

Strategic Plan

Making Ireland the Best Place
in Europe to be LGBTQI+

2023
-2027



LGBT
IRELAND

For Inclusion
For Equality
For Everyone

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1. Introduction

Who We Are

LGBT Ireland is a national charitable organisation providing support services to people who are lesbian, gay, bi, transgender, queer, or intersex (LGBTQI+) and their family members. The organisation was established in 2010 when seven regional LGBT helplines joined efforts to coordinate the provision of a high-quality **national helpline and information service** throughout Ireland. Since then, LGBT Ireland has enhanced its supports and now also provides **specialist peer support** groups and other direct services, **advocates at a national level** and **provides education and training programmes** to a range of statutory and voluntary organisations and groups. Our growth and expansion happened in collaboration with regional LGBTQI+ member organisations, who participate on the board and who work with us to address emerging issues and challenges facing LGBTQI+ people living across Ireland.

LGBTQI+ Rights in Ireland Today

Together with our network member organisations and strategic partners, we believe that understanding and meeting the needs of LGBTQI+ people is essential in creating a more inclusive society. In the last decade, Ireland has taken substantial legal and policy strides in this direction. Driven by LGBTQI+ activism, case law, and campaigning, the success of the Marriage Equality referendum was followed by the enactment of legislation on same sex marriage, gender recognition, and certain family rights. In addition, positive policy developments have included the publication of two national LGBTQI+ strategies seeking to achieve a coordinated approach to inclusion across government departments. While at an EU level, the European Commission's LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020 - 2025, aims for a European Union where all people are free to be themselves without risk of discrimination, exclusion, and violence.

The focus in Ireland today continues to be on addressing fundamental gaps in LGBTQI+ rights, protections, and services. The Government are progressing hate crime legislation, regulation of assisted human reproduction is being considered, and research to inform a ban on conversion practices is underway. Enacting these laws is vital to protecting the LGBTQI+ community. Policy initiatives, including improved financial support for LGBTQI+ services, research into the conditions facing LGBTQI+ people in the International Protection Accommodation system, and a review of the Relationship and Sex Education curriculum in schools, are all welcome developments. However, a sustained effort is required to convert research and review recommendations into meaningful change. A feature of recent years is an increased openness to partnership-working between statutory bodies and LGBTQI+ organisations, and this collaborative approach will be crucial if LGBTQI+ equality and non-discrimination is to be achieved.

Our Achievements Over the Past Three Years

The past three years were incredibly challenging for everyone, dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, requiring mass restrictive measures never previously experienced. We had to come together by staying apart. For LGBT Ireland, ensuring that services remained uninterrupted was really important. Our staff and volunteer team continued to work remotely and dedicated their time to delivering incredible results, including the following achievements:

- Fully operational frontline services during the pandemic, supporting thousands of contacts across the period.

- Successfully campaigned for full implementation of the Children and Family Relationship Act 2015, resulting in hundreds of same sex parented families achieving legal recognition.

- Developed new services to support older and isolated LGBTQI+ people during the Covid-19 pandemic. These supports included an Online Community Group and a new LGBTQI+ Telefriending Service.

- Launched the LGBT Champions programme, developed the first e-module on LGBTQI+ awareness in healthcare services offered through the HSELand online training portal and hosted three major healthcare conferences supporting the learning and development of thousands of health and social care professionals.

- Advocated for improvements in the International Protection system for LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers, which brought about improved pathways including training for IPAS staff which will deliver better outcomes for the most vulnerable of asylum seekers.

- Delivered research on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health of the LGBTQI+ community to inform mental health officials in order to respond appropriately.

- In collaboration with the Irish College of General Practitioners, produced 'Guide for Providing Care for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual patients in Primary Care' delivering information and advice for its over 3,800 members.

- Advocated for a change to Ireland's laws around hate speech and hate crime which will see a new law for Ireland introduced later this year.

Our Focus for Tomorrow

Despite the progress made in recent years, there is still a long road ahead. According to the Central Statistics Office's Equality and Discrimination survey 2019, LGBTQI+ people were the group with the highest rate of perceived discrimination in Ireland. Ranking 16th on ILGA Europe's LGBTQI+ human rights and equality index 2022, the lack of protections for Intersex people in Ireland, the pathologising approach to trans healthcare here, and the age restrictions on gender recognition are key policy areas that have yet to be addressed. Progressing these issues is ever more challenging with increasingly divisive and harmful anti-trans discourse being stoked by far-right actors and spread over mainstream and social media.

