



LGBT
IRELAND

For Inclusion
For Equality
For Everyone

Investing in LGBTQI+ Equality

LGBT Ireland's 2026
Pre-Budget Submission

August 2025

Budget 2026 is an opportunity to demonstrate Ireland's continued leadership on LGBTQI+ inclusion and equality, and set Ireland on the path to becoming the best place in Europe to be LGBTQI+

NATIONAL LGBTQI+ INCLUSION STRATEGY II (2024–2028)

The National LGBTQI+ Inclusion Strategy II is a whole of Government commitment and is the framework and path to continued progress for LGBTQI+ equality in Ireland

TO BE SUCCESSFUL IT NEEDS:

- Fully and properly resourced implementation mechanisms across all Departments and State Agencies.
- Full costings conducted, and resources allocated, for the Action Plans.

LGBT IRELAND'S BUDGET 2026 PRIORITIES

	STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY AND STAND UP TO HATE			ADDRESS INEQUALITIES IN LGBTQI+ HEALTH SERVICES				SUSTAINABLE LGBTQI+ INCLUSION	
INVEST IN...	National action plan to combat hate	Defending democracy and supporting cohesion	LGBTQI+ rights globally	Health and wellbeing of older LGBTQI+ people	Equality for LGBTQI+ families	Compassionate healthcare for trans and non-binary people	LGBTQI+ mental health services	LGBTQI+ communities nationwide	Specialist LGBTQI+ case support
ISSUE	Rising hate crime, and a risk that the potential of the new hate crime legislation is not fully realised	Growing misinformation, polarisation, and hate, which undermines democracy and threatens social cohesion	LGBTQI+ people globally continue to face persecution with their freedoms and rights inhibited	Older LGBTQI+ people face poorer health outcomes due to their specific and additional needs not being fully considered or addressed	LGBTQI+ couples do not have access to HSE Assisted Human Reproduction Services, unlike their straight counterparts	Ireland lacks a safe, person-centred, and accessible model of gender-affirming care	LGBTQI+ people experience significantly poorer mental health outcomes than others, with a need for inclusive, accessible services nationwide	LGBTQI+ organisations nationwide lack sufficient, sustainable multi-annual funding, which limits the impact that they can make.	LGBTQI+ organisations are supporting people with increasingly complex needs, and are not sufficiently resourced for this.
ASK	Invest in the development and implementation of a National Action Plan to Combat Hate	Dedicated funding to defend democracy and counter misinformation	Dedicated Irish Aid budget line for global LGBTQI+ human rights work	Sustained funding for the LGBT Champions Programme and new research funding	Inclusion in the AHR Scheme of female couples engaging in donor conception; Funding for the AHRRA	Dedicated, sufficient sustained funding for a compassionate, rights-based model of trans healthcare	A dedicated LGBTQI+ mental health programme, focused on accessible, counselling support	Increased predictable, multi-annual and sustainable funding	A pilot programme of Complex Case Support Worker roles within LGBTQI+ organisations
€	To be costed	€0.5 m	€5 m	€0.1 m	See Dept. costings	€5.5m	€0.25 m	€0.5 m + %age increases	€0.2 m

Introduction

LGBT Ireland is a national charitable organisation working to improve the visibility, inclusion, and rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and non-binary (LGBTQI+) people living in Ireland. We welcome the opportunity to make this Pre-Budget 2026 Submission.

Since decriminalisation in 1993, Ireland has made immense advancements in LGBTQI+ rights, freedoms and inclusion. This year marks the tenth anniversary of Marriage Equality, Legal Gender Recognition legislation, and the introduction of certain family rights. Significant gains across a range of legal, policy and practice areas have been made in recent years which have led to improved outcomes for LGBTQI+ people. This progress has been driven and achieved through and by the LGBTQI+ community, wider civil society, public support, and political leadership. Over the last three decades, we have become a global example of progress in LGBTQI+ equality. We can all rightly be proud of these achievements.

Despite this progress, there is still a way to travel. As of 2025, we are ranked 14th in Europe in terms of LGBTQI+ human rights and equality.¹ There remain significant gaps in LGBTQI+ rights, protections, and services, including for the transgender community, LGBTQI+ parents and their families, older LGBTQI+ people, LGBTQI+ people who face multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination, and LGBTQI+ people needing to access mental healthcare. The frontline organisations and infrastructure that sustain progress and inclusion, and which provide vital supports and services for the LGBTQI+ community, continue to face a challenging environment, often operating under persistent funding and resource constraints, as need rises but resources do not.

In addition, the progress that has been made is now under threat – in Ireland and around the world. We are witnessing an alarming rise in anti-democratic forces; organised attacks on equality, human rights and democracy itself; and an atmosphere of growing hate, intolerance and hostility impacting the rights and safety of LGBTQI+ people and other marginalised or minoritised communities.

These challenges demand urgent action including budgetary investment by Government in order to safeguard and strengthen the progress that has been made, address the major gaps that remain, and continue to advance and promote LGBTQI+ human rights and equality.

Through the *National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II (2024-2028)*, and its associated Action Plan, we have a path forward to address many of these challenges. The Strategy sets out a roadmap that can not only safeguard the progress we have made but also drive the

Budget 2026 is an opportunity to demonstrate Ireland's continued leadership on LGBTQI+ inclusion and equality, and set Ireland on the path to becoming the best place in Europe to be LGBTQI+.

