

Process review of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020

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Executive Summary

The LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020 is a cross-Government strategy driven and coordinated by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). The Strategy arose from the National Youth Strategy, which was published in 2015, and which had identified LGBTI+ young people as a specific population group for consideration in the context of focused provision for marginalised/disadvantaged youth. As a result, this world first action-oriented strategy was developed with the goal of ensuring that all LGBTI+ young people are visible, valued and included in Irish society. Originally due to finish in 2020, the Strategy was extended into 2021 due to the public health emergency arising from the COVID 19 pandemic. This extension helped facilitate the implementation of actions under the Strategy.

The Strategy has been reviewed via two evaluation processes. The first of these culminates in this report, which reviews Strategy action holders' perceptions of the Strategy implementation process. This will assist the DCEDIY in understanding what worked well and what could have been done differently in order to inform the implementation of future strategies in this policy area. The findings from this Process Review has also provided explanatory context, and acted as a key input to the second evaluation process, the Final Report on the Implementation of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy, which identifies progress made across all relevant Government Departments and Agencies, on the aims and actions outlined in the Strategy.

This Review examines: general progress on actions outlined in the Strategy, issues around responsibility for the actions, and action holders' perceptions of the success of their actions in reaching the target population. The Review then explores action holders' perceptions of: the supporting factors for implementation of their Strategy actions, as well as the challenges; the value (or otherwise) of stakeholder collaboration; and learnings for future strategies. Key themes which emerge across these areas include: the quality of leadership at the planning stage of the Strategy, and how the implementation phase would have benefitted from a continuation of this leadership; the need for greater communication and updates on progress throughout the implementation process; that some actions were deemed incomplete only because they are ongoing and/or are longer-term in nature than the Strategy; resource

constraints and issues relating to short-term grant funding; pandemic and non-pandemic related challenges; and the value of extending the Strategy into 2021.

The interviews underpinning this Process Review were conducted by the Research and Evaluation Unit (REU) of the DCEDIY between November 2021 and June 2022. Participant responses were also analysed by the REU. Of the 20 organisations or organisation groups named in the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy as having responsibility for at least one action under the Strategy, 10 were represented in the interviews. Of these, four were government Departments, two were government agencies, and four were non-profit organisations. A total of 17 participants, or participant teams, took part in the interviews, some of whom were responsible for more than one action under more than one objective. Eight participants were from government Departments, four were from government agencies, and five were from non-profit organisations. The interview schedule (see Appendix) was designed to address the core functions of a process evaluation, as outlined in the (UK) HM Treasury's *Magenta Book* (2020)¹. The key findings of this Process Review will now be presented according to the key questions underpinning process evaluations, as per the *Magenta Book*.

Was the intervention delivered as intended?

When asked whether actions were completed 'as originally described in the strategy', the majority of participants (5/8) responded that 'no' they had not been. This is unsurprising given that the Strategy was planned prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, a key challenge which inevitably influenced much of its implementation. Despite this, all participants indicated that some progress had been made on completing the actions. Overall, the actions outlined in the Strategy were broadly implemented, with all actions either 'completed', 'almost completed', 'started', or a mixture of these responses. No participant described an action as 'not started yet'. When asked if the action(s) had reached their target group, approximately half of participants stated that 'yes' it had reached the target group (8/17), with the same number responding 'don't know' (8/17) and just one responded 'no', that they had not reached their target group. The high proportion of 'don't know' responses may indicate a need for better data collection on this metric that relates Strategy actions to outcomes.

A common theme across the interviews was the ongoing, or longer term nature of many of the actions. The ongoing nature of these actions meant that they could not be categorised as

¹ For more information, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book>

‘done’, not because progress had not been made, but rather because the timelines involved extend beyond the Strategy timeline. When asked whether the time frame for completion of the actions was sufficient, just 7/17 agreed that it was, while a majority (10/17) described the timeframe as insufficient. When asked for the optimal time-frame, the majority of participants (7/10) selected the longest duration of 3+ years from the response options. One participant mentioned how significantly more time is needed in order to implement school curriculum reform, while another highlighted that this is also true when it comes to passing legislation, due to the high number of organisations that need to be involved, and who need to have their voices heard through consultations. One participant described how, during a focus group of LGBTI youth in which they were asked about the impact of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy on them, reported a low level of awareness overall, particularly in relation to the longer term/ongoing strategic actions, such as work related to employment rights. However, these young people were more likely to be aware of more tangible actions and their benefits, such as the rollout of home STI kits.

What worked well and less well, and why?

Three participants discussed challenges relating to DCEDIY leadership of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy. One participant suggested that more Departmental leadership was needed to ensure that work on interrelated actions would progress in a coordinated manner, given the high level of dependency between them. A theme which emerged from various responses to a number of the evaluation questions, was the importance of continuity from the planning to the implementation phase of the Strategy. Some participants had been involved in the planning phase, and felt that it had been a very well run process, but lamented that this structure had not been maintained during the implementation phase. A number of other participants who had not been involved in the planning stage of the Strategy, mostly because they had inherited responsibility for the action at a later date, reported that this represented a barrier to implementation. When asked if the extension to the strategy was helpful, one participant recommended that additional time should have been given to putting a more robust implementation plan in place that would link people across multiple organisations who shared responsibilities for a range of key strategy actions.

One participant referenced difficulties associated with the transfer of functions from one government Department into the DCEDIY. Another participant suggested that the group of

young people involved in the development of the Strategy should have been more involved during the implementation stage, as they could have played a central and valuable role in its delivery and success.

Stakeholder collaboration appears to have been beneficial at both policy development and implementation stages, and was a significant supporting factor in the delivery of the strategy. The vast majority (15/16) of participants stated that they had collaborated with other organisations, and the most common number of organisations that participants had collaborated with was 15 or more organisations (n=6). Regarding the nature of the collaboration, 7 of the 17 participants described their relationship with collaborators as ‘informal’, and which had been established prior to the Strategy. Regarding the benefits of collaboration, three participants responded that it had provided them with greater insights into their target LGBTI+ youth population group, as well as a deeper level of community engagement. One participant elaborated that they would not have been able to make progress on their action without the help of collaborating partners, who were trusted within the communities they serve.

One participant highlighted that communication with and funding from the DCEDIY had acted as a supporting factor, and another noted the benefits associated with being able to tap into the expertise of DCEDIY staff. Recommendations arising from this feedback include: retaining the same leadership and breadth of stakeholder involvement from the planning phase through to implementation; monthly meetings between DCEDIY leadership and those responsible for implementing the actions; and providing regular updates on progress made by other organisations on implementing Strategy actions.

On the subject of resources, participants had variable experiences in accessing the funding necessary to complete their actions. A total of 10 out of the 17 participants said they had enough resources to complete their action(s), one of whom stated that they only had enough funding due to the provision of additional COVID-related supports. Some participants stated that they had received no funding for the completion of their action(s), and so had relied on wider organisational funding, their own resources, and/or funding which had been allocated by government under another related policy or strategy. In these cases, internal organisational support for the implementation of the Strategy proved a key supporting factor, where both

organisational staff time and financial resources were needed to complete the relevant actions.

There was also some criticism of the grant based model for allocating funding under the Strategy, with one participant remarking that they had been unaware of the opportunity to apply for the funding until quite late in the implementation phase, and had therefore missed the opportunity to avail of it. Another stated that a significant barrier to the implementation of their actions had been the difficulty they faced in persuading partner organisations to apply for the funding due to the associated administrative burden, one-off nature of the funding, and/or doubt that the funding would benefit their target young people.

How has the context influenced delivery?

Most (14/17) participants agreed that the COVID 19 pandemic and its associated restrictions acted as a barrier to the completion of their action(s). Participants were almost evenly split on whether the one year extension to the Strategy had been helpful in overcoming this barrier, with 9 of the 17 responding that it had been helpful. However for many of those who stated that it had not been helpful, this was due to the ongoing nature of their actions, which stretch beyond the Strategy timeline. Other participants pointed to the fact that pandemic-related restrictions continued throughout much of 2021 and so, even with the extension, their ability to run in-person events or initiatives had been limited. Organisations referenced a range of other examples of how COVID impeded the delivery of their actions/activities. These generally related to the online delivery of services and initiatives, and included: the need to cancel or delay events which could not be delivered online; the extra worked involved in adapting initiatives to an online format; 'Zoom fatigue' which decreased the benefits associated with some initiatives, or led to some participants, who generally attend in-person events, not taking part at all. However, some participants also noted that some young people had adapted more easily to online engagement.

One participant mentioned the challenges associated with the mental health of LGBTI+ young people, which they felt had deteriorated during pandemic-related restrictions. A number of organisations also noted that members of their staff had been redeployed during the pandemic, slowing the implementation of some actions and in some cases leading to an increase in the waiting lists for already stretched services. Some COVID-era adaptations are

likely to outlast any restrictions, such as the increased use of digital communication tools and other online mediums. For example, one participant mentioned how they had developed an online “Training the Trainers” programme that will continue to be delivered online. Another participant, whose work included designing sanitary facilities, found that the COVID-related hygiene requirements ‘dovetailed very nicely’ with the findings of their research on suitable characteristics for inclusive facilities.

Most participants (15/17) stated that they had encountered challenges in addition to those posed by the COVID 19 pandemic. These included internal challenges, such as staff changes (n=10); and external challenges such as the 2021 cyberattacks on the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health. Another external challenge to implementation, raised by one participant, centred on public misconceptions about their action (which related to LGBTI+ inclusivity in the school curriculum). This presented a considerable challenge during the public consultation process, with a perceived rollback of government supports for this and other actions (transgender healthcare and student-centred health groups).

What can be learned from how the intervention was delivered? (e.g. what could be improved?)

