

SUBMISSION TO THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Department of Climate, Energy, and the Environment

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About Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre

Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre is Ireland's largest LGBTQ+ community support and advocacy organisation. We provide a safe and welcoming space where LGBTQ+ people can gather, connect, and access support in a society that does not always recognise or meet their needs. Our work centres on people who are marginalised, isolated, or at risk, and we engage daily with individuals experiencing poverty, housing insecurity, discrimination, trauma, and social exclusion.

We deliver a wide range of supports, including mental health and wellbeing services, information and referral, community safety initiatives, cultural and social programmes, and access to safe, inclusive space. These services act as early intervention, reduce isolation, and support people to navigate complex systems that often fail to account for their lived realities.

Outhouse is dedicated to supporting the people, spaces, and issues that matter to LGBTQ+ communities. Our vision is a future where LGBTQ+ people are safe, seen, and celebrated. Our mission is to improve quality of life by providing a trusted space to find connection, access community support, engage with culture, and contribute to collective advocacy and campaigns that advance equality and social inclusion.

Our work is grounded in the values of trust, respect, joy, inclusivity, and impact. Underpinning everything we do is a clear commitment to equity and intersectionality, recognising that inequality is shaped by overlapping factors such as poverty, gender identity, migration status, disability, and housing insecurity. Our engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals aligns most closely with SDGs 3, 8, 10, and 11, reflecting our focus on health and wellbeing, decent work, reduced inequalities, and inclusive, safe communities.

LGBTQ+ People and the SDGs

We wish to make a fundamental point at the outset of this submission. We are now in the deeply concerning position where ministers are publicly acknowledging that key SDG targets will not be met by the Irish State. This is not a marginal or technical issue. It is a clear signal that the national implementation of the SDGs has failed to deliver the promised change. A third National Implementation Plan cannot proceed as if this context does not exist. If targets are known to be out of reach, the plan must confront why that is the case and set out clearly what will change in how the State approaches delivery, accountability, and prioritisation.

Our experience of SDG 3, good health and wellbeing, is grounded in the daily realities of people seeking support. We are seeing sustained and growing demand for mental health and psychosocial supports, particularly among trans and non-binary people, LGBTQ+ migrants, and those living with poverty or housing instability. Too often, community organisations are carrying responsibility and risk that properly belong with the State. Prevention and early intervention remain underfunded, while people are pushed towards crisis points before support becomes available. If the next National Implementation Plan is to be credible, it must treat community-based, low-threshold supports as essential health infrastructure rather than optional additions to statutory services.

Our work also highlights the deep interconnection between SDG 8, decent work, and broader wellbeing. Insecure employment, discrimination in hiring, and limited progression opportunities continue to shape the economic lives of many LGBTQ+ people. These experiences do not exist in isolation. Poor work leads directly to poor health outcomes, housing precarity, and increased reliance on crisis services. Current policy approaches often treat employment, equality, and social protection as separate domains. The next National Implementation Plan must take a more integrated approach, recognising decent work as a protective factor against poverty, homelessness, and poor health.

SDG 10, reducing inequalities, must be understood as the thread that runs through all others. History shows us, without exception, that during periods of social, economic, or environmental upheaval, those who are already marginalised are affected first, affected most severely, and are the last to

recover, if they recover at all. LGBTQ+ people are among those groups. This is especially relevant in the context of climate change, which represents an existential and compounding threat. Climate shocks deepen inequality, strain public services, and disproportionately impact those with the least economic and social protection. Any SDG plan that does not explicitly recognise this pattern risks repeating it.

A persistent barrier to progress on SDG 10 is the lack of disaggregated data on LGBTQ+ poverty, exclusion, and outcomes. National reporting often obscures intersectional disadvantage, making it difficult to track whether policies are reducing inequality or entrenching it further. “Leave no one behind” cannot remain a rhetorical commitment. The next National Implementation Plan must embed lived experience into governance and decision-making structures and establish clear accountability mechanisms when targets are missed.

Our engagement with SDG 11, sustainable and inclusive communities, is shaped by the role of physical, trusted spaces in people’s lives. Community spaces like ours function as social infrastructure. They reduce isolation, support safety, enable early intervention, and foster belonging. Yet such spaces are frequently treated as peripheral within urban policy, rather than as essential components of healthy, resilient cities, communities, and societies. Community safety, housing security, and inclusion are inseparable. If the National Implementation Plan is serious about sustainable communities, it must recognise and support the role of inclusive community spaces and local actors.

Finally, we return to the central challenge facing this consultation. Ireland now accepts that SDG targets will be missed. That reality demands honesty and ambition in equal measure. The Third National Implementation Plan must be explicit about where previous approaches have fallen short, who has borne the cost of that failure, and what will be done differently. Without that shift, the SDGs risk becoming statements of intent rather than instruments of change. We urge the Government to adopt an approach that centres those most exposed to risk and inequality and to treat the SDGs as a framework for action, not aspiration alone.

Progress and gaps since the last National Implementation Plan

There has been increased visibility of the SDGs across government and civil society, and we acknowledge the effort made to embed the SDGs within policy discourse. That said, visibility has not translated into delivery for those most exposed to risk and inequality. From our perspective, the gap between national ambition and lived experience remains wide. Progress has been uneven, difficult to measure, and slow to reach communities already facing disadvantage.

In practice, community organisations continue to absorb unmet needs across mental health, social support, housing insecurity, and community safety. This reflects a broader pattern in which SDG commitments exist on paper but lack the funding, coordination, and accountability required to deliver tangible outcomes for the people most affected by inequality.

