

Galway LGBTI+ Inter-agency Group

LECP Submission August 2022



Introduction to the LGBTI+ Interagency Group

The LGBTI+ Interagency Group consists of a collaborative network of organisations in Galway City and county. This group consists of members from; AMACH!; Gort FRC; Tusla; Galway City Council; GRETB; Loughrea FRC; Galway City Partnership; Galway City Community Network; Galway County PPN; Galway Rural Development; Sexual Health West; Galway Drugs Service; Galway City and County Councils; Galway Traveller Movement; Community Garda; Sexual Health West. This group aims to make local progress on implementing the policy commitments in the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy, and to enhance supports and services to the LGBTI+ community.

To date, the group have been involved in the original development of the LGBTI+ Resource Centre; Teach Solais and more recently the development of a Public Recognition Marker, Resource Pack and Code of Practice for Organisations and Services to help ensure that their operations are inclusive and demonstrate that they are LGBTI+ Friendly. The Interagency Group will work to roll out cultural competency training to partner organisations in an extension of this work towards the goal of visibility, inclusion and equality¹. This group appreciates the support of both Galway City and County Councils and looks forward to building on this important work into the future.

The LGBTI+ Interagency Group welcomes the opportunity to submit to the LECP consultation process and would like to make the following comments on the experiences of the LGBTI+ communities that are relevant to the High-Level Goals. This will be followed by recommendations regarding actions that can be taken to address the identified challenges relevant to this community under each goal.

1. A world-class, creative city region

The LGBTI+ community still experience high levels of discrimination in Ireland². We note a stark increase in the rise of harassment, discrimination and violence directed towards the LGBTI+ population at a national and international level. While the positive contribution of the LGBTI+ community to Irish arts, culture and sport is highlighted, the history of the LGBTI+ movement is preserved, and Ireland is recognised as an LGBTI+ friendly tourist destination at a national level³, action to promote the visibility of LGBTI+ people in the cultural economy at a local level is still needed. This will lead to the increased visibility and normalisation of LGBTI+ identities in cultural life which can drive awareness of, and positively affirm, LGBTI+ identities in order to tackle discrimination in public life^{4,5}. This would then enable the city to demonstrate attainment of Thematic Pillar 1 of the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy, that the community is visible and included⁶.

Recommendation:

Providing creative outlets for the LGBTI+ community allows for open and honest dialogue about the positive and negative lived experiences of the community. To this end we ask for support for AMACH! and other relevant organisations to facilitate community engagement in creative and cultural activities, ranging from the arts to PRIDE events. This will raise the visibility of the community and promote their contribution to the creative economy of Galway.

¹ National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy [46699_1823e5fb971045b3bf6919f6be02061c.pdf](#)

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ [lgbt-ireland-pdf.pdf \(hse.ie\)](#)

⁵ <http://cdn.thejournal.ie/media/2014/06/stad-stop-transphobia-and-discrimination-report.pdf>

⁶file:///C:/Users/info/Downloads/46699_1823e5fb971045b3bf6919f6be02061c%20(1).pdf

3. An equal and inclusive city

Discrimination towards LGBTI+ people must be addressed if the goals of an equal and inclusive city are to be achieved. A significant number of LGBTI+ people still face discrimination in the workplace (17.5%), and in accessing services (19.6%)⁷. The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (as set out in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014) places a statutory obligation on the public sector to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of service users and staff.

The findings of a national report into the mental health and wellbeing of the LGBTI+ people are also a great concern. This report revealed that 75.2% of respondents had experienced being verbally hurt, with approximately one fifth of participants having experienced physical attacks due to being LGBTI+⁸. This requires action to increase the visibility and normalisation of LGBTI+ identities, through education, and positive affirmation, which will enhance protection and support for this community⁹.

Recommendations:

To tackle discrimination in services, a commitment to Public Sector Duty must be made explicit in policies and process guidelines. According to the duty, there is a need to assess, address and report on the status of equality and human rights compliance across all services, as experienced by the public and staff. Many partners implementing the actions set out in the LECP, and stakeholders impacted by this Plan, will therefore also be impacted by the Public Sector Duty. This means that a reference to this interaction and interrelationship to the LECP is necessary, particularly with regard to public services. This would enable the city to demonstrate the attainment of Thematic Pillar 2 of the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy, that the community is treated equally, and Pillar 4, that they are safe and supported¹⁰. Furthermore, representative organisations, like AMACH!, should be regarded as a partners and utilized as vital sources of information when implementing the public sector duty to assess, address and report on the status of human rights compliance in public services.

It is welcomed that the Issues Paper makes note of the need for the safety and security of our older community members. However due to the rise of discrimination, and the widespread experience of violence within the LGBTI+ community, it is crucial that to the safety and security of this group is considered, whether by the provision of supportive services, or protection from harassment. This is of utmost importance to our community given the recent protests targeting our members in the public areas of Galway City. This also underscores the need for an LGBTI+ safe space within the confines of Galway City.

Given the findings of reports that negative attitudes and misinformation towards LGBTI+ people still persist in Ireland, it is recommended that public awareness and behaviour change campaigns are undertaken to promote a better understanding of sexual orientation, gender identity and the realities of what it means to be a LGBTI+ person¹¹. The LECP actions in the forthcoming plan should enable AMACH! and other relevant organisations to continue to build on the work undertaken to promote inclusive LGBTI+ friendly businesses, services and organisations to ensure that LGBTI+ people can engage in public life without fear of discrimination.