As mentioned, there was positive feedback regarding the DCEDIY’s leadership during the planning phase of the strategy, as well as the contributions of LGBTI+ young people during this phase. Given some of the more challenging feedback regarding DCEDIY leadership during Strategy implementation, some of the key recommendations included: continuity in leadership from the planning to the implementation phase, as well as the inclusion of young people during implementation; more communication from the DCEDIY throughout the implementation phase, particularly in the form of updates about the work of partner organisations and; the implementation of a multi-annual grant funding model to replace the current grants system. Another recommendation was that all stakeholders be made aware of all key working groups from the outset, as some organisations hadn’t been aware of grants and other available supports.

Another theme which emerged was that it is not always appropriate to treat LGBTI+ youth as a single category, either when identifying service needs, or when evaluating the impact of various actions. Some services are only required by one or two groups under the wider

LGBTI+ youth umbrella, and so some actions will only benefit those groups. Additionally, some actions may have an impact on numerous groups of LGBTI youth, but these impacts may be variable according to specific needs and characteristics. A recommendation arising from this was the development of evaluations that identify the differential impacts of Strategy actions on these groups.

Context

The [LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020](#) is a cross-Government strategy driven and coordinated by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The Strategy arose from the National Youth Strategy, which was published in 2015, and which had identified LGBTI+ young people as a specific population group for consideration in the context of focused provision for marginalised/disadvantaged young people. As a result, an action-oriented three-year strategy was developed to target this group.

The LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020, was published on 29th June 2018. It is a world first action-oriented mission to ensure all LGBTI+ young people are visible, valued and included. The Strategy is a key commitment in both the 2016 and 2020 Programmes for Government and is a significant contribution towards the Government's broader commitment to continue to strive for the full inclusion of LGBTI+ people in Irish society.

First Annual Implementation Report of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy

In 2019, DCEDIY requested update reports from all Government partners outlining their progress on actions committed to under the Strategy. [The First Annual Implementation](#)

Report, published in 2019, provided details of progress across government in the implementation of the Strategy.

The actions initiated in the first year of implementation centred on the lives of LGBTI+ young people across a range of domains, with a particular emphasis on education, health, safe and inclusive spaces, and increased consideration of the issues faced by transgender young people. Out of a total of 59 actions, 46 had already been initiated by this time, with 10 reporting a plan for carrying out the action. There were 2 actions for which Leads had not reported any information, while one action was reported as being ‘under review’ (1).

Extension of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy

The LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy was extended into 2021 due to the public health emergency arising from the COVID 19 pandemic. The extension enabled the full implementation of actions under the strategy and facilitated the development of a comprehensive report that would provide input to the DCEDIY on the future strategic direction of its LGBTI+ youth policy.

Process Review Aims

The DCEDIY initiated an Implementation Review of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020, to identify progress made on the aims and actions outlined in the Strategy across all relevant Government Departments and Agencies.

The review has culminated in the publication of an implementation report, which provides an overview of the extent to which each of the goals has been met, highlighting where some key actions have been progressed, and identifying where progress has been slower than envisaged.

The aim of this Process Review report is to provide key process-related inputs for the Implementation Review. The Review presents the results of an evaluation of the processes of implementing the actions under the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy, which will assist the DCEDIY in understanding what worked well and what could have been done differently. This will help to inform the implementation of future strategies in this area.

Methodology

In October 2021, the DCEDIY Youth Reform Strategy & Participation Unit emailed the nominated contacts for each organisation responsible for at least one action under the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy to inform them that their input was required for:

1. A Final Progress Report on the Actions in the Strategy,
2. A Process Review of the Implementation of the Strategy.

All nominated contacts were provided with a template containing questions about the actions for which their Department/organisation had lead responsibility, which they were asked to complete. Nominated contacts that completed the template were then contacted by a member of the DCEDIY Research and Evaluation Unit (REU) requesting their consent to participate in a Process Review of the Implementation of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy.

Of the 20 organisations or organisation groups named in the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy as having responsibility for at least one action under the Strategy, 10 were represented in the interviews conducted for this Process Review. Of these 10 organisations or organisation groups, four were government Departments, two were government Agencies, and four were non-profit organisations. The remaining 10 organisations either did not fill in the template or did not agree to be interviewed as part of the Process Review.

The Process Review interview took the form of either a telephone or video call, which was conducted by a member of the DCEDIY evaluations team. The interviews were structured in nature, with a mixture of closed-ended and open-ended questions, however participants were encouraged to elaborate on their answers to the structured interview questions. The interview questions (see Appendix A) were designed by the DCEDIY evaluations team in collaboration with the Youth Reform Strategy & Participation Unit, and summaries of the answers were recorded in writing by the interviewer or other member of the evaluations team on the [EU Survey](#) platform (the European Commission's official survey management tool).

The interview questions were designed to address the core functions of a process evaluation, as outlined in the HM Treasury's Magenta Book (2020)². The Magenta Book highlights how

² For more information, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book>

process evaluations should examine activities involved in the implementation of a policy and the pathways by which it was delivered. This should cover questions such as:

- was the intervention delivered as intended?
- what worked well and less well, and why?
- how has the context influenced delivery?
- what can be learned from how the intervention was delivered? (e.g. what could be improved?)

The findings from these questions can then go on to complement impact evaluations, for example, by providing the context to explain why an intended impact did not occur as planned, and by raising possible explanations for unintended impacts.

The interviews took place between November 2021 and June 2022, and participant responses were analysed by the REU. Close-ended questions were analysed using Microsoft Excel, with figures generated using the results of these analyses, and open-ended questions analysed qualitatively using the method of thematic analysis. The qualitative approach taken was inductive in nature, which allowed the data to determine subthemes within the structure of the main interview themes. Close-ended questions were the most common question format used throughout the survey, while open-ended questions were primarily used to encourage participants to elaborate on their responses.

Limitations

Small sample size: Approximately half of the organisation groups responsible for actions under the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy (20 in total) did not agree to participate in the process review. Caution should therefore be taken when interpreting the generalisability of the findings.

As the interviews were not recorded, the responses could not be transcribed. Interview responses were instead summarised in the EU Survey tool by the interviewer or other member of the evaluations team during the interview. This increases the risk that some more detailed responses may have been omitted.

Key Findings

The key findings from this Review will now be presented thematically, as follows:

- A. General progress on actions
 - 1. Completion status
 - 2. Responsibility for the action
 - 3. Reaching the target population

- B. Implementation supports and challenges
 - 4. Supporting factors
 - 5. Challenges associated with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic
 - 6. Non-pandemic related challenges
 - 7. The need for additional resources
 - 8. The need for additional time
 - 9. DCEDIY leadership

- C. Stakeholder collaboration
 - 10. Nature of the collaboration
 - 11. Communication frequency
 - 12. Quality of communication
 - 13. Collaboration benefits
 - 14. Collaboration challenges

- D. Future learning

A. General progress

A total of 17 participants or participant teams took part in the interviews, some of whom were responsible for more than one action and more than one objective. Eight participants were from government Departments, four were from government Agencies, and five were from non-profit organisations. The 17 participants represented 10 organisations that were action leaders for 13 of the 15 objectives outlined in the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy³, and for a total of 30 of the 59 actions therein. Some of the organisations also reported on actions where they were listed as partner organisations rather than action leaders under the Strategy.

³ None of the participants were action leaders for any actions under Objectives 3 and 9.

1. Completion status of the actions

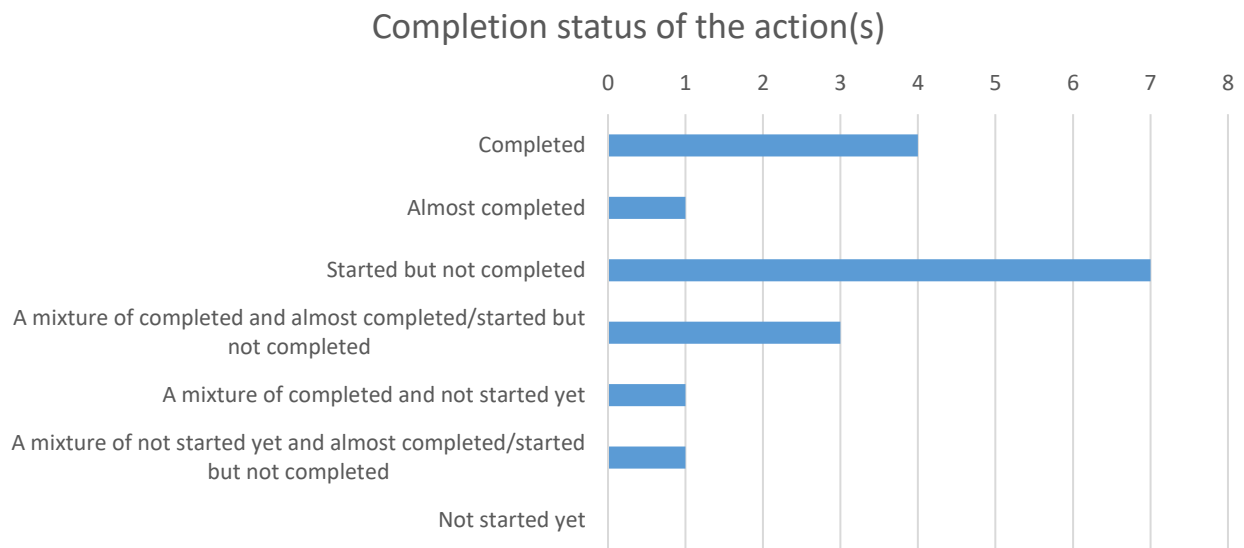


Figure 1: Completion status of the action(s)

Seven participants stated that they had started but not completed the action or actions they are responsible for (see Figure 1). This was the most common answer among all participants, regardless of organisation type. The incompleteness of the actions was largely due to the ongoing nature of the action, which was not typically tied to the lifetime of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy. Four participants reported that they had completed the action(s), while one reported that the action was almost completed, with the remaining five stating that the actions were either a mixture of completed and almost completed (N=3); a mixture of completed and not started yet (N=1); or a mixture of not started yet and almost completed (N=1). None of the participants reported that there had been no progress on their action(s).

