



HSE RAINBOW BADGE

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT (2024)



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The HSE Rainbow Badge Initiative (RBI) gives healthcare staff a way to show that their place of work offers open, non-judgemental and inclusive care for all who identify as LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Queer and Intersex; the + simply means inclusive of all identities, regardless of how people define themselves). People may use “queer” to describe a sexual orientation or gender identity that is not heterosexual or cisgender. For example, people who are lesbian, gay, asexual, or transgender may identify as queer. Some people may choose the term queer to express their sexual orientation or gender identity. However, in the past, some used this word as a harmful slur against LGBTQI+ communities. For this reason, some people may still view it as offensive. A glossary of terminology developed by the National Social Inclusion Office (NSIO) is included as appendix one.



Author note: We have chosen to use the acronym LGBTQI+; ‘lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender; queer/questioning with + signifying we are inclusive of all sexual and gender identities not included in the LGBTQI+ acronym’. We have used this acronym to refer broadly to all types of sexuality and gender-diverse individuals. We acknowledge that each of these letters (and many more) represents a distinct patient population with individualised healthcare needs (as adapted by Roth et al, 2021). It must be noted that language in this area is constantly evolving and the authors have used the terms commonly used at this time and acknowledge that these terms may change over time.

The HSE Rainbow Badge Initiative originated at Evelina London Children’s Hospital in the UK. It was adapted for the HSE by Linn Dara Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services in Dublin. Its simple objective is to make a positive difference by promoting a message of inclusion.



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“There will not be a magic day when we wake up and it’s now okay to express ourselves publicly. We make that day by doing things publicly until it’s simply the way things are.”

TAMMY BALDWIN US SENATOR, WISCONSIN



Foreword

This toolkit resource is intended as a guide to implementing the HSE Rainbow Badge Initiative in your service or setting. The Badge is a powerful symbol of support and acceptance, but it does not stand alone. The Badge is the end point of a process of education and engagement with issues and supports in the LGBTQI+ community.

It is an acknowledgement that we, as healthcare providers own a responsibility to be informed and aware, and to develop a practice of healthcare which is both of those things. If you intend to implement the Rainbow Badge in your healthcare setting we hope that this updated toolkit will guide you through the process and signpost you to other useful resources.

The HSE Rainbow Badge Initiative is one of the ways we, as a service are working towards making “that day” a reality for our colleagues and service users. The badge recognises diversity and acceptance; progress that has been made and the work still to be done.

The model is underpinned by a commitment to education, awareness raising and to creating safe, supportive learning and working environments for those who engage with the initiative so that our allyship is authentic and our service users receive the appropriate, compassionate care that is their right.

This toolkit is an updating of the great work undertaken by Linn Dara, CAMHS in bringing the Rainbow Badge from the NHS to their service for children and young people. This iteration in Dublin and Midlands incorporates adults and older people and minority groups that may experience additional challenges such as Traveller and Roma and those in the International Protection Application System. The updating of this resource has been a collaborative initiative between Linn Dara, CAMHS, CHI and HSE Dublin and Midlands and the HSE National Social Inclusion Office.

It is a timely revision in light of the findings of the 2024 research “Being LGBTQI+ In Ireland” by Agnes Higgins, which highlights statistics regarding the deteriorating mental health of our younger LGBTQI+ population and our Transgender population. Their sense of being unsafe in their communities, of being reluctant to disclose their sexual identity, the effect of hate speech on social media are issues for all of us. It is the responsibility of everyone to foster a safe and nurturing society where people can live their truest, best lives.

We see in the research that the rate of suicidal ideation and completion is significantly higher in the LGBTQI+ community than in comparative heterosexual cohorts and that the time of greatest risk is aged 15. This statistic reinforces the need for the work of Linn Dara, CAMHS and CHI on the rainbow badge to be supported and continued, so that our young people, are supported in their developing identities and sense of self.

Similarly the work in Dublin and Midlands region to embed the rainbow badge across our services for adults and older people, Traveller and Roma, and ethnic minority groups is critically important to improving the experience of healthcare for our service users.

I am heartened by the statistics in relation to healthcare and healthcare provision which are markedly improved since the same questions were asked in the previous report in 2016. However we cannot allow ourselves to grow complacent. With a third of respondents feeling a responsibility to educate their healthcare provider on issues relating to their sexuality, we must shift that responsibility back onto ourselves. Education, compassion and inclusion are the cornerstones of care, and I am proud to lead a service that works with such commitment towards this goal.

This resource provides a mechanism for embedding the inclusion of LGBTQI+ service users and colleagues into our work sites and settings. With minor adaptations it also has the potential to be used in the community with our delivery partners and grant aided organisations. This will ensure that the core values of inclusion and respect which underpin this toolkit, and indeed the work itself, are replicated as widely as possible.

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MARGARET MCQUILLAN *Head of Service Health and Wellbeing*

KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE HSE RAINBOW BADGE INITIATIVE

Key Principles

The HSE Rainbow Badge Initiative is a way for HSE staff to demonstrate that they are aware of the issues that LGBTQI+ people can face when accessing healthcare.

The badge itself is intended to be a simple visual symbol identifying its wearer as someone an LGBTQI+ person can feel comfortable talking to about issues relating to their sexuality or gender identity. It shows that the wearer is there to listen without judgement and signpost to further support if needed.

The model emphasises that wearing a badge is a responsibility. We provide basic education and access to resources for staff who want to sign up to the project. The information we provide outlines the challenges that LGBTQI+ people can face in relation to accessing healthcare and the degree of negative attitudes which are still found. However further resources and educational opportunities exist which should be considered also to offer the best possible support with the available resources. When an individual signs up to wear a badge, they acknowledge why the project is needed and what their responsibility entails.

Committing to the project emphasises that you promote an environment that is open, tolerant and inclusive. The aim of this initiative is to actively break down barriers which LGBTQI+ people may face within the HSE and HSE supported services and organisations. We recommend the designation of a “go to” person who will drive the initiative and act as a resource for signposting further learning opportunities or updates to policy relating to LGBTQI+ people.

The following information may give you some ideas to secure buy in from your wider team.

Making a Business Case for the HSE Rainbow Badge

The HSE Rainbow Badge initiative gives people a way to show that their place of work or their community space offers open, non-judgemental support for all who identify as LGBTQI+. Its simple objective is to make a positive difference by promoting a message of inclusion. There are also key outcomes specifically related to healthcare:

- Improving population health
- Improving quality, safety and value
- Improved health outcomes for LGBTQI+ Service users
- Alignment with core values and policy



National LGBT+ Irish Strategy (2019-2021)

Outlines a requirement that services are required to respond to the needs of LGBTQI+ young people and this includes, training, information and inclusiveness.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/bab0fe-launch-of-the-lgbti-inclusion-strategy-2019-2021/>

HSE Diversity Inclusion and Equality Strategy (2019-2024)

Identifies a goal of increased staff awareness and inclusivity measures for all employees, and an overall goal of having diversity champions throughout the health service.

We have worked to build a model that emphasises the substance behind the symbol. We are very keen to see the badges, and what they represent, spread across the HSE with all of the relevant resources in place, educational and otherwise, to make it meaningful and safe for LGBTQI+ to engage.

This toolkit provides information about the initiative and some tools to facilitate adoption across other HSE organisations. It may also be a useful resource for organisations outside of the HSE, with small adaptations to the badge and materials.

