

SUBMISSION TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT OF STRATEGY

Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage

August 2024



Outhouse
LGBTQ+ CENTRE

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
About Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre.....	3
LGBTQ+ Rights in Ireland Today.....	3
Goal A.....	5
Goal B.....	5
Goal C.....	6
Goal D.....	6
Goal E.....	7
Goal F.....	7
Goal G.....	8
Other Observations and Inputs.....	8
Public Sector Human Rights and Equality Duty.....	8
Tangible Indicators and Accountability in Strategy Delivery.....	9
Costing and Budget Assignment for Strategy Implementation.....	9

About Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre

Outhouse is the cornerstone of support for the LGBTQ+ community. We provide a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQ+ individuals to gather, connect, and find solace in a world that doesn't always understand or embrace them. We are the heartbeat of the queer community, offering vital services, including social spaces, mental health support, cultural events, and much more.

We are dedicated to supporting the people, spaces, and issues important to the LGBTQ+ communities. Our vision is a future where LGBTQ+ individuals 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.

We live by the values of Trust, Respect, Joy, Inclusion, and Impact. Our commitments to equity and intersectionality underpin our work.

LGBTQ+ Rights in Ireland Today

Ireland has made significant strides towards achieving greater equality and inclusion for the LGBTQ+ community through successful referendums, progressive legislation, and more inclusive public policies. These advancements reflect Ireland's commitment to creating a more equitable society. However, the LGBTQ+ community still confronts profound challenges and battles within our society. Despite remarkable progress, discrimination, harassment, and inequalities persist, casting long shadows over the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals. Mental health issues are prevalent, and the weight of isolation can be crushing. Poverty, homelessness, and substance misuse disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ individuals and significantly impact their day-to-day lives.

Positive policy developments include the publication of two national LGBTQ+ inclusion strategies. However, despite these strategies, government funding for LGBTQ+ organisations remains sporadic and inadequate to meet the

community's demand for services or the scale of resources needed to transform society. The lack of financial support and infrastructure investments significantly impacts organisations' abilities to provide essential services and support to our LGBTQ+ communities, holding back progress for the most vulnerable and marginalised.

Addressing these issues requires a sustained effort from the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage. Collaboration between LGBTQ+ organisations and statutory bodies is crucial to ensure meaningful and longstanding change and equity for LGBTQ+ people. The Department must focus on integrating LGBTQ+ voices and needs within its goals to effectively address the unique challenges faced by this community.

Despite these advances, LGBTQ+ individuals in Ireland face significant challenges related to housing and homelessness. Data shows that 24% of LGBTQ+ people have experienced housing difficulties, with the figure rising to 46% among Trans and Intersex individuals. On average, these housing difficulties last for 8.5 months. The reasons for these difficulties are stark: 11% of LGBTQ+ people cite sexual orientation, 7% cite gender identity or expression, and 27% of Trans and Intersex individuals report these factors as causes, well above EU averages. Additionally, 31% attribute housing issues to relationship or family problems, with a dramatic 66% of those aged 55+ facing such issues compared to 40% in the EU. LGBTQ+ individuals are less likely to own their homes and often struggle more to make ends meet, with financial problems affecting 40% of LGBTQ+ people and 60% of Trans and Intersex individuals. The fear of discrimination and violence in emergency accommodations exacerbates the situation, making many hesitant to seek help. This vulnerability is underscored by Ireland's ranking as 23rd out of 28 EU countries for LGBTQ+ housing difficulties¹, highlighting the urgent need for targeted support and inclusive housing policies.

As we look to the future, it is clear that addressing the intersecting needs of the LGBTQ+ community requires a multi-dimensional approach. The Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage has a significant role in developing and implementing inclusive strategies and fostering collaboration to build a more equitable, inclusive, and supportive society for everyone.

¹ Source: [EU-LGBTI II Survey in All EU Member States](#)

Goal A

To provide a framework that ensures a sustainable housing system in Ireland with a supply of good quality housing to match the needs of all our people.

- **Dedicated Emergency Accommodation:** Foster the creation of a national LGBTQ+ emergency accommodation shelter in Dublin city centre to provide a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Such a shelter will address unique challenges such as discrimination, harassment, and mental health issues and ensure easy access to essential support services and community support networks.
- **Inclusive Housing Solutions:** Foster the creation of LGBTQ+ housing co-operatives and enable policy changes that allow LGBTQ+ individuals to co-locate in social and affordable housing schemes, reducing isolation and enhancing wellbeing.
- **Update the National Quality Standards for Homeless Services:** Implement a requirement in the quality standards to improve data collection practices to include LGBTQ+ demographics to better understand and address the community's needs in policy development.

Goal B

To provide a framework for the sustainable management of water resources from source to sea and for the provision of effective and efficient water services.

- **Inclusive Public Consultation:** Ensure that vulnerable communities are engaged and actively supported to be included in public consultations on water management to address their specific needs and concerns.

Goal C

Recognising the large numbers of public bodies that local authorities now provide services on behalf of, work with and through policy and programme leaders across national and local Government to enable independent, democratic, responsive, innovative and effective local government. Ensure effective electoral management and high quality fire services and emergency management.

- **Training and Awareness:** Implement training for local government officials and emergency service providers on LGBTQ+ issues to ensure respectful and inclusive interactions and services.
- **Inclusive Policy Development:** Encourage the co-creation of local government policies that specifically address the needs of the LGBTQ+ community and other vulnerable and minoritised communities, ensuring their active inclusion in all aspects of public life.

