



Community  
Education  
Network  
Meeting

# INCLUSION

JUNE 23<sup>RD</sup> 2021



Promoting inclusion  
in adult education



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This CEN meeting was a combined networking event at which the general AONTAS Membership and CEN members come together to discuss the topic of inclusion of the LGBTI+ community in adult and community education. The event was run during Pride Month and aimed to explore the issues that affect LGBTI+ adult learners and considerations for the sector.

The presenters were as follows:

- **Seán Frayne**  
Sexual Health and Youth Worker,  
BeLong To Youth Services
- **Beryl Ohas**  
LGBTI+ Co-Leader,  
Roots in Africa-Ireland



Community Education Network Meeting



### INTRODUCTION



The meeting was opened by AONTAS Head of Communications, Katie O'Rourke who gave an introduction to the meeting and the agenda for the day. Katie also provided some key AONTAS updates which are summarised on the next page.

Katie then introduced Séan who gave an overview of the work he does in Belong To, shared some Belong To resources, and spoke about the language around LGBTI+ and use of appropriate terminology.

Following Séan's input Katie introduced Beryl who spoke about the cultural histories that impact

on the acceptance of the LGBTI+ community and the importance of building alliances in support of the community.

The meeting provided the space for breakout discussions in order to reflect on what members had heard, the experience within their own organisations, examples of good practice and initiatives, and to identify questions for the speakers. Following the breakout sessions CEN Coordinator, Suzanne Kyle facilitated a discussion among the members and speakers during which members shared their insights, queries and ideas.

36 Attendees

21 Organisations

11 Counties



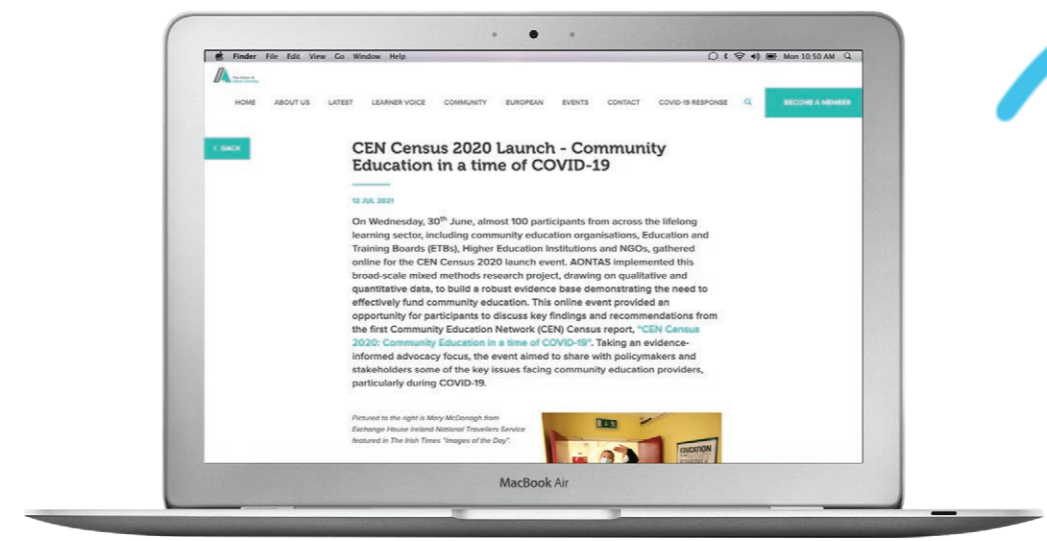
JUNE 23<sup>RD</sup> 2021

### AONTAS Updates

*Katie O'Rourke, AONTAS Head of Communications provided key AONTAS updates below:*

- Keep an eye out for the upcoming AONTAS Newsletter which is sent monthly to all members detailing activities, projects and events currently happening within AONTAS

- The launch of the **CEN Census: Community Education in a Time of COVID-19** is due to be held on June 30th. The purpose of the survey was to map community education provision across the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) identifying: number of learners, available courses, funding streams, target groups and learner supports. The aim is also to gather key data on the impact of Covid-19 on community education



*For more information on the CEN Census: Community Education in a Time of COVID-19 and the launch of the report click the button*

**Click to view report**

**Community Education Network Meeting**

### Introduction to BeLonG To and the LGBTI+ Alphabet

BeLonG To are the national organisation supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI+) young people in Ireland. They provide information, advice and support for young people and their families, teachers and peers. They also provide training for people working with young people including education providers. You can find out more [here](#).

