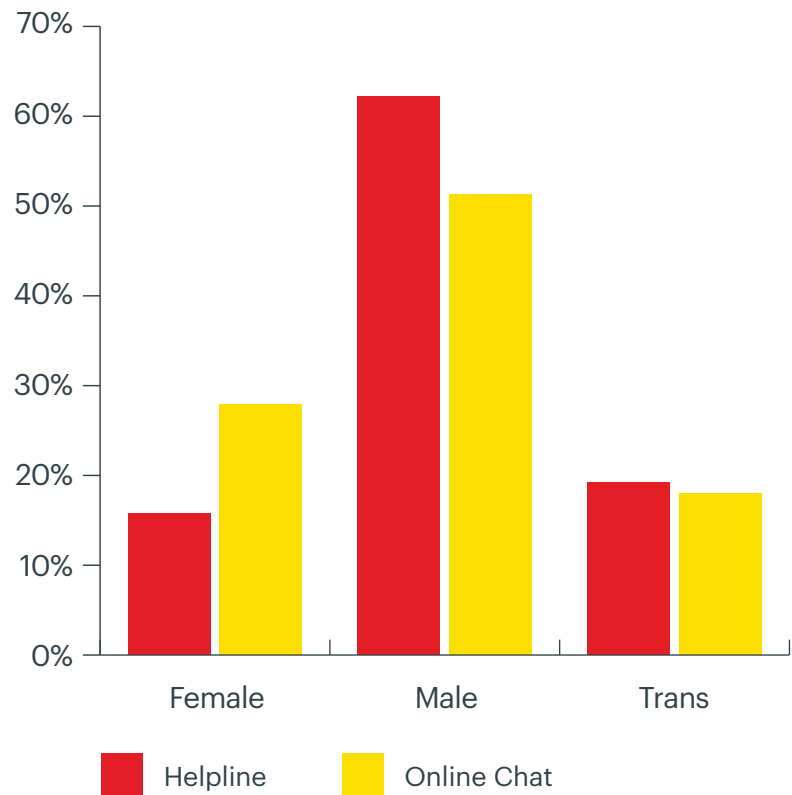


Table 3 & 4 on the previous page, shows the gender identity and sexual orientation of those accessing our services. For both services over half of all contacts were from people who identified as male, with a higher portion of male callers at 64%, than males using the online chat service at 53%. People identifying as Trans accounted for the second highest category of callers at 20% and 18% of contacts to the online chat service. 29% of online chats were from those identifying as female and 16% of online chats.

Over half of people contacting both services identified as Gay followed by 22% of online chats from those identifying as Bi and 16% of callers identifying as Bi. 16% of people contacting us identified other than as LGB and 11% as Lesbian.

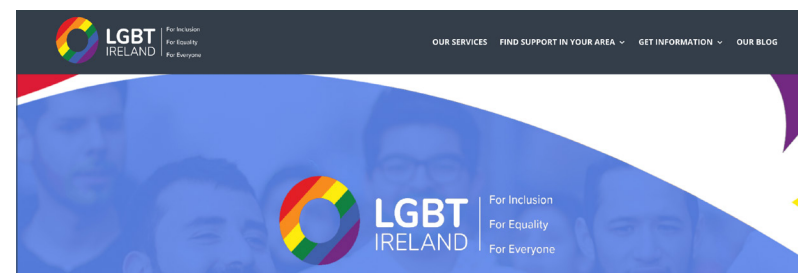
## Website Statistics

This year saw phenomenal growth in the number of visitors accessing information and support from our website [www.lgbt.ie](http://www.lgbt.ie) with 174,805 people visiting the site, an increase of 137% on 2018.

Lgbt.ie provides information on a range of LGBTI+ issues and details of supports around the country.

### In 2019, the top 5 pages:

1. **What is LGBT**
2. **Get Information: Sexuality & Romantic Identities**
3. **Our Services**
4. **Find Support in Your Area**
5. **Online Chat Support**