<https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/procedures-guidelines/diversity-equality-and-inclusion>



The Progress Badge

In 2023, following feedback and consultation with service users, the HSE Rainbow Badge was updated to the Intersex-Inclusive flag. Daniel Quasar (American artist and designer) building on leadership from Amber Hikes (American Civil Rights Activist) in 2018 created the Pride Progress flag (<https://progress.gay/>). In 2021, Valentino Vecchietti of Intersex Equality Rights adapted the Pride Progress flag design to incorporate the intersex flag, creating this Intersex-Inclusive Pride flag in 2021 (<https://www.consortium.lgbt/intersex-inclusive-flag/>).

- **Black and brown stripes:** Represent people of colour within the LGBTQIA+ community and those lost to violence or illness such as HIV/AIDS.
- **Light blue, pink, and white stripes:** Represent the transgender community.
- **Purple circle in a yellow triangle:** The purple circle inside the yellow rectangle represents the intersex community.
- **White, pink, and light blue stripes:** Represents boys, pink represents girls, white represents those who are transitioning, feel that they have a neutral gender, or identify as intersex.
- **Purple stripe:** Represents those who identify as a combination of genders or who do not identify as any gender.



www.hrc.org/resources/lgbtq-pride-flags

Original core flag colours and their meaning:

Red - Life

Orange - Healing

Yellow - Sunlight

Green - Nature

Blue - Serenity & harmony

Purple - Spirit

See details of core flag colours as well as new additions here.

www.hrc.org/resources/lgbtq-pride-flags

The word “progress” in the new flag isn’t only about adding the new colours to it. It’s also because of the shape, which differs from the original design of horizontal stripes only. The Progress Pride Flag shows the white, pink, baby blue, black, and brown stripes in a triangle shape, with the old six-colour rainbow stacked next to them.

This was done to convey the separation in meaning and shift of focus to how important the issues represented on the left are. The placement of the new colours in an arrow shape is meant to convey the progress still needed.

The young people consulted by Linn Dara CAMHS and Linn Dara Schools in updating the HSE Rainbow Badge requested that the HSE Logo not dilute the integrity of the flag structure and so the logo is positioned out to the side, demonstrating allyship.

This project has the support of the Health Service Executive, Royal College of Physicians in Ireland, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Irish Association of Emergency Medicine, Mental Health Nurse Managers, Irish Institute of Mental Health Nursing, Nursing & Midwifery Planning and Development Unit, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and Children’s Health Ireland. We would like to thank BelongTo (The National LGBTQI+ youth organisation), LGBT Ireland and TENI and the HSE National Social Inclusion Office for their advice and support in developing this project.

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With support from
the HSE National
Social Inclusion Office

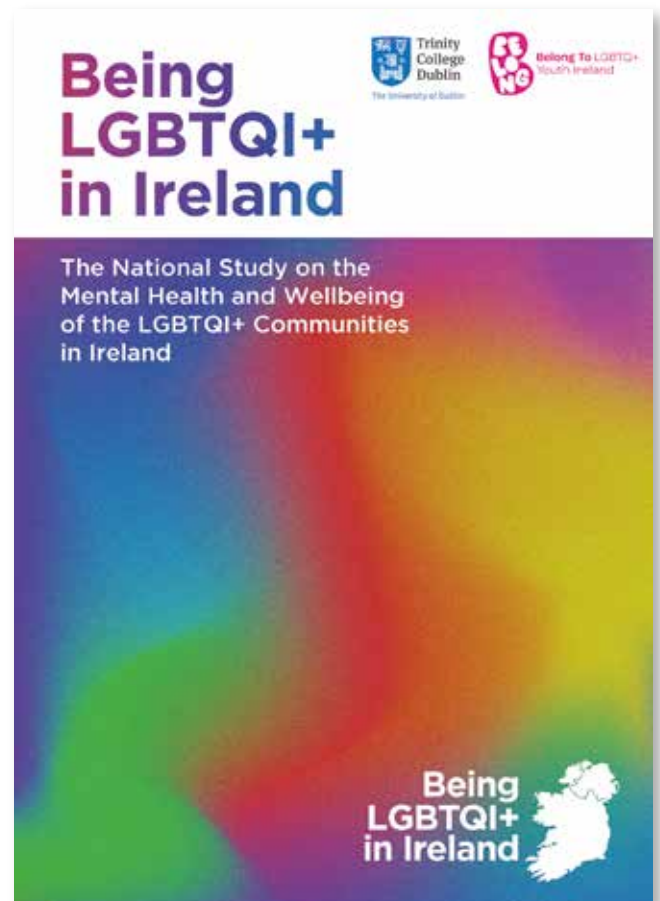


WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Mental health issues such as depression and anxiety are significantly more common in people who identify as LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex; + denoting inclusion of all identities). Many people still feel afraid to disclose their sexual or gender identity - being unable to do so often increases their risk of physical and mental health problems.

Research carried out by BelongTo and Trinity College Dublin has shown that, sadly, negative attitudes towards LGBTQI+ people remain prevalent within the HSE; as a result, LGBTQI+ people can be reluctant to disclose their sexual and / or gender identity to healthcare workers, affecting the quality of the care they receive. These barriers lead to marked inequalities in healthcare for this extremely vulnerable group of people.

In 2016 a landmark study, "The LGBT+ Ireland Report: national study of the mental health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in Ireland" highlighted significantly increased risk to the mental health of the LGBTQI+ community combined with substantial challenges in accessing appropriate and compassionate healthcare. The 2024 iteration of this research: "Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland", highlighted significantly improved relationships with healthcare providers/provision, however the mental health statistics associated with an LGBTQI+ identity remain stark with levels of mental health, deteriorating since the last research in 2016 for all groups, from children and young people to adults and older people.



Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland 2024

(The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Community in Ireland)



This research indicated that LGBTQI+ people in Ireland face high levels of self-harm, suicidality and increased levels of depression, anxiety and stress since the previous study in 2016. The two most vulnerable cohorts within the statistics are children and young people and the Trans community.

The participants in the research were aged between 14 and 84 with the greatest number of responses coming from the 26-35 year old category.

The key findings across the total number of participants in terms of mental health makes for stark reading.

