

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2026

Protect Progress, Fund the Future, Deliver Equality

June 2025



Outhouse
LGBTQ+ CENTRE

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LGBTQ+ Rights in Ireland Today

Ireland has made undeniable progress over the past two decades in advancing the rights of LGBTQ+ people, from marriage equality to gender recognition and the development of national inclusion strategies. These milestones are a source of pride and proof of what can be achieved when leadership, community mobilisation, and public support align.

But progress is not permanent, and it is not evenly felt.

Across Ireland, many LGBTQ+ people still face discrimination, exclusion, and violence in their everyday lives. Hate crimes continue to rise, mental health outcomes remain deeply concerning, and access to healthcare, especially for trans and intersex people, is unacceptably limited. The waiting list for gender-affirming care now stretches over a decade. The vast majority of community spaces are physically inaccessible to disabled LGBTQ+ people. And intersectional identities, such as being queer and Black, disabled, migrant, or working class, often mean facing compounding barriers without adequate support.

Meanwhile, year-to-year project-based funding and the absence of core support have created a fragile ecosystem of LGBTQ+ services, placing organisations under growing pressure at a time of rising need.

Internationally, we are witnessing a global backlash against LGBTQ+ rights, including the rollback of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, cuts to international aid, and growing political hostility. Ireland cannot be complacent in this context. The erosion of rights elsewhere reminds us that hard-won progress can be undone, and that leadership is more essential now than ever.

This is a pivotal moment. The foundations have been laid, but the structure of true equality remains incomplete. Without sustained investment, legislative reform, and meaningful support, Ireland risks leaving behind the most vulnerable in our community. Now is the time to recommit to an Ireland where all LGBTQ+ people are safe, seen, and celebrated, not in theory, but in everyday reality.

About Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre

Outhouse is the cornerstone of support for the LGBTQ+ community. We provide a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQ+ individuals to gather, connect, and find solace in a world that doesn't always understand or embrace them. We are the heartbeat of the queer community, offering vital services including social spaces, mental health support, cultural events, and much more.

We are dedicated to supporting the people, spaces, and issues important to the LGBTQ+ communities. Our vision is a future where LGBTQ+ individuals are safe, seen, and celebrated.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for LGBTQ+ people by providing a safe space to find:

- **Connection** - discovering themselves, their people, place, and passions.
- **Community Support** - accessing information, programmes, and services.
- **Culture** - experiencing creativity, heritage, discovery, and fun.
- **Campaigns** - being part of a strong, credible, and trusted voice for LGBTQ+ communities.

We live by the values of Trust, Respect, Joy, Inclusivity, and Impact.

Underpinning our work are our commitments to equity and intersectionality.

Pillar 1 - Ensuring Safety

Implement and Communicate the Hate Crime Act

We welcome the long-overdue passage of the Hate Crime Act, marking an important milestone in protecting LGBTQ+ people and other marginalised communities from targeted violence and discrimination. However, we are disappointed that hate speech was ultimately excluded from the final legislation. This shortfall has triggered infringement proceedings by the European Commission against the Irish State for failing to fully transpose EU directives on combating racism and xenophobia through criminal law.

In the absence of robust protections on hate speech, it is even more critical that the new hate crime law is effectively implemented and clearly communicated to the public. Many people do not yet understand what the law covers, how it works, or how they can report incidents. Without this understanding, the law risks being underused and failing to achieve its purpose. We reiterate our call for a comprehensive public information and awareness campaign, to:

- Educate the public on what constitutes a hate crime;
- Promote reporting among victims and witnesses;
- Build public confidence in the legal and policing response;
- Ensure affected communities understand their rights and pathways to justice.

Despite rising hostility and extremist mobilisation, hate crimes and incidents against LGBTQ+ people remain significantly under-reported. Fear of not being believed, previous negative experiences with law enforcement, and a lack of clarity on how to report all contribute to this silence.

To address this, we recommend the appointment of a dedicated Hate Crime and Community Safety Officer housed within an LGBTQ+ organisation. This role would provide:

- Direct support to victims of hate crimes and incidents;
- Assistance with navigating reporting and justice processes;
- A trusted point of contact for community engagement and safety planning;
- Liaison with Gardaí and statutory services to improve systemic responses.

This measure would help build trust, reduce barriers to reporting, and contribute to safer, more responsive communities.

Proposed investment: €0.75m

Ban Conversion Practices and Support Survivors

Conversion practices, efforts to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, are inherently abusive, harmful, and discredited. Despite government commitments, Ireland has yet to introduce legislation to ban these practices, leaving LGBTQ+ people, particularly young and vulnerable individuals, exposed to harm.

Research commissioned by the government, and carried out by Trinity College Dublin, has confirmed that conversion practices take place in both religious and professional settings in Ireland. These practices are linked to serious and lasting psychological harm, including anxiety, depression, self-hatred, and trauma. Trans, non-binary, and intersex people are especially at risk, with some experiencing gatekeeping of gender-affirming care as a form of suppression.

We are calling for:

- Urgent legislation to ban all forms of conversion practices, including those targeting gender identity and expression;
- Wrap-around support services for survivors, including access to LGBTQ+-affirming and trauma-informed care;
- Public education to raise awareness about the harm of these practices and how to seek help.

Proposed investment: €0.10m

Strengthen Garda Diversity Officers and Community Engagement

Building trust between the LGBTQ+ and other minoritised communities and An Garda Síochána is essential to improving safety outcomes, increasing reporting of hate crimes, and ensuring equitable access to justice. The Garda National Diversity and Integration Unit (GNDIU) and its network of Garda Diversity Officers (GDOs) play a crucial role in this work, acting as liaison officers to

minority communities and providing reassurance that policing services are inclusive, non-discriminatory, and accessible.

However, the GDO role is not a designated or protected post. Community Gardaí and Diversity Officers are frequently redeployed to fill staffing gaps due to persistent recruitment and retention challenges. This undermines their ability to build long-term relationships, weakens institutional knowledge of marginalised communities, and contributes to ongoing distrust and under-reporting of hate crimes and incidents.

We are calling for urgent investment to:

- Establish the GDO role as a formal and recognised post of responsibility;
- Ringfence one-third of the 582 existing GDOs to full-time duty as Garda Diversity Officers, embedded in local stations and protected from routine redeployment;
- Provide ongoing training and development to ensure GDOs are equipped to respond to the unique needs of LGBTQ+ and other minority communities.

This measure would directly support the implementation of the Hate Crime Act, reinforce trust in Garda services, and contribute to safer communities for all.

Proposed investment: €10.7m

Pillar 2 - Ensuring Health and Wellbeing

Expand Free, LGBTQ+ Specialist Mental Health Services

The availability of free, publicly funded, LGBTQ+-affirmative counselling and psychological support is dangerously inadequate. Currently, there is only one part-time counsellor dedicated to LGBTQ+ individuals within the public health system, based in the Gay Men's Health Service. This level of provision is wholly unacceptable given the consistently poor mental health and wellbeing outcomes reported across LGBTQ+ communities in national and international studies.

LGBTQ+ people, especially those who are trans, non-binary, intersex, or living with multiple marginalised identities, continue to face elevated risks of depression, anxiety, suicidality, and trauma, often stemming from stigma, rejection, violence, and systemic discrimination.

We are calling for urgent investment to:

- Scale up the number of trained, LGBTQ+-affirmative counsellors and mental health professionals across the country;
- Ensure that specialist mental health support is free and accessible, not means-tested or reliant on charity or private providers;
- Embed services within both primary care and trusted community-based settings, where LGBTQ+ people already feel safe and supported;
- Expand training for mental health and social care staff to provide trauma-informed, culturally competent care.

Proposed investment: €1.5m

Fix Trans Healthcare Now

Ireland is ranked as having the worst trans healthcare in Europe, a devastating indictment of our healthcare system's failure to meet even the most basic needs of trans people. The waiting list for a first appointment, for new referrals, with the National Gender Service is now effectively over 10 years long, leaving thousands of people in limbo without access to timely, appropriate, or affirming care.

This is not just a crisis of access; it is a crisis of dignity, wellbeing, and human rights.

Despite the publication of a long-awaited report from the HSE's Transgender Identity Services Working Group in 2020, recommendations to revisit the model of care contained in this report have not been progressed, and officials are not working from the Quality Improvement Division's Model of Care. We cannot afford further delays. Trans people need and deserve a healthcare system that sees them, includes them, affirms them, and supports them, not one that treats their existence as a problem to be gatekept.

We are calling for urgent investment to:

- Implement a robust, accessible, and informed consent-based model of care, aligned with WPATH standards, delivered in primary care, and developed in collaboration with trans and gender non-conforming people;
- Dismantle the current bottlenecks by funding regional access pathways and scaling up primary care provision, enabling GPs to prescribe HRT directly;
- Develop access to gender-affirming surgery by establishing a training scheme for clinicians and working towards delivery in Ireland;
- Train and upskill healthcare professionals nationwide, ensuring gender-affirming care is available in every part of the country.

Proposed investment: €5.5m

Train Healthcare Staff to Deliver Inclusive, Affirming Care

LGBTQ+ patients often experience substandard care, misgendering, inappropriate questions, or worse, due to inadequate training and unconscious bias. The current under-1-hour e-learning module on HSE LanD is insufficient to equip clinical staff with the skills and awareness they need. As a result, LGBTQ+ people are still educating their own healthcare providers, an unfair and avoidable burden.

As a model of best practice, we urge the scaling-up of the LGBT Ireland Champions Programme. This initiative trains healthcare and social care professionals to become active advocates and ambassadors in their organisations, making LGBTQ+ patients feel safer, seen, and respected. The programme has been rolled out across multiple services, including acute and older-person care, and has even been shortlisted for the Irish Healthcare Awards for Innovation.

We are calling for investment to:

- Embed robust LGBTQ+ training into all initial qualification pathways (medicine, nursing, social care, allied health);
- Support continuing professional development (CPD) programmes, including rolling out the Champions model nationally;
- Ensure training engages with intersectionality, addressing the unique needs of trans, non-binary, intersex, disabled, and racialised LGBTQ+ individuals.

Proposed investment: €2.5m

Pillar 3 - Promoting Participation and Inclusion

Invest in Multi-Annual and Sustainable Funding

LGBTQ+ organisations play a vital role in advancing equality, providing support, and meeting the complex needs of a vulnerable and marginalised population. Yet, the current funding model is predominantly short-term, project-based, and insufficient, creating instability across the sector.

Year-to-year funding cycles severely limit the ability of organisations to engage in strategic planning, invest in long-term impact, or retain experienced staff. The absence of core funding has resulted in a fragile and unsustainable ecosystem, where organisations are constantly chasing limited resources while demand for services continues to grow.

At a time when fundraising is under increasing pressure due to rollbacks in DEI commitments and cuts to institutional and international funding streams, the Irish government must step in to provide stability.

We are calling for:

- A shift toward multi-annual, core funding models that prioritise sustainability, capacity-building, and organisational development;
- An overall increase in funding to match the scale and complexity of need within the LGBTQ+ community;
- A review of the current funding architecture to better align supports with long-term outcomes and impact.

Without predictable and sufficient funding, LGBTQ+ organisations cannot meet the needs of those they serve, nor can they build the kind of infrastructure required to respond to future challenges.

Proposed investment: €5m

Invest in Accessible LGBTQ+ Community Spaces Nationwide

Access to safe, inclusive, and physically accessible community spaces is a fundamental enabler of connection, support, and wellbeing for LGBTQ+ people. Yet today, there is only one universally accessible LGBTQ+ space on the island of

Ireland, Dundalk Outcomers. This includes both community centres and commercial venues such as bars and clubs.

From our consultation with the community, we know that 1 in 5 LGBTQ+ people are living with a disability, and many of them are locked out of their own community spaces due to physical inaccessibility. This exclusion contributes to social isolation, poor mental health, and unequal participation in community life.

We must do better. We are calling for a national capital investment programme to:

- Fund the development, expansion, and retrofitting of LGBTQ+ community spaces and sports facilities to meet universal design standards;
- Ensure equitable access to community connection and peer support for all LGBTQ+ people, regardless of disability or location;
- Promote health, wellbeing, and belonging through investment in bricks-and-mortar infrastructure that anchors inclusive services and culture.

Without accessible spaces, the promise of inclusion rings hollow. Community infrastructure is a critical part of the social fabric that supports LGBTQ+ lives and futures.

Proposed investment: €50m

Invest in Intersectional Community Development

LGBTQ+ people living at the intersection of multiple forms of marginalisation, including racism, ableism, poverty, and migration status, continue to be underserved by both mainstream and LGBTQ+ supports. While intersectionality is often acknowledged in policy, it remains drastically underfunded in practice.

Ireland currently has no dedicated community development worker focused on Black empowerment and inclusion, let alone one focused specifically on Queer People of Colour. The same absence of targeted infrastructure exists for LGBTQ+ people living with disabilities, LGBTQ+ Travellers, Roma, and others facing structural exclusion.

We must get real about intersectionality. It will not deliver results without sustained, ring-fenced investment in community-led development that

empowers marginalised groups, builds leadership, and addresses the specific barriers they face within both the LGBTQ+ community and wider society.

We are calling for:

- Dedicated community development roles to support and empower racialised LGBTQ+ people, people living with disabilities, and other systematically excluded groups;
- Long-term funding for intersectional initiatives, events, leadership programmes, and peer-led projects;
- A national commitment to equity-based investment in community development as a tool of liberation, inclusion, and collective wellbeing.

Without this investment, the promise of inclusion remains out of reach for those most impacted by discrimination. The time to act is now.

Proposed investment: €0.75m

Pillar 4 - Ensuring Equality and Non-Discrimination

Amend Equality Law to Reflect Ireland Today

Ireland's equality legislation must evolve to reflect the full diversity of our society and the lived realities of those most at risk of discrimination. The Equal Status Act and the Employment Equality Act remain outdated in key areas and do not currently offer explicit protection to many marginalised groups.

We are calling for urgent legislative amendments to explicitly include:

- Sex characteristics (to protect intersex people);
- Gender identity and gender expression (to protect trans and non-binary people);
- Anti-body status (to protect people living with HIV and others facing health-related stigma);
- Socio-economic status (to protect those experiencing poverty and social exclusion).

These updates are vital to promoting human rights, equality, and dignity in modern Ireland. Without them, too many people continue to fall through the cracks of our legal protection frameworks.

Once enacted, these new protections must be accompanied by a public information and awareness campaign, to ensure people understand their rights and obligations under the law.

Proposed investment: €0.5m

Integrate Restorative Justice into Hate Crime Sentencing

In cases of hate crimes, justice must be about more than punishment. It must also be about repairing harm, rebuilding trust, and preventing reoffending. Restorative justice offers a meaningful path to achieving this by centring the needs of victims, empowering communities, and supporting individuals to understand the impact of their actions and break cycles of prejudice and violence.

We are calling for restorative justice to be a required component of any custodial or non-custodial sentence for hate crimes. This would ensure that justice is not only seen to be done but that it actively supports the healing of individuals and communities targeted by hate.

This approach is especially important for marginalised groups who may feel that the traditional justice system does not reflect or redress the full extent of the harm caused. Restorative practices can provide a more visible, engaged, and accountable form of justice.

Investment is needed to:

- Expand the availability of restorative justice programmes within the criminal justice system;
- Build specialist capacity to deliver these programmes in cases involving hate crimes;
- Ensure affected communities are part of shaping how harm is acknowledged and addressed.

Proposed investment: €1m

Champion LGBTQ+ Rights on the Global Stage

Ireland has long positioned itself as a global advocate for human rights and equality. In a world where LGBTQ+ people are facing rising hostility, the dismantling of key funding bodies like USAID, and increasing repression, Ireland must step up and play a leadership role in protecting LGBTQ+ rights internationally.

We are calling on the Government to take two critical steps:

- 1. Appoint a Special Envoy for LGBTQ+ Rights**

This dedicated role would represent Ireland's commitment to promoting LGBTQ+ rights abroad, support diplomatic engagement in regions where LGBTQ+ people are under threat, and strengthen partnerships with international human rights defenders. It would also reflect the Programme for Government commitment to promote human rights and equality for LGBTQ+ people internationally, and reaffirm Ireland's role as a progressive voice in multilateral fora.

- 2. Establish a dedicated Irish Aid funding line for LGBTQ+ human rights**

We are calling for a ring-fenced annual allocation of €5 million within Irish Aid to directly support LGBTQ+ organisations, activists, and LGBTQ+ human rights work globally. As international funding declines and vital infrastructure is dismantled, this commitment would fill a critical gap and support lifesaving work in some of the most hostile regions of the world.

Together, these measures would ensure Ireland not only speaks out for LGBTQ+ rights but backs that commitment with strategic diplomatic focus and meaningful financial support.

Proposed investment: €5.5m

Cost of Proposed Actions

Total costed Budget proposals: €83.8m

Capital Spending: €50m

Current Spending: €33.8m

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