## Online Presence

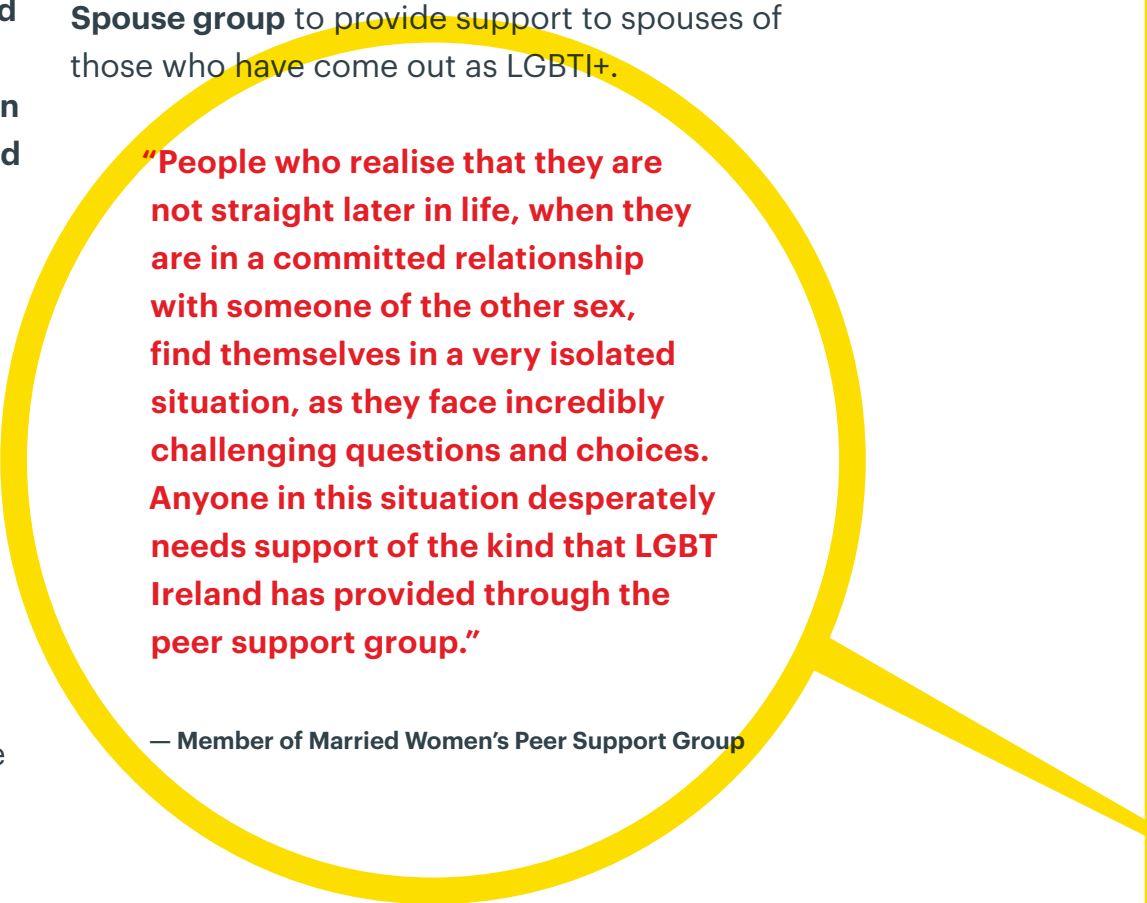
**Our online presence also grew further in 2019 through our blog and social media channels. The number of blog posts increased from 1 in 2018 to 17 in 2019, these posts covered a variety of topics and issues. The entire 'Get information' section on the website was updated as well as the 'Find Support in Your Area' section to include more supports around the country.**

Last year we also committed to posting regularly on our social media, sharing our news, articles and information. In 2019 we grew our Facebook page followers from 3,370 to 5,024. We also gained 1,167 new followers on our Twitter account.

## Peer support groups

To enhance the support available to those who face additional challenges to living openly as LGBTI+, we run **five targeted peer support groups**.

The **Married Women's group** offers support to those who are coming out as LGB within a heterosexual long-term relationship. This can be an extremely complex and difficult process and the group provides ongoing peer to peer support to women who are in this situation. We also run a **Straight Spouse group** to provide support to spouses of those who have come out as LGBTI+.



**"People who realise that they are not straight later in life, when they are in a committed relationship with someone of the other sex, find themselves in a very isolated situation, as they face incredibly challenging questions and choices. Anyone in this situation desperately needs support of the kind that LGBT Ireland has provided through the peer support group."**

— Member of Married Women's Peer Support Group

Our two **First Out groups** focus on supporting those who are struggling to come out or are confused about their sexual orientation. These monthly groups offer non-judgemental and supportive spaces for people of all ages to connect with others who are at a similar stage.