27% experienced severe or extremely severe symptoms of depression

34% experienced severe or extremely severe symptoms of anxiety

23% experienced severe or extremely severe symptoms of stress

52% had self-harmed

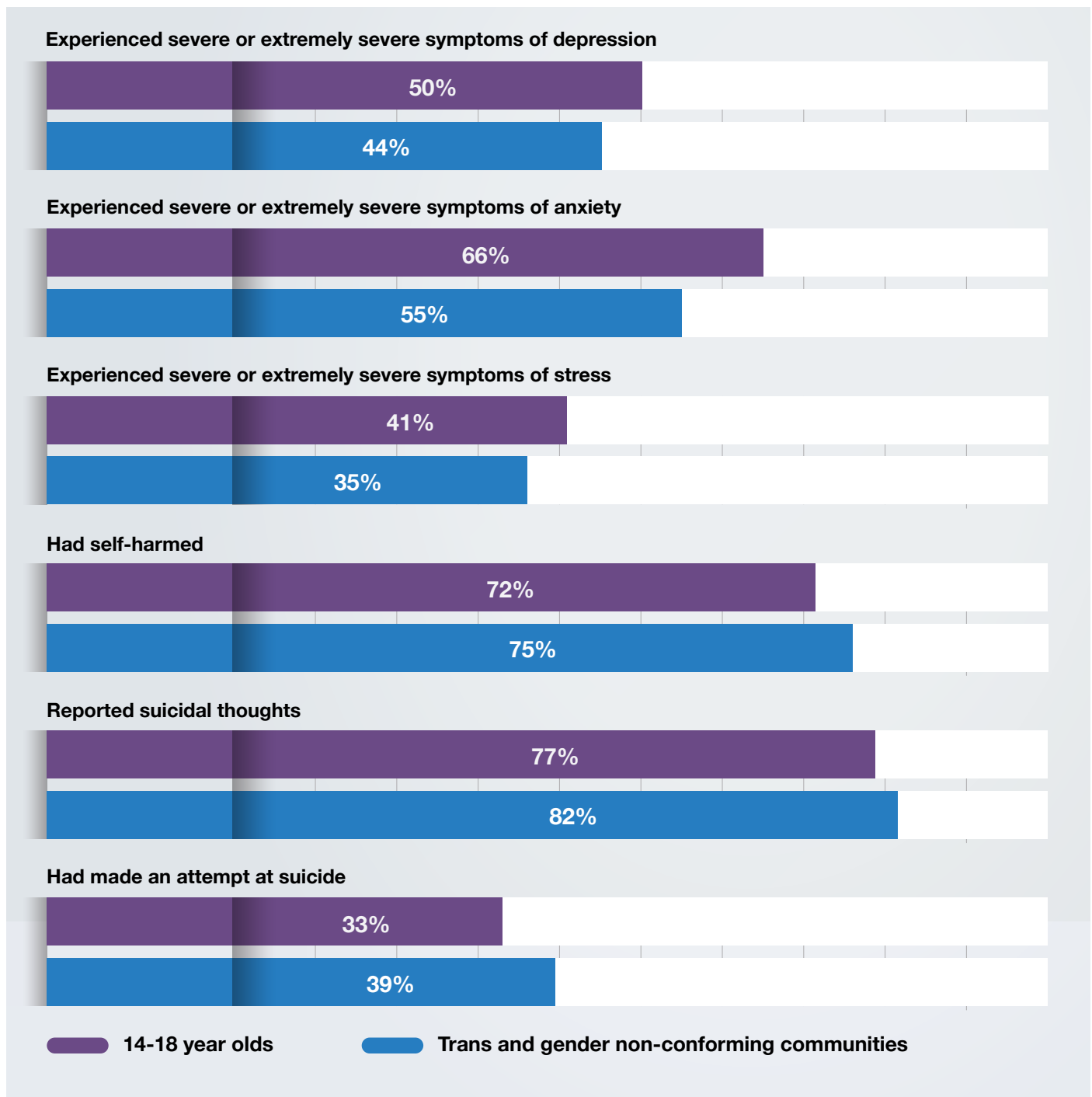
64% reported suicidal thoughts

26% had made an attempt at suicide



Children & Young People

These percentages increase in relation to the youth population (aged 14-25) and gender non-confirming communities.



This research would seem to confirm that for different populations within the LGBTQI+ community there are specific or additional challenges.

While this particular research does not look at the challenges for Migrant groups or Traveller and Roma, there are findings from other research that confirm these challenges are prevalent.

What is most worrying in that regard is that one of the key supports identified in the 2024 research for the LGBTQI+ community, is that sense of belonging within that community, and for some groups that belonging is not readily available.

Adults and Older People

In Ireland, older LGBTQI+ people grew up in a time when homosexuality was considered a mental illness and when sexual relationships between same-sex couples was considered a criminal act, immoral and sinful (LGBT Ireland, 2018). One in 10 older LGBTQI+ people have seriously considered ending their life and 5% have self-harmed. Heterosexuality was seen as the only legitimate sexual orientation and LGBTQI+ people were marginalised, rendered invisible and socially excluded.

The report 'Visible Lives' (2011) details stigma, marginalisation and discrimination that older LGBTQI+ people have faced in their lives and the social and emotional impacts this adversity had on their lives and indeed continues to have for some. This includes, rejection by family/friends, isolation/loneliness, loss, grief including disenfranchised grief and high levels of substance misuse and emotional struggles as a means to cope with adversity.

As part of the HSE's Peoples Strategy (2019-2024) there are focussed goals on diversity and inclusion, with one in particular to make the HSE LGBTQI+ aware and inclusive. The other goal is to make the HSE an employer of choice for individuals who identify as LGBTQI+. The HSE's Intercultural Health Strategy (2018-2023) includes several goals which aim to address LGBTQI+ patients.

One of these goals is "Address health inequalities relevant to LGBTQI+ service users" in relation to migrant population, sexual health, mental health and access to services.

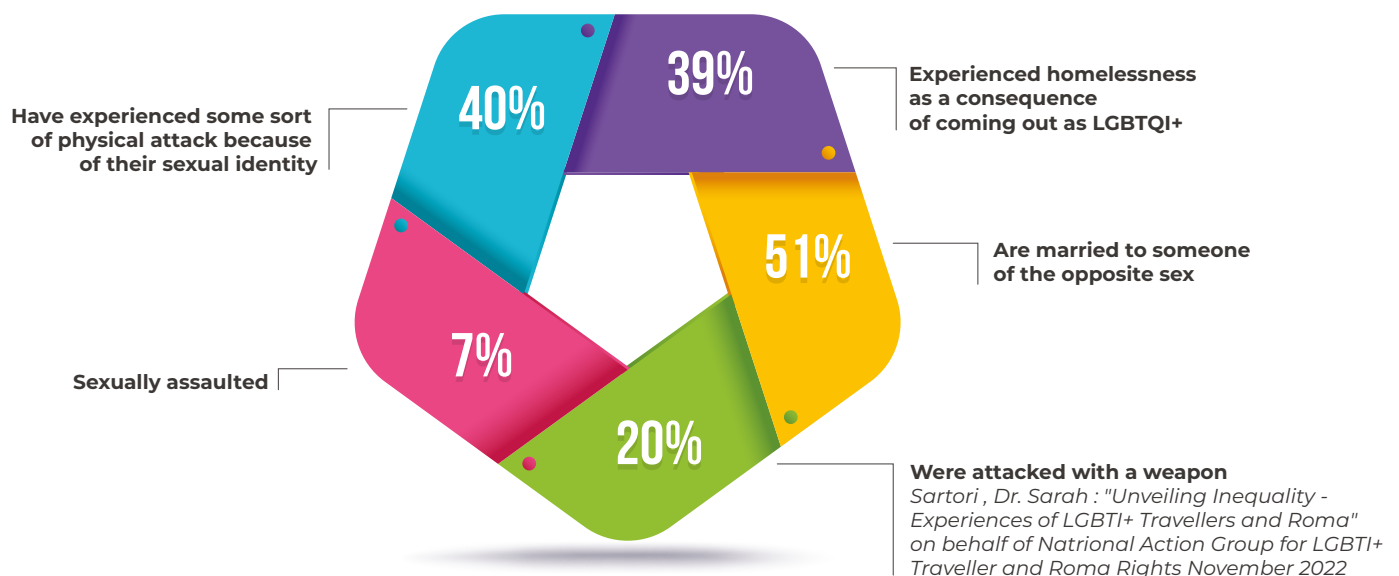
The awareness and active sign up to the HSE Rainbow Badge initiative clearly demonstrates a commitment to all areas of the HSE's values and strategies. Supporting patients who will feel more confident and comfortable in approaching a member of staff wearing a badge, as well as supporting and respecting our staff who feel empowered to be themselves.

The active sign up process will involve providing information and training on wearing the badge. The process ensures the organisation conducts awareness and information sessions for staff in the area. These sessions will focus on how to best support patients and colleagues who raise concerns or challenges related to their sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as addressing existing health inequalities.