Seán Frayne from BeLonG To Youth Services presented on the work of BeLonG To, the importance of using the correct terminology for LGBTI+ and guidance on pronoun use. The key points are captured below:

- Understanding the differences between sexual orientation and gender identity is essential. The **Gender Unicorn Image** is a useful visual to show this

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
GAY CONVERSION THERAPY IS STILL LEGAL IN IRELAND

**INCLUSION of LGBTQI+ PEOPLE in ADULT & COMMUNITY ED.**

**YOU DEFINITELY KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS LGBTQI+**  
YOUR COUSIN | THE MILKMAN | YOUR SISTER'S FRIEND

**SEÁN FRAYNE**  
BELONG 2 YOUTH SERVICE

**LGBTQI+ EXPLAINER**

**SEXUAL / ROMANTIC ATTRACTION**

**L = LESBIAN**  
**G = GAY**  
**B = BISEXUAL** } (PANSEXUAL)

**Q = A WAY OF IDENTIFYING BEYOND BINARIES**

**REMEMBER the UNICORN**

**GENDER IDENTITY**

**T = TRANSGENDER**

**I = INTERSEX**  
↳ VARIATIONS IN SEXUAL ANATOMY

**+ = ALL THE OTHER TERMS**

**CISGENDER = IDENTIFYING WITH THE GENDER ASSIGNED TO YOU AT BIRTH**

**SEXUALITY IS...**

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION** (with hearts icon)