**Is Rainbow Muid** peer support group offers support to LGBTI+ people seeking international protection in Ireland. During 2019, between 12 and 20 LGBT+ asylum seekers living in Direct Provision attended the support group **each month**. Many members reported having to deal with threatening behaviours and harassment from other residents in their Direct Provision centres, which had an extremely detrimental impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

A core part of the peer support is building the social network and social capital of members of the group through the monthly participation of Irish LGBT+ allies from various professional and other backgrounds as part of the meeting day. This has resulted in the group building supportive friendships and practical supports as they navigate the fields of study and employment.




**“Since I have started to follow the support group Is Rainbow Muid I feel like I’m born again. The meetings we do means a lot to me because I found hope again for my life, I found motivation for every single day I wake up. I found on this support group a new family, new friends, a new life. Personally, I can’t wait until the next meeting.”**

— Member of Is Rainbow Muid Peer Support Group

# Training and Education in 2019





**“The training I received from LGBT Ireland on their Champions Training Programme gave me the insight, knowledge and confidence to change my practice for the better, allowing me to include all older people and their needs, in the care I provide. ‘Flying the rainbow flag’, while working with patients in the Hospital has not only benefited the patients, but has also unexpectedly made the working environment more inclusive for LGBT staff members. Many staff members confided that they had not felt represented previously but were now so proud that the hospital is striving to be an inclusive and safe place for all.”**

— Health Professional Dublin

LGBT Ireland’s training delivery in 2019 engaged a wide range of services in the public, community and voluntary and private sectors with a total of 1,581 people trained.

Knowledge, confidence and competence of frontline and management staff were strengthened to ensure services and workplaces become more accessible to and inclusive of greater numbers of people in the LGBTI+ community as well as their families and friends.

LGBT Ireland’s external training engaged NGOs working on older people’s issues, homelessness, youth support, the Traveller community, migrant and ethnic minority women, adults with intellectual disabilities and community-based low-cost counselling services.





**Figure 1:** Pride Event in Saint James Hospital organised by the staff who are LGBT Champions

In terms of health services reached, a range of large city hospitals like St. James, Beaumont, Tallaght University Hospital were successfully engaged through training and Journal Club inputs. Local, specialised hospitals and hospices like Cherry Orchard, Cappagh and St. Francis Hospice also accessed general LGBT+ awareness training as well as specific to the needs of older LGBT+ people.

With Ireland's healthcare services becoming more multicultural, managers and staff alike are reporting high levels of satisfaction with the learning opportunity and experience of LGBT+ awareness training in an Irish legal and cultural context.





626

Health and social care  
professionals trained



358

NGO staff and volunteers trained  
across a range of services



319

Company employees and  
managers trained



82

University officers, staff,  
and student leaders trained

## HSELand eLearning module

During 2019, LGBT Ireland led a steering group of national and regional LGBTI+ organisations, along with HSE personnel, to produce the first e-module on LGBT+ awareness in healthcare services.

The 45-minute e-module was launched on HSELand in July and feedback has been extremely positive. This project was funded and supported by the HSE's Sexual Health and Crisis and Pregnancy Programme.



**Figure 2:** Launch of eLearning Module for HSELand

## Training development work

A core part of the work of our Training Department is to innovate, evolve and support fledgling work for invisible groups within the LGBT+ community. As part of our Strategic Plan 2018-2020, LGBT Ireland placed strong priority on three cohorts of our community whom we feel are not yet experiencing the equality, inclusion and support which other LGBTI+ citizens and residents have come to expect of Ireland. These groups are LGBT+ Travellers & Roma, older LGBT+ people and LGBT+ people seeking international protection in Ireland.

During 2019, significant activity and impact can be evidenced as a result of 2018 development work. Looking forward to 2020 there is still immense work needed for those most marginalised in our community, so that they can experience more visible, more equal lives, free from fear and discrimination.

### **LGBT Traveller Awareness Training designed + delivered by National Action Group on LGBT+ Travellers & Roma:**

LGBT Ireland is active in the training sub-group of the national action group. During 2018 short training videos featuring three gay Travellers talking about different aspects of their lives were finalised. The videos focused on 'coming out', 'Traveller identity', 'mental health', 'messages to LGBT Travellers'. During 2019 the training workshop was designed and for the first time LGBT Traveller Awareness Training formed a key activity of Traveller Pride Week March 2019. Over 25 participants joined from over 10 Traveller organisations. This has generated a significant number of training requests from other Traveller organisations across the country. This training delivery is to be rolled out during 2020 subject to funding being secured. The target regions are Donegal, Mayo and Galway.