¹ [ILGA-Europe Rainbow Map 2025](#)

advancements needed to secure LGBTQI+ equality into the future. We believe the Strategy and Action Plan can be transformative for the LGBTQI+ community, and is the path forward.

However, in order to follow that path, we must pave it. Ambition alone is not enough. For the Strategy to succeed, it requires ongoing implementation and whole of Government support, with full costings and investment across all responsible Departments and State Bodies. The commitments and ambition must be matched by the necessary dedicated funding identified across all its actions. These measures will be crucial to supporting the longer-term goal of fully implementing the Strategy.

In addition, in order to address the specific and urgent challenges of today, there are areas of investment which, based on LGBT Ireland's expertise and experience, we have identified as particular priorities for Budget 2026. Strategic and focused investment in these areas will:

- **Confront current threats:** directly tackle the challenges of hate and anti-democratic forces which are threatening the progress that has been made.
- **Address persistent gaps:** advance access to inclusive LGBTQI+ healthcare and services, which remains a big gap in our European rankings.
- **Sustain long-term progress:** ensure LGBTQI+ organisations have the stability and resources needed to maintain and advance progress nationwide.

Budget 2026 is a crucial moment for LGBTQI+ equality. It is a key opportunity to deliver and implement Government commitments. The right investments across these critical priority areas will help to ensure the Strategy is not just a promise, but a platform for real impact. If the Government seizes this opportunity, it will demonstrate Ireland's continued leadership on LGBTQI+ inclusion and equality, and set Ireland on the path to becoming the best place in Europe to be LGBTQI+.

LGBT Ireland's asks for Budget 2026



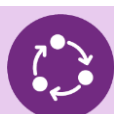
1. STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY AND STAND UP TO HATE

- Invest in a national action plan to combat hate
- Invest in defending democracy and supporting cohesion
- Invest in supporting LGBTQI+ rights globally



2. ADDRESS INEQUALITIES IN LGBTQI+ HEALTHCARE

- Invest in the health and wellbeing of older LGBTQI+ people
- Invest in equality for LGBTQI+ families
- Invest in compassionate healthcare for trans and non-binary people
- Invest in LGBTQI+ mental health services



3. ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY IN LGBTQI+ INCLUSION

- Invest in LGBTQI+ organisations nationwide
- Invest in specialist LGBTQI+ case support

National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II

The *National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028 (NLIS II)*² and its associated first two-year Action Plan launched in June 2025. The Strategy is a whole-of-Government plan and the Government's flagship commitment to LGBTIQ+ equality. It builds on the inaugural *National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy (2019-2021)* and the *LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy (2018-2020)*. The Strategy comprises four core pillars:

1. **Safety:** Preventing and addressing bullying, violence, and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people.
2. **Health and wellbeing:** Improving health outcomes for LGBTIQ+ individuals through increased access to appropriate services and a more inclusive health and social care environment.
3. **Participation and inclusion:** Ensuring LGBTIQ+ people are visible and included in society, including in education, employment, and public life.
4. **Equality and non-discrimination:** Addressing legal and policy frameworks to protect LGBTIQ+ rights and promote equality in all areas.

ENSURING SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

LGBT Ireland strongly welcomes the *National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028* as the pathway and framework to continue progress for LGBTIQ+ equality in Ireland.

While the first National Strategy made important progress, its impact was constrained by limited implementation capacity, short-term funding, and a lack of accountability mechanisms.³ To avoid repeating these mistakes, the new Strategy must be backed by a whole-of-government commitment to delivering meaningful and measurable outcomes. As a whole-of-government strategy, it requires commitment and sufficient resourcing across all Departments and State Agencies in order to be successful.

The Strategy and its Action Plan have the potential to deliver significant progress across a range of areas affecting the lives, rights, health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people. This can only be achieved if they are adequately and sufficiently resourced to do so.

OUR ASKS

Based on learnings from the first National Strategy, we call on Government to:

- Ensure that the implementation mechanisms for the *National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II* are fully and properly resourced, not just within the Department of Children, Disability and Equality as the lead Department, but across all Departments and Agencies, as a whole-of-government strategy.
- Conduct detailed costings of the Action Plans, and allocate additional, or reallocate existing, budget and resources, to ensure that actions can be delivered.

² [National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028](#)

³ LGBT Ireland (2024) [Progress Made. Renewed Efforts Required. A Shadow Report of Ireland's First National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy](#)



Strengthen democracy and stand up to hate

1A: INVEST IN A NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO COMBAT HATE

THE ISSUE	Rising hate crime, and a risk that the potential of the new hate crime legislation is not fully realised
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The commencement of the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 marked a long-overdue step forward in Ireland's response to hate crime. For the first time, Irish law provides for tougher sentences where hate is proven as a motivation for an offence, including on the basis of gender, sex characteristics and sexual orientation. While we continue to call for the modernisation of Ireland's laws on extreme hate speech, which remains a significant gap in our legal and social protection framework, LGBT Ireland welcomes the passing of the legislation. After many years of advocacy and campaigning, this is a significant achievement. The legislation sends a clear message that hate-motivated violence and abuse have no place in Irish society and responds to the growing need of targeted communities to feel safer.