Against this backdrop, our new strategy seeks to bolster existing gains and partnerships while also creating a renewed momentum towards achieving LGBTQI+ equality in Ireland. In many ways, we will continue to do what we have always done, while intensifying our efforts to support systemic change in national policy and practice. We plan to:

- ▶ Continue to provide and develop support services to optimise the outcomes for LGBTQI+ people across Ireland **(goal 1)**.
- ▶ Deliver our existing LGBTQI+ awareness training while also developing a national quality assured training programme in partnership with other LGBTQI+ organisations **(goal 2)**.
- ▶ Establish a multidisciplinary research network aimed at coordinating a programme of high-quality research with the voices of LGBTQI+ people at the centre, understanding the importance of research to develop effective policy and practice **(goal 3)**.

- ▶ Continue to provide high-quality supports that empower LGBTQI+ seeking refuge and International Protection in Ireland recognising that war, anti-LGBTQI+ discrimination, and climate change makes migration the only option for many LGBTQI+ people across the world. We will also seek to strengthen Ireland's support of LGBTQI+ people in hostile countries abroad **(goal 4)**.
- ▶ Campaign, alongside our allies, for necessary policy and practice change to ensure LGBTQI+ equality is achieved in Ireland **(goal 5)**.
- ▶ Create urgency and momentum for achieving LGBTQI+ equality by working collaboratively towards the goal of Ireland becoming the best place in Europe to be LGBTQI+ **(goal 6)**.
- ▶ Ensure good practice in governance to provide assurance to our partners, funders, and other key stakeholders that the organisation is best utilising its resources to attain these ambitious strategic goals **(goal 7)**.

2. Our Ambition, Purpose, and Values

Our Ambition

Is an Ireland where LGBTQI+ people, in all their diversity, can live full, safe, authentic, and celebrated lives.

Our Purpose

Is to support and empower LGBTQI+ people to be visible, safe and to have their voices heard, in the policy and practices that affect their lives.

Our Values

Our values inform everything we do by ensuring our work reflects a shared purpose that can reach communities across the country. Our values are:

Compassion: We strive to deliver all our work compassionately through relationships based on empathy, respect, and dignity.

Collaboration: We value collaboration between the LGBTQI+ sector, civil society and state agencies who are committed to achieving LGBTQI+ equality.

Intersectionality: We prioritise working with LGBTQI+ people who face multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination.

Solution Focused: We believe in finding evidence-based solutions through constructive questioning, dialogue, and building lasting working relationships.

3. Our Helpline Network Members and Strategic Delivery Partners

Partnership is key to everything we do. LGBT Ireland believes that collaborative work is not only paramount but essential to achieving our strategic goals. We work with our network of regional LGBTQI+ organisations to deliver the national Helpline service and with many other partner organisations to enhance our capacity to support and advocate on a wide range of issues affecting our community.



4. Our Strategic Goals

GOAL 1: Further Develop Services to Optimise Outcomes for LGBTQI+ People Across Ireland

Strategic Goal

LGBT Ireland and our LGBTQI+ member organisations provide a range of services to LGBTQI+ people, with the aim that these provide consistent quality and are accessible to people no matter where they live in Ireland. This strategic goal focuses on creating efficiencies and further developing frontline supports.

Rationale

Helpline calls are increasingly complex in their nature. This raises the need for additional training and supports for volunteers who provide the helpline services to ensure the highest quality of service delivery. The actions in this section aim to ensure volunteers are supported, that services are consistent, and evidence based and are run as efficiently as possible.

Objectives

- ▶ Helpline users can call any evening in the week and always receive a consistent, confidential, empathetic, and informed service that is provided by an LGBTQI+ person who is well trained, supported and understands their issues.
- ▶ Volunteers have a menu of ways that they can contribute to the LGBTQI+ community. They meet other LGBTQI+ people and feel a sense of belonging.
- ▶ Volunteers are supported and trained, developing skills and capacities relevant to their role, and feel valued and appreciated for their work.
- ▶ People with complex cases who require targeted supports can liaise with a key worker who can provide support in getting access to the services who can address their issue/s.
- ▶ Provide new opportunities for LGBTQI+ sector organisations' staff to collaborate.
- ▶ To establish a caseworker role for Dublin to manage complex cases.

GOAL 2: Develop a National Quality Assured Training Programme & Kitemark in Partnership with other LGBTQI+ Organisations

Strategic Goal

To develop and provide consistently well-delivered and quality-assured training to public, private and third sector service providers. This interagency approach will ensure there is accessible, available, and standardised LGBTQI+ awareness training.

Rationale

The LGBTQI+ community needs inclusive services where staff are not only not discriminatory but also where staff understand and empathise with the experiences of LGBTQI+ people. We acknowledge that to achieve the goal where every public facing service provider has access to high quality training, we need clear signposting to a quality-assured programme. This needs to be accessible nationally. To achieve this, alongside our LGBTQI+ partner organisations, we believe a nationally agreed and managed approach is the answer. This means that quality assured local LGBTQI+ organisations and trainers will run a communally developed programme. We can do more and can do it better together.