Was the completed action/were the completed actions completed as originally described in the Strategy?

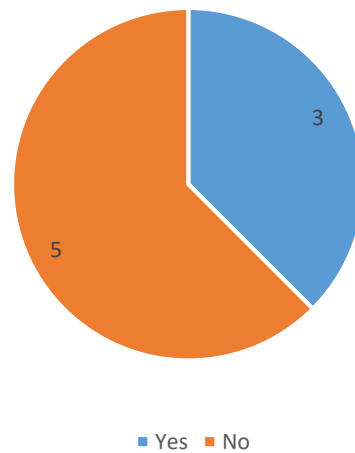


Figure 2: Alignment of completed actions with the Strategy

Among the eight participants who had completed all or some of the actions for which they were responsible, most (N=5) did not complete the action(s) as originally described in the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy (see Figure 2). Of these five participants, two were from government Departments, one was from government Agency, and two were from non-profit organisations. The most common explanation for why the actions were not completed as originally described (N=2) related to the ongoing nature of the action(s), which were part of their core work and therefore would never be “completed” as such. Participants mentioned that while individual tasks within the actions might be classified as “completed”, the actions themselves were often too broad to be categorised as complete.

One participant recommended that future strategies should be accompanied by key performance indicators and an implementation plan that can allow the responsible organisations to develop specific tasks arising from broader actions, which would give a more detailed breakdown of what was/was not completed, as well as the reasons why. Other explanations included that completion of the actions was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic (which will be discussed in more detail in Section B).

Another participant mentioned that they had not completed their actions as originally described in the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy as they had actually exceeded their

original action remit, and completed a number of related projects over and above the action description. One other participant mentioned that the action was not completed as originally described as they decided to reframe the action based on a comprehensive consultation process, which they felt would maximise public support, by providing design guidelines to assist organisations requesting gender-neutral facilities, rather than instructing that organisations include such facilities.

Will the action(s) that are not yet completed/started be completed as originally described in the Strategy?

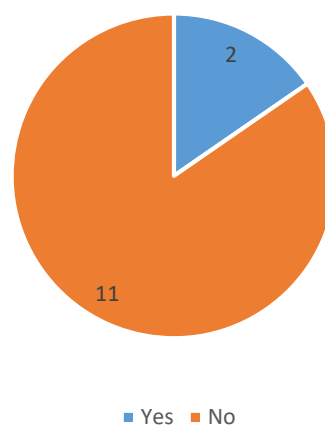


Figure 3: Alignment of uncompleted actions with the Strategy

For the 13 participants who had not yet completed or started some of the actions for which they are responsible, the majority (N=11) stated that the action(s) will not be completed as originally described in the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy (see Figure 3). Of these 11 participants, four were from government Departments, four were from government Agencies, and three were from non-profit organisations. The reasons given why the actions will not be completed as originally described were similar to those outlined above, including that some actions are embedded in ongoing work which is dynamic in nature; the broad or vague nature of the actions and the difficulties this can bring in declaring them as complete, even when specific tasks have been finished; and the impact of the pandemic on the method of delivery and timeframe of the actions. Other explanations included the impact of the cyberattack on certain government Departments and Agencies in the summer of 2021. In one case this meant that the funding had to be delivered before the necessary service-level agreements had been

completed, and in another case the attack caused disruptions to the completion of the action due to delays in the receipt of key implementation documentation.

Another participant mentioned that it was difficult to get an overall sense of the completion of the action because they were unaware of the progress of other organisations that shared responsibility for the same action. One participant discussed how the action they are responsible for is intrinsically linked to progress on other actions under the Strategy, and how it is difficult to get a sense of progress on one specific action without having wider knowledge of broader progress on the Strategy as a whole. Another participant expressed concern that the actions under the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy will be signed off as complete without any sense of the impact they have had on the lives of LGBTI+ young people, and suggested that the Strategy should only be considered complete if the intended long term impacts on these young people have been achieved.

Another participant touched on the difficulties associated with progressing an inherited action when their predecessor has left the organisation and taken institutional knowledge about the relevant actions with them. One participant described adopting an action when the previous staff member responsible for the action changed roles, but how the action no longer aligned with their/their team's remit. The action therefore ended up outside of their usual reporting line, causing it to lack a dedicated lead and home within the organisation. One participant discussed how the action they were responsible for was no longer fit for purpose, as it conflated the diverse clinical needs of a broad range of LGBTI+ Youth who are generally able to access treatment through existing channels, according to individual need.

2. Responsibility for the action

Did your responsibility for the action(s) change over the course of the Strategy?

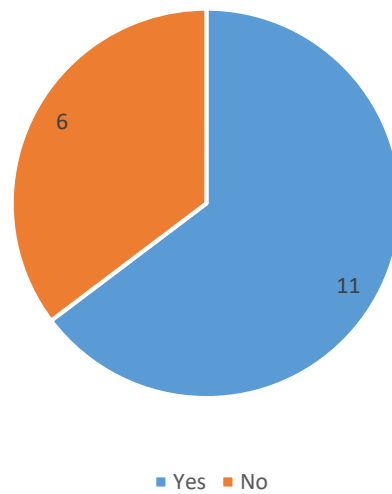


Figure 4: Responsibility for the action(s) throughout the Strategy

The majority of the 17 participants (N=11) reported that personal responsibility for the action(s) assigned to them had changed over the course of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy (see Figure 4). Of these 11 participants, five were from government Departments, three were from Agencies, and three were from non-profit organisations. The most common reason given for why their own personal responsibility had changed was that they had inherited responsibility due to staff/organisational changes, such as the transfer of functions from one Department to another. In one case, the transfer of functions meant that the participant no longer had responsibility for the action. In another case, the participant took on responsibility for the action because it had no dedicated lead, even though the action fell outside their remit. This participant noted that they had limited visibility of progress on the action, or how it had been implemented to date.

Two participants mentioned that responsibility has been spread across more staff members since the action was first assigned, and that they are now involved in a more specific aspect of the delivery of the action. One of these participants reported that they had been redeployed during the pandemic, and that when they returned to their original role they were no longer involved in the same area of action implementation. Three participants expressed concern that their actions did not fit within their organisation, either due to a change in the organisation's function or because their organisation had inherited responsibility for the

action. Another participant mentioned that while their organisation was listed as a partner organisation for a number of actions under the Strategy, they did not recall working on all of these listed actions, but could point to their involvement with other actions in Strategy.

3. Reaching the target population

In your opinion, has/have the action(s) that you are responsible for reached its/their target population?

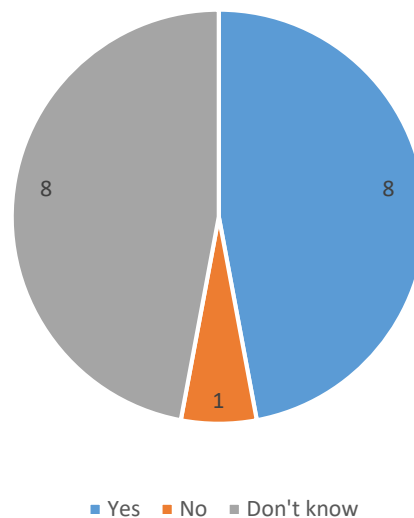


Figure 5: Impact of actions on target population(s)

Eight participants believed that the action(s) they are responsible for had reached the target population; eight responded that they did not know; and one participant felt that their actions did not reach their target population (see Figure 5). Of the eight participants who believed that the action(s) they are responsible for had reached the target population, four were from government Departments, and four were from non-profit organisations. A number of reasons were given for why participants responded with 'don't know', for example, one participant mentioned that it is because they are still collecting evaluation results from the intervention. Another mentioned that data on impact was not collected, so it was difficult to say if the action had reached the target population. Another discussed how the activities under their action were not directly under their remit so they were unsure of the situation on the ground.

One participant suggested that examining all LGBTI+ young people together was not helpful when measuring the impact of their action(s), for example, some actions might benefit

bisexual youth but may have little impact on transgender youth. Four participants mentioned that they could not answer this question as the action had not yet been implemented. For one participant, this was due to the impact of the pandemic, which had delayed implementation. Another mentioned that they did not know whether the relevant actions reached their target populations as they were providing updates on behalf of their organisation as a whole, and could only speak in detail on the actions they were personally responsible for. This participant also discussed how they were not responsible for service implementation, so could not know for sure whether the target population had been reached.

Another participant discussed how they ran a focus group with LGBTI+ young people to get a sense of the impact of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy on them. The participant noted that the young people were not aware of impacts arising from the Strategy. According to this participant, this was mainly due to the fact that so many of the actions are long-term in nature and will take longer to be delivered than the lifetime of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy. The participant also noted that most LGBTI+ young people in the focus group had no knowledge or awareness of specific actions under the Strategy, such as work related to LGBTI+ employment rights, and work to progress LGBTI+ diversity and inclusion related to An Garda Síochána. However, the young people did refer to specific benefits relating to actions under the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy, such as the rollout of home STI kits.

B. Supports and Challenges

4. Supporting factors

When asked which factors supported them in completing their actions, 11 participants mentioned the partnerships they had established with people outside of their own organisations. Of these 11 participants, four were from government Departments, one was from an Agency, and five were from non-profit organisations. Six of the 11 participants mentioned the importance of partnerships with NGOs, as they could tap into the needs of the community and help ensure access to the target population groups. Another two participants highlighted the supportive work of a partner agency in preparing resources and toolkits for the LGBTI+ young people benefiting from their action. Another of these participants discussed how partners on the ground had been pushing for implementation of the action, which had acted as a motivating force.