As part of 'National Coming Out Day' and 'Positive Mental Health Week' in October 2019, the National Action Group launched its 'Coming Out as an Ally to LGBT Travellers & Roma' campaign which runs through 2020 building allies within the Travelling

and settled communities in support of LGBT+ Travellers & Roma. This campaign lends visibility to and promotion of the training.

### **Older LGBT+ People: LGBT Champions Programme:**

National and International research consistently shows that older LGBTI+ people are reluctant to seek healthcare when they need it, due to a fear that healthcare professionals will not understand their needs or will discriminate against them, because of their LGBTI+ identity. This can have a significant detrimental impact on their health and wellbeing outcomes. To tackle these barriers to accessing healthcare, in 2018 LGBT Ireland developed the LGBT Champions Training for health and social care professionals working in older people's services.

Encouraged by winning an Equality Award from Social Innovations Ireland, during 2019 the Programme consolidated and trained over 100 LGBT

Champions in the year. This scale-able national programme is ready for expansion, with the next steps underway to pilot across the CHO 5 region, supported by the Slaintecare Integration fund.

Consultations during 2019 resulted in the selection of CHO 5 and substantial pre-development and promotional activity was carried out during the second half of 2019. During 2020 the aim of the Champions Programme is to reach 60 target services across the region. This will continue in 2021 and see the full spectrum of older people's services in CHO 5 reached.

An unexpected outcome of the Champions programme so far, has been the benefits reported by LGBTI+ staff. With a number of Champions reporting that LGBTI+ colleagues have felt supported by the inclusion measures introduced in services by Champions.

Older People's Services Sector networking and collaboration was also a significant feature of our work during 2019. LGBT Ireland strengthened partnerships and joint activities with key services like BNI, ALONE, Age Action during 2019 through presenting at seminars and delivery of specific targeted training to ALONE and BNI staff and befriender volunteer coordinators.

#### **LGBT+ Refugees and Asylum Seekers:**

LGBT Ireland, together with NFX and Queer Diaspora, organised and facilitated an **EU-Ireland Learning Exchange on LGBTI+ asylum seekers in Europe** held in Dublin in February. Important information and experience exchange took place to enhance organisations' ability to respond to the needs and issues facing this very vulnerable group in our community.

LGBT Ireland, in close working partnership with Irish Refugee Council, re-launched a monthly peer support group for LGBTI+ people seeking international protection in Ireland. The group is called **Is Rainbow Muid, We Are Rainbow**. The launch coincided with IDAHOT day on 17th May 2019 and saw Is Rainbow Muid launch their video "What in the world does IDAHOT mean?". The group also participated in Dublin Pride and Cork Pride hosting events to publicly raise awareness of their issues.

## Internal training

LGBT Ireland's frontline support services — the National LGBT Helpline, the Gender Identity Family Support Line and a range of peer support groups — require training and on-going learning standards system to ensure the quality, relevance and appropriateness of our services. These services are delivered by a body of approximately 80 volunteers across the country.

The on-going support system to our volunteers remained very active during 2019 in maintaining the quarterly local helpline coordinators forum to gauge training and other support needs of volunteers. LGBT Ireland's Annual Volunteer Conference was also successfully organised and executed and held in Westport in October. This three-day event provided tailored ongoing training and support on emerging issues from our services including expert inputs on Trans Healthcare, Sexual Health, the impact of Hate Crimes, and LGBT+ Family issues.

Also, during 2019, LGBT Ireland delivered peer support facilitation training to 8 volunteers who wish to take on additional volunteering duties in our monthly peer support groups. These include our First Out groups, the Married Women's Group, the 'Straight Talking' Spouse Group and Is Rainbow Muid.



# Advocacy





## LGBTI+ family rights

Much of our advocacy work in 2019 focused on raising awareness of the need to improve the rights and recognition of LGBT+ families living in Ireland. Our work had a dual focus:

Firstly, to advocate for the full implementation of Children and Families Relationship Act (CFRA) 2015 to provide legal certainty for those families who are covered by the provisions of the Act.

Over the year we organised a series of information events to support LGBTI+ parents and those planning parenthood to better understand the legislation. We also produced and disseminated an information guide for LGBTI+ parents and met with key stakeholders including the Civil Registrars office and the Department of Health to outline the specific needs of LGBTI+ families. In November we were delighted to see the commencement orders for Parts 2 and 3 of the CFRA signed into law with effect from 4th May 2020, which will bring the full Act into operation.



