



SUBMISSION ON THE NATIONAL DISABILITY STRATEGY

January 2024

Contact: Oisín O'Reilly (he/him) (ceo@outhouse.ie)

Contents

Contents	2
About Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre	3
Overview of Submission	3
Context	4
Critical Considerations	5
Accessible Community Space	5
Understanding the Lived Experience	5
Recommendations	5
Invest in Accessible Community Infrastructure	5
Promote Inclusive Digital Spaces	5
Combat Invisibility Through Representation	5
Prioritise Mental Health Support	6
Allocate Funding for Inclusive Research Initiatives	6

About Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre

Founded in 1997, Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre is a vibrant and safe space for LGBTQ+ people, communities, and organisations that is inclusive of the diversity within our communities.

Outhouse is dedicated to supporting the people, spaces, and issues important to the LGBTQ+ communities.

Our vision is a future where LGBTQ+ people are safe, seen, and celebrated.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for LGBTQ+ people by providing a safe space to find:

- **Connection** - discovering themselves, their people, place, and passions.
- **Community Support** - accessing information, programmes, and services.
- **Culture** - experiencing creativity, heritage, discovery, and fun.
- **Campaigns** - being part of a strong, credible, and trusted voice for LGBTQ+ communities.

In all our work, we are guided by the [values](#) of trust, respect, joy, inclusivity, and impact and grounded by our commitments to [equity](#) and [intersectionality](#).

Overview of Submission

The development of the new National Disability Strategy is not taking place in a vacuum. It is taking place in a society that is radically shifting. This submission opens by laying out the context as we see it for LGBTQ+ people in Ireland today. From here, it examines the critical considerations for LGBTQ+ people with disabilities and concludes with recommendations that respond to them.

Context

Over the last fifty years, Irish society has travelled a significant distance towards greater equality and inclusion for LGBTQ+ people. These changes were historic and seismic, but unfortunately, this progress hasn't been universally shared across all identities and lived experiences of LGBTQ+ people.

While legislative advancements, such as the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993 and the recognition of same-sex relationships through the introduction of civil partnerships in 2011 and marriage equality in 2015, marked substantial milestones, there remains work to be done to ensure that all members of the LGBTQ+ community fully realise the benefits of these changes.

For LGBTQ+ individuals with disabilities, the intersectionality of these identities adds layers of complexity to their lived experiences. The evolving societal landscape has brought increased visibility to diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. However, the specific challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals with disabilities have not always received the attention they deserve. 13.05% of LGBTQ+ individuals who have engaged in our programmes and services in 2022 and 2023 identified as a person living with a disability.

Issues of accessibility, discrimination, and understanding unique healthcare needs are just a few examples of the complexities faced by LGBTQ+ individuals with disabilities. In navigating the intersections of disability and LGBTQ+ identities, it becomes evident that a targeted and nuanced approach is necessary to address the gaps in inclusivity and support.

As society continues to evolve, it is essential to recognise that the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals with disabilities are not static; broader social, economic, and cultural shifts shape them. This submission seeks to contribute to the ongoing inclusivity dialogue, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and tailored approach within the new National Disability Strategy.

In the following sections, we will delve into critical considerations for LGBTQ+ individuals with disabilities, examining specific challenges and opportunities that must be addressed to ensure a more equitable and inclusive future for all members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Critical Considerations

To fulfil the vision of the UNCRPD, ensuring the full inclusion of disabled people in Ireland necessitates comprehensive changes across various domains.

Accessible Community Space

Central to this effort is the prioritisation of accessibility, spanning physical infrastructure, digital spaces, and the availability of information. At present, a notable gap exists in providing accessible LGBTQ+ community spaces for disabled individuals. This absence not only results in physical barriers but also contributes to a sense of invisibility and isolation, significantly impacting the mental health and well-being of disabled LGBTQ+ individuals.

Understanding the Lived Experience

The importance of comprehensive data collection and research on the lived experiences of disabled LGBTQ+ individuals cannot be understated. This information is vital for understanding specific challenges, informing policy decisions, and ensuring that future strategies are evidence-based and responsive to the community's needs.

Recommendations

To address these challenges and foster inclusivity, the new National Disability Strategy should:

Invest in Accessible Community Infrastructure

Allocate resources to develop and enhance community spaces that are fully accessible to disabled LGBTQ+ people. This involves retrofitting existing spaces and designing new ones with universal accessibility in mind. The goal is to create physical environments that promote inclusivity, allowing disabled LGBTQ+ individuals to actively participate in community life without facing physical barriers.

Promote Inclusive Digital Spaces

Extend the focus on accessibility to digital platforms. Invest in developing and enhancing online LGBTQ+ community spaces that are fully accessible to individuals with disabilities. This ensures that the community is not only physically accessible but also digitally inclusive, providing opportunities for connection, support, and information sharing.

Combat Invisibility Through Representation

Actively address the issue of invisibility by promoting the representation of disabled LGBTQ+ individuals in community spaces, events, and

communications. This can involve showcasing diverse stories and experiences to create a more inclusive narrative. By doing so, the community can foster a sense of belonging and break down the isolation that contributes to poor mental health.

Prioritise Mental Health Support

Recognise the unique mental health challenges faced by disabled LGBTQ+ individuals due to limited accessibility. Allocate resources to provide targeted mental health support services that address the intersectionality of disability and LGBTQ+ identity. This may include counselling services, peer support groups, and awareness campaigns that specifically cater to the needs of this demographic.

Allocate Funding for Inclusive Research Initiatives

Allocate specific funding streams dedicated to understanding the lived experiences of disabled LGBTQ+ individuals. This funding should support research initiatives that employ diverse methodologies and adopt an intersectional approach. This would ensure that the experiences of individuals at the crossroads of these identities are thoroughly explored, leading to a nuanced understanding that can inform targeted interventions.