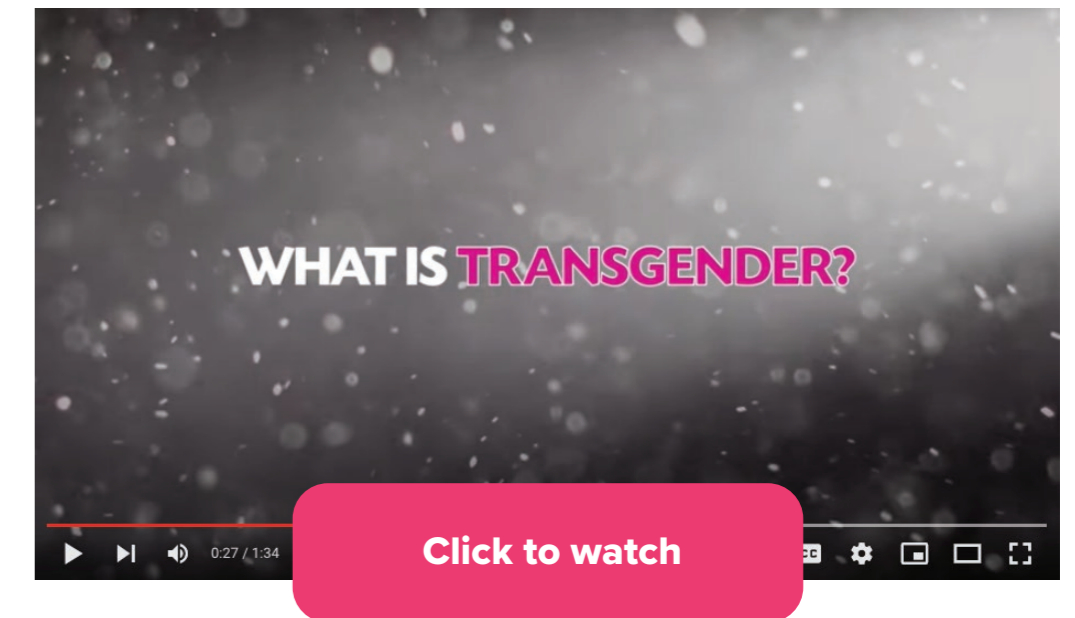
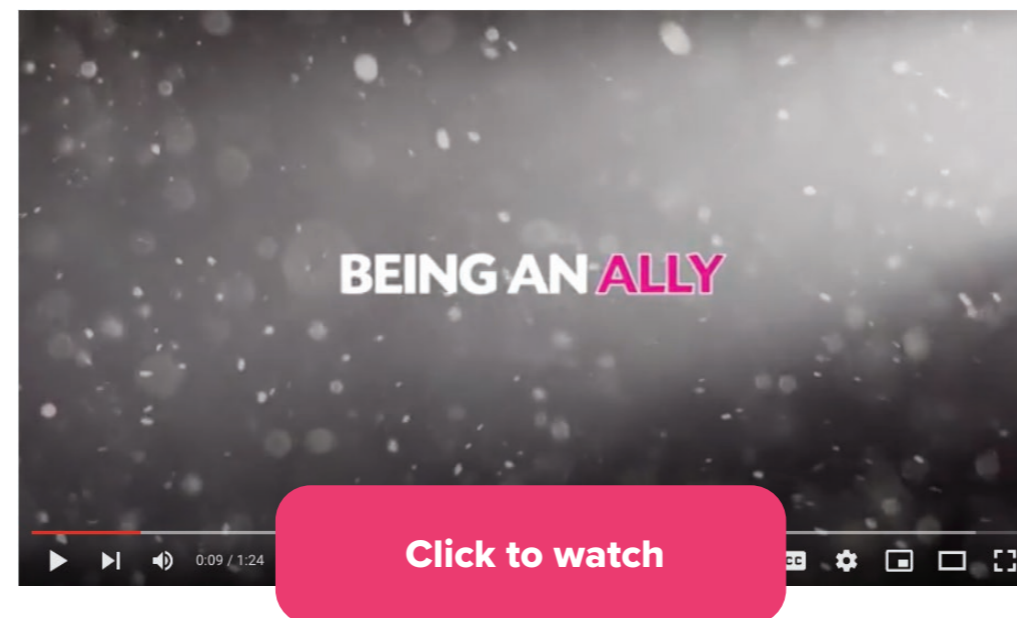
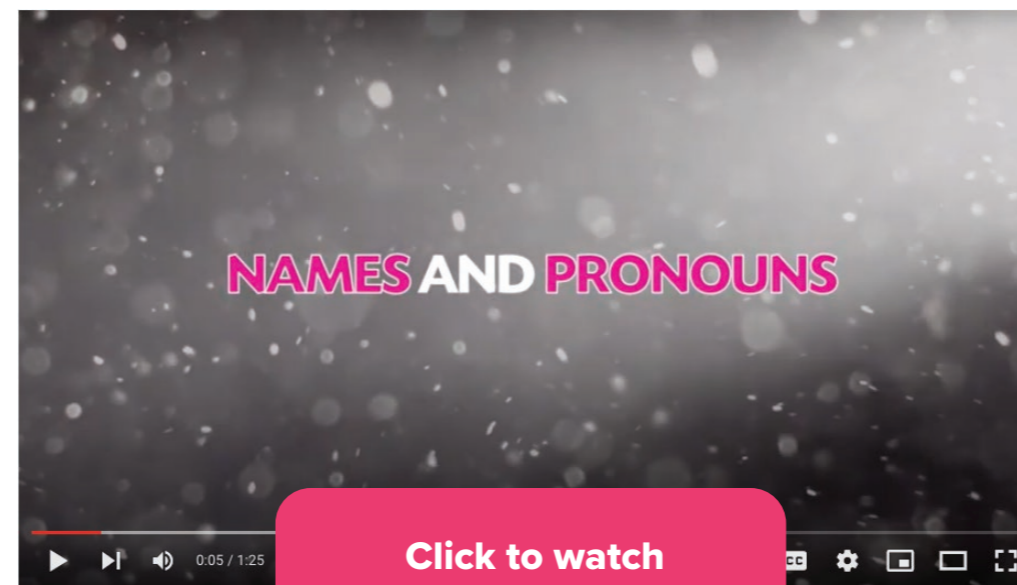
**GENDER IDENTITY** (with person icon) → DEEPLY FELT INTERNAL EXPERIENCE