Two participants highlighted that their own colleagues had acted as key supporting factors in implementing their actions. One mentioned that although they had no specific budget for the action, and had to use their own resources, the commitment of their staff members had been crucial in implementation. Another participant highlighted the importance of having colleagues within one's own organisation that are willing to help, as the work required to implement the action was all completed in-house.

Another participant mentioned that they were sufficiently resourced to complete their action(s) because of funding received for a different but related strategy, which acted as a supporting factor. Another discussed how the activities under one of the actions had already been included in other policies and strategies, so the impetus to complete the action had existed prior to the establishment of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy. Another participant discussed how the transfer of functions from other Departments into the DCEDIY had acted as a supporting factor, as this had brought the broader LGBTI+ and LGBTI+ Youth policy areas together, which had assisted in forging better links with between colleagues working in this policy space.

One participant could not think of many supporting factors due to the impact of the pandemic and cyberattack, but mentioned that in ‘normal times’ their action would have been easily implemented. Another did not have enough detailed information and so was unable to answer, as despite their overall responsibility for relevant actions, implementation and oversight responsibilities lay with a partner agency. One participant highlighted that communication with and funding from the DCEDIY had acted as a supporting factor, and another noted the benefits associated with being able to tap into the expertise of DCEDIY staff. Another participant mentioned that there had been no support at all from the DCEDIY in assisting them in implementing the actions, although they felt that the Department had shown robust leadership during the strategy development phase (See Section 9 for additional discussion).

5. Challenges associated with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

Did the Covid-19 pandemic impact the completion of the action(s)?

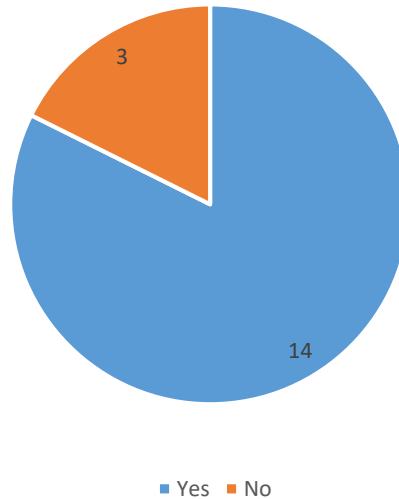


Figure 6: Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the action(s)

The majority (N=14) of participants found that restrictions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic did impact on the completion of their respective action(s) (see Figure 6). One common response was that the initiative(s) was/were not easily adaptable to an online format (N=8), and in many cases implementation was delayed until it could be delivered in person. One participant suggested that this was because certain programmes were only suitable as a

face-to-face interaction, while another discussed how delays in the completion of their action(s) were mainly due to the extra time it took to adapt the initiative for online delivery. Two participants whose activities were moved to an online format, mentioned how these activities became unpopular and overwhelming for attendees due to “Zoom Fatigue”. Another discussed how the opportunities for youth engagement during the pandemic varied significantly based on differences among young people in comfort levels with online engagement. One participant mentioned the challenges associated with the mental health of LGBTI+ young people, which they felt had deteriorated during pandemic-related restrictions.

Another common response (N=4) related to the redeployment of staff during the pandemic, either within their own team and/or in partner organisations, which delayed activities on some projects. Another participant discussed how their service is delivered in clinics, which were closed at the start of the pandemic. This caused delays and prevented the service from being expanded according to the relevant Strategy action. One participant discussed how clinic closures led to a growth in waiting lists for certain services, which had already been strained before the pandemic. Two participants mentioned that their actions were deprioritised due to COVID-19 work taking up all of their time, and therefore work on the actions dropped out of their day-to-day activities.

Some participants (N=3) mentioned how COVID restrictions had led to potentially lasting changes to how their programmes were implemented. For example, one participant mentioned how they developed an online “Training the Trainers” programme that will continue to be delivered online in the future. Another spoke about an increase in the volume of digital communication delivered by their organisation during the pandemic, which they felt would continue. Another discussed how events they had planned could not be carried out due to COVID, but that they managed to digitise some events so that they could be provided online. One participant mentioned that activities related to their action, such as their e-learning programme, were delivered as normal as they were already delivered in an online environment. Another mentioned that the pandemic requirements dovetailed nicely with their own research on providing an inclusive physical environment for transgender and intersex young people, and so it didn’t delay completion of their action.

In your opinion, was the Strategy extension in 2021 helpful in allowing time to implement the action(s)?

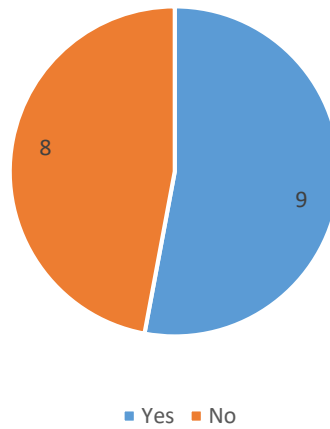


Figure 7: Helpfulness of the 2021 Strategy extension

When asked if the extension of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy into 2021 (which was offered due to the public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic) was helpful in allowing time to implement the action(s), nine participants answered yes and the remaining eight said no (see Figure 7). Of the nine participants who answered yes, four were from government Departments, and five were from non-profit organisations. When those who answered no were asked to elaborate, one common response (N=4) was that the extension did not make a difference as the activities underpinning the action are ongoing and not bound to the lifespan of the Strategy.

Two participants clarified that the extension did not apply to them as one had completed their action (delivery of a grant programme) in 2021, while the other noted that their action had been completed in 2019. One other participant mentioned that, as society was still affected by pandemic restrictions during 2021, none of their issues were alleviated by extending the Strategy by a year. Another participant mentioned that the extension was not needed as they were already acutely aware of their timeframes, which were less dependent on the Strategy. One participant mentioned that while the extension did not help them specifically, they did think it would help more widely, in delivering the Strategy.

Seven of the participants elaborated on how the extension was helpful in allowing time to implement their respective actions. One participant discussed how it enabled the continuation

of their work on the action with other organisations, while another discussed how it helped to ensure that a higher number of actions would be completed by the time the government introduces the next LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy. Another participant described how they would not have been able to run their event in 2020 due to COVID restrictions, so the extension was very much needed. One of these participants mentioned that while the extension was helpful, they were still dealing with COVID-related challenges. Another participant discussed how any extension is helpful, as many of the actions within the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy remained incomplete, but also suggested that more time would be needed to put in place a more robust implementation plan that would link similar actions together and ensure that those responsible for similar actions were aware of and in contact with each other.

6. Non-pandemic related challenges

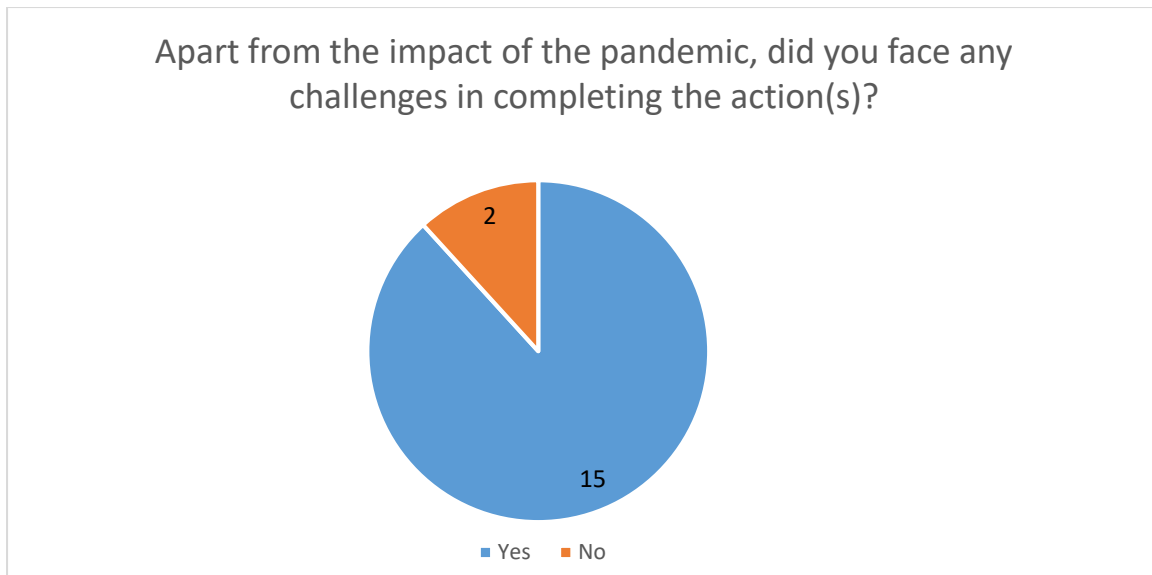


Figure 8: Non-pandemic challenges faced in completing the action(s)

The majority (N=15) of participants reported that they faced non-pandemic related challenges in completing their respective action(s) (see Figure 8). Of these fifteen participants, seven were from government Departments, three were from Agencies, and five were from non-profit organisations. Three participants discussed challenges relating to DCEDIY leadership of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy. One of these participants discussed how certain actions could not be considered completed until all inter-related actions have also been completed, which underscores the need for central steering to ensure that those responsible for complementary actions are collaborating with each other. Another participant mentioned that while other strategies require updates from each organisation and then provide a larger update to everyone involved, this has not been done with the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy, which has made it difficult to get a sense of overall progress. Another participant discussed how the actions need to be more specific and better defined, as it is common for specific projects or interventions to have deadlines and to be completed as part of an action, but that the actions themselves are ongoing, beyond the lifetime of the Strategy.

