

Welcoming Address at Launch of Community Development Code of Practice

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1. Good morning everyone, and welcome to this community development workshop on working with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and communities. I am Davin Roche, Director of Community Development in GLEN. We in GLEN are delighted and excited to be hosting this inaugural national workshop, and to be hosting the launch of the first national LGBT code of practice for programmes engaged in community development.
2. The code is a wonderful example of what can be achieved by local communities and by Community Development organisations. It shows what can be achieved when this work is recognised and supported by government departments, statutory agencies and national NGOs. This national code emerged from local experiences. It can be traced back to a young gay man being badly bullied and ostracised by his peers in a very rural part of Ireland and to his mother asking her local Community Development Project for help. The CDP amongst other things asked their Support Agency for support, and from this the Network of CDPs, Family Resource Centres and Regional Support Agency Supporting LGBT Communities (West and Midlands Region) was established. The Network's role continues to be to build the awareness and know-how of projects to promote LGBT social inclusion and equality in their communities. The Network is also committed to achieving positive social change. The Network not only identified the need for an LGBT code of practice, but they developed one. And we in GLEN were delighted to support the Network in its work and in developing the Code of Practice. We also agreed with the Network that the regional code should be, to use the jargon rolled out nationally. We in GLEN have worked closely with the Dept of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Family Support Agency and Pobal to make this happen. We would like to thank them for their commitment to supporting LGBT equality and social inclusion and to thank the Department for its financial support for the publication of the Code and for today's workshop and launch.

3. From an LGBT perspective it is critical that communities are supported now and into the future to promote equality and social inclusion. LGBT people need strong community development organisations which are led by local people and which have the resources to support all those in their communities who are experiencing social exclusion, including those members who are LGBT.
4. In GLEN we share the Code of Practice's view that the last twenty years have seen great progress for lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and that there is a developing awareness of transgender issues. Social progress has been led by more and more LGBT people living their lives openly and finding support and acceptance from families, friends and work colleagues. LGBT people and their supporters have worked actively for progress in law such as the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993 and the Equal Status and Employment Equality Acts in the 1990s. The advent of Civil Partnership for same-sex couples as proposed in the Civil Partnership Bill 2009 will bring new visibility for LGB people. The enactment of inclusive gender recognition legislation is a key priority for transgender people.
5. However in GLEN we also share the Code of Practice's view that many LGBT people still experience social exclusion and that this can arise from negative experiences in families, in schools, in local communities and from society more broadly. We share the view of the CDP, FRC and Partnership programmes that LGBT inclusion and equality are key community development issues. And we know that community development organisations have a key role to play in working with local LGBT people to address experiences of isolation, inequality, invisibility and social exclusion, be these in Belmullet, Belturbet, or Blanchardstown.
6. It is for all of these reasons that we are delighted to have been able to play a role in the development and publication of this Code and to host the workshops and launch today. We would like to thank the Dept for its financial support for the publication of the code and for today's workshop and launch. We look forward to CDPs, FRCs and Urban and Integrated Partnership Companies