**BIOLOGICAL SEX** (with plus sign icon)

**GENDER EXPRESSION** (with person icon) → HOW WE EXPRESS OURSELVES EXTERNALLY

JUNE 23<sup>RD</sup> 2021

- The importance of using the correct terminology and pronouns in relation to gender identity is vital for creating inclusive environments
- Some steps Education Practitioners can take to create more inclusive learning environments are:
  - Being an ally and openly supporting the LGBTI+ community
  - Providing your students with resources and signposting information
  - **Don't be afraid of what you do not understand.** Seek advice about any issues or questions you have by contacting BeLonG To directly who can provide independent advice but more importantly speak to the person themselves to understand their needs



*For more information on BeLonG To training for people working with young people including education providers.*

**Information on BeLonG To training**

### Roots in Africa-Ireland Presentation

Beryl Ohas, LGBTI+ Co-Leader, spoke about the challenges she faced as a gay person growing up in her own community and the steps we can take to create a more inclusive society. Some key points are summarised below:

- Impact of culture on gender identity and sexual orientation – Beryl spoke about her own experience of being gay in African culture and the challenges this brought
- The need for allies in adult education and communities that support LGBTI+ people and the creation of a powerful united approach to reduce discrimination
- Adult education should be about the person, their uniqueness, their passion and the skills they bring, not about what makes them different



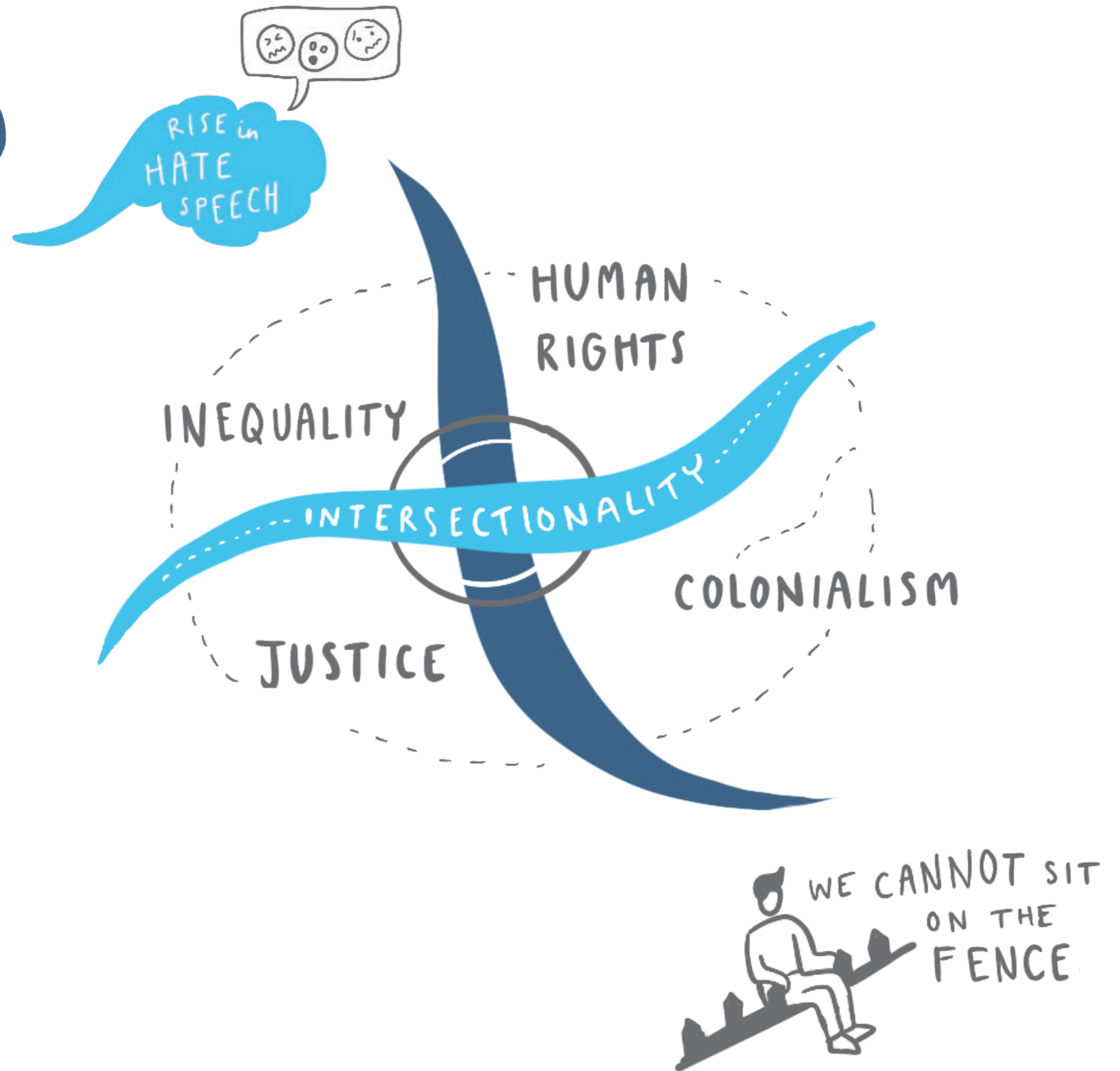
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## BREAK-OUT GROUPS