Three participants expressed concern about the lack of coordination with other organisations and agencies working on their respective actions, and felt that each were working in silos. One participant discussed challenges they were experiencing with a partner organisation and how this has made collaboration with them more difficult. Another two participants mentioned that while collaborating with other stakeholders brings benefits, it can also be challenging when partner organisations' circumstances change, which is something that is

outside of their own control. Another participant discussed the difficulties they faced in receiving timely responses to Strategy-related queries, both internally and from collaborating partners.

Four participants discussed capacity restrictions due to insufficient funding, with one specifying a need for training and support resources to be put in place to enable implementation. One participant suggested that funding allocated by the DCEDIY was not as strategic as it could be, as it was given in small amounts and with a requirement that it is spent very quickly. This participant recommended that governance structures for future strategies include an implementation committee that is responsible for securing strategically targeted multi-annual funding, which would help to maximise impact. Another participant also discussed how a perceived lack of sustainable funding opportunities for partner organisations affected their capacity to implement their respective action. This participant commented on how opportunities to apply for short-term “piecemeal” grants are not taken up by many of their partner organisations due to a high administrative burden associated with the grant application and management process, but also a perceived low impact potential for the LGBTI+ youth that they serve.

Two participants discussed capacity restrictions due to a lack of staff, with one elaborating on challenges related to high staff turnover in their organisation and the difficulties involved in recruiting staff, particularly for new clinical services related to transgender healthcare. Another participant discussed how structural changes within their organisation had caused disruption due primarily to a loss of staff, while another again highlighted the challenges associated with the transfer of functions from one government Department to the DCEDIY. One participant discussed challenges relating to the high level of external input needed for their action, which required high levels of email correspondence. This participant also discussed how, in their opinion, there had been considerable public misconception about the nature of their action (which related to LGBTI+ inclusivity in the school curriculum), which was a considerable challenge during their public consultation process.

One participant mentioned that because they had not been personally involved in the development of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy, they did not fully understand what was required of them in terms of implementation. This participant discussed how this meant that

the actions they were completing under the Strategy were not necessarily aligned with other policies they were developing in the area of LGBTI+ youth.

The 2021 cyberattack on government computer systems was also cited by two participants as a key non-pandemic-related challenge, which hindered access to emails and files and which made it extremely difficult to operate as normal. Another participant mentioned a perceived rollback of government supports for transgender healthcare and student-centred health groups, as well as a perceived resistance to making changes to the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum. This participant discussed how these perceived rollbacks posed key challenges to the implementation of their respective actions under the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy.

Impact of organisational changes on the implementation of the action

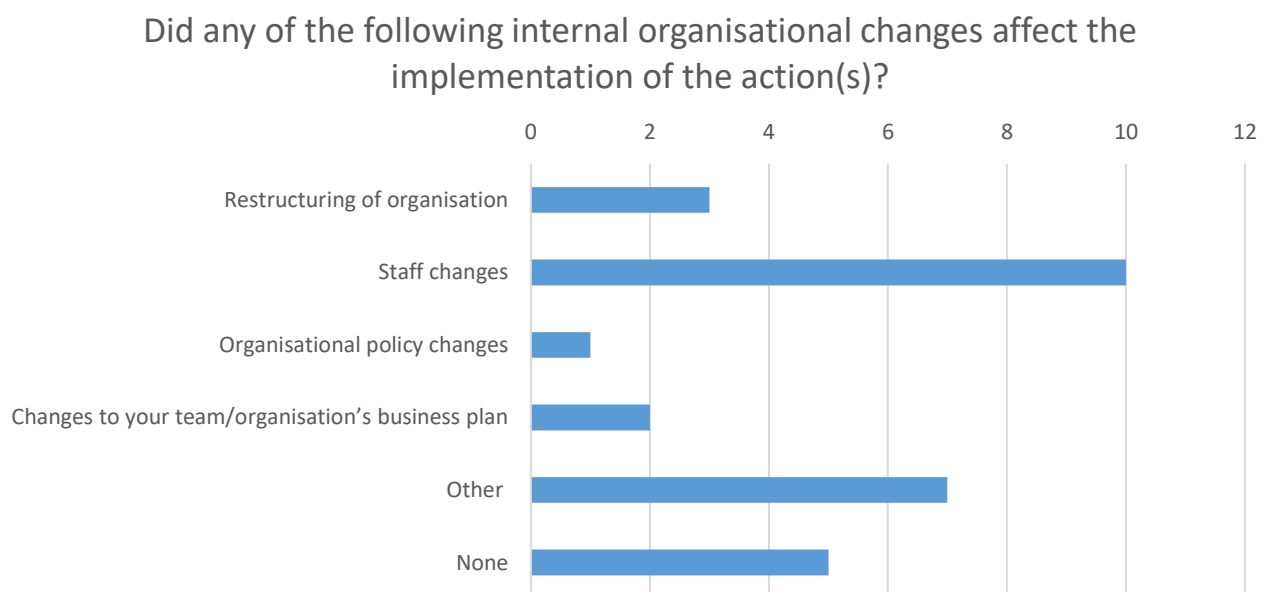


Figure 9: Impact of organisational changes on action implementation

When asked if any internal organisational changes affected the implementation of the action(s), the majority (N=10) mentioned staff changes, followed by ‘other’ (N=7) and none (N=5) (see Figure 9). Of the ten participants that mentioned staff changes, five were from government Departments, two were from Agencies, and three were from non-profit organisations. Of the seven participants that answered under ‘other’, two were from government Departments, three were from Agencies, and two were in non-profit organisations.

‘Other’ responses included references to the 2021 cyberattack and associated lack of access to key data; the transition to online communications during the pandemic; and challenges associated with coordinating actions under a range of strategies with overlapping but distinct actions. Participants also referred to changes that assisted in the implementation of their action(s). For example, one participant discussed the introduction of a new inclusion and diversity strategy that helped to embed their action into their day to day work. This participant also mentioned the benefit of hiring a dedicated staff member to take responsibility for the action. Another participant discussed establishing a stakeholder working group, to ensure that institutional knowledge would not dissolve in spite of considerable staff changes.

7. The need for additional resources

Do you feel that you/your organisation had enough resources to implement the action(s)?

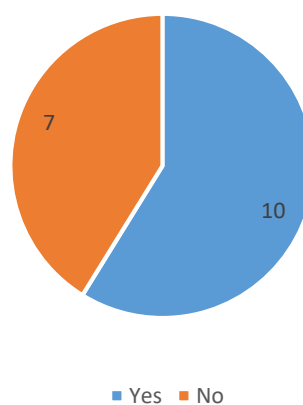


Figure 10: Sufficiency of resources available to implement the action(s)

The majority (n=10) of participants felt that they had enough resources (e.g. funding, staffing) to implement their respective action(s) (see Figure 10). Of these ten participants, five were from government Departments, three were from Agencies, and two were from non-profit organisations. Of the seven that did not, three were from government Departments, one was from an Agency, and three were from non-profit organisations.

For those who felt that they did not (N=7), requirements for additional resources included additional funding for staffing and staff training (N=4), particularly relating to specific LGBTI+ youth issues; additional funding to facilitate the provision of more detailed and bespoke services to partner organisations (N=1); and increased funding in general (N=1). One participant mentioned that they did receive increased funding during the pandemic, which had allowed them to hire more staff and expand their remit. However, this participant noted that a general lack of strategic funding allocation hinders organisations from achieving maximum impact.

8. The need for additional time

Do you feel that the time-frame allocated for the completion of the action(s) was:

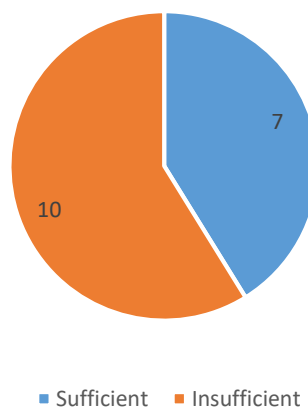


Figure 11: Sufficiency of time available to implement the action(s)

The majority of participants (N=10) felt that the time-frame allocated for the completion of the action(s) was insufficient (see Figure 11). Of these ten participants four were from government Departments, four were from Agencies, and two were from non-profit organisations. The most commonly suggested time frame for the completion of their respective action(s) was an additional three or more years (N=6); followed by an additional one year (N=2); and an additional two years (N=1), while none of these participants selected an additional few months (see Figure 12).

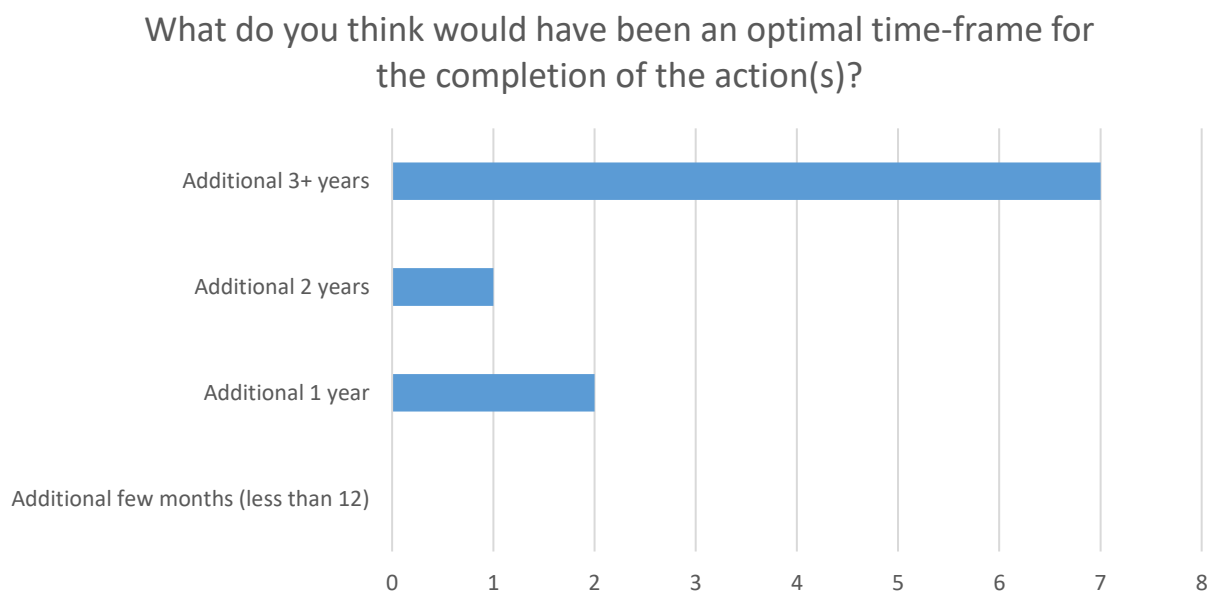


Figure 12: Optimal time frame for completion of the action(s)

When asked to elaborate, one participant suggested that no timeline would be sufficient as the actions are ongoing and embedded into their day-to-day work, with no defined deadline. Another participant suggested that the timeframe would not have been sufficient regardless of the impact of the pandemic, while another suggested that the timeframe may have been sufficient in the absence of COVID-19.