**Figure 5:** Legal Seminar on LGBTI+ Families, organised by Outlaw and Lesbian Lawyers Networks in conjunction with LGBT Ireland



Secondly, we sought to raise awareness of the many families that will fall outside the scope of the CFRA and to advocate for the development of broader legislation to recognise all LGBTI+ families. We developed a detailed submission on the General Scheme of Assisted Human Reproduction Bill 2017 and presented at a hearing of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health to feed into their pre-legislative scrutiny of the Scheme. There is much awareness and education work still needed on the experiences and impact of the lack of rights for LGBTI+ families and which we will continue in 2020.

## Hate crime and hate speech legislation

Hate crime and hate speech is a huge concern for our community. Through our services we have heard of people's experience of being shouted at, threats to 'out' people, offensive graffiti on homes, and threats of physical. These incidences have taken place in public spaces, on public transport, in school,

in workplaces, as well as online through social media, websites and dating Apps.

These incidents can have a deep and lasting impact on those who are victimised, leaving them feeling unsafe and fearful of further and escalated harassment. Many of those who have been targeted, report that it put a significant strain on their mental health, impacted on their ability to attend school or work and negatively affected their intimate relationships and family life.

To support the development of hate crime and hate speech legislation, we organised a consultation event for the LGTBI+ community in Dublin in December 2019 and developed a detail

submission to feed into the Department of Justice and Equality's consultation on hate speech. We also took part in the Garda Diversity consultation event in December, on the development of an implementation plan to support the delivery of the Garda Diversity and Integration Strategy 2019 – 2021.



# LGBT+ people seeking international protection in Ireland

During 2019, LGBT Ireland advanced the visibility, awareness and representation of those members of our LGBT+ global family seeking international protection in Ireland. To strengthen the collaboration and understanding on these issues both in Ireland and in Europe, LGBT Ireland initiated or co-organised a number of events through the year:

- In February, together with NFX, Queer Diaspora and Outhouse organised an EU-Irish Learning Exchange on LGBT+ asylum seekers in Europe.
- In May to mark IDAHOBt, we launched the [video](#) 'What in the world does IDAHOBt mean?' which featured members of Is Rainbow Muid.
- Together with Cork Pride, Is Rainbow Muid group held a video screening/awareness-raising Q+A event in Gay Project Cork as part of Cork Pride 2019.



We also made a detailed submission to the Oireachtas Justice Committee on the specific challenges and risks LGBT+ asylum seekers face. The committee was seeking to better understand the experiences, challenges and negative impact of these living in the Direct Provision system. In a survey among those LGBT Ireland support the following priority needs were identified:

**"Need direct provision system to end"**

**"Need to be able to breathe and be ourselves – we have escaped from oppression and now we face it here once again"**

**"Need staff to be sensitized to the needs and vulnerabilities of LGBT+ residents – currently management turns a blind eye to threatening behaviour and harassment"**

**"Need more LGBT+ together in the same hostel so that we can support each other"**

**"Need to be close to LGBT+ supports"**

**"Need help to cope with internalised oppression and repressed anger and fear"**

**"Need counselling"**

These priorities inform the key issues of LGBT Ireland's advocacy work in this area, which are:

**Vulnerability assessments** need to be carried out with each applicant for international protection with specific mention and description of the legal and societal culture towards LGBTQI rights in Ireland and the rights and protections available to LGBT+ asylum seekers under international protection in Ireland in line with EU Reception Conditions Directive.

The proposed **"New Standards on Direct Provision"** need to be published and include a strong independent oversight and enforcement mechanism. The enforcement of some of the new standards requires LGBT+ sensitization training and requires funding.

LGBT+ asylum seekers needs to be **accommodated in centres in cities like Cork, Galway and Dublin where LGBT+ supports exist**. These support services are extremely important to support positive mental health and well-being in LGBT+ asylum seekers.

IPO need to work to **end the system of direct provision** and replace it with a system which focus on Reception Centres liable to Reception Standards along the lines of the current propose "New Standards".

Our nationwide  
team of volunteers

## Our nationwide team of volunteers

**Our dedicated team of volunteers are the heart of our organisation. Working tirelessly to deliver services to thousands of people throughout the country, all year round.**

Alongside delivering support and information, volunteers also took part in awareness raising campaigns, trained up new volunteers, and supported the extension of our services.