Traveller and Roma

Research into LGBTQI+ Traveller and Roma populations highlights experiences of racism from the mainstream Irish LGBTQI+ Community and Services as well as isolation due to fear of discrimination and attitudes within their own communities. Where the "Being LGBTQI+" research indicated community support as a positive, this is not as freely available to members of the Traveller and Roma Communities. In addition to those challenges previously referenced, the additional challenges faced by the Traveller and Roma communities include:

- Isolation/Lack of Understanding from their community
- Homelessness (Exclusion from their community)
- Lack of Support/no Support
- Heterosexual Marriage (often with children)
- Exacerbated Mental Health Issues



International Protection Application System (IPAS)/Asylum Seekers

Ireland is also a proudly multicultural country and our health services have played a pivotal role in the welcome and support of refugees and those seeking asylum under the International Protection Application System (IPAS) and more recently the Beneficiary of Temporary Protection (BoTP) scheme.

For a number of these people their country of origin is unsafe for them because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and they may have been living under threat of punishment including imprisonment and in some countries, death. It is important to hold an awareness of the particular difficulties in disclosure for these people and counteract the negative responses they have been conditioned to expect.

There are specific challenges for LGBTQI+ in IPAS or Transit Centres which also need to be acknowledged. It is vitally important that all healthcare professionals understand general LGBTQI+ issues as well as the specific cultural and religious contexts encountered in countries and regions from which individuals seek protection.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach, including the implementation of inclusive asylum policies, training for asylum officers and healthcare providers on LGBTQI+ specific needs. To begin to increase awareness of these issues, and to help improve the experiences of healthcare for LGBTQI+ people, the HSE promotes the HSE Rainbow Badge initiative.

Healthcare

The HSE Rainbow Badge is an opt-in initiative: healthcare staff sign-up to the badge and its values, receiving education about LGBTQI+ health needs and ways in which they, the wearer, can overcome heteronormative barriers and use inclusive language, to be an LGBTQI+ ally in health. It is important to acknowledge that there are potential challenges that arise from differing cultural or religious perspectives. Creating a sense of safety for concerns to be discussed is important to allow for any misinformation or misunderstanding to be clarified. Inclusion is a vital component of healthcare and should be supported and enhanced at every opportunity.

“ Although the badges aren’t designed as a symbol intended to prompt disclosures, they may prompt a person to disclose information about their own sexuality or gender identity, perhaps for the first time. ”

Healthcare providers wearing the badge may be the first person someone has ever felt confident enough to open up to about how they feel. For them, it may be one of the most important moments of their life. The way a healthcare provider responds may be remembered for the rest of their life. And yet existing resources are extremely limited, particularly with limited visual acknowledgement for this vulnerable group of service users. We know that simple acts of visual representation and basic frontline training are something which members of the LGBTQI+ community value and it is noted that this simple act can improve access to healthcare and address fear for service users.

Increased awareness of the issues surrounding LGBTQI+ people when accessing healthcare on the part of HSE staff can make significant differences to LGBTQI+ people’s experience, and, in turn on their physical and mental health.

What does this mean for Healthcare Providers?

Participants reported higher levels of satisfaction with their healthcare providers than in previous research: sharing that it was empowering to engage with healthcare providers who were respectful, sensitive and knowledgeable about issues and experiences in the LGBTQI+ Community.

A Bisexual woman aged 32 wrote “I feel less stigmatised than I once did. More comfortable to speak about my mental health”.

Just over one third of respondents felt they were in a position of having to “educate” their healthcare provider on their issues, and so a key recommendation arising out of the report was to build capacity amongst all healthcare personnel by including LGBTQI+ perspectives in ongoing continuous professional development (CPD).

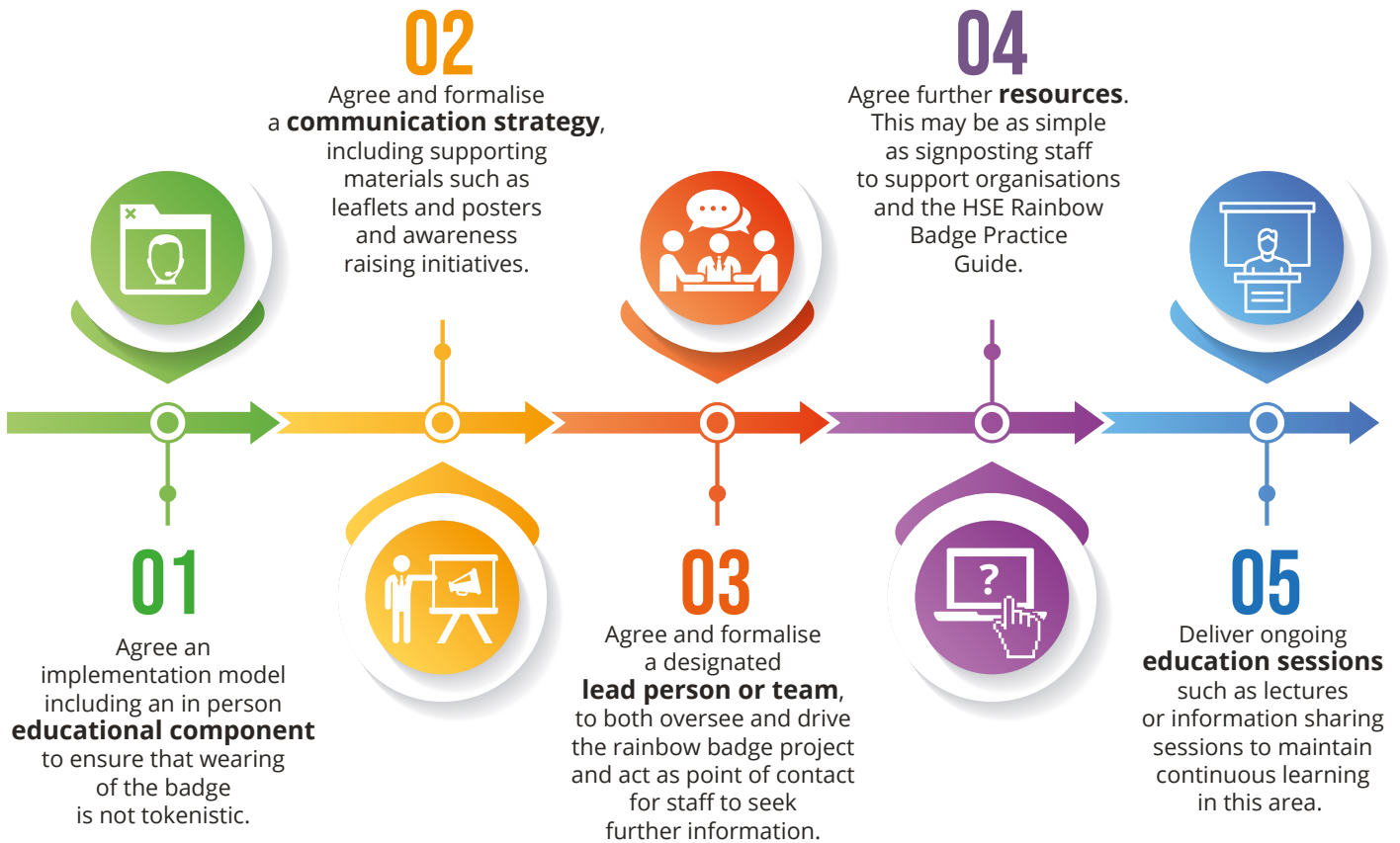
Simple symbols, such as the rainbow badge, are an effective way to signal to LGBTQI+ people that they are in a positive, inclusive, safe environment, and encourage them to talk about things they may otherwise have felt unsure or uncomfortable disclosing. They also encourage conversations amongst staff themselves about the importance of being aware of issues of equality, diversity and inclusion, and help to reinforce the shared responsibility that HSE staff have in this regard.

