

SUBMISSION TO THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT STATEMENT OF STRATEGY

Policing & Community Safety Authority

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Outhouse
LGBTQ+ CENTRE

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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, Inclusivity, and Impact.

Underpinning our work are our commitments to equity and intersectionality.

LGBTQ+ People and Policing in Ireland

Ireland has made significant progress on LGBTQ+ rights in recent decades, from decriminalisation and marriage equality to gender recognition, increased public visibility, and hate crime legislation. These are important milestones, but the legacy of criminalisation and the lived experience of policing for many in our community continue to shape our reality today.

The relationship between LGBTQ+ people and the criminal justice system in Ireland is complex. For much of our history, the Gardaí were part of a broader system of state-sanctioned oppression. Laws criminalising same-sex relationships and policing of queer spaces and people were actively enforced. This history is not abstract; it remains within living memory for many in our community, particularly our elders, and this history is passed down from one generation to the next.

Today, while the legal landscape has changed, the culture of policing has not always kept pace. LGBTQ+ people continue to be among the most frequently targeted groups for hate crimes and hate incidents in the State. The rise in extremism and anti-LGBTQ+ hostility in recent years has been visible, alarming, and deeply felt by our community.

Unfortunately, many LGBTQ+ people do not feel confident turning to the Gardaí for protection. Trust in An Garda Síochána remains low, particularly among trans people, queer people of colour, sex workers, and others who face multiple forms of marginalisation. Reports of extremist activity, intimidation, hate crimes, and hate incidents have often been met with responses that feel dismissive, inadequate, or retraumatising. In many cases, individuals have been discouraged from reporting further incidents due to past negative experiences.

While this is not the experience of all LGBTQ+ people, it is the experience of far too many.

We want to acknowledge the vital and positive work of the Garda National Diversity and Integration Bureau (GNDIB). In many ways, the Bureau operates like a small NGO within the wider policing system, committed, responsive, and grounded in values of inclusion, trauma-informed practice, and community engagement. Their efforts matter and have made a difference.

But they do not represent the full experience of policing in Ireland.

Concerns persist about a culture within An Garda Síochána that can be defensive, closed to feedback, and slow to recognise or address systemic issues. When civil society organisations raise concerns, they are too often met with silence or resistance, rather than openness and dialogue. This makes it harder to build the kind of policing service the public deserves, one that protects everyone, listens to those it serves, and improves when it falls short.

Improving the relationship between LGBTQ+ communities and policing in Ireland is not simply a matter of new policies or training. It requires a shift in power, culture, and accountability, including strong, independent oversight that ensures progress is real, measurable, and sustained.

The establishment of the Policing and Community Safety Authority (PCSA) offers a crucial opportunity to achieve that shift. Its role in setting priorities, assessing performance, and promoting human rights in policing must be grounded in the lived experiences of those communities whose trust has yet to be earned.

Strategic Priority 1

Provide Consistent Oversight and Independent Assessment

Observation:

The draft strategy outlines human rights and equality monitoring, but lacks specific commitments to marginalised communities such as LGBTQ+ people.

Recommendations:

- Embed sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE) as explicit dimensions of equality in all oversight frameworks.
- Include community-level data analysis of hate crime, stop-and-search, and use-of-force incidents disaggregated by equality ground.
- Conduct thematic inspections on policing of hate crimes and community safety for LGBTQ+ people.
- Ensure oversight includes assessing An Garda Síochána's compliance with its Diversity and Integration Strategy and Public Sector Duty under Section 42 of the IHREC Act 2014.

Strategic Priority 2

Support and Promote Community Safety

Observation:

The draft recognises vulnerable communities but does not define them or set out clear engagement mechanisms.

Recommendations:

- Establish formal community advisory mechanisms to inform oversight and community safety assessments, ensuring inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised voices such as LGBTQ+ people.
- Partner with civil society, including LGBTQ+ organisations, to co-design engagement frameworks and monitor lived experiences of safety and policing.
- Promote inclusive models of local community safety partnerships, ensuring that sexual orientation and gender identity are represented in their composition, plans, and reporting.
- Ensure that the PCSA's definition of "safety" includes freedom from hate, harassment, and intimidation, both offline and online.