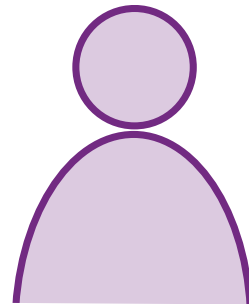
A highlight of the year is our annual volunteer conference, when our helpline volunteers from across the country come together to learn, network and support each other in the amazing work that they do.



## What Our Volunteers Have to Say

"It's a really special thing being able to put someone, who might have taken months to pick up the phone or send a chat, at ease... and to help them not feel so alone for even 10 minutes, it puts into perspective what you can do to change someone's life."

"I have really enjoyed the last year of volunteering. The number of people who will say that talking out their problem has helped..... I have found it all so rewarding."

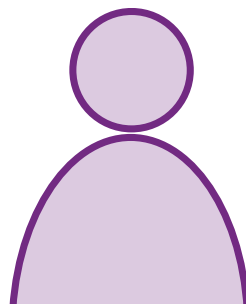


"Volunteering with LGBT Ireland has given me invaluable skills for understanding, empathising with and supporting others..... being a part of the work of LGBT Ireland makes me feel optimistic and proud of Ireland's LGBTI community."

**"As a volunteer for the Gender Identity Family Support line, I have loved being a listening ear to parents who are going through the same experience that I have been through."**

**"Volunteering with the helpline has really given me a sense of belonging within our community. It is a privilege to be part of such a vital service."**

**"I have been a volunteer with LGBT Ireland and I can honestly say it is a fantastic organisation that really puts the needs of the LGBT community at the heart of everything they do. Working as a volunteer has been an extremely rewarding experience and has really taught me that just being there to listen is an incredibly powerful and often overlooked support."**



**"I experienced how working in a group of volunteers became an opportunity for my personal development. I give my best in both my professional and voluntary work, but I often have the same, if not more, satisfaction and fulfilment from volunteer work."**



## Our Staff and Board of Directors

**As well as our wonderful volunteer team, LGBT Ireland consists of our staff team and Board of Directors.**

In 2019, the staff team was made up of our CEO, Training Coordinator, Champions Programme Coordinator, and Administrative Officer. We were also able to employ a part-time Online Development Officer, to support the development and rollout of our eLearning programme for the HSE and a part-time Policy officer through NUIG's Human Rights Degree Internship programme. All of staff reported directly to the CEO, with the CEO reporting to the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors consisted of nine Board members in 2019. Six of the Directors work, or volunteer in, LGBTI+ organisations or services around the country, bring vital regional and local knowledge to inform our organisation's national focus and strategy. The other three Directors work outside the sector bring an independent perspective to the Board. All of the Directors have a wealth of skills and experience including in, delivering frontline services, law reform, governance, and strategic communications. The Board met six times in 2019, including two full day sessions to review progress on our Strategic Plan and to plan for further recruitment to the Board.

## Working in partnership

### **Working in partnership is central to LGBT Ireland and the work we do.**

Alongside working with our network members throughout 2019, we also worked in partnership with other LGBTI+ organisations and groups, including with TENI, BeLonG To, NXF, Gay Men's Health Network, Dublin LGBTQ+ Pride, GOSSH and LGBT Health South East, pooling our collective knowledge and experience to develop training, services and policy responses that reflect and respond to the needs of our diverse community.

Many mainstream organisations also collaborated with us on projects in 2019, these included events and initiatives with Age Action, ALONE, Befriending Ireland, INMO, Sage Advocacy, and Samaritans

Ireland, adding significant expertise and a broader reach to our training and services.



**Figure 6:** LGBT Ireland and Age Action joint awareness event for International Day of Older Persons 1st Oct.

# Acknowledgments

## Our Network Member Organisations

**To our amazing network member organisations: Gay Project, LINC, Outcomers, Outwest, LGBT Kilkenny, LGBT Dublin and AMACH LGBT! we are enormously grateful to you for your dedication to supporting the LGBTI+ community and to supporting us.**



# Our Funders

**LGBT Ireland are very grateful to the funders who have supported our work this year. We could not have continued to deliver and grow our services, training and advocacy initiatives without your help. Thanks to POBAL, HSE's National Office of Suicide Prevention, Social Innovation Fund, HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme, Department of Justice and Equality, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, The Community Foundation for Ireland, and the National Lottery Fund.**