One participant noted that having sufficient resources would have had more bearing on achieving the actions than having more time. Another participant discussed how faster progress might have been made if longer-term grants were made available to partner organisations, rather than a succession of six month grants with annual application processes and no opportunity to carry unspent funding over into subsequent years. Another participant

mentioned how significantly more time is needed in order to implement school curriculum reform, while another highlighted that this is also true when it comes to passing legislation due to the high number of organisations that need to be involved, and that need to offer an opportunity to have their voices heard through consultations.

Another participant recommended having a 5-year LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy with actions reviewed after a shorter period of time (e.g. a mid-year review), and allowing the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy to be implemented according to an evolving action plan. Another participant reiterated this point and suggested that the DCEDIY should develop agreed key performance indicators at the outset, to help focus all stakeholders on the core aspects of their respective actions and to help ensure that the actions are completed within a given timeframe. This point was also emphasised by another participant, who recommended that the DCEDIY should check in with participant organisations on their service plans, to better understand how dedicated indicators can be used to monitor the implementation of individual actions. Another participant recommended that the Department should check with all stakeholders involved to see which actions or similar actions are already identified in their various strategic plans and operation plans. This participant suggested that it is usually these actions that tend to be implemented, and as a result these are usually the actions that are measured and reported on. Another participant recommended that the DCEDIY align the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy with other related strategies, as the same staff will often be responsible for coordinating, implementing, and reporting on each.

One other participant discussed how the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy deadline was a benefit as it helped to focus their attention on the action. Another participant reiterated this point and emphasised how the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy assisted them in framing what needed to be done in a concrete way and helped them to identify who was responsible for each part, and to ensure ongoing progress was made.

9. DCEDIY leadership

In your opinion, did the DCEDIY provide suitable leadership in the development and implementation of the Strategy?

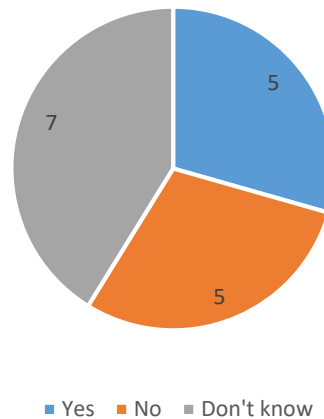


Figure 13: Suitability of DCEDIY leadership on the Strategy

When asked if they thought that the DCEDIY provided suitable leadership in the development and implementation of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy, the most common answer from participants (N=7) was that they did not know (see Figure 13). Of these seven participants, three were from government Departments, three were from Agencies, and one was from a non-profit organisation. The main reason given for this answer was that the participant had not been responsible for the action during the development of the Strategy (N=6). One of these participants commented that while they were not involved in the development stage themselves, they had been told by those who were involved that it had been an effective process, with good supports provided early on.

Another participant commented that the Department did not consult with the participant's organisation or team in the development of the Strategy, so they could not comment on the Department's leadership during the development stage. One participant mentioned that they would have appreciated being consulted during the development stage so they could have given some input on the development of their respective action. Another participant noted that a lack of involvement with the DCEDIY in the initial stages led to an action being developed and assigned to them that they felt was not needed. Another participant noted that while they were not sure whether their predecessors had engaged in the development of the

Strategy, they nonetheless felt that they were reporting on actions that they had not signed up to.

Five participants felt that the DCEDIY did not provide suitable leadership, while five others felt that the Department did provide such leadership. Six of the participants expressed that they would have preferred more frequent and personal contact with the Department, as communication was rare and conducted by template via a generic email address, with one participant expressing that this felt like a box ticking exercise rather than meaningful engagement. One participant recommended more hands on engagement from the DCEDIY during the lifetime of the Strategy, but especially when new staff (i.e. staff not involved during the development of the Strategy) take on responsibility for any actions under the Strategy, to help bring them up to speed. Another participant commented that while there was minimal coordination, oversight or direct contact with the DCEDIY, the situation might have been different had the pandemic not happened. One participant discussed how they and their team adopted the Strategy when they moved into their current role. They felt that their respective actions had not received appropriate attention due to a lack of institutional memory and associated lack of prioritisation, particularly at senior organisational levels.

Another participant commented that they would have preferred to receive feedback from the DCEDIY on how the Strategy as a whole was progressing, in order to better understand the strategic direction in this policy area. One participant mentioned that although they felt the Strategy development stage was robust and innovative, the DCEDIY had not provided the same level of commitment during the implementation stage. This participant suggested that more Departmental leadership was needed to ensure that work on interrelated actions would progress in a coordinated manner, given the high level of dependency between them. The participant also argued that the group of young people involved in the development of the Strategy should have been more involved during the implementation stage, as they could have played a central and valuable role in its delivery and success.

One government agency involved in a grant programme under the Strategy felt that they would have benefited from greater collaboration with the DCEDIY in delivering grant funding, as well as in deciding on the criteria for the evaluation of the programme. As it was their first time involved in the grant programme, they felt they could have learned more from the DCEDIY's expertise. One participant expressed regret that they had not engaged more

directly with the DCEDIY earlier on in the development of the Strategy, as the lack of personal contact they had experienced meant that they had only recently been made aware of resources and support available to them. This participant recommended that all stakeholders be made aware of the relevant working groups from the outset, as this would help them to improve their decision-making around implementation.

Another common suggestion (N=3) was that the DCEDIY should improve on its level of specificity when developing strategy actions. One participant suggested that when developing the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy, the DCEDIY should have collaborated with more organisations that have developed similar strategies, in order to improve implementation efficiency and effectiveness. Instead, staff felt that they were reporting on differing versions of the same actions across different strategies. Another participant noted that their organisation could only refer to specific projects when reporting on their respective actions, but felt that this didn't necessarily address the broader nature of the actions. Another participant suggested that the actions outlined in the Strategy should be more specific and measurable, in order to facilitate the reporting process.

According to another participant, while one part of their organisation was included in the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy development process, their own team had not been invited. As a result, they felt that the agreed actions assigned to them would have benefited from more detail and refinement in order to ensure added value. Similarly, another participant noted that an action assigned to them had already been part of their core work plan prior the Strategy, and so they felt that more direct involvement during the development of the Strategy could have resulted in agreement on a more useful action.

C. Stakeholder Collaboration

Did you collaborate with other stakeholders outside of your organisation to implement the action(s)?

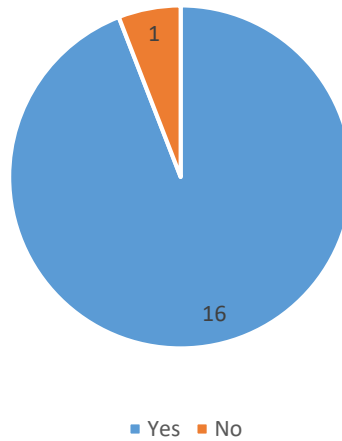


Figure 14: Involvement in stakeholder collaboration

Almost all of the participants (N=16) reported that they had collaborated with other stakeholders outside of their organisation to implement their action(s) (see Figure 14). When asked how many organisations they had collaborated with, the most common answer was 15 or more organisations (N=6), followed by one organisation (N=4); two organisations (N=2); and 6-10 organisations (N=2) (see Figure 15).

How many organisations did you collaborate with?

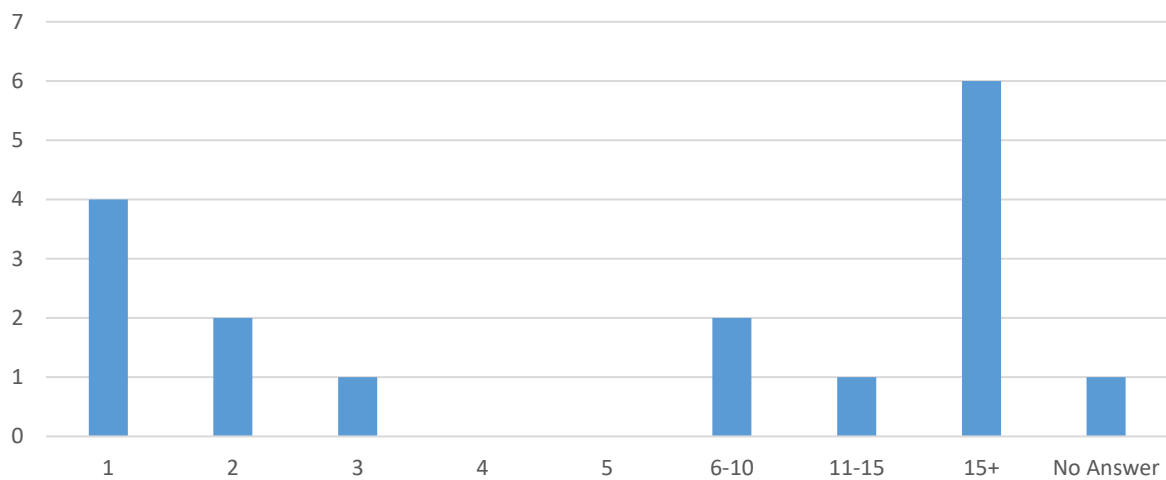


Figure 15: Average number of organisations involved in collaboration

When asked what types of organisations contributed most to progress on their Strategy actions, most participants (N=9) mentioned one or more NGOs or community-based organisations (such as schools and clinics) that liaise with LGBTI+ youth at a local level. Of these nine participants, four were from government Departments, one was from an Agency, and four were from non-profit organisations. Three of these participants mentioned agencies under the aegis of their Department or independent public bodies; one mentioned a steering group; one mentioned a business representative group; and one participant mentioned the DCEDIY. Some organisations did not specify any particular organisations, but mentioned that all stakeholders they collaborate with had contributed to progress on their respective actions.