Strategic Priority 3

Be a Credible, Trusted, and Expert Voice on Policing

Observation:

This objective presents an opportunity for the PCSA to shape public discourse on inclusive, rights-based policing.

Recommendations:

- Commission and publish research on policing and minority communities, including barriers to trust and reporting.
- Develop a public education campaign on rights in policing and complaint mechanisms, in accessible and inclusive language.
- Collaborate with human rights, equality, and community organisations to strengthen expertise on intersectionality and vulnerability.
- Establish an annual equality impact report on policing, highlighting progress and gaps across key groups.

Strategic Priority 4

Be a Well-Run and Effective Organisation

Observation:

Commitments to human rights, climate action, and workplace culture are positive, but equality duties need explicit visibility.

Recommendations:

- Include explicit reference to the Public Sector Human Rights and Equality Duty in the strategy and its implementation framework.
- Publish an Equality and Human Rights Framework outlining how the PCSA will meet its duty in practice.
- Ensure ongoing training in LGBTQ+ inclusion and trauma-informed practice for all PCSA staff.
- Develop clear, measurable indicators and publish annual progress reports disaggregated by equality ground.

Other Observations and Inputs

Public Sector Human Rights and Equality Duty

We welcome the inclusion of the Public Sector Human Rights and Equality Duty throughout the draft strategy and the PCSA's recognition of its dual role: both as a public body bound by Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 and as an oversight authority assessing An Garda Síochána's compliance with the same duty.

This dual responsibility positions the PCSA uniquely to lead by example in embedding human rights and equality across Ireland's policing system. To achieve this, the Duty must not only guide internal processes but actively shape oversight priorities, data collection, and reporting.

We recommend that the final strategy:

- Sets measurable outcomes for the implementation of the Duty, with clear indicators to track progress on eliminating discrimination, promoting equality, and protecting rights in policing.
- Publishes the results of the Authority's human rights and equality assessments annually, demonstrating transparency and accountability.
- Uses the Duty as a lens through which all performance assessments and inspections of An Garda Síochána are conducted, including assessment of their own compliance with Section 42.
- Engages communities affected by inequality, including LGBTQ+ people, migrants, and people with disabilities, to inform the Authority's understanding of lived experience and guide future oversight priorities.
- Promotes a culture of continuous learning on human rights and equality within both the PCSA and An Garda Síochána, through ongoing staff training and partnership with civil society experts.

Embedding these commitments will strengthen the Authority's credibility, ensure that oversight is meaningfully rights-based, and demonstrate leadership in advancing equality across the wider criminal justice system.

Tangible Indicators and Accountability in Strategy Delivery

The commitments outlined in the draft strategy are ambitious and promising, but their impact will depend on how progress is measured and reported. Without clear indicators and transparent accountability mechanisms, even the best-intentioned actions risk becoming symbolic rather than substantive.

For communities whose trust in policing and oversight is fragile, such as LGBTQ+ people, visibility of progress is essential. People need to see not just that oversight exists but that it delivers real change. The Authority's strategy should, therefore, include tangible, measurable outcomes for each strategic objective. These should track both process (how engagement and oversight are carried out) and impact (how they improve communities' lived experiences).

Annual reporting should include progress against these indicators, disaggregated by equality ground where possible, and shared publicly. Civil society organisations and community partners should be invited to review and comment on performance results, helping to identify emerging gaps or trends that quantitative data may miss.

By committing to specific, measurable indicators and open reporting, the PCSA can demonstrate leadership in transparent governance and strengthen public confidence in its work.

Costing and Budget Assignment for Strategy Implementation

Delivering the goals of the strategy will require dedicated and sustained investment. Each strategic objective should be supported by a clear costing model and an assigned budget line to ensure that actions are achievable, not aspirational. Transparent financial planning demonstrates both accountability and intent; it shows that commitments to oversight, equality, and community engagement are properly resourced and prioritised.

Without ring-fenced funding for areas such as stakeholder engagement, research, and equality monitoring, the Authority risks under-delivering on its most critical aims. Publishing indicative budgets or costed work plans would also strengthen confidence among civil society partners and the wider public

that resources are being directed where they will have the greatest impact. A strategy that links ambition to investment sends a clear message that the PCSA is serious about lasting, measurable change.

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