Legislation alone is not enough, however. It is only one part of the multi-faceted and comprehensive response needed to address hate crime and hate speech. As members of the Coalition Against Hate Crime, we are calling for the development and implementation of a comprehensive, whole-of-government National Action Plan to Combat Hate, which is fully costed and adequately resourced through sustained investment. This plan must go beyond the criminal justice system to address the root causes of hate – with a focus on prevention, education, community engagement, support for victims, and improved data and accountability mechanisms.

Action plans against hate crime and hate speech have been recognised as good practices by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)⁴ and the Council of Europe⁵. In Ireland, this approach has been adopted in other areas such as in tackling racism and domestic violence. In this context, we are calling for the introduction of a National Action Plan against Hate Crime and Hate Speech. A National Action Plan will recognise the necessity of policies and measures to ensure the successful implementation of the legislation, identify and provide necessary human, technical and financial resources, provide for their introduction, establish a timeframe for their establishment and identify milestones. Such actions should inform and be informed by the periodic review of the legislation.

A National Action Plan should include:

- Mandatory training for all those working in the criminal justice system

⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights Opinion of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights on the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia – with special attention to the rights of victims of crime (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2013)

⁵ Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16[1] of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 May 2022 at the 132nd Session of the Committee of Ministers)

- Targeted education programmes to address root causes of hate and promote inclusion, especially in schools and youth settings
- National awareness campaigns to counter disinformation, build public understanding of hate crime and hate speech, and ensure affected communities understand their rights, how to report incidents, and where to access support
- Improved monitoring, reporting and disaggregated data collection
- Strengthened and enhanced community policing to build trust and engagement with affected communities
- Expanded and improved victim support, including trauma-informed responses and community-based supports
- Effective measures to tackle online hate, including platform accountability, regulation and enforcement

ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

The introduction of a National Action Plan Against Hate will support the Programme for Government commitments related to modernising the Incitement to Hatred Act 1989, combatting racism and discrimination, protecting vulnerable groups from online harm, and tackling disinformation. It will also be crucial to the effective delivery of the National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II strategic objectives of Pillar 1 – Safety, particularly “Enforcement mechanisms are in place to make hate crime/hate speech laws effective and there are appropriate supports for victims.”

OUR ASK

- Allocate dedicated, adequate and sufficient multi-annual funding for the development and implementation of a National Action Plan to Combat Hate, aligned with the Council of Europe standards on combating hate speech and hate crime, and grounded in a whole-of-Government, whole-of-society approach.

COST	For 2026, allocation should be given to the development of a National Action Plan, which itself should include costings of follow-on actions.
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1B: INVEST IN DEFENDING DEMOCRACY AND SUPPORTING COHESION

THE ISSUE	Ireland is facing a growing spread of misinformation, polarisation, and hate, with LGBTIQ+ people and other minority communities increasingly targeted and scapegoated, which undermines democracy and threatens social cohesion.
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In recent years, Ireland has seen a marked escalation in anti-democratic activity, including the spread of far-right disinformation campaigns, attacks on public institutions such as libraries, arson attacks on accommodation for people seeking international protection, and

violent unrest in the capital. LGBTQI+ people are increasingly being targeted by these movements – both online and in public life – through false narratives, coordinated harassment, and the deliberate distortion of human rights language.

These trends are not unique to Ireland but reflect a broader pattern of anti-rights backlash across Europe. In this environment, disinformation is not just a communication issue – it is a threat to democratic participation, public safety, and social cohesion. Attacks on LGBTQI+ people are increasingly recognised as a facilitator of democratic backsliding.

Civil society organisations, particularly those working on equality and human rights, are at the frontlines of this democratic challenge. Yet many operate without adequate resources, strategic communications capacity, or protection from coordinated harassment and reputational attacks. At the same time, there is a critical need to invest in civic and digital literacy – particularly among young people – and to empower civil society to engage effectively and inclusively with increasingly polarised communities. Dedicated public investment is urgently needed in democratic resilience and anti-disinformation efforts that centre the voices and needs of marginalised communities, including to support strategic communication, human rights education, civil society capacity-building and leadership.

ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

This investment directly supports Programme for Government commitments to counter disinformation and hate and promote public trust in democratic institutions. It also advances key objectives within the National LGBTQI+ Inclusion Strategy II (2024–2028), particularly under Pillar 1 (Safety), including the commitment to “Ensure that misinformation in relation to LGBTQI+ people in Ireland is countered.”

OUR ASK

- Create a dedicated funding line of at least €0.5 million for year one, for initiatives to counter disinformation, promote inclusion, and strengthen democratic values. This funding can support existing community and voluntary organisations to lead public education, training, and awareness-raising initiatives, and grassroots groups working to build community resilience and challenge scapegoating and polarisation.
- Invest in programmes that foster social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, either specifically, or as part of wider or additional objectives, including local and national initiatives that promote positive narratives about diversity, support inclusive civic participation, and build trust across communities, particularly those most targeted by hate, misinformation, or exclusion.

COST	€0.5 million dedicated funding to counter disinformation and defend democracy, plus additional investments in programmes and initiatives that foster social cohesion alongside other goals.
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1C: INVEST IN SUPPORTING LGBTQI+ RIGHTS GLOBALLY

THE ISSUE	LGBTQI+ people globally continue to face persecution with their freedoms limited and rights violated
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At a time when LGBTQI+ rights are facing unprecedented global opposition, Budget 2026 presents a critical opportunity for Ireland to reaffirm and strengthen its leadership and commitment to LGBTQI+ rights internationally.

Ireland has long been a strong voice for LGBTQI+ rights on the global stage. The *Programme for Government 2025* reaffirms the State's commitment to improving the lives and protecting the rights of LGBTQI+ communities, both at home and abroad, as does the *National LGBTQI+ Inclusion Strategy II*. The promotion of LGBTQI+ rights is also a stated foreign policy priority. However, given the scale and urgency of current threats, these values and commitments must be matched by an increased and sustained response of targeted action and investment.

LGBTQI+ organisations around the world are under growing pressure – facing crackdowns on rights, political hostility, and rising hate – while international funding is being drastically reduced. The recent shutdown of US foreign aid, alongside significant cuts from other donor countries, is already having devastating consequences for LGBTQI+ communities. Vital services, protections, and community infrastructure built over decades are being dismantled.

Ireland can and should play a stronger role in responding to this crisis. As opponents of LGBTQI+ equality become more organised, better resourced, and increasingly internationally coordinated, the need for proactive, values-driven leadership has never been more urgent. Budget 2026 is a chance for Ireland to provide that leadership.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of marriage equality, we are reminded that Ireland has a proud history of showing courage, fairness, and leadership on LGBTQI+ rights. This moment is not just a milestone – it is a call to action. Now is the time to extend that leadership globally by stepping up our support for the LGBTQI+ human rights movement worldwide.

ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

This investment will support the *Programme for Government 2025* commitment to “Actively advocate for the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals both in Ireland and internationally”, as well as the *National LGBTQI+ Inclusion Strategy II* Strategic Objective: “The protection and promotion of LGBTQI+ rights at an international level is advanced” under Pillar 4: Equality and Non-Discrimination.

OUR ASK

- Establish a dedicated, ring-fenced annual budget line of €5 million within Irish Aid, under the Department of Foreign Affairs, to directly support global LGBTQI+ human rights work, including funding for LGBTQI+ led organisations, human rights defenders, and community-led initiatives and responses – particularly in contexts and

regions where LGBTQI+ people face violence, criminalisation, or systemic discrimination.

- Commit to a multi-annual funding framework (minimum five years) to ensure sustainable, long-term support and reinforce Ireland's international leadership on LGBTQI+ rights and equality.

COST €5 million dedicated, ring-fenced annual budget line within Irish Aid



Address inequalities in LGBTQI+ healthcare

2A: INVEST IN THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF OLDER LGBTQI+ PEOPLE

THE ISSUE	Older LGBTQI+ people face poorer health outcomes due to their specific and additional needs not being fully considered or addressed.
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Ireland's over-65 population is projected to exceed 1 million by 2031 and 1.45 million by 2046.⁶ Up to 8% of this population are estimated to be LGBTQI+, underscoring the need for inclusive health and social care services. While ageing brings challenges for everyone, older LGBTQI+ people are more likely to experience loneliness and isolation, poorer physical and mental health, and increased reliance on health and social care services – yet their specific needs are frequently overlooked.

Many older LGBTQI+ people view health and care systems as unwelcoming. They often lack confidence that services will understand or respect their identities, leading to mistrust, delayed diagnoses, and reluctance to be open or engage with healthcare providers. The *Visible Lives* study found that 40% of older LGBT+ people were not comfortable being open with health and social care providers for fear of rejection or discrimination.⁷ The *Pride at Home* research found older LGBTQI+ people receiving homecare often conceal their identities due to fear of discrimination. This underlines the urgent need for inclusive and affirming home support services.⁸

A 2018 LGBT Ireland consultation with national and regional health and social care providers in the older person's sector found the specific needs of older LGBTQI+ people were not being adequately considered or addressed, with consequent negative impacts on health outcomes. Good practice, where it existed, tended to be ad hoc or within individual services, rather than embedded systemically. Key barriers include a lack of LGBTQI+ cultural competence, training and support for frontline staff.

In response, LGBT Ireland established the LGBT Champions Programme – a national training initiative aimed at health and social care professionals working with older people.

⁶ CSO, [Population and Labour Force Projections 2017-2051](#)

⁷ Higgins et al (2011) [Visible Lives: Identifying the Experiences and Needs of Older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender \(LGBT\) People in Ireland](#)

⁸ Duffy et al (2025) [Pride at Home](#)

An independent evaluation in 2021 confirmed the programme's impact, showing marked improvements in LGBTQI+ cultural competence, awareness, confidence, and understanding among participants, while reducing heteronormative assumptions. Notably, 91% reported implementing changes to better support LGBTQI+ service users.

Sustained investment is needed to continue to embed the proven value of the LGBT Champions Programme as a core component of Ireland's care infrastructure, ensuring consistent, affirming care for older LGBTQI+ people.

In parallel, updated research is urgently needed to build on the findings of the *Visible Lives* study, in order to better understand the evolving needs of this population, particularly those who remain underrepresented or invisible in existing data.

ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

Investment in this work is crucial to meet the *NLIS II* Pillar 2: Health and Wellbeing Strategic Objective: An inclusive environment is in place for LGBTQI+ people within health and social care settings, particularly Action 21: "Provide inclusive care for older LGBTQI+ people". *The Programme for Government 2025* commits to "Continue to improve investment in and access to a range of health services for LGBTQI+ people and provide for a more inclusive health and social care environment."

OUR ASK

- Provide sustained funding for the LGBT Champions Programme to continue embedding LGBTQI+ inclusivity into Ireland's health and social care services, empowering professionals to deliver more compassionate, informed, and equitable care for older LGBTQI+ people.
- Fund new, dedicated research into the current needs and experiences of older LGBTQI+ people, ensuring active inclusion of diverse identities within the LGBTQI+ community, and addressing gaps since the *Visible Lives* study was conducted.

COST	Sustaining existing Champions Programme funding in 2026, and developing a plan for growth in activity and funding in subsequent years. An additional €0.1 million once-off funding to conduct new research on the needs and experiences of older LGBTQI+ people.
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2B: INVEST IN EQUALITY FOR LGBTQI+ FAMILIES

THE ISSUE	LGBTQI+ couples do not have access to HSE Assisted Human Reproduction Services, unlike their straight counterparts
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2025 marks the tenth anniversary of the *Children and Family Relationships Act 2015*, which extended limited parental rights to same-sex female couples. Some provisions – including

legal recognition for certain non-birth mothers – only came into effect in May 2020, underscoring the slow pace of legislative progress.

In July 2024, the *Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Act 2024* (the 2024 Act) was signed into law. This legislation provides a long-awaited framework to regulate Assisted Human Reproduction (AHR) treatments — including IVF, ICSI, IUI, and embryo transfer — and establishes a new regulatory body, the Assisted Human Reproduction Regulatory Authority (AHRRA). However, the Act has not yet been commenced. An amending bill, reportedly at an advanced stage of drafting, will be necessary to address continuing legal gaps for LGBTQI+ families.

Since September 2023, public funding has been available for certain AHR procedures. However, a July 2023 statement by the then Minister for Health confirmed that treatments involving donated gametes (sperm or eggs) were excluded from funding pending further implementation of the AHR framework.⁹

This exclusion disproportionately impacts LGBTQI+ families. Under Irish law, same-sex female couples can only obtain legal parentage if their child is conceived in a clinical setting within Ireland. Donor conception outside Irish AHR clinics (including at-home insemination or conception abroad) is not recognised under the *Children and Family Relationships Act 2015*. Therefore, these couples are legally required to access Irish DAHR services but must pay privately to do so, while opposite-sex couples can often achieve parentage recognition without any clinical involvement or cost.

Though the exclusion technically applies to all couples using donor gametes, its practical effect is discriminatory. Opposite-sex couples retain access to low- or no-cost conception routes that still result in legal parentage,¹⁰ while same-sex couples are effectively forced to self-fund expensive clinical procedures simply to be recognised as parents. Male couples are also excluded, though substantive preparations are required before the surrogacy framework will be operational in Ireland.

The Department of Health has cited the need for the regulatory structures contained within the 2024 Act to be in place before expanding public funding for AHR involving a donor element. However, donor conception is already regulated by provisions in the *Children and Family Relationships Act 2015*, including consent, registration of identifying information, and protection of the child's right to identity. These provisions, many of which are mirrored in the 2024 Act, already provide a legal basis for donor assisted AHR (DAHR) in Ireland. Facilities are currently licensed by the HPRA and are operating daily within this existing legal framework.

There is no clear reason why public funding could not already be extended to cover DAHR for female couples using donor sperm in licensed Irish clinics. Even if commencement of the 2024 Act is deemed necessary before this expansion, the relevant sections of the Act – Parts 2 and 3, which outline regulatory obligations on clinics – can be commenced now, without further amendment or delay.

⁹ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-health/press-releases/minister-for-health-announces-full-funding-for-assisted-human-reproduction-treatment-from-september/>

¹⁰ The *Status of Children Act 1987* in conjunction with the *Civil Registration Act 2004* currently facilitates the registration of a father based on his marriage to the mother or the mother's agreement.

As an immediate measure, LGBT Ireland is calling for HSE Assisted Human Reproduction Services to be opened to female couples using donor sperm in licensed Irish clinics, and for appropriate Budget provision to be made for this.

Additionally, LGBT Ireland is calling for the full and appropriate funding of the AHR Regulatory Authority (AHRRA). In response to a Parliamentary Question on 29 July 2025, the Minister for Health confirmed that “An appropriate budget allocation will be provided for the AHRRA in 2026.”¹¹ This is a welcome and important step. However, the impact of that allocation will depend entirely on its adequacy.

Establishing a fully functional regulatory authority and delivering inclusive public AHR services will require sustained investment and urgency. This must include not only the infrastructure of the AHRRA but also funding to address the systemic exclusion of LGBTQI+ couples from publicly funded treatment. LGBTQI+ families have already waited far too long for recognition and equality — Budget 2026 must deliver the progress they need.

ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

Investment in this area in Budget 2026 will directly support the *Programme for Government* commitments to “Expand eligibility to State-funded IVF,” and “Establish the new AHR Regulatory Authority to support Assisted Human Reproduction and establish our first public Assisted Human Reproduction treatment centre.” It also supports *NLIS II*, Pillar 4 (Equality and Non-Discrimination), Strategic Objective: “Equality for rainbow families is enhanced,” including Action 43: “Address any potential gaps in legislation to address any outstanding issues related to donor-assisted human reproduction and surrogacy which are of particular relevance to LGBTQI+ families.”

OUR ASK

- Ensure that Budget 2026 allocates dedicated, ring-fenced, sustained multi-annual funding for the Assisted Human Reproduction Regulatory Authority (AHRRA) which is sufficiently robust to support its full and timely establishment and operationalisation, including recruitment, infrastructure, technology, and operational capacity.
- In the short term, provide adequate additional funding to expand the HSE AHR scheme to include female couples engaging in donor conception now.
- In the medium term, allocate funding to ensure the scheme can accommodate all LGBTQI+ individuals and same-sex couples who will become eligible once the *Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Act 2024* and its amending legislation are commenced.

COST	We expect that this proposal will have a relatively modest impact on the funding needed for the HSE Assisted Human Reproduction Scheme for 2026, in the context of its overall budget.
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¹¹ https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2025-07-29/2847/#pq_2847

We understand that appropriate costings have been conducted already by Government with respect to the AHRRA establishment, and call on this allocation to be made.

2C: INVEST IN COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE FOR TRANS AND NON-BINARY PEOPLE

THE ISSUE	Ireland lacks a safe, person-centred, and accessible model of gender-affirming care – with serious and harmful implications for health and rights of transgender people.
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Access to timely, appropriate, and rights-based trans healthcare is essential to the health, wellbeing, dignity and rights of transgender people. Yet in Ireland access to trans healthcare is essentially non-existent. A 2022 study on access to gender-affirming healthcare in Europe found Ireland has the worst healthcare system for transgender people among the 27 EU member states.¹² For adults, trans healthcare is largely limited to the National Gender Service (NGS) in Dublin – the only dedicated gender clinic in Ireland and the largest service provider. Waiting lists are at crisis point, with over 2,000 people on the waiting list for the NGS, and an estimated waiting time of over ten years for a first appointment.¹³ The *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* study found one in three trans adults waited at least three years for a first appointment.¹⁴ In the absence of timely and appropriate care, many trans people are forced to seek private treatment, access services abroad, or self-medicate.¹⁵ There is currently no healthcare service for transgender young people.

We continue to call for a model of gender affirming care to be developed under the principles of patient involvement, community co-production, transparency and accountability. We support and endorse the vision set out in the *Trans Healthcare in Ireland* study, which proposes an accessible and holistic, community-based, integrated model of care grounded in human rights and aligned with international standards (WPATH, WHO) and Sláintecare principles.¹⁶ Work has commenced on the development of a new model of gender-affirming care, and we welcome that funding has been made available for this. It is vital that the new model of care is developed according to the principles above and that dedicated, adequate, multi-annual funding is made available to ensure the model can be implemented effectively and that trans and non-binary people, including young people, have timely access to the healthcare they need.

ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

Investment in transgender healthcare will support the commitment in the *Programme for Government 2025 – Securing Ireland's Future* to "Ensure a transgender healthcare service

¹² Transgender Europe (2022) [Trans Health Map 2022](#).

¹³ Black, J., 2025. '[Over 2,000 people waiting for trans healthcare in Ireland](#)', *The Beacon*.

¹⁴ Higgins A; et al (2024) [Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland](#).

¹⁵ Quilty, A & Belong To (2024) [Trans Healthcare in Ireland: Accessing Healthcare related to Gender Identity for Trans and Non-binary People](#).

¹⁶ Ibid

that is based on clinical evidence, respect, inclusiveness and compassion."¹⁷ It also supports *NLIS II* Action 16: "Improve the provision of transgender healthcare for adults and young people" under Pillar 2: Health and Wellbeing.

OUR ASK

- Allocate dedicated, sufficient, sustained, and ring-fenced multi-annual funding for the full implementation of a compassionate, rights-based model of trans healthcare, delivered in primary and community care settings.
- The model must be based on informed consent, grounded in international standards (WHO and WPATH), and developed through community co-production, with transparency and accountability at every stage.

COST	Funding required will be dependent on the model of care developed, and we recommend an allocation of €5.5 million be made.
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2D: INVEST IN LGBTQI+ MENTAL HEALTH

THE ISSUE	LGBTQI+ people experience significantly poorer mental health outcomes than the general population – yet the need for inclusive, accessible services and supports nationwide remains unmet.
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Ireland's national mental health policy, *Sharing the Vision – A Mental Health Policy for Everyone*, recognises that additional work is needed to promote inclusivity in mental health policy and practice in Ireland. Members of the LGBTQI+ community, members of the Traveller community, asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants are recognised as among the priority groups in our population more likely to experience mental health difficulties.

LGBTQI+ people in Ireland continue to face disproportionately high rates of poor mental health, including higher rates of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and self-harm. Access to LGBTQI+ inclusive, affirming, and trauma-informed mental healthcare remains inconsistent, with long waiting lists and a shortage of LGBTQI+ aware professionals. The need for health professionals who are respectful, sensitive, supportive, and knowledgeable about LGBTQI+ identities and experiences is critical.

Finding from the *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* study highlight a stark deterioration in mental health and wellbeing across the LGBTQI+ community since the *LGBT Ireland* study in 2016, particularly among young people under 25, and transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) people. This is echoed by the experience of LGBT Ireland's frontline services.

Significantly, since 2016 there has been overall:

- A 17% increase in severe or extremely severe symptoms of depression
- A 30% increase in severe or extremely severe symptoms of anxiety

¹⁷ While we welcome the inclusion of trans healthcare in the Programme for Government, we are concerned by the weaker nature of this commitment compared to *Programme for Government 2020 – Our Shared Future*, as well as the use of the problematic terminology, including "based on clinical evidence," which has previously been used to cherry-pick evidence to justify restricting access to gender affirming healthcare.

- A 33% increase in severe or extremely severe symptoms of stress.

Among LGBTQI+ young people aged 14–18 experience, rates compared to the general youth population are alarming:

- Three times the rate of severe or extremely severe depression and anxiety
- Three times the rate of self-harm
- Twice the rate of suicidal thoughts
- Five times the rate of suicide attempts

Mental health outcomes for trans and gender non-conforming people are particularly concerning:

- 44% reported severe/extremely severe depression
- 55% reported severe/extremely severe anxiety
- 35% reported severe/extremely severe stress
- 75% had self-harmed
- 82% had experienced suicidal thoughts
- 39% had attempted suicide

LGBTQI+ people from marginalised communities experience compounded risks.¹⁸ Among LGBTQI+ Travellers and Roma, over 60% reported suicidal thoughts, and 32.6% had attempted suicide. Mental health challenges are compounded by the intersection of racism, discrimination, and structural exclusion. For asylum seekers and refugees, access to mental healthcare and support is critical, particularly in the context of trauma, identity disclosure, and the international protection process. Disclosing gender identity or sexual orientation can be deeply distressing, particularly without culturally competent and trauma-informed support. Inappropriate or absent care risks re-traumatisation and worsening mental health outcomes.

Despite progress in mental health infrastructure and policy, urgent and sustained investment is required to ensure all LGBTQI+ people – especially youth, TGNC individuals, and those facing multiple forms of marginalisation, can access timely, respectful, and appropriate support. Without this investment, existing inequalities will continue to deepen.

Models for delivery of this exist, and can be applied for the LGBTQI+ community. In 2022, £260,000 was granted for a new LGBTQIA+ Mental Health Advocacy Service in Northern Ireland. This funding was used to hire mental health professionals with LGBTQI+ expertise to work directly with the community. The Department of Health recently announced €2 million recurring funding for a programme of mental health supports for men. This is a very welcome model of tangible support for men, with a particular focus on counselling supports. We are calling on Government to provide a dedicated LGBTQI+ mental health programme, focused on accessible, culturally competent counselling support.

ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

Investing in LGBTQI+ mental health supports the Programme for Government mental health commitments, particularly around ensuring access to appropriate supports when and

¹⁸ <https://lgbt.ie/we-dont-feel-safe-lgbti-travellers-and-roma-at-greater-risk-of-homelessness-verbal-and-physical-abuse-and-serious-mental-health-issues/>

where people need them. It also aligns with a number of the Strategic Objectives and Actions under Pillar 2 of the National LGBTQI+ Inclusion Strategy II: Health and Wellbeing.

OUR ASK

- Invest in inclusive, accessible, mental health services and supports nationwide with improved access, reduced waiting times, and tailored supports for LGBTQI+ people, specifically with a focus on access to counselling.
- Ensure targeted, adequately funded mental health responses for multiply marginalised LGBTQI+ communities, including Travellers and Roma, asylum seekers, refugees and other ethnic minorities, and disabled people.

COST	€250,000 as initial year 1 funding of a dedicated LGBTQI+ mental health programme, focused on accessible counselling support.
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Ensure sustainability in LGBTQI+ inclusion

3A: INVEST IN LGBTQI+ ORGANISATIONS NATIONWIDE

THE ISSUE	LGBTQI+ organisations across Ireland, including LGBT Ireland, lack sufficient and sustainable multi-annual funding, which limits their ability to respond to the evolving needs of the communities they serve, and compromises the sustainability of progress made nationally for LGBTQI+ inclusion.
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LGBTQI+ community organisations play a central role in promoting inclusion, protecting rights, and improving the wellbeing of LGBTQI+ people across Ireland. They are essential to building a more equal, participatory, and resilient democracy, especially for groups at greater risk of discrimination, marginalisation, and social exclusion. Ensuring LGBTQI+ people are visible, supported, and resourced throughout Ireland is essential to achieving vibrant, inclusive towns and rural communities.

Since 2020, the LGBTQI+ Community Services Fund has supported 138 projects with over €5.46 million in funding. Most recently, on 27 June 2025, €1.4 million was announced for the 2025 funding round. While this investment is welcome and has provided critical support to local and national organisations, this funding remains structured around annual grants, which limits the ability of organisations to plan long-term, retain staff, and respond effectively to growing and complex community needs. It also falls short of the full amount called for in our pre-budget submission last year (€1.9 million), and the amount needed to meet community needs.

LGBTQI+ people in Ireland need properly funded services, community infrastructure and representative organisations. The LGBTQI+ sector needs to be adequately resourced to continue to address the ongoing and emerging challenges we face, including through the

development and implementation of more sustainable multi-year funding models across all Government Departments, State Agencies, and funding schemes. Multiannual funding should be the default approach for community and voluntary organisations, with an appropriate average funding cycle of three to five years. This would facilitate effective longer-term planning, better staff recruitment and retention rates, and support improved outcomes for LGBTQI+ people and communities across Ireland.

Community inclusion is not self-sustaining. It requires leadership, infrastructure, and long-term investment. We all benefit from communities where every person is safe, valued, and empowered to contribute. To achieve this, equality must be resourced, not just recognised. To ensure the continued delivery and growth of services, and sustainable organisational infrastructure, Government must make a clear, multi-annual and sustainable commitment to LGBTQI+ inclusion as a core public policy goal, moving beyond short-term grant cycles.

ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

This investment will support the overall *Programme for Government 2025* commitments to improving the lives and protecting the rights of the LGBTQI+ community in Ireland. It will also be essential to the delivery of the following Strategic Objective under Pillar 3 (Participation and Inclusion) of the National LGBTQI+ Inclusion Strategy II: “An enabling environment for LGBTQI+ civil society organisations is fostered.”

OUR ASK

- Commit to predictable, multi-annual, and adequately resourced funding for the nationwide community and voluntary sector across all Departments and State Agencies, to ensure LGBTQI+ organisations and the wider sector have equitable access to long-term, stable, and sustainable support.
- Increase the overall investment in the LGBTQI+ Community Services Fund to reflect rising demand, inflationary pressures, and the growing scope of services delivered.
- Transition the LGBTQI+ Community Services Fund to a multi-annual funding model, with a three- to five-year cycle to support long-term planning, staff retention, and organisational sustainability.
- Invest in targeted rural and regional supports, including services and centres, to address the specific needs of LGBTQI+ people outside of the capital.

COST	<p>An additional €0.5 million for the LGBTQI+ Community Services Fund in 2026, with commitment to a multi-annual funding model for subsequent years which takes into account rising costs and inflation.</p> <p>Appropriate increases across all other funding sources for community organisations, which takes into account wage increases, inflation and general cost of living increases.</p>
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3B: INVEST IN SPECIALIST LGBTQI+ CASE SUPPORT

THE ISSUE	LGBTQI+ organisations are supporting people with increasingly complex needs, and are not sufficiently resourced for this work
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LGBTQI+ people in Ireland continue to experience disproportionately high levels of discrimination, marginalisation, and mental health challenges. These impacts are particularly acute for those with intersectional vulnerabilities such as LGBTQI+ people seeking international protection, LGBTQI+ Travellers and Roma, disabled LGBTQI+ people, and those experiencing homelessness or intimate partner violence.

Over the past year, LGBT Ireland's frontline services have seen a rise in demand. LGBTQI+ organisations are increasingly responding to complex and urgent cases involving individuals experiencing crisis or acute need, including victims of hate crime, violence, harassment, mental health distress, housing and homelessness, and other complex challenges. These cases require intensive, long-term, specialist support, and multi-agency working.

Despite the escalating complexity of need, no funding currently exists for dedicated Complex Case Support Workers – roles that are essential to deliver timely, person-centred, and trauma-informed support and to prevent further marginalisation or harm. In the absence of funding for such dedicated roles, LGBTQI+ organisations are left trying to fill critical gaps to provide additional support, sustained advocacy and case management for service users who are experiencing or affected by such complex issues.

The LGBTQI+ sector is uniquely positioned to provide culturally competent crisis support. What is absent is the necessary investment to do so effectively and sustainably.

ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

Investment in Complex Case Support Workers would enable LGBTQI+ organisations to more effectively respond to complex cases, build sustained relationships with vulnerable service users, and ultimately contribute to the Government's commitments across all Pillars of the *LGBTIQ+ National Inclusion Strategy II*, particularly under Pillar 1 (Safety) and Pillar 2 (Health and Wellbeing). This investment also aligns with wider national priorities on mental health, social inclusion, gender-based violence, and anti-racism.

OUR ASK

- Allocate dedicated and ring-fenced funding to establish Complex Case Support Worker roles within LGBTQI+ organisations.
- As an initial step, we recommend a pilot investment in Budget 2026 to fund up to five part-time Complex Case Support Worker positions across key organisations nationally, with appropriate training, supervision, and organisational support.

COST	€200,000 for a pilot investment in regionally and nationally located Complex Case Support Workers.
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About LGBT Ireland

LGBT Ireland is a national charitable organisation working to improve the visibility, inclusion, and rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and non-binary (LGBTQI+) people living in Ireland. 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.

Through our national helpline, online, and face-to-face services, we provide confidential support and information to thousands of LGBTQI+ people and their family members each year. Informed by the issues and experiences raised through our frontline services, we also undertake extensive training and advocacy work to enhance the visibility, inclusion and rights of LGBTQI+ people living in Ireland. We work toward policy and legislative reform amplifying LGBTQI+ people's voices.

As a network organisation working with regional LGBTQI+ organisations, our work is deeply rooted in the knowledge and experience of members working across the country.



LGBT
IRELAND

For Inclusion
For Equality
For Everyone

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RCN: 20159672 | LGBT Ireland is the trading name of
LGBT Support and Advocacy Network Ireland CLG

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