**Break out Sessions**

The final part of the meeting gave CEN members the opportunity to share thoughts and experiences on today's topic which gave way to a meaningful discussion with key learning and messages to take away. These are captured below:

- The need for provisions to be put in place to support LGBTI+ in Direct Provision to ensure they are placed in the correct environment, are not subject to discrimination and have access to appropriate supports
- To be as inclusive as possible, educators need to promote the idea that diversity and difference is the norm – this should be taught from a young age





- Being open and honest as educators, asking the students themselves what their needs are, what name and pronouns they would like to use. Be open to learning and correcting any mistakes
- LGBTI+ are experts in their own experience and should be consulted on matters related to them and the unique challenges they face
- Providing older LGBTI+ people with the support through a greater understanding of their experience
- The power of visual supports such as the LGTBI+ flag or posters displayed in a classroom
- The need for top down government support for gender and sexual orientation inclusive approaches and policies

JUNE 23<sup>RD</sup> 2021

# INCLUSION

## INTRODUCTION

COMING SOON!

### CEN CENSUS LAUNCH

INFORMING & ADVOCATING on behalf of MEMBERS

IMPACT



## INCLUSION of LGBTQI+ PEOPLE in ADULT & COMMUNITY ED.

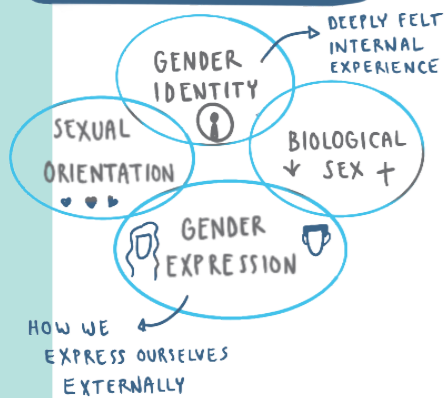


SEÁN FRAYNE  
BELONG 2 YOUTH SERVICE

YOU DEFINITELY KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS LGBTQI+

- YOUR COUSIN
- THE MILKMAN
- YOUR SISTER'S FRIEND

### SEXUALITY IS...



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### LGBTQI+ EXPLAINER

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DID YOU KNOW?  
GAY CONVERSION THERAPY IS STILL LEGAL IN IRELAND

### WHAT CAN WE DO TO BE SUPPORTIVE?

- BE A LISTENING EAR: YOU DON'T HAVE TO SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS.
- IT IS OK TO MAKE MISTAKES HE/HER THEY/THEM
- SEND SIGNALS of SUPPORT
- DON'T ASK A TRANS PERSON A QUESTION THAT YOU WOULD NOT FEEL COMFORTABLE ANSWERING.
- BE OPEN TO LEARNING
- BE LOVING

### THERE IS TOO MUCH HATRED IN THE WORLD

our authentic selves

GET TO KNOW the REAL PERSON - their SKILLS, TALENTS & PASSIONS

BERYL OHAS  
ROOTS IN AFRICA

PEOPLE of AFRICAN DESCENT FACE DIFFICULTY IN BEING ACCEPTED...

ADULT EDUCATION IS SO IMPORTANT to BRING US TOGETHER and pass on **NEW WISDOM** and **EMBRACE DIVERSITY.**

### ALLYSHIP IS ABOUT...

WILLINGNESS to TALK and REALLY LISTEN

DON'T FEAR YOUR OWN LACK of UNDERSTANDING

- BE HONEST ✓
- ASK QUESTIONS ✓
- ASSUMPTIONS ✗
- BUILD TRUST ✓
- USE the SERVICES THAT ARE OUT THERE.

THIS CAN REALLY HEAL the TRAUMA EXPERIENCED...

## BREAK-OUT GROUPS

### CARE HOMES...

OLDER GAY PEOPLE  
TRAINING for CARE STAFF



CONSERVATIVE POPULIST VIEWS

RISE in HATE SPEECH

WE CANNOT SIT ON THE FENCE



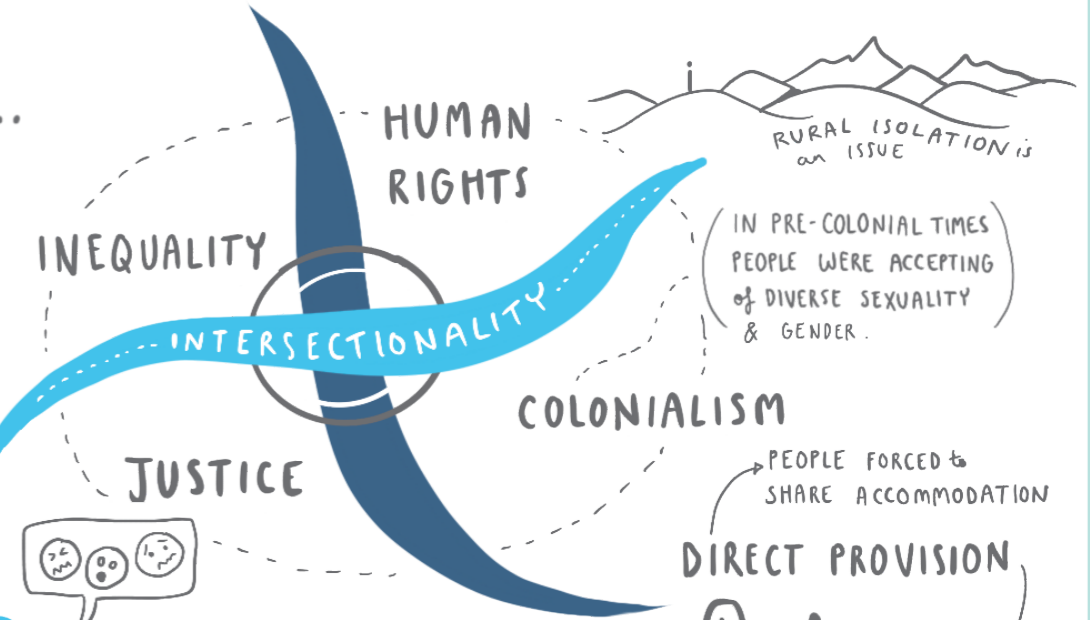
LISTEN to the ACTUAL LIVED EXPERIENCES of LGBTQI+ PEOPLE



NOW IS THE TIME TO STAND TOGETHER for WHAT IS GOOD.

LOVE

FEAR



RURAL ISOLATION is an ISSUE

IN PRE-COLONIAL TIMES PEOPLE WERE ACCEPTING of DIVERSE SEXUALITY & GENDER.

PEOPLE FORCED to SHARE ACCOMMODATION

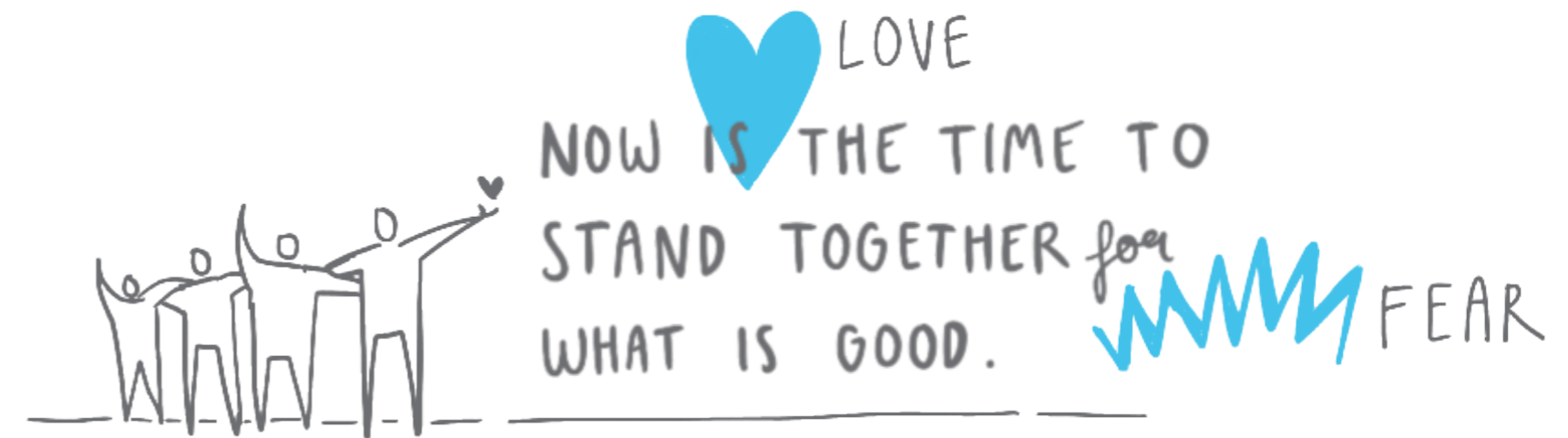
### DIRECT PROVISION



SYLVIE'S DEATH.....

SMALL ACTIONS MEAN A LOT

we as community educators must FLY the FLAG



## Conclusion

The aim of the meeting today was to provide CEN members with key AONTAS updates but also give members the space to learn about experiences of LGBTI+ people in society and consider how community education providers can best support the LGBTI+ community while taking positive steps to create a more inclusive educational environment. Beryl Ohas shared her inspiring story of being gay in her community, helping

members to understand the lived experience and how this can impact on someone's life. Some key tips and approaches on how to not only be more inclusive, but to be an ally for people who are LGBTI+ was shared by BelongTo with some key advice for members on how to apply this in the educational setting. CEN members had the opportunity to explore this topic and share their learnings with the aim of creating safe learning spaces for LGTBI+ community

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**AONTAS would like to thank** our guest speakers Sean Frayne and Beryl Ohas and all our CEN members whose knowledge and contributions are vital to the development of the CEN. Many thanks to our CEN Steering Group members for guiding and supporting the work of the CEN:

Cathleen McDonagh Clarke,  
Exchange House

Ciarán McKinney, Age & Opportunity

David O'Brien, Soilse

Lia Clarkson, Warrenmount CED

Mary Hughes, LCEN

Mary Maher, DAL

Maura Kearney, Acorn Project

Rachel Morrissey, D8CEC

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We recommend that AONTAS CEN members join EPALE (the European Platform for Adult Learning in Europe) so that you can be included in our CEN EPALE groups and receive more information on our CEN meetings, including presentations and other relevant news and events.

*You can register on EPALE by clicking here:*

[Click to open link](#)

**For more information** on the AONTAS Community Education Network, or to become a member, please click here:

[Click to open link](#)