



LGBT Friendly Roscommon launched

Countywide initiative kicks off in Hannon's

■ DAN DOONER

"Everybody needs to play a part in supporting LGBT young people." This was the message from Irish Times columnist and Independent Chair of Ireland's first LGBT National Youth Strategy, Una Mullally, as she officially launched 'LGBT Friendly Roscommon 2017' in Hannon's Hotel recently.

LGBT Friendly Roscommon is a public awareness initiative, which aims to introduce a code of practice through a series of awareness-raising workshops in order to assist LGBTI young people.

Una Mullally said that while a lot had been done to make Ireland an easier place to grow up in, more needed to be done.

She said: "Being LGBT is not the problem. The problem is the negative attitude that is encountered all too frequently by LGBT young people. It is this negative attitude and the negative behaviours that it can give rise to, that must be challenged and changed."

Roscommon native, Will Keane, said that while growing up in the county provided him with many happy memories, becoming aware of his sexuality complicated matters.

He said: "My childhood was a very happy time but as I grew up and became aware that I was gay, this did make things more difficult."

Will, who appeared on RTE Television's

'Only Gay in the Village', urged local businesses and clubs to display the LGBT Friendly symbol, which was designed by Elphin Community College student, Luke McEvoy.

Those present at the launch also heard from Angela Toolis, chairperson of Roscommon Children and Young People's Services Committee, who is also area manager for Tusla, the child and family agency. The CYPSC chair praised the work of those involved including HSE Office of Suicide Prevention, Tusla, Foróige, Roscommon County Council and Roscommon LEADER Partnership.

Nikki Mullen provided an insight into her work as an LGBT Youth Support Worker with SMILY Youth LGBT Group in Sligo/Leitrim while highlighting the difficulties faced by LGBT young people.

Elphin Community College student, Lydia Dwyer, who acted as MC for the launch, encouraged those in attendance to utilise the series of workshops that will take place throughout the month of May. The workshops will be organised across the county in order to raise awareness of LGBT issues in Co. Roscommon as well as aiming to create an even more LGBT friendly atmosphere within organisations and clubs in the county.

Copies of the Code of Practice template and a schedule for the workshops can be found in the Roscommon CYPSC section of www.cypsc.ie.



Pictured at the launch of 'LGBT Friendly Roscommon 2017' at Hannon's Hotel were Andrea Heaney, William Neary, Emily Sharkey and Padraic Croghan. Picture: Andrew Fox



Pictured at the launch of 'LGBT Friendly Roscommon 2017' at Hannon's Hotel were Brian Higgins, Elphin Community College, Caroline Duignan, Coordinator of Roscommon Children and Young People Services Committee, Morgan Mee, Roscommon Children and Young People Services Committee, Nikki Mullen, Smily LGBT Group, Sligo and Luke McEvoy, Elphin Community College. Picture: Andrew Fox



Pictured at the launch of 'LGBT Friendly Roscommon 2017' at Hannon's Hotel were Mary McGrath, HSE, Una Mullally, Chair of Ireland's first LGBT National Youth Strategy, Will Keane, Guest Speaker, Angela Toolis, Chairperson of the Children and Young Person Service Committee and Lydia Dwyer, Chairperson of Roscommon Comhairle na nÓg. Picture: Andrew Fox