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## **Garda Inspectorate Calls for Change in Dealing with Homophobic Crime**

The Garda Inspectorate Crime Investigation report, published yesterday, recommended changes to the way the Gardaí investigate homophobic incidents. The report noted that not one of the over 1,000 Gardaí interviewed had ever recorded or investigated such a crime. The report put forward a series of recommendations to the Gardaí to ensure that a victim-centred policy was implemented, which encouraged victims to report offences.

“We welcome the recommendations of the Garda Inspectorate on addressing homophobic crimes and incidents. **Changing a culture of underreporting of homophobic and transphobic incidents to the Gardaí will require significant efforts to build confidence that incidents will be taken seriously and will be investigated**” said Brian Sheehan, Director of GLEN.

“Despite very positive progress in Ireland for LGBT people over the last number of years, including better relations between the LGBT community and the Gardaí, there remains very significant challenges to be overcome to ensure that LGBT people can go about their daily lives with the same sense of security that others enjoy” said Sheehan. **“The recommendations of the Garda Inspectorate relating to homophobic incidents provide a strong basis for moving forwards.”**

Research by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency in 2013 found that:

- One third of LGBT people in Ireland were physically or sexually attacked or threatened with violence in the last five years.
- One in four experienced harassment six or more times in the last 12 months, according to research by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency in 2013.
- Eight of out every ten LGBT people who experienced a homophobic or transphobic incident did not report the last incident to the Gardaí.

However, the number of incidents officially recorded in the Garda PULSE system as having been motivated by homophobia stood at 17 in 2013.

“We particularly welcome the Garda Inspectorate recommendation to develop third party reporting sites to accommodate victim reporting. **GLEN will launch a third party reporting website in December which aims to bridge the gaps between LGBT individuals who experience hate crime and the Gardaí, and to encourage reporting of all homophobic or transphobic incidents**” said Craig Dwyer, Policy and Projects Officer, GLEN.

In recent years the Gardaí has linked the roles of Ethnic Liaison Officers (ELO) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Liaison Officers. We welcome the Inspectorates recommendation to review the decision to merge the two roles, as they are dealing with very different communities and both require very different training to understand the complexities of the communities with whom they are engaging.

**“These recommendations, if implemented, could help build the confidence of those LGBT people who experience violence and harassment to report the incident to the Gardaí.**

Ultimately the aim is to achieve a society where LGBT people can live a life without fear of violence and harassment because they are LGBT, and a society where they can feel comfortable holding their partners hands walking safely down the main street in any town or village in Ireland”, concluded Dwyer.

***Ends***

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