



LGBT
IRELAND

For Inclusion
For Equality
For Everyone

Submission on the An Garda Síochána Strategic Plan for 2025 – 2027

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About LGBT Ireland

LGBT Ireland is a national charitable organisation working to improve the visibility, inclusion, and rights of LGBTI+ people living in Ireland. Through our national helpline, online, and face-to-face services, we provide confidential support and information to thousands of LGBTI+ people and their family members each year. Informed by the issues and experiences raised through our frontline services, we also work extensively in the area of policy and legislative reform to ensure that LGBTI+ people's voices are heard in the policy and practice developments that affect their lives. The submission below is informed by the issues and experiences of the LGBTI+ community and their family members who contact us. As a network organisation with seven regional LGBTI+ member services, we also have a strong regional focus, and the recommendations outlined below are deeply rooted in the knowledge and experience of our members working across the country.

Overview of Submission

The development of the new Strategic Plan for An Garda Síochána isn't happening in a vacuum. It is taking place in the context of a society that is shifting. This submission opens by laying out the context as we see it for LGBTQI+ people in Ireland. From here, it examines five key considerations that flow from the current context. It concludes with ten recommendations that respond to those key considerations.

Context

Over the last 30 years, we have travelled a long and winding road toward greater equality, diversity and inclusion for LGBTQI+ people. This began with the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993 and culminated with the marriage equality referendum in 2015.

These changes were historic and seismic. Unfortunately, the response hasn't been universally positive. Alongside the advancement of rights, we have witnessed an organised pushback to the progress we have made. This includes an increase in LGBTQI+ hate crimes, targeted attacks and online harassment.

Ireland currently stands at a crossroads. The decisions we take now will shape the country's direction for years to come. We can choose to continue on the path towards greater equality, diversity and inclusion, or we can give way to those who want to push us back.

We believe that all State bodies, including An Garda Síochána, must play a prominent role in protecting and defending the human rights, visibility and safety of Ireland's LGBTQI+ community. This submission sets out the things that An Garda Síochána must consider in order to do just that.

Five Key Considerations

The following considerations must inform the development of the new strategic plan if it is going to meet the needs of the LGBTQI+ community.

Training Needs

Policing in modern Ireland is complex. Our society has shifted. Communities that were once hidden are now visible. Things that were once criminal are now celebrated. Laws have changed. Our understanding of sexuality and gender has evolved. Old institutions like An Garda Síochána must be better equipped to navigate this new landscape. Therefore, the new Strategic Plan must include in-person training for all Gardaí on current LGBTQI+ issues.

Engagement with Minority Communities

The creation of the Garda National Diversity Unit was a welcome development. This unit has helped to enhance coordination at a national level. During the next strategic period, the focus must shift to enhancing diversity initiatives at a local and regional level to ensure nationwide consistency. To that end, the Garda Diversity Officer role must be evaluated, and resources for community policing must be increased. As part of that job evaluation, consideration should be given to the creation of a specialist, full-time Garda Diversity Officer in each area.

New Threats

There is no doubt that political extremists pose a threat to the State and the safety of minority communities. This threat must be taken seriously. These extremists organise online and openly incite hatred and violence. These groups and individuals must be monitored, and their criminal actions must be prosecuted as a priority.

Addressing Hate Crimes

Last year saw a 30% rise in reported hate crimes. We need to understand this rise. Data collection and reporting must be enhanced to aid this understanding. In addition, consideration must be given to how the increased number of victims are supported. To reduce hate crimes, those who incite hate and violence, on and offline, must be pursued and prosecuted.

Meeting Legal Obligations

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 places an obligation on all public bodies to “have regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, (b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and (c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.” This obligation must inform the new Strategic Plan.

Ten Recommendations

To ensure that the new strategic plan meets the needs of the LGBTQI+ community, we recommend:

Overarching

1. The new Strategic Plan must place a central focus on equality, diversity and inclusion by creating a new dedicated Equality, Diversity Inclusion pillar.
2. In-person training for all Gardaí on LGBTQI+ issues.

Interaction with minorities

3. Increase resources for community policing.
4. An evaluation of the Garda Diversity Officer role.
5. The introduction of new policies and procedures to protect the human rights and dignity of minority communities, including PSE policy and gender identity policy.

Responding to the far-right

6. A new intelligence-led approach to the policing of those who target minority communities, including online monitoring.
7. Proactive enforcement of incitement to hatred laws.

Addressing hate crimes

8. A review of how hate crime victims are supported.
9. Enhanced reporting on hate crimes and hate incidents.
10. A focused effort on building connections and trust with communities targeted by hate offenders.