Goal D

To ensure that planning and building in our regions, communities and maritime area contributes to the delivery of sustainable and balanced development.

- **LGBTQ+ Community Spaces:** Foster the development of safe, inclusive, and accessible dedicated community spaces where LGBTQ+ individuals can gather and receive support. This will foster a sense of community and belonging, which will lessen isolation.
- **Inclusive Urban Planning:** Ensure that urban planning and development projects undergo an equity and inclusion review process to consider the unique needs of vulnerable and marginalised people, including LGBTQ+ residents, and the efficacy and impact of the proposed measures on them.
- **Public Participation:** Encourage and resource the participation of vulnerable and minoritised communities in the planning and development processes to ensure that city and county development plans reflect their unique needs and perspectives.

Goal E

In the context of climate change and the impact of weather on Ireland, serve the whole of society through the production and communication of reliable weather and climate information to protect life and property and to further enhance Met Éireann's role as the authoritative voice on meteorology and climatology in Ireland.

- **Research and Analysis on the Impact of Climate Change:** Commission research and analysis to understand how climate change uniquely affects minoritised and vulnerable population groups, including LGBTQ+ individuals, to inform public policy and design appropriate mitigating measures.
- **Community Resilience:** Promote initiatives that enhance the resilience of vulnerable and marginalised communities to climate impacts, including community-based adaptation projects and support networks.

Goal F

To conserve, protect, manage and present our built, natural and archaeological heritage, and our biodiversity, for its intrinsic value and cultural identity, including to the environment as well as a support to local communities, regional economic development and sustainable employment.

- **Inclusive Heritage Programmes:** Develop programmes that highlight and preserve the contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals to Ireland's cultural and historical heritage. Ensure that the heritage of Ireland's LGBTQ+ population is documented, maintained, and accessible to the public.
- **LGBTQ+ Tourism:** Promote LGBTQ+ inclusive tourism initiatives that recognise and celebrate the community's cultural heritage, fostering economic opportunities and social inclusion.
- **Inclusive Experiences:** Ensure that natural and heritage sites are safe and welcoming for LGBTQ+ visitors by implementing LGBTQ+ awareness training for all team members interacting with the public, ensuring policies are up to date and providing inclusive facilities.

Goal G

To provide a framework that assists the Department, local authorities and agencies to enhance digital services and accelerate, alongside our partners, the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the use of data and digital technologies.

- **Data Collection:** Implement data collection practices and standards that include LGBTQ+ demographics to better understand and address the community's needs in policy development regarding housing and homelessness.

Other Observations and Inputs

Public Sector Human Rights and Equality Duty

Under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, the Department is required to set out in its strategic plan an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to its functions and purpose and the actions it is taking or proposes to take to address those issues.

The Department has undertaken an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes are material to the execution of its functions. However, despite significant challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community in Ireland, the unique needs of this community have not been specifically referenced or planned for within these commitments. To truly fulfil its public sector duty and human rights obligations, the Department must explicitly include and address the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals alongside other communities protected under equality legislation.

Areas to which Human Rights and Equality considerations apply:

- **Accessibility, Universal Design, and Reasonable Accommodation for LGBTQ+ individuals:** Implement measures to ensure that Department facilities, programs, and services are inclusive and accessible to LGBTQ+ individuals, recognising the specific and intersecting barriers they may face.
- **Promotion and support of human rights and equality principles as they apply to the Department's staff, including LGBTQ+ employees:** Provide ongoing training on LGBTQ+ issues and review relevant policies

to ensure equality of opportunity and a supportive workplace environment for LGBTQ+ staff.

- **Ensure that local authorities meet the housing needs of LGBTQ+ individuals:** Develop and implement a strategic framework to address the housing needs of LGBTQ+ people, recognising their unique vulnerabilities and the higher risk of homelessness they face.
- **Community and Public Service Inclusion:** Develop policies that promote inclusive urban planning, ensuring that the unique needs of LGBTQ+ residents are considered in community development projects.

By explicitly addressing the needs of the LGBTQ+ community within its strategic commitments, the Department can ensure a more comprehensive and equitable approach to human rights and equality, fulfilling its legal obligations and promoting a genuinely inclusive society.

Tangible Indicators and Accountability in Strategy Delivery

A crucial element for the strategy's success is the establishment of tangible indicators and robust accountability mechanisms to ensure the delivery of commitments. Without these, the strategy risks falling short of its goals, leaving the LGBTQ+ community underserved and vulnerable.

Costing and Budget Assignment for Strategy Implementation

For the Strategy to be effective, all proposed actions must be thoroughly costed, and a dedicated budget is assigned for the strategy's entire duration. Clear and transparent financial planning ensures that each initiative has the necessary resources for successful execution. Without allocated funding, even the most well-intentioned actions risk being under-resourced and failing to achieve their desired impact. A well-defined budget not only demonstrates a genuine commitment from the government but also allows for better planning, monitoring, and accountability.

Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre

105 Capel Street
Dublin 1, D01 R290
Ireland

Tel: +353 1 873 4999

hello@outhouse.ie

www.outhouse.ie

Charities Registration Number: 20033293

CHY: 11815

CRO: 255357