10. Nature of the collaboration

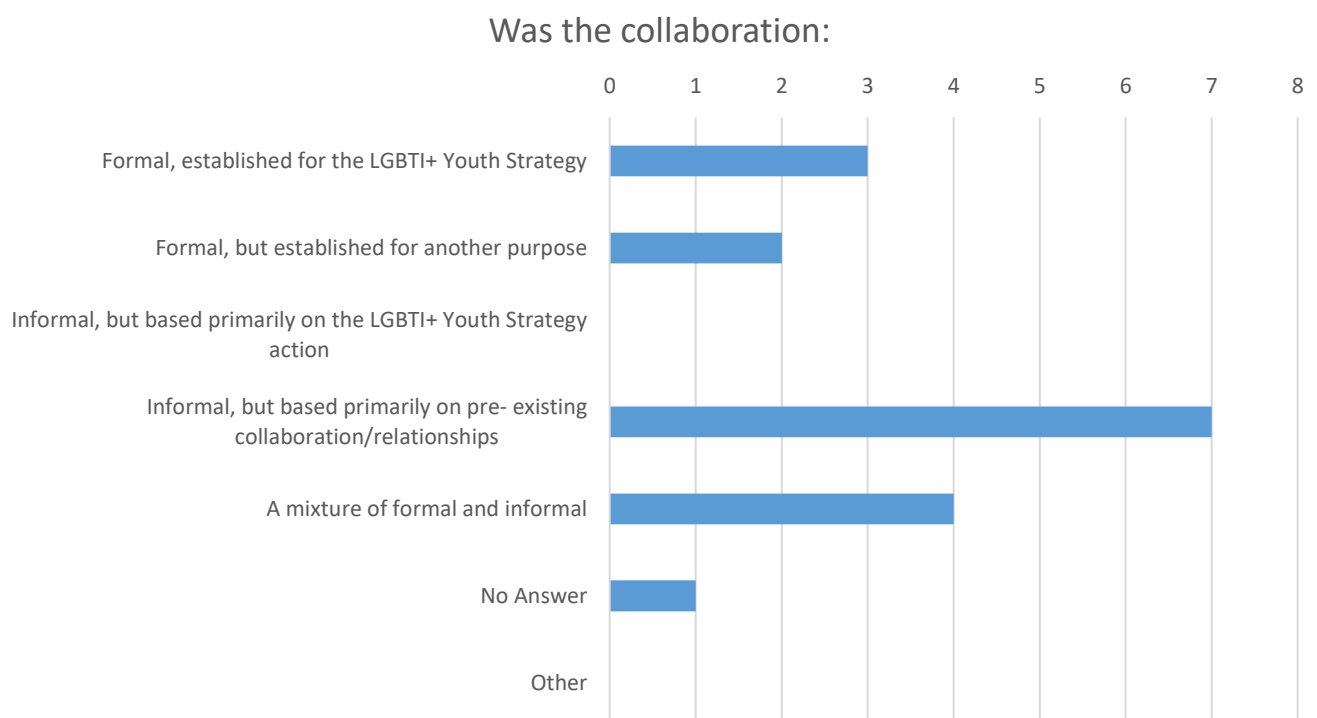


Figure 16: Nature of collaborations with other stakeholders

The most common answer given by participants when asked about the nature of their collaboration with external organisations (N=7) was that they were informal but based primarily on pre-existing collaborations/relationships (see Figure 16). Of these seven participants, four were from government Departments, one was from an Agency, and two were from non-profit organisations. One of these participants elaborated that their collaborative relationships had initially been established for a previous sexual health strategy.

Four other participants noted that their collaborations with other organisations were a mixture of formal and informal; three mentioned that they were engaged in formal collaborations established specifically for the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy; and two described their collaborative relationships as formal, but established for a purpose other than the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy.



Figure 17: Involvement of collaborating stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Strategy

When asked if all stakeholders they collaborated with were adequately involved in the development and implementation of the Strategy, four participants answered “yes”, while the most common answer (N=12) was “don’t know” (see Figure 17). Of the four participants who answered “yes”, two were from government Departments, and two were from non-profit organisations. Of the twelve participants who answered “don’t know”, six were from government Departments, three were from Agencies, and three were from non-profit organisations.

One reason for the latter answer was that participants had not been in their current role during the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy development process and therefore had little knowledge of how the process had evolved. Another participant suggested that while they had not personally been involved during the development phase, they thought it most likely that other organisations they collaborated with had, given the overlap between their pre-existing policy priorities and actions outlined in the Strategy.

Rather than assigning actions to organisations and teams without asking for their input, one participant recommended involving all of the stakeholders that had been included during the Strategy development stage in the assigning and implementation of actions. Another commented that while the relevant organisations had played a large role during the Strategy consultation phase, it seemed that responsibility to progress and implement Strategy actions had fallen to Departments and agencies. Another participant also noted that many organisations and key players (such as young people) had played a key role during the development of the Strategy, however, these key players had not retained this role during the implementation stage, due to a lack of DCEDIY coordination or leadership.

11. Communication frequency



Figure 18: Frequency of communication with other stakeholders

When asked about the frequency of communication, the most common answer (N=9) was a mixture of regularly (daily, weekly, monthly) and irregularly (quarterly, annually, once only), (i.e. as needed). This was followed by quarterly (N=3); and weekly (N=2) (see Figure 18).

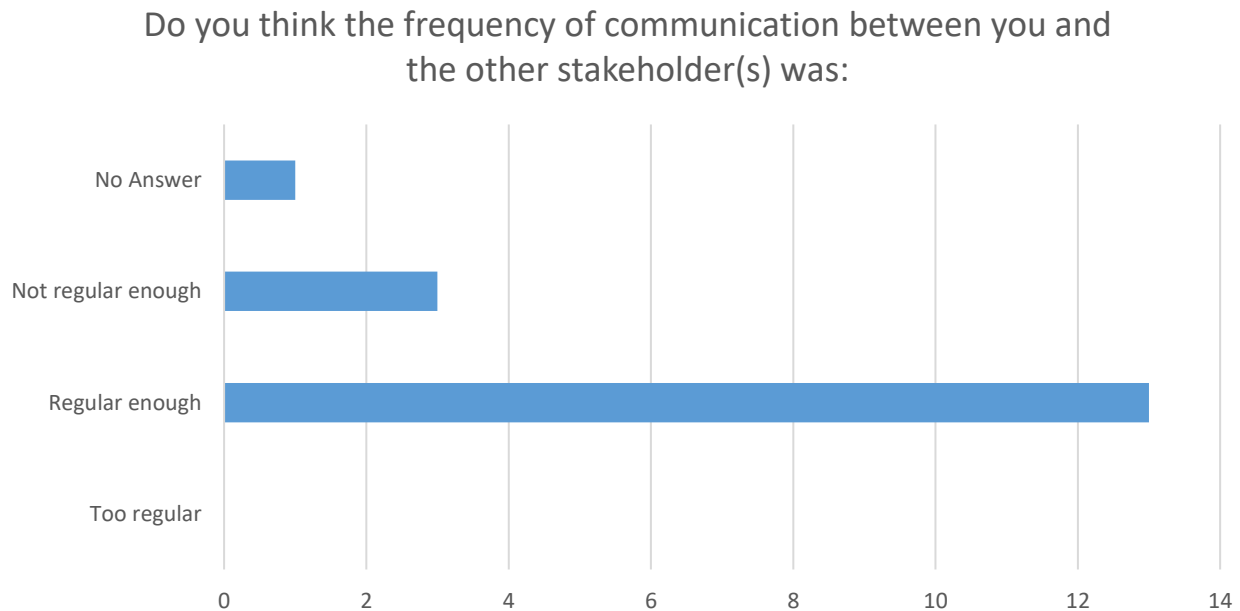


Figure 19: Sufficiency of communication with other stakeholders

The majority of participants (N=13) felt that the frequency of communication with collaborating partners was regular enough (see Figure 19). Of these thirteen participants, seven were from government Departments, two were from Agencies, and four were from non-profit organisations. Of those who felt that the frequency of communication was not regular enough (N=3), one was from a government Department, one was from an Agency, and one was from a non-profit organisation.

These three participants were asked what could have been done differently to improve the frequency of communication. One recommended that the DCEDIY clearly set out its expectations around the delivery and evaluation of a key LGBTI+ youth-related fund, from the outset, so that they could be better prepared for the implementation of their action. This participant also noted that they would have preferred to set up more regular (e.g. monthly) meetings with the DCEDIY. Two participants recommended increasing the volume of informal ad hoc collaboration with other stakeholders to exchange information on other LGBTI+ related activities, rather than just collaborating on the action itself.