- 1 Persecution in Home Countries
 - 2 Discrimination in Refugee Camps
 - 3 Inadequate Legal Recognition
 - 4 Limited Access to Healthcare
 - 5 Violence and Hate Crimes
 - 6 Family Rejection and Displacement
 - 7 Legal and Administrative Hurdles
 - 8 Intersectional Discrimination
 - 9 Limited Safe Spaces and Support Services
 - 10 Cultural and Linguistic Barriers
- (See Appendix for more information)



TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING HSE RAINBOW BADGE

The Rainbow Badge Initiative (RBI) is an “opt-in” initiative available to all HSE staff and funded agencies. There is no National lead for implementing the RBI and so we recommend following the model below to ensure consistency. In person training may not be available in every region. Information and guidance can be sourced through the HSE National Social Inclusion Office. We suggest a planned roll out of a whole department or whole service approach to the initiative:



In person LGBTQI+ awareness training is the ideal and should be signposted for staff as it fosters a deeper understanding and empathy that virtual training often cannot replicate. This interactive setting allows for real-time dialogue, addressing misconceptions and answering questions directly, which enhances learning. It also creates a safe space for employees to discuss sensitive topics, share personal experiences, and build solidarity. Such training promotes inclusivity, reduces prejudice, and equips staff with the tools to create a supportive environment for LGBTQI+ individuals, ultimately contributing to a more respectful and productive workplace for colleagues and service users.

There are also two modules available on HSELand; “LGBT+ Awareness and Inclusion: the basics” and “An Introduction to Transgender Awareness in Healthcare.” These training modules are available to HSE staff and funded agencies.

At a very minimum, the HSE Rainbow Badge initiative requires verification of participation in the online training provided by the HSE on HSELand. To find HSE in person training in your region contact socialinclusion@hse.ie



CASE STUDIES

Roll Out Case Study 1



Baile Átha Cliath Theas, Cill Dara
& Iarthar Chill Mhantáin
Cúram Stáinte Pobail
Dublin South, Kildare & West Wicklow
Community Healthcare

CASE STUDY

D S K W W C H

Implementation of the HSE Rainbow Badge Initiative (RBI) began in earnest Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow Community Healthcare (DSKWWCH) in 2022. A small working group made up of Health Promotion and Improvement staff began implementing a model based off the original HSE Rainbow Badge Toolkit resource from 2021. This included supporting staff to complete “LGBT+ Awareness and Inclusion: the basics” module on HSELand followed by a face to face coffee morning where those who completed the online training were presented with HSE Rainbow Badges. Each site also had the opportunity to sign a pledge which would go on to be displayed in their workplace.



The initiative was welcomed and supported within primary care and hospital settings with two primary care centres and one hospital signing up to the HSE Rainbow Badge in 2022, culminating in a pride stand in Naas Hospital to celebrate the diversity of our staff. By the end of 2022 95 staff members had completed the training, signed the pledge and received a HSE Rainbow Badge.



In 2023 Ireland celebrated 40 years of the Dublin Pride parade. To commemorate this, the HSE Rainbow Badge working group, with the support of the Head of Service in Health and Wellbeing commissioned a video “Pride in Practice” marking the 40 years of Pride as both protest and celebration. The video also featured reflections from HSE staff who had completed the HSE rainbow badge training on how it had changed their attitudes, beliefs and practice. Watch the HSE Pride 2023 video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWup0kPoNJo>

Following wider developments of the rainbow flag and the introduction of the progress flag to reflect the broader community, the HSE Rainbow Badge Initiative adopted the Progress Badge and recommended that staff complete the “Introduction to Transgender Awareness in Healthcare” module (also available on HSELand) as necessary steps towards achieving the HSE Rainbow Badge.

There were more celebrations as the first ever Pride parkrun took place in June 2023. The usually lily white parkruns of Kildare turned into rainbows. The initiative was showcased with poster presentations at the Health Promotion Conference in NUIG and the Enhanced Community Care Conference for the region. The poster presentation was also shortlisted for a HSE Staff recognition award. By the end of 2023 a further 40 staff had undertaken the HSE Rainbow Badge Initiative.

In 2024 on the back of the existing success of the RBI in DSKWWCH there was a request for the RBI to be implemented for staff at the National Transit Centre (NTC). The NTC Health Response Team under Health and Wellbeing in CH07, HSE Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow (DSKWWCH), working in collaboration with the lead agency, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), and other agencies, provide a health response for Ukrainian people arriving in Ireland seeking temporary protection. International Protection Applicants are resident in NTC and a health response is also provided for this cohort.

The aim was to support staff who encounter LGBTQI+ people on a daily basis who were feeling under resourced in this area primarily around terminology. Following collaborative discussion it was agreed that the implementation model would need to be adapted for greatest efficacy in the NTC. It was agreed to develop a workshop for staff that included an element of self-care and resilience building, with an emphasis on safe supportive conversation and dialogue. There was a recognition that not all staff would feel safe to wear a badge however the session may resource them to deal with one to one situations or disclosures more confidently.

In lieu of the Rainbow Pledge, an Inclusion Pledge was designed in consultation with HSE and International Office for Migration, (IOM) staff. This took a broader geographic as well as community of interest focus so that the express inclusion of LGBTQI+ people would not exclude any other cultural or ethnic group. The founding principle was one of conversation, not challenge and the creation of a safe and supportive learning environment where dialogue is encouraged and reflection on any internal bias fostered.

Participants were supported in the first instance to review their existing knowledge and comfort levels and identify gaps in learning or information. They were also invited to engage in constructive dialogue about barriers or blocks to more meaningful engagement with LGBTQI+ people in the centre. In all evaluations, the workshop scored very highly in increasing knowledge and confidence in working with LGBTQI+ issues in the NTC moving from pre-workshop ratings of “fair” or poor”” to post workshop results of “good” and “very good”.



This broadening of the implementation model maintained its educational focus but was easily tailored to meet the needs of the group and face to face training will continue to be a vital part of the implementation model as it develops further.

A further development in 2024 has been that Workplace Wellness Committees in DSKWWCH are currently undertaking LGBTQI+ training with a view to embedding an inclusion focus in their work to support staff health and wellbeing in their work sites.

Over the past number of years requests for the HSE Rainbow Badge have not only come from HSE staff, but from our colleagues working in our communities. As a result so we aim to create a model that can be implemented in community settings with our delivery partners.

The Health and Wellbeing team in partnership with our colleagues in CHI and Linn Dara CAMHS have taken an active role in the updating of this toolkit as part of the HSE rainbow badge initiative in 2024, demonstrating the commitment within the team to the HSE rainbow badge and what it represents.

“ I used to think things like this were not important, to be honest I thought I’d be wasting time in the workshop when I could be doing other things. But it’s really opened my eyes and I find it very emotional thinking that this little badge, that costs me nothing to wear, can mean so much to someone who might be feeling lost or ashamed of who they are. ”

PARTICIPANT REACTION

The promotion of the HSE rainbow badge is now very much a core part of the work of the Health Promotion and Improvement team and we look forward to the future developments.



CASE STUDIES

Roll Out Case Study 2



CASE STUDY

Children's Health Ireland

It was Winter 2021, the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the emergency departments of Children's Health Ireland, we were working our way through tonnes of PPE, masks, aprons and gloves. One of our nurses was working in the COVID-19 vaccination centre on her days off. A 19 year old registered with just the first initial L. The nurse asked what their name was. They said "Luke... But I was Laura." The nurse gave Luke the vaccine. Then Luke started crying and said, "I was so scared about coming because I was afraid someone would say something that upset me. But I saw your HSE Rainbow Badge and I knew you'd be ok. You treated me so well." The nurse sent a text with Luke's story and it made all the hard work we'd been doing to improve LGBTQ+ access to health worth it.

We'd had funding approved to launch the HSE Rainbow Badge in Children's Health Ireland in March 2020. But suddenly all our staff communications were dominated by COVID-19 hot zones, cold zones, cancelled clinics, staff sickness policies. We were devastated when our launch was stood down, while COVID-19 changed everything about the way we worked.

At the same time, mental health presentations in Children's Health Ireland were exploding – lockdown was having a devastating effect on our young people. Although we didn't have the HSE Rainbow Badge, we were determined to set about looking at ways we could improve experiences of LGBTQ+ young people attending our services.

With the support of our Research Ethics Committee, we first looked at practice across the three children's Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Centre in Children's Health Ireland. We used the LGBT-DOCSS, a validated research tool of clinical competency in caring for LGBTQ+ patients, to explore how our staff felt about caring for LGBTQ+ young people. We found that our staff held great attitudes, but only scored moderately well in the knowledge domain. Their clinical preparedness scores were in the low zone, even lower when asked about caring specifically for trans young people. Although our staff held positive attitudes towards LGBTQ+ young people, positive attitudes alone are not sufficient to provide quality care.

Our staff wanted and needed more education, but we were in the middle of a pandemic. So we turned to the online forum. We used three online education resources: The HSEland eLearning module, 'LGBT Attitudes and Awareness, The Basics' that takes 40 minutes to complete; a blogpost hosted on the website Don't Forget The Bubbles, about how healthcare professionals can be LGBTQ+ allies, a four-minute read; and a seven-minute video we hosted on YouTube. Less than an hour's education in total. And then we invited back the staff, using the LGBT-DOCSS validated tool to assess post-intervention competence at two weeks and three months after the educational intervention.

RAINBOW BADGE

Wearing a HSE Rainbow Badge in your work in CHI gives a positive message and shows you have taken the responsibility to be someone who is a friendly ear for LGBT+ young people and families

It shows that 'YOU CAN TALK TO ME' about issues of gender and sexuality

Click here for more information and to apply for your Rainbow Badge

Crumlin | Temple Street | Tallaght | Connolly | Herberton/Kilmainham

Things looked good two weeks later. Clinical competence scores improved across all three domains. Attitudes went from good to really good, knowledge from moderate to good and clinical preparedness from low to moderate – we were really pleased to see these clinical preparedness scores had the biggest climb. But what really thrilled us was that these scores continued to climb. Three months after completing the education we asked the staff to complete the LGBT-DOCSS again. The scores in all three domains had increased, with the biggest climb, again, in clinical preparedness. We wondered why our staff's confidence continued to improve – they told us that the one-hour education had challenged their internal assumptions and helped make small changes in their interactions with all young people, being more inclusive in their care.

By then, Children's Health Ireland was ready for a good news story and in June 2021 we got the green light to launch the HSE rainbow badge. Taking the NHS and Linn Dara CAMHS model, we implemented a model that was opt in – staff have to actively sign-up to the badge and its values, participate in education about LGBTQ+ health needs and sign a pledge to say that they, the wearer, would be an ally in health.

By July 2022, 1,285 staff in Children's Health Ireland had signed up for the badge, embracing its values. We wanted to assess the impact the badge had had on our staff, and see if there was anything more we could or should do to support them and our patients. Our Research Ethics Committee approved a mixed-methods survey, and the responses from our staff have been incredibly positive, both in terms of interactions with other staff and with young people and their families.



And the impact the badge has had on workplace culture is amazing. One staff member wrote,

“ If I had told myself when I was younger that I’d be working in a workplace which supported LGBT people I wouldn’t have believed it. It was such a struggle being different when I was a child. I feel so fortunate to be able to be completely me at work and even in a small way support youngsters who aren’t so happy in their difference yet. So thank you. ”

The work we’ve been doing has won three national awards. Children's Health Ireland and Linn Dara CAMHS jointly won the 2021 Irish Healthcare Award Equality Initiative Of The Year for the HSE Rainbow Badge. Our research won the 2023 Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Dr Michael Blackow Memorial Prize in the UK, and the 2023 Irish Healthcare Award Research Paper Of The Year. And we’re not finished. We’re currently working with Belong To, the National LGBTQI+ Youth Organisation to run focus groups with LGBTQI+ young people to explore the experiences they’ve had with healthcare professionals, as well as focus groups with Children's Health Ireland staff, so that we can move on to our next education strategy to continue to improve the way we deliver compassionate, inclusive care to LGBTQI+ young people.

If you’d like to find out more about the work we’ve been doing in Children's Health Ireland, here are some resources you may find useful:

- O’Dwyer C, Kehoe A, Shanahan D, O’Brien W, Hall D. Staff experiences of wearing the Rainbow Badge in a paediatric hospital setting: a mixed-methods survey. *Arch Dis Child*. 2024 Apr 18;109(5):422-427. doi: 10.1136/archdischild-2023-326469. PMID: 38413196; PMCID: PMC11041577.
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- Kelleher ST, Barrett MJ, Durnin S, Fitzpatrick P, Higgins A, Hall D. Improving clinical competence with LGBTQ+ patients in the paediatric emergency department: an education intervention study. *Arch Dis Child*. 2024 Jan 22;109(2):173-174. doi: 10.1136/archdischild-2023-326083. PMID: 37863518.
- How to be an LGBTQIA+ young person - Don't Forget the Bubbles (dontforgetthebubbles.com)

CASE STUDIES

Roll Out Case Study 3



CASE STUDY

Linn Dara CAMHS

Linn Dara CAMHS Approved Centre staff noted an increase in young people presenting who identify as LGBTQI+ and a corresponding deficit in staff knowledge in working with this cohort of young people. Staff felt they required additional knowledge and information in order to be culturally competent.

To mark LGBTQ Pride Dublin Festival in 2019, HSE Linn Dara Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service launched an initiative to promote a positive message of inclusion for LGBTQI+ young people, families and colleagues. 2019 was a huge year for the LGBTQ+ movement as we celebrated 50 years since the historic Stonewall Riots, an important point in history, considered by many to be the birth of the modern LGBTQI+ rights movement. This initiative was initially supported by generous innovation funding from the Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development Unit for Dublin South, Kildare and Wicklow.

Staff from Linn Dara CAMHS have been signing up to wear a specially designed HSE Rainbow badge to show support for those that identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/trans+, intersex or who do not identify as heterosexual or male/female.

“ Simple visual symbols such as the HSE Rainbow Badge, can make a real difference to young people exploring their sexuality or questioning their assigned gender. These badges are a visual commitment to young people and families, who may be worried about the reaction they may receive if they were to disclose their sexuality or gender identity when in contact with our services; that they are valued and respected. ”

said Mike Healy who is driving the initiative as Assistant Director of Nursing for Linn Dara CAMHS Approved Centre.

When staff sign up to the initiative, they are provided with information about the challenges LGBTQI+ people and families can face and are given details on how they can offer support or how they can seek additional support should that be required. The negative effects of stigmatisation, harassment and discrimination on LGBTQI+ people which is termed 'Minority Stress' is well known (Supporting LGBT Lives, 2009) and Linn Dara CAMHS is committed to improving the health of LGBTQI+ young people by cultivating an environment that is safe, supportive and inclusive for all those that use or work in its services including those that identify as LGBTQI+.



Goal one of the national LGBTI Youth Strategy (2018) is to 'Create a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for LGBTIQ+ young people, HSE Rainbow Badges are the first step in the process for Linn Dara CAMHS in addressing the needs of LGBTIQ+ young people and families who access its services.

Young people, staff and Peer Reviews have all reported on the need for Linn Dara CAMHS to reach out, support and include LGBTIQ+ people in our day to day workings. The HSE Rainbow Badge symbolises the recognition that, as people who work in healthcare, we can play a key role in making things better. LGBT Ireland Report (2016) acknowledges LGBTI specific barriers to accessing mental health services including:

- a lack of understanding: mental health practitioners were not sufficiently aware and understanding of LGBTI identities and the appropriate language and terminology to use.
- a fear of misunderstanding: The person's LGBTI identity would be seen as the problem.

Chief Officer at the time, Ann O'Shea commended staff on the introduction of HSE Rainbow badges and their dedication to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Young people and their families are the cornerstone of the services we provide in Linn Dara CAMHS and this initiative which has been championed by the staff working on the frontline, sends a very clear message that Linn Dara CAMHS is an open healthcare service that will ensure that if you use its services, you should be free from exclusion, judgement and discrimination.



CASE STUDIES

Roll Out Case Study 4



CASE STUDY

South East Technological University

South East Technological University (SETU) believes in ‘diverse and inclusive organisational culture which encourages and supports the contribution of all and where members of our community can learn or work to their full potential. SETU values difference and promote a culture where everyone is treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and free from harassment and bullying.’



Having seen the success of the HSE Rainbow Badge as a visual symbol for young people accessing the Linn Dara CAMHS Approved Centre, it was decided to apply for funding

from the EDI Committee in SETU and run a pilot scheme to gauge the level of interest in a similar scheme in the university.



A grant of €800 was received by Nicola Cantwell, pharmacist/work placement coordinator and Áine O'Neill, lecturer in biochemistry, both from the Department of Applied Sciences, SETU. This money was used for the design and purchase of SETU Rainbow Badges. The badge was designed using the most recent iteration of the Rainbow flag and the SETU logo.

It was decided to roll out the badge to a small cohort initially, to iron out any teething problems and evaluate the appetite for expanding the programme across every SETU campus for all staff and students. The pilot included class tutors, heads of department, student services, peer mentors and officers from SETU Students Union from Carlow and Wexford Campuses. Everyone who signed up to the pilot was asked to complete two training modules: HSE Land LGBTQI+ Awareness and Inclusion: the basics and Jigsaw training course: Supporting the Mental Health of LGBTQI+ Young People. Details of the SETU Rainbow Badge Initiative were shared via SETU IT platform using Microsoft Sway (link below). We decided to make the training mandatory for anyone who wanted a badge. This was to ensure that the badge was not seen as a ‘fashion accessory’ but had meaning. Everyone who wears the SETU rainbow badge should wear it with pride. We also made it clear that wearing the SETU Rainbow Badge was voluntary and was not intended to imply that those who chose not to wear a badge were unsympathetic to LGBTQIA+ people.

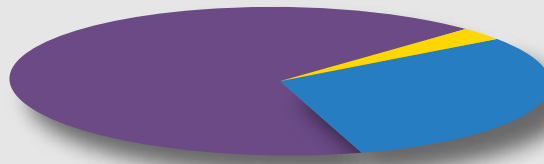


Those who choose to wear the HSE Rainbow Badge are signalling a willingness to listen sympathetically, and a knowledge of the services and supports available around LGBTQIA+ issues.

Approximately 60 staff and students completed the badge with 33 responding to the feedback survey. Overall feedback was positive, however many participants felt that the training was not sufficiently focused on education and recommended that this be changed. Others had completed Shout Out training from AHEAD so it was agreed that this could be used as an alternative to the Jigsaw course. The badge was officially launched in January 2023 in Carlow and rolled out across the entire organisation with the support of the EDI offices in Carlow and Waterford. SETU Rainbow badges started to appear across the entire organisation among staff and students from every department.

Even though the wearers of the rainbow badge do not have all the answers, they help to make the university a more welcoming and inclusive environment. 67% of those who wear the SETU Rainbow Badge would recommend it to a friend.

How likely are you to recommend the SETU Rainbow Badge Initiative to a friend or colleague?



- Very unlikely: **0%**
- Unlikely: **0%**
- Neither likely nor unlikely: **0%**
- Likely: **30.3%**
- Extremely likely: **66.7%**

We have continued to collect feedback and to action it as

appropriate. SETU is working on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training which will be education focused and the intention is to replace some of the current modules when it becomes available. It was also decided to add in the HSELand course: An Introduction to Transgender Awareness in Healthcare as a training requirement to further expand the knowledge base of those completing the badge.

Introducing the SETU Rainbow Badge has proven to be a very simple but effective way to improve gender awareness and cultural competency across the organisation. It sends a clear message to students, their families and staff that SETU supports everyone's right to equality and inclusion and promotes belonging as one of the most important aspects of the SETU experience.

Our intention is to handover the management of the SETU Rainbow Badge to the EDI office as the project deserves more time than we can devote to it. The EDI office has access to greater funding and resources to set up the initiative as a long-term project. Overall, setting up the SETU rainbow badge has been a very rewarding experience for us. We would love to see more organisations introducing rainbow badges, this is a living project and needs to be continuously promoted and adapted as society changes.

#SETURainbowBadge Twitter: @PharmTechCarlow or @QueenAlocin

“ The rainbow badge initiative at SETU is a wonderful example of a staff led EDI campaign which has both raised visibility and knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues across our campuses. It has also encouraged allyship and has helped to make SETU a safer and more welcoming place for members of the LGBTQ+ community. We aim to build on this initiative into the future to continue to fight all forms of discrimination or harassment against the LGBTQ+ community. ”

DR ALLISON KENNEALLY, VICE PRESIDENT FOR EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (EDI)
AT SOUTH EAST TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY (SETU), IRELAND 23/2/24

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- <https://jigsawportal.learnupon.com/store/1107852-supporting-the-mental-health-of-lgbt-young-people-jigsaw-belong-to>
- <https://www.hseland.ie/dash/Account/Login>



APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Terminology



LGBTQI+ acronym

LGBTQI+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex. The plus sign symbolises many other identities included under the LGBTQI+ umbrella, such as asexual (A). The acronym LGBTQI+ is used to refer to a broad community of people who have been historically marginalised due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics.

Sex – a person's physical characteristics

This refers to the physical characteristics that a person has (organs, chromosomes and hormones). Although it has been historically understood as binary (male/female), it is not. Based on sex characteristics, we can differentiate male, female and intersex people.

Intersex refers to a person who has one or more sex characteristics (genetic, hormonal and/or physical sex characteristics) that fall outside the binary male/female.

Gender Identity – who a person is

Gender Identity refers to the way a person feels and thinks about themselves as: a man, a woman, or an alternative gender (non-binary, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, genderfluid, etc.) Since gender identity is internal, a person's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity matches the gender associated with their sex at birth.

Transgender: A person whose gender identity is different to the gender associated with their sex at birth. Remember – trans or transgender are adjectives: trans person/man/woman.

Non binary: A person whose gender identity does not fit into the categories of boy/man or girl/woman. Some people may use other labels such as gender queer or gender fluid. Note: For some people whose gender identity falls outside the binary, such as gender fluid, their gender identity is not fixed and it can change over time.



Gender refers to the characteristics that a society associates with being a man or boy and with being a woman or girl. Gender is a social construct, therefore it can be mean different things for different societies and it can change over time.

Gender Expression refers to how a person presents their gender. This can include appearance, name, pronouns and/or social behaviour.

Sexual Orientation – to whom a person is attracted to

The concept of sexual orientation refers to whom a person is attracted to emotionally and/or sexually.

Lesbian / Gay: Someone who is emotionally and sexually attracted to people of the same gender. Historically the word gay has been used to define men who are attracted to other men and the word lesbian has been used to describe women who are attracted to other women. However, non-binary people may also use these labels to define their sexual orientation.

Bisexual / Pansexual / Queer

Bisexual: A person who is sexually/and or romantically attracted to people of more than one gender.

Pansexual: A person who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to people of all gender identities.

Note : Some people may use the word queer to refer to their gender identity as well as a way to express a sexual orientation that is not heterosexual/straight.

Heterosexual / Straight: Someone who is emotionally and sexually attracted to people of the opposite gender.

Asexual / Aromantic: Asexual (or “ace” for short) refers to a person who does not experience sexual attraction to others whilst Aromantic refers to a person who does not experience romantic/emotional attraction to others. People may identify with both or with one and not the other.

Coming Out refers to process of discovering one’s LGBTQI+ identity and sharing this with others. It’s the right of the LGBTQI+ person to decide when to come out. Disclosing a person’s LGBTQI+ identity – voluntarily or involuntarily –is referred to as “outing”.

Heteronormativity: The assumption that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is “the norm”. This can lead to the invisibility and stigmatisation of other sexual orientations.

Homophobia / Biphobia: Negative attitudes and feelings towards people who are, or who are thought to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual or any other sexual orientation other than heterosexual.

Transphobia: Negative attitudes, feelings and discrimination towards people who are, or who are thought to be transgender.

Source: HSE National Social Inclusion Office

Appendix 2: LGBTQI+ People living in International Protection Accommodation Centres (IPAS)

1. Persecution in Home Countries:

Many LGBTQI+ individuals flee their home countries due to persecution based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. In several regions, same-sex relationships are criminalised, and individuals face severe penalties, including imprisonment or even death.

2. Discrimination in Refugee Camps:

Upon fleeing their home countries, LGBTQI+ refugees may face discrimination and harassment in refugee camps or temporary shelters. These spaces may lack adequate protection mechanisms and inclusive policies, leading to further marginalization and vulnerability.

3. Inadequate Legal Recognition:

In countries where LGBTQI rights are not recognized or protected, refugees may struggle to prove their sexual orientation or gender identity to authorities responsible for determining asylum claims. This can result in their claims being disbelieved or denied, exposing them to the risk of deportation or detention.

4. Limited Access to Healthcare:

LGBTQI individuals may encounter barriers in accessing healthcare services, including gender-affirming care or HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. Discrimination and stigma from healthcare providers can deter individuals from seeking essential medical support.

5. Violence and Hate Crimes:

LGBTQI+ refugees are at heightened risk of experiencing violence, hate crimes, and sexual assault, both within host countries and among fellow refugees. Prejudice and intolerance towards their sexual orientation or gender identity can exacerbate their vulnerability to such attacks.

6. Family Rejection and Displacement:

LGBTQI+ individuals often experience rejection and estrangement from their families, leading to social isolation and lack of support networks. This familial rejection may contribute to their decision to seek asylum abroad, further complicating their integration into new communities.

7. Legal and Administrative Hurdles:

LGBTQI+ asylum seekers may encounter bureaucratic challenges and lengthy asylum procedures, including arbitrary detention, lack of legal representation, and delays in processing their claims. These obstacles can prolong their uncertainty and insecurity in host countries.

8. Intersectional Discrimination:

LGBTQI+ refugees who belong to other marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities, women, or persons with disabilities, may face compounded discrimination based on multiple intersecting identities. Intersectionality further exacerbates their vulnerability and limits their access to rights and resources.

9. Limited Safe Spaces and Support Services:

Host countries may lack adequate resources and specialized support services tailored to the needs of LGBTQI refugees, including shelters, counselling, and legal assistance. The absence of safe spaces can impede their ability to seek help and rebuild their lives free from persecution.

10. Cultural and Linguistic Barriers:

LGBTQI refugees from non-Western cultures or linguistic backgrounds may encounter difficulties in navigating unfamiliar legal systems and cultural norms in host countries. Language barriers can hinder their communication with authorities and accessing essential information and services.

LGBTI+ people living in Direct Provision Accommodation Services (IPAS) accommodation : Best practices and lived experiences.

RESOURCES

Education and training resources

The HSE badge model is underpinned by educating and empowering staff to become LGBTQI+ allies. The following are resources you may find helpful, but there are many others available both within Ireland and internationally.



Training packages

HSELand LGBTQ+ Awareness and Inclusion: the basics and An Introduction to Transgender Awareness in Healthcare training are available from www.hseland.ie HSELand is accessible to all HSE staff, funded agencies, students and volunteers.

LGBT+ Awareness and Inclusion: the basics

How you can make a positive difference to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Designed and developed by Aurion Learning

An Introduction to Transgender Awareness in Healthcare

This module is for any staff within the HSE who have an interest in improving their understanding and communications with transgender people.

Let's begin

Module last reviewed: 01/09/2021

Ideally a face to face training element should be incorporated to allow for further conversation and dialogue which is not facilitated by an online platform. Identifying a key person or people to act as a driver and support for the implementation. In HSE Dublin and Midlands training is provided through the Health and Wellbeing Team. To check the availability of training in your region or for more information contact socialinclusion@hse.ie

LGBTireland have developed a training programme for healthcare professionals who work with LGBTQI+ older people, The LGBT Champions Programme, but also tailor their training to healthcare professionals working with LGBTQI+ people of all ages.

www.lgbt.ie/champions-programme,
training@lgbt.ie.

BeLonGTo have partnered with Jigsaw to provide training for people who work with young people on the topic of supporting LGBTQI+ young people's mental health.
www.belongto.org/professionals/training

BeLonGTo have some free e-learning modules for schools that are very relevant.

They have a range of training and resource materials available from their website
www.belongto.org/training/



REFERENCES

Blog posts and videos

The **Genderbread Person** is an international resource that explains gender and sexual attraction in an easy to understand way. www.genderbread.org

Don't Forget The Bubbles has a series of blog posts on LGBTQI+ children and young people's health needs here.

The **Royal College of Physicians of Ireland** have published a talk for the faculty of paediatrics 2020 meeting about the health needs of LGBTI+ children and young people which you can find here www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWup0kPoNJo - HSE Pride 2023 video.

Articles

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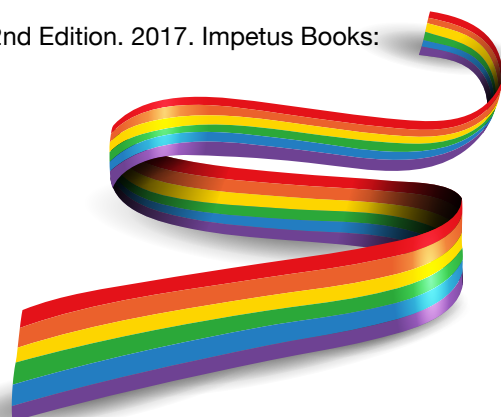
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This list of references and resources is by no means exhaustive.
For more information see www.hse.ie/HSERainbowbadge





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