Leaving no one behind

The principle of *“leave no one behind”* is central to the SDGs, yet it remains one of the weakest areas of implementation. LGBTQ+ people experience layered disadvantage shaped by poverty, discrimination, migration status, disability, and housing insecurity. These experiences are often invisible in national data and reporting.

Without disaggregated data and structured engagement with affected communities, it is not possible to assess whether policy action is reducing inequality or entrenching it. The next National Implementation Plan must move beyond aspiration and establish clear mechanisms to identify who is being left behind, why this is happening, and what corrective action will follow.

Policy coherence and joined-up delivery

A recurring barrier to progress is the lack of coherence across health, employment, housing, equality, and climate policy. The impacts of poor mental health, insecure work, and unsafe communities are interconnected, yet policy responses remain fragmented. This places additional pressure on community organisations to bridge gaps between systems.

The next National Implementation Plan must strengthen cross-departmental responsibility for SDG delivery and reduce reliance on short-term, project-based responses now common features across most government strategies. Joined-up, sustained delivery should be treated as a requirement rather than a voluntary once-off exercise delivered by community organisations.

Localisation, communities, and place

Sustainable and inclusive communities depend on safe, accessible, and trusted local infrastructure. Community spaces play a critical role in reducing isolation, supporting wellbeing, and enabling early intervention, particularly for those who do not engage easily with statutory services.

Local authorities and community organisations must be properly resourced to deliver on SDG 11. Inclusion, safety, and belonging should be recognised as core outcomes of urban policy, not secondary considerations.

Climate risk and inequality

Climate change is a compounding risk that cuts across all SDGs. History shows that in periods of disruption, marginalised communities are impacted first and hardest, and recover last. LGBTQ+ people are not exempt from this pattern, particularly where poverty, poor health, and insecure housing already exist.

The National Implementation Plan must explicitly address the intersection of climate risk and social inequality. Failure to do so will undermine progress across SDGs 3, 8, 10, and 11.

Priority actions for the next National Implementation Plan

To be credible, the Third National Implementation Plan must:

- Set out how missed targets will trigger corrective action.
- Embed lived experience in governance and decision-making.
- Strengthen accountability for delivery across departments.
- Treat community-based services as essential infrastructure.
- Address climate risk as a driver of inequality, not a separate issue.

Without these shifts, the SDGs risk remaining statements of intent rather than tools for change.

Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Obligations under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty are directly relevant to the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Duty requires public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect the human rights of those they serve. In the context of the SDGs, this Duty should act as a practical mechanism for ensuring that “leave no one behind” is not aspirational but operational.

In practice, the Duty is unevenly applied and too often treated as a procedural requirement rather than a driver of decision-making. Where SDG targets are known to be off track, the Duty should prompt a clear assessment of who is most affected, whose rights are at risk, and what steps are required to mitigate harm. This is particularly relevant for LGBTQ+ communities, where inequality is shaped by intersecting factors such as poverty, discrimination, health access, housing insecurity, and exposure to violence.

The Third National Implementation Plan presents an opportunity to align SDG delivery more explicitly with Public Sector Duty requirements. This includes embedding equality and human rights impact assessment into SDG governance structures, policy development, and reporting processes. It also requires meaningful engagement with affected communities at an early stage, rather than after decisions have been made.

As Ireland faces increasing social, economic, and climate-related pressures, the Public Sector Duty must be treated as a safeguard against deepening inequality. Applying the Duty rigorously would help ensure that SDG action prioritises those most exposed to risk, identifies unintended negative impacts, and supports corrective action where policy is falling short.

We urge that the Third National Implementation Plan clearly set out how Public Sector Duty obligations will be applied, monitored, and enforced as part of SDG implementation. Without this, commitments to equality, inclusion, and human rights risk remaining disconnected from the realities faced by those the SDGs are intended to protect.

What must be different in the Third National Implementation Plan

A third National Implementation Plan cannot be framed as business as usual. The acknowledgement that SDG targets will not be met requires a shift in how the State approaches delivery, accountability, and risk. This plan must be explicit about what will change in response to failure, rather than treating missed targets as inevitable or external to policy choice.

First, accountability must be strengthened. Where targets are not met, the plan should set out clear processes for review, correction, and reallocation of effort. Reporting without consequence has not delivered progress. The next plan must make clear who is responsible for outcomes, how underperformance is addressed, and how learning is fed back into policy, resource allocation, and funding decisions.

Second, the risk burden must be rebalanced. Community organisations cannot continue to absorb unmet needs caused by gaps in health, housing, employment, and social protection systems. While community-led responses are essential, they should complement statutory action rather than substitute for it. The plan must recognise community services as part of the State's social infrastructure and resource them accordingly.

Third, lived experience must be embedded earlier and more meaningfully. Consultation alone is insufficient. People most affected by inequality, including LGBTQ+ communities, must have a role in shaping priorities, monitoring impact, and identifying failure. This is particularly important when national data fails to capture the realities of poverty, discrimination, and exclusion.

Fourth, policy coherence must move from aspiration to requirement. The impacts of insecure work, poor health, unsafe communities, and climate risk are interconnected. The plan must require coordinated action across departments, rather than relying on informal collaboration or short-term initiatives. Where responsibilities overlap, ownership must be clear.

Finally, climate change must be treated as a compounding driver of inequality. The plan should explicitly recognise that social and economic shocks linked to the climate crisis will deepen existing disadvantage. Protecting those who are

already most exposed is not optional. It is central to achieving progress across the SDGs.

If the Third National Implementation Plan is to restore confidence in the SDGs as a framework for action, it must demonstrate that lessons have been learned, that failure is taken seriously, and that those most at risk are no longer an afterthought.

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