12. Quality of communication

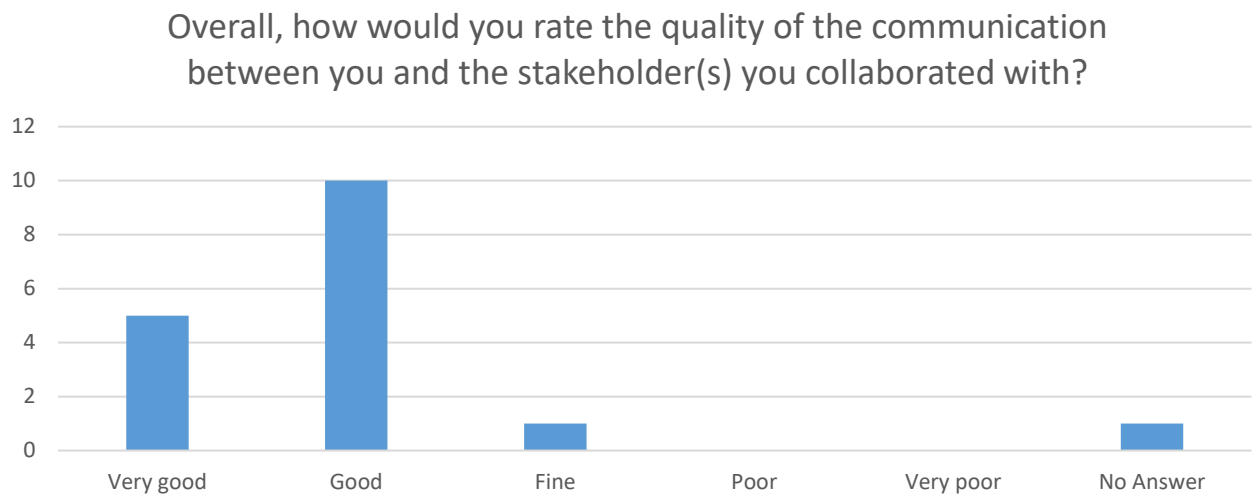


Figure 20: *Quality of communication with other stakeholders*

Most participants (N=10) felt that the quality of the communication between their organisation and the organisation(s) they collaborated with was good. Of these ten participants, four were from government Departments, two were from Agencies, and three were from non-profit organisations. Another five participants felt that the quality of communication was very good. One participant categorised the quality as “fine” (see Figure 20).

13. Collaboration benefits

When asked about the main benefits associated with collaborating with stakeholders outside of their team on the action(s), three participants responded that it provided them with greater insights into their target LGBTI+ Youth population group, along with a deeper level of community engagement. One of these participants elaborated that they would not have been able to make progress on their respective action without the help of collaborating partners, with whom they had already built trust and credibility, and who had also built trust and credibility within the communities they serve. Another of these participants mentioned that stakeholder collaboration had helped them to better understand the barriers and challenges faced by their target LGBTI+ youth population group.

Five participants discussed how the collaboration had allowed them to expand their network and organisational reach; five mentioned that the collaboration had helped them to broaden their perspective; and eight mentioned benefits relating to greater access to information and expertise. Two other participants elaborated that working with collaborating partners had helped them to bring their focus beyond the niche cohort of young people they usually engage with, and into the wider community of LGBTI+ youth.

Other responses included a comment from one participant that communication with other stakeholders was not frequent enough to determine the quality or benefit, as they had only met during the Strategy development phase. Another participant mentioned that it was important to have robust discussions with different stakeholders when working on sensitive subjects (such as inclusivity in the physical environment for transgender and intersex youth) and to come to a consensus agreement on the correct implementation approach. Another participant discussed how frequent communication with stakeholders (on providing staff capacity building on LGBTI+ youth issues to service providers) had ensured that the relevant organisations didn't operate in silos. Frequent communication also provided the participant with an opportunity to engage with the populations impacted by the actions they were delivering.

14. Collaboration challenges

When asked about the main challenges associated with collaborating on the action(s) with stakeholders outside of their team, two participants mentioned the need to have a longer LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy timeframe in order to build working relationships over time through ongoing stakeholder communication. According to one of these participants, this would help to ensure that everyone is on the same page in terms of expectations. Another participant suggested that a longer timeline would have been preferable, in order to allow them and their partners more time for event planning. This may have enabled them to run their annual residential training event for students at a more suitable time of year.

One participant discussed how communication and collaboration improved once they had identified the leading stakeholders and knew who they should liaise with on questions about their respective action. Another participant noted that a lack of leadership from the DCEDIY during implementation was a key challenge, as in their view there was no oversight to ensure

that the relevant stakeholders were actually engaging in meaningful collaboration on action delivery.

One participant mentioned that a stakeholder working group should have been established with those working on their respective action, in order to improve coordination. Three other participants mentioned that there can be challenges when their own policy objectives, but also methods of implementation, are different to those of their partners. However, one of these participants elaborated that while this is a challenge it can sometimes lead to a healthy tension between stakeholders, who can work together towards consensus on a shared goal.

Two other participants mentioned that as their respective actions relate to sensitive issues, they can at times attract publicity and media attention, which can bring its own implementation challenges. Another participant discussed how funding relationships between funder and funded organisation can present a collaboration challenge, but also suggested that this is a natural dynamic within such relationships. One participant mentioned that the limited time available to their partner organisations represented a key challenge for them, giving the example of difficulties experienced in scheduling collaboration meetings.

D. Future learning

Participants were asked whether there are any other aspects of the implementation of the LGBTI+ Strategy that they would have done differently. Three participants suggested that, for subsequent strategies, implementing partners be provided with sufficient funding and resources. One of these participants suggested that if funding had not already been available to them (from another source), they would not have had the necessary resources to carry out their respective actions under the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy. Another participant suggested that successor strategies should be costed to ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to complete all actions.

One participant suggested linking commitments in the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy with similar commitments in other strategies in order to avoid repetition and prevent those responsible for cross-cutting actions from having to report the same information for multiple strategies. This participant also recommended giving more thought in advance to how the actions will be implemented and resourced, and providing more clarity when setting down the objectives. Another participant suggested making the actions more specific and measurable, rather than phrasing them as broad statements about work that they are often already doing. This participant also asked that the DCEDIY ensure that future Strategy actions relate specifically to the work of action owners.

Another participant also touched on this point, stating that they view their LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy actions as less detailed versions of actions they are responsible for under another strategy. This participant recommended that future LGBTI+ National Youth Strategies are developed in line with the operational plans underpinning similar strategies. This should include a gap analysis that compares and contrasts similar strategies, and assesses what additional resources may be required. In a similar vein, another participant recommended establishing clear targets for each action when planning any successive strategies, but to allow these targets to remain flexible in order to account for unforeseen circumstances. They mentioned that this could be done by embedding targets in a more frequently updated strategic document rather than in the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy document itself, which did not change over the lifetime of the Strategy.

One other participant suggested that future strategies should encourage greater coordination with stakeholders that are collectively responsible for the same action. Another suggested making sure stakeholders are more aware of the various working groups operating under the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy and knowing who the right stakeholders are. Another two participants recommended assigning a particular person, rather than an organisation, as the dedicated lead for each action, and ensure that any change in responsibility is clearly communicated to the DCEDIY in order to ensure that those responsible are always easily identified and that actions do not become ownerless. Another participant suggested that more care be taken to ensure that actions are assigned to appropriate leads. This participant felt they did not have the necessary expertise to implement their respective action. Similarly, another participant commented that they would not like to continue being assigned responsibility for action(s) under the Strategy, as they are not familiar with the issues and struggle to understand the different groups involved.

Five participants discussed issues relating to DCEDIY leadership and communication during the lifetime of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy, with one discussing how communication with the DCEDIY is the key issue that they would like to improve. Another mentioned that it was their organisation's first time working on this particular action. They felt that they could have benefited from more collaboration with the DCEDIY in order to benefit from the Department's experience with LGBTI+ Youth policy. One participant requested more meaningful engagement with the DCEDIY at the start of any successor Strategy engagement process, with another participant recommending more review DCEDIY and stakeholder meetings, to help refocus all parties on the implementation of the Strategy.

One participant commented that a lack of leadership from the DCEDIY undermined the potential impact of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy, and that actions which may be ticked off as complete are not actually linked to achievement of outcomes. This participant suggested that this has contributed to young people they engage with feeling that the Strategy has not resulted in concrete change in their lives. Another participant recommended that the coordination of the Strategy could be carried out by another Department, such as the Department of the Taoiseach, who may be better able to find more proactive solutions to problems that arise.

Five participants recommended that any subsequent LGBTI+ National Youth Strategies should focus more on LGBTI+ subgroups such as the “more invisible” lesbian, bisexual, and intersex groups, so that their specific needs are not conflated with the wider population group. One of these participants specifically requested that the healthcare needs of all LGBTI+ groups would not be conflated, as each subgroup has different needs and therefore require a tailored stakeholder plan. Another participant recommended that future strategies do more to address the health needs of LGBTI+ youth, such as ongoing crises in transgender healthcare, and that while health affects every other dimension of wellbeing for LGBTI+ youth, it tends to be low on the hierarchy of government policy needs.

Other participant recommendations included facilitating action owners’ access to international LGBTI+ experts, such as those who work on issues affecting disabled LGBTI+ youth, in order to encourage exploration around more society-wide solutions. One participant recommended ensuring that a successor LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy feed into Ireland’s wellbeing policy framework, and suggested that a successor strategy include the commitment in the Programme for Government to introducing an inclusive and age-appropriate programme on LGBTI+ relationships in school RSE and SPHE curricula. One other participant recommended that any subsequent strategies include actions relating to the ongoing Review of the Action Plan on Bullying.

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Appendix

Add Questionnaire



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland