

## **Press Release**

The Natural Women's Council, the Irish Education Alliance, the Parent's Rights Alliance and Lawyers for Justice Ireland – 2 October 2023

### **BelongTo Quality Mark**

A letter was issued by BelongTo on or about the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2023 seeking applications from secondary schools in Ireland to apply for its Quality Mark Initiative 2023 – 2024. These school will be required to undertake what appears to be an intensive 18 month “whole school” application process. Which of course will necessitate access to the school, principal, teachers and students by BelongTo for 18 months. We question the suitability of BelongTo, an activist group promoting ideological transgenderism, to issue a Quality Mark to schools. What value will this mark be to the students? How much time will be taken away from core and elective studies to chase this mark? BelongTo, an extremely well-funded NGO, also demands a fee to apply for this mark of €845. Will parents first be consulted to see if they are in agreement? Do most parents even know who BelongTo is?

### **Stand Up Week 6-10 November**

BelongTo also pursue secondary schools to run a week-long BelongTo “Stand Up” campaign (6 - 10 November this year). BelongTo claim on their website that this is the 13<sup>th</sup> year of running this campaign. We note with concern that young and vulnerable first year students, who are 12 and 13 years old, are only in their new secondary school for a few weeks before the school devotes an entire week to sexual matters at the behest of BelongTo. Have parents consented to this? Again, do parents even know who BelongTo is?

BelongTo's motivation seems to be to ensure that transgender ideology pervades our education system and the lives of children in this country and is taught to children as fact. This is an ideology that is not science based and is not shared by most parents of children in Irish schools. NGOs such as BelongTo and TENI seems to have a strong foothold in the curriculum in Irish schools, with considerable influence over the department of education, the NCCA and teaching unions and open access to schools.

### **BelongTo provide services for persons aged 14 to 23 years old.**

BelongTo state very clearly on their Facebook page and website that their services are only for the age group 14 to 23. We have several serious concerns regarding this age category.

Firstly, why are BelongTo granted such significant access to our children in secondary schools when these schools are attended by thousands of children aged only 12 and 13? If BelongTo admit publicly that their services are not appropriate for children under 14 (and NWC object to the provision of these services and radical messaging for all minor children), why are BelongTo seeking to promote their services and viewpoint to all children in these secondary schools, including those who are by their own admission too young for these messages? Why are schools allowing this?

Secondly, the age group of 14 to 23 years old puts together minor children with adults. How are minor children attending BelongTo meetings outside of schools segregated from adults when discussing sensitive matters of a sexual nature, which is inevitable for an organisation that exists solely for the purpose of discussing sexual preferences and sexual matters? How are the services and messages segregated for minors and adults?

BelongTo’s website provides contact information for adult sexual information services that can be contacted by their 14- to 23-year-old target audience, Gay Health Network (“publishes and distributes HIV and safer sex information for men who have sex with men (MSM) ...”) and Man2Man (“a comprehensive sexual health information for men who have sex with men”). Why are minor children aged 14 to 17 being directed to adult sexual information services by BelongTo? Do our gay children not require shielding from adult sexual content in the same manner that our heterosexual children do? An organisation that focusses on sexual issues and claims to represent both minor children below the age of consent and adults is in truly murky waters.

### BelongTo As “Teacher Trainers”?

BelongTo engage in “teacher training” in Ireland. Here is an excerpt from their training manual, whereby they shockingly advise teachers to lie to parents:

	✓ Do	✗ Don't
<b>Pronouns</b>	If you don't know what pronouns to use, ask. Take time to get it right and apologise if you get it wrong. Start introducing yourself using your pronouns to show you are open to learning.	Guess or hope for the best. If you are bad at remembering names or pronouns, consider a personal approach where you use gender neutral words as a rule.
<b>Coming Out and Confidentiality</b>	Respect their judgement and preferences in relation to their family. Don't assume that someone is out – it may not be safe for them to be out in certain environments.	<b>Out them</b> to their parents. Ensure you use whatever pronouns they wish you to use if you are communicating with their parents about or with the young person
	Respect their confidentiality. Being trans is not a child protection issue in and of itself, only if there is additional threat of harm present, in line with the national guidelines.	<b>Out them</b> if their parent/guardian asks directly – say you don't know, reassure the parent that the most important thing is the young person's happiness and feeling of safe spaces. Encourage them to speak to their young person.

It is immoral and unethical to lie to parents about their children. Our children are not “our young person” but minor children for whom we the parents are the primary carers and educators under the law. Gender Dysphoria is a medical condition and not one that legally may be kept hidden from a child’s parent. To suggest that a child could be unsafe or at risk of “harm” from their family if their parents, their legal guardians, are advised of their condition is very divisive. If any child is at actual risk of harm then this is a separate child protection issue and should be reported to Tusla, as all teachers, who have child protection training, will know.

Is this simply a sinister attempt by BelongTo to justify transitioning vulnerable and confused children behind their parents’ backs and without proper medical advice? If schools, teachers and principals go along with this secrecy, they will be complicit. A trusting relationship between parents and teachers in schools is very important. An organisation that trains teachers to lie to parents should not be allowed near schools nor children. No school should seek the approval of such an organisation.

### Allegations That BelongTo Facilitates The Conversion Of Gay Youth To Transgender

Testimony has recently emerged from a young person who attended BelongTo youth groups. He claims that most of the teens attending these groups start off identifying as gay, but by the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> BelongTo meeting, the majority of those teenagers begin to identify as transgender. What is going on in these meetings? Instead of supporting gay teenagers to be comfortable with who they are and their healthy young bodies, do they instead seek to convince teens that they should change their gender?

In a tweet posting this testimony, Irish Senator G. Craughwell stated that he will be contacting the police and that he wants a full investigation into BelongTo. The link below is to an interview with a young Lesbian who describes her own disturbing experiences at a BelongTo youth group. Which begs the question, is Belongto really supporting gay, lesbian and bisexual children and people at all? Or is this group simply a front for a transexual organisation, drawing in young and vulnerable gay children and young people and converting them to transgender?

### **Belongto Does Not Have Medical License To Dispense Medical Advice**

BelongTo appears to dispense medical and psychological advice to children and to schools, without a medical license to do so. Gender Dysphoria is not a sexual orientation but a recognised psychiatric condition. Demand for total and unwavering affirmation of this condition is an ideology and not a proven and clinically based treatment plan.

Professor Donal O'Shea, an endocrinologist with the National Gender Service in Ireland, has denounced the recent movement towards ideologically driven health care for gender dysphoria. Each child presenting with gender dysphoria deserves and requires proper licensed and individual treatment, led by licensed professionals and the child's parents. What is not helpful or wise is a ideology driven by an NGO which seeks to indoctrinate teachers in school to manage a psychiatric condition of minor children behind parents' backs. Do children suffering from gender dysphoria not deserve respectful and professional treatment?

Failure to respect gender dysphoria as a medical condition is dangerous. Particularly given that this organisation appears to be motivated by turning Irish children into lifelong transgender medical patients, with serious medical consequences, including irreversible hormone therapy, horrific genital mutilation, mastectomy and sterilisation.

Very concerning is the increasing number of young people, often referred to as detransitioners, who regret medically transitioning and seek to reverse these procedures. More of these brave young people are now speaking out about how they were rushed into making these permanent life changing decisions at a very young age when they were not able to fully understand the consequences. Their stories are very distressing.

On the issue of transgenderism, schools must remain neutral and insist that proper licensed medical advice is sought for each individual child suffering from gender dysphoria, not the general advice of an advocacy group pushing a particular radical agenda with a one size fits all prescription for Irish children. Our children deserve better than that.

**Conclusion:** Pending a full review of these allegations NWC do not believe that BelongTo should be allowed access to any Irish schools nor should schools continue to support BelongTo. Schools should instead cancel Standup week and cancel any pending applications for the so-called quality mark pending a full investigation into BelongTo has been undertaken.