Objectives

- ▶ Create more LGBTQI+ accessible and friendly services by ensuring the staff that provide these are informed and supported to understand issues facing LGBTQI+ people.
- ▶ Support government departments, agencies and the third sector to make LGBTQI+ training a core strategic requirement.
- ▶ Maintain communally agreed standards ensuring high-quality training.
- ▶ Develop a central training for trainers' programme, quality assurance, and a booking and pricing system to ensure equity, collaboration and cohesion.

GOAL 3: Establish a Multidisciplinary LGBTQI+ Research Network to Coordinate a Programme of High-Quality Research

Strategic Goal

Establish a multidisciplinary LGBTQI+ Research Network with membership from universities and other key stakeholders to support a programme of high-quality research that aims towards improvements in policy and practice.

Rationale

There is a need to ensure that research in relation to LGBTQI+ issues is relevant to the needs of our community and that the implementation of recommendations are supported. This requires coordination at a national level. LGBT Ireland will play a role in convening the network and holding a small number of open access events for practitioners, researchers and policymakers in order to explore issues of relevance to their work, support partnership and sharing of good practice.

Objectives

- ▶ Developing partnerships between researchers, academics, service providers and policymakers to support evidence-based policy and practice.
- ▶ Coordinating research projects over multiple years to maximise respondent engagement and reduce research fatigue within key demographics.
- ▶ Advocating for and supporting health and social care providers to generate and make available data that can be used to research issues of access and equity for LGBTQI+ populations.
- ▶ This goal requires the collection of data on service user sexuality and gender identity across key state services.
- ▶ Supporting the dissemination and implementation of findings.

GOAL 4: To Provide High-Quality Support Services to LGBTQI+ Asylum Seekers & Refugees, Empowering Them to Access Their Rights

Strategic Goal

To work in partnership with key stakeholders to improve systems, policies, and practices so that LGBTQI+ people from a Refugee or Asylum-Seeking background have access to rights, protection and freedom as they move through International Protection (IP) in Ireland.

Rationale

LGBT Ireland has been working in this space since 2018. It has built expertise and credibility as well as a deep understanding of the changes and improvements which need to happen both to keep LGBTQI+ people seeking international protection feeling safe and positive about their new life here, as well as ensuring all relevant State agencies implement their own published best practice standards and European directives on these issues. To date, LGBT Ireland has ensured the needs of LGBTQI+ people are clearly iterated in such policies. But many of these policies have yet to be operationalised. Implementation is the key focus of this strategic plan period. The war in Ukraine and its subsequent programme refugee emergency swiftly and dramatically changed the context of these issues in Ireland. A key priority going forward is to ensure the current positive policy and practice changes, as well as accommodation solutions, become mainstreamed for all those seeking refuge in Ireland, regardless of their protection pathway.

Objectives

- ▶ Collaborate with the International Protection Accommodation Services to develop an LGBTQI+ specific policy to include mental health supports and geographic access to the LGBTQI+ community.
- ▶ Improve timeframe for the International Protection Office in providing information to LGBTQI+ applicants and early legal assistance.
- ▶ Fully LGBTQI+ trained mental health and legal support providers are listed as recommended service providers.
- ▶ Expand on the collaboration with services within the LGBTQI+ sector to advocate and impact on policy and practice, case work and wraparound services.
- ▶ An increase in LGBTQI+ programme refugees receiving visas and accommodated through LGBT Ireland's Rainbow Community Sponsorship Programme.

GOAL 5: To Campaign alongside our Allies for Necessary Policy and Practice Change to Ensure LGBTQI+ Equality

Strategic Goal

To work collaboratively with LGBTQI+ organisations across Ireland, and our allies, to advocate for the legislative, practice and policy change needed for LGBTQI+ people to have access to their rights and be able to live lives free from discrimination.

Rationale

There is a need for new Irish legislation, such as hate crime and a ban on conversion therapy, as well as the reform of a large body of existing legislation, which no longer reflects society's overwhelming intention towards LGBTQI+ equality. The vastness of the work, combined with the time requirements of effective legislative and policy advocacy, means that there is need to ensure that the efforts of all LGBTQI+ and allied organisations are well coordinated and aligned. LGBT Ireland has a role, alongside its peers, in supporting this alignment. The goal of coordination means that the organisation takes the lead in some areas of policy change, supports other organisations in their lead work, and aims to engage with allied agencies and state agencies in finding and progressing down the pathways that are more expedient to creating change.

Objectives

- ▶ Enhance trans awareness, positive visibility and attaining trans rights and access to health services.
- ▶ Introduce hate crime legislation and support LGBTQI+ people to engage with the legal system.
- ▶ Fully inclusive assisted human reproduction legislation introduced.
- ▶ Enshrine older LGBTQI+ inclusion in the operations and policies of older people's services.
- ▶ LGBTQI+ safe housing available to address homelessness and intersectional vulnerabilities.
- ▶ Achieve an all-Ireland ban on conversion practices.
- ▶ Continue to support the National LGBTQI+ Traveller and Roma Action Group.
- ▶ The National LGBTQI+ Community Services Fund moves from annual to multiannual funding.
- ▶ Secure a follow up National Inclusion Strategy with adequate resourcing.
- ▶ LGBT Ireland is represented on high level mental health national forums and strategic groups.
- ▶ Enhance collaboration with An Garda Síochána in relation to Garda strategy and policy including LGBTQI+ training for all Diversity Officers.
- ▶ Increased engagement by the LGBTQI+ community with national health screening programmes.

GOAL 6: Work Collaboratively to Make Ireland the Best Place in Europe to be LGBTQI+

Strategic Goal

This initiative aims to unify government departments, LGBTQI+ organisations, civil society, service providers and the public to work collaboratively to bring about the changes in policy and practice that are required for LGBTQI+ people, in all their diversity, to live full, safe, authentic, and celebrated lives in Ireland.

Rationale

Ireland is currently ranked 16th among 49 European countries in terms of LGBTQI+ rights and recognition.

Since Marriage Equality, there is a risk that the needs and priorities of the LGBTQI+ community are considered to be largely addressed and are consequently deprioritised. This issue needs to be considered within the European and global context where there is a political and cultural swing to the right and the likely erosion of LGBTQI+ rights that this brings internationally. With this backdrop, it is more important than ever that Ireland maintains its place as a leader in equality and inclusion, remaining a beacon across Europe for positive social change. The goal of being the best place in Europe to be LGBTQI+ provides an inspiring, ambitious and understandable goal. This initiative can effectively connect stakeholders to the range of key policy and cultural goals and actions required for LGBTQI+ people to have access to the rights, services and supports they need and to feel their lives are valued and celebrated.

Key Partners

LGBT Ireland and other LGBTQI+ organisations across Ireland. Internationally the process will be linked to the work of ILGA and the Fundamental Rights Agency, who play a key role in assessing LGBTQI+ inclusion across the EU. This goal cannot be achieved without the support and engagement of government departments and allied community and voluntary organisations.

Objectives

The following objectives are considered key to achieving the best in Europe status and can only be achieved with coordination across all government departments, LGBTQI+ organisations and civil society allies and with support from private philanthropy and corporate social responsibility programmes. This list is not exhaustive or finalised and will be co-created with partners engaged in this goal. These measures can only be achieved in partnership with a wide range of agencies.

- ▶ To establish and convene a steering committee of key stakeholders to drive the achievement of this goal.
- ▶ Achieve all objectives listed in Goal 5.
- ▶ New indicators in relation to intersectional equality concerns are incorporated into ILGA scorecard.
- ▶ Supporting our partners to deliver on their strategic objectives, including:
 - The expansion of Pride events in rural towns, ensuring LGBTQI+ visibility across Ireland.
 - Development of a national LGBTQI+ cultural and arts centre that houses and supports several LGBTQI+ organisations, provides events for the community and its allies, as well as providing another destination for tourists wishing to engage with the breadth and depth of Irish culture.
 - An LGBTQI+ cultural steering group is established that brings together arts and cultural institutions across the island of Ireland to ensure that LGBTQI+ narratives are permanently visible in all cultural centres in Ireland, as well as supporting the development of a range of high-profile national LGBTQI+ arts and cultural events.
 - Equality budgeting mechanisms are enshrined within key government departments to promote appropriate resourcing for organisations working on intersectional equality goals.

GOAL 7: Ensure Good Practice in Governance

Strategic Goal

LGBT Ireland is committed to good governance. We aim to meet the highest standards in governance, to be an excellent employer and manager of volunteers and to provide our partners, funders and stakeholders with relevant information and assurance that the organisation is best utilising its resources to attain its ambitious strategic goals.

Rationale

So as to protect the organisation, its funders, stakeholders and supporters, LGBT Ireland strives to reach the highest level of governance and oversight. The onus is on LGBT Ireland to ensure that we operate to the highest of standards and transparency so that those who support the work of the organisation can be secure in the knowledge their funding is in safe hands.

Objectives

- ▶ The organisation is appropriately resourced to undertake its work.
- ▶ Maintain Charities Regulator Governance Code adherence.
- ▶ Audits continue to show that governance is high quality and recommendations are addressed in a timely manner.
- ▶ Achieve Triple Lock Status.



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- ▶ **Our Staff & Board**
 - ▶ **Quality Matters**
 - ▶ **Sectoral Partners**
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