⁷ National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy [46699_1823e5fb971045b3bf6919f6be02061c.pdf](#)

⁸ [lgbt-ireland-pdf.pdf \(hse.ie\)](#)

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ [file:///C:/Users/info/Downloads/46699_1823e5fb971045b3bf6919f6be02061c%20\(1\).pdf](#)

¹¹ Ibid.

Furthermore, public and service planning should be inclusive of all voices that make up the Galway community. This should be supported by participation in programme management at all stages, from planning to implementation, across all relevant provisions relevant to the LECP. Collaborating with groups like AMACH!, and other LGBTI+ organisations in all aspects of decision-making as part of the LECP implementation is an absolute requirement for any inclusive, participatory, and democratic process. These actions will ensure that the community is safe and supported¹².

5. A city that promotes the health and well-being of all its people

The discrimination that the LGBTI+ community experiences runs the risk of generating minority stress, which is the negative impact of experiencing stigmatisation and exclusion. This can result in mental health risks, depression, self-harm and suicidal ideation, alcohol misuse^{13, 14, 15}. These risks are particularly amplified for the transgender community^{16, 17}. It has been recommended that actions to support the well-being and health of this community should engage with LGBTI+ agencies in order to ensure supports and services are appropriate, and responsive to the needs of the community¹⁸.

Recommendations:

Given the risks to wellbeing that discrimination poses, LGBTI+ people must have access to relevant and timely supports that are appropriate to their needs. This would enable the city to demonstrate attainment of Thematic Pillar 3 of the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy, that the community is healthy in addition to Pillar 4, that the community is safe and supported.

To achieve this goal of support for LGBTI+ people, organisations such as AMACH! should be allocated adequate resources in order to provide appropriate support when needed. This will allow AMACH! to provide ongoing social and practical support. This is particularly important because messages from a study on social connectedness reinforce the central role that LGBTI+ communities can play in the promotion of mental health and social wellbeing through social support¹⁹. This happens because “resilience has a social source, friends and a supportive environment”²⁰.

Research has also shown that the diversity of experience within the community can result in intersectional experiences of discrimination²¹. This means that some supports must be targeted at the diversity of intersectional experience in the community. This includes cohorts such as older LGBTI+ people²²,

¹²file:///C:/Users/info/Downloads/46699_1823e5fb971045b3bf6919f6be02061c%20(1).pdf

¹³ Maycock et al., 2009 Supporting LGBT Lives. Available at: [untitled \(dcu.ie\)](#)

¹⁴ [lgbt-ireland-pdf.pdf \(hse.ie\)](#)

¹⁵ [0309-UL-Report-Body_online.pdf \(teni.ie\)](#)

¹⁶ [IHREC-Strategy-Statement-2022-2024-Submission.pdf \(lgbt.ie\)](#)

¹⁷ Delaney, N. & McCann, E. (2020). A phenomenological exploration of transgender people's experiences of mental health services in Ireland. *Journal Of Nursing Management*, 29(1), pp. 68-74

¹⁸ [lgbt-ireland-pdf.pdf \(hse.ie\)](#)

¹⁹ Ceatha et al., 2019 The Power of Recognition: A Qualitative Study of Social Connectedness and Wellbeing through LGBT Sporting, Creative and Social Groups in Ireland Available at: file:///C:/Users/info/Downloads/ijerph-16-03636.pdf

²⁰ Maycock et al., 2009 Supporting LGBT Lives. Available at: [untitled \(dcu.ie\)](#)

²¹ <https://lgbt.ie/advocacy/submission/>

²² <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/27923/1/>

migrant LGBTI+ people²³, young LGBTI+²⁴, LGBTI+ people with disabilities²⁵, LGBTI+ Travellers²⁶, the Transgender/ Non-Binary community²⁷, and Intersex people²⁸. AMACH! is already working towards this differentiated support based on need and should be adequately resourced to ensure its activities are sustainable going forward.

It is also strongly recommended that the word citizens in the Issues Paper, and plan is changed to the word people, so that it is clear that programmes, services and supports target all people who live here in this vibrant diverse context, regardless of citizenship.

Conclusion

LECP actions and funding should include providing sustainable support for organisations such as AMACH! that will enable them to provide continuity of service for the diverse intersectional needs of the community into the future. At the moment, continuity of service provision is uncertain as funding for this organisation is only promised for time-limited periods.

Furthermore, the project does not have a permanent home, nor does this diverse community have a place to gather without fear of discrimination, harassment, or public outing of identity. Given the scale of discrimination, the problem of minority stress, and its impact on mental health a sustainable funding solution, and access to a safe location for the community is vital. Support for the provision of an LGBTI+ resource centre could help ensure the health and wellbeing of the LGBTI+ community in Galway city and county through access to support appropriate to their needs.

We look forward to the forthcoming LECP and hope that it will lead to a more inclusive, safe, and healthy experience of Galway City for our LGBTI+ community.

²³ <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/27923/1/>

²⁴ Higgins, Agnes, Doyle, L, Downes, C; Murphy, R; Sharek, D; DeVries, J; Begley, T; McCann, E; Sheerin, F & Smyth, S (2016). The LGBT Ireland report: National study of the mental health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender & intersex people in Ireland. Dublin: www.belongto.org

²⁵ [IHREC-Strategy-Statement-2022-2024-Submission.pdf \(lgbt.ie\)](#)

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ <http://cdn.thejournal.ie/media/2014/06/stad-stop-transphobia-and-discrimination-report.pdf>

²⁸ [Microsoft Word - Intersex Mapping Study Final Report \(dcu.ie\)](#)