



Coming out in care

Information for children and young
people on their Sexual Orientation
and Gender Identity



empowering people in care

This leaflet is for LGBTI+ children and young people living in care and it was created by LGBTI+ care experienced children and young people.

In this leaflet we have provided tips, resources and rights you have that you may find useful.

Tips on Coming Out In Care

1. Who can you come out to?: Someone you trust, e.g.:

- A friend
- Family member
- Foster Carer
- Social Worker or Residential Staff.

It is **YOUR CHOICE** who you come out to - never feel pressured. You may come out on impulse, but planning might help you feel better prepared.

2. Make a Plan:

- Think of the right time
- Think of a safe place
- Think of the right person



3. Plan For Afterwards

Coming out can be tough even when it's positive

- Remember your self-care
- Remember to relax and reflect
- It may go well, or it may not go as well as you had hoped

“You may have to come out over and over throughout your life, but it does get easier”



Children and young people in Care Do Have a Right To Privacy

You have a right to your privacy, that includes a right to come out to someone, and not to be outed by anyone else.

“Being LGBTI+ is not a child protection issue”

‘Outing Someone’

Outing is the act of disclosing an LGBTI+ person’s sexual orientation or gender identity without that person’s consent.

This includes sharing information about somebody’s identity with other staff members without their consent.

The negative impacts of “Outing” are:

- Mistrust
- Lack of privacy
- Trauma
- Impact on mental health
- Isolation
- Anger
- Judgement.

“People put us at risk by outing us and breaking our right to privacy”
(EPIC LGBTI+ focus group)

If I am being bullied over being gay, what should I do?

Talk to someone you trust.

If I am unhappy about my treatment after coming out in care, what are my rights? **Contact EPIC.**

Living in residential care



Coming out in any setting might not be an easy thing to do and coming out in a residential home can make it a bit more difficult. Having many staff as well as other children and young people in your home-life can make it daunting to come out.

The same rules apply if you want to plan your coming out process (choosing the right time, the right person, feeling safe). However, there are some things to consider about coming out in residential care that may need to be addressed with your keyworker/ staff:

1. Let the staff member know that you do or do not want this important information shared with other professionals. Your voice is important in this and your privacy needs to be respected. It is your right.
2. If you have only recently moved into your residential home, you may not feel close to any staff member or young person yet. It is perfectly normal to wait as long as you want to come out to someone you trust.
3. Other children and young people may put pressure on you to come out. You have a right to your privacy and if you feel like you are being pressured to disclose information about yourself, speak to your keyworker about this. Deciding to come out should be your decision alone.

“You may have come out to a previous foster carer/ staff member and now you have moved, where you may not have contact with the person you came out to anymore. This can be disheartening, and you may feel like coming out was pointless. In reality, you now have an understanding of what felt right and went well when you came out, as well as what you might want to change. Your experience can help shape the next time you come out when you are ready”

Being LGBTI+ in Rural Ireland

Testimonial:

Care experienced person (21):

“When I came out in a rural area it was so taboo, it (being gay) was not something you really heard about or saw. I had to face a lot of prejudice, violence and bullying in school and at home. I didn’t have access to supports, like I did when I moved to the city”

“When I lived in my town, there were no support groups and I didn’t know anyone who lived there that was like me.”



Rural supports:

Youth Work Ireland

youthworkireland.ie/youth-work-centre/lgbt-youth-project

SpunOut

Spunout.ie/voices/experiences/growing-up-lgbti-rural-ireland

Remember:

You are not alone! You are part of a wider LGBTI+ community in Ireland, and you are also part of the care experienced community. You will find your people, and you get to choose your family.

There is also a whole LGBTI+ online community. You can access information on www.belongto.org

Tip: If you are on BeLonG To’s website, you can hit the “EXIT” button and it will shut down the webpage immediately.

Your Rights Explained:

Your rights are protected under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

You have the right to:

Non-discrimination - this means that no child can be discriminated against, and no child should be treated unfairly for any reason, including on the basis of your sexual orientation, gender identity or any other status. (Article 2)

Survival and development – this means that you have access to basic services and to equality of opportunity in order for you to achieve your full potential in the best way possible. (Article 6)

Be heard – this means your views and opinions must be listened to and respected in all matters concerning you. (Article 12)

Privacy – You have a right to others keeping your information private, which includes your sexual orientation and gender identity. Staff, carers, social workers or others should not Out you without your consent. The law must protect children’s privacy, family, home, communications and reputation from any attack. (Article 16)

Resources for children and young people preparing to leave care:

If you are LGBTI+ in care, you might feel a little nervous about leaving care and what LGBTI+ supports are available to you. These services should be friendly and understanding of your care experience as well as your sexual orientation or gender identity.

Some resources below:

- EPIC
- BeLonG To
- SpunOut
- LGBT.ie
- Outhouse
- Pavee Point
- Queer Diaspora
- Childline
- Queer Housing Dublin
- TENI
- OutWest
- Jigsaw Online Supports (www.jigsaw.ie)

Text About It (**Text HELLO to 50808**) (www.text50808.ie)

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phone: 01 8727661 **web:** www.epiconline.ie