

Aontú General Election Manifesto 2024

Law

- **Human Trafficking**
 - Aontú will ensure the recognition of the victimhood of children within Human Trafficking and victims of child sexual exploitation.
 - We will work to implement specialised supports for children that testify against an adult who has groomed and exploited them.
 - Aontú will work to ensure that intent to groom, as well as grooming is a sufficient threshold to reach prosecution.
 - Criminal exploitation is a form of human trafficking and should be considered as a serious form of child abuse.
 - Aontú will ensure the financial penalty associated is measured by the incomes generated by the children involved for the criminals associated with their exploitation.
 - Aontú will implement EU recommendations that children who have been trafficked are not penalised for criminal activities they have been compelled to commit as a direct consequence of being coerced or trafficked.
 - Aontú will guarantee funding for the continuation of training of front-line professionals, including An Garda Síochána, in how to identify the warning signs of trafficking.
 - Aontú will seek to implement a child specific National Referral Mechanism, echoed by the Children's Rights Alliance and also therefore responding to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's call for more focus on Child Trafficking.
- **New Irish Border Agency**
 - We will create a new Border Agency. It will take over responsibility for border control, processing of applications and enforcement. Currently only a few hundred people are involved in managing our border systems and they are operating across two different government departments and in four different guises – the Garda National Immigration Bureau, the International Protection Office, The Border Management Unit and the International Protection Procurement Service.
 - As an example, there are currently only 31 staff in the International Protection Procurement Service which is charged with finding accommodation for what will be 20,000 IPAS applicants by the end of 2024 – that is 1 member of staff for 709 individuals which is clearly not efficient or sustainable.
 - Aontú have looked extensively at other EU countries of similar size to determine a better way forward. Lithuania, a country of similar population and size, have an integrated border force of over 4,000 staff – our investment in a new Border Agency will be of the same magnitude.
- **Re-instate Planning Laws**
 - We will re-instate the application of planning laws for asylum accommodation. Currently, no planning is required for IPAS accommodation – we have former industrial complexes, hotels and other buildings being automatically converted to house migrants without any input from the local population.
 - Aontú will end the exemption for asylum accommodation from planning law.

- **A Community Dividend**
 - Where communities agree to host migrants, there must be a community dividend. The Government set aside millions of euros for this purpose, yet allocated only a small amount.
 - If a town or village agree to an increase in their population, the Government must provide immediate, sustainable investment in public services such as schools, healthcare and housing so that not only can local services cope with more demand, but that those who wish to create conflict with others on the basis of pressure on public services will have no fertile ground on which to spread disharmony.
- **Applications Determined in 6 Months**
 - We will ensure that every application for asylum is processed within 6 months. This will be achieved through the new Border Agency which will be appropriately staffed. We have had asylum applicants wait up to ten years for their applications to be determined, and this must end.
 - Aontú will create a new court and properly resource it to decide on asylum applications. Where the new court refuse an appeal, the applicant must be subject to enforced deportation.
- **End the Destruction of Documents**
 - We are clear, where an applicant deliberately destroys or loses travel documents, they will be refused permission to land. There have been instances where people have come to this country, destroyed their travel documents and rather than being held as is mandated in Irish law, they are released from their port of entry and are able to make their way to claim asylum at the IPAS centre in Dublin. There are no checks as to where these people then go.
 - We know that the vast majority of those entering the country do so having first been in another European country. Their details are recorded by the EU Frontex system and so Irish authorities will know from where someone has come from should they destroy their travel documents.
 - We want to ensure that anyone who comes to this country with intentions to frustrate our lawful processes as their very first act, will not be allowed to remain.
- **Fairness in Allocation of Resources**
 - There should be no circumstances whereby resources are prioritised for those entering the country for any reason, over those who have lived here their whole lives and have paid the taxes that sustain such services. Aontú will demand this be enshrined in law.
- **Oversight of State Resources**
 - Aontú will seek the relevant Minister to lay before the Dáil a report that will comprehensively outline the resources and finance being used in the system each year so that Irish taxpayers can hold their elected representatives to account.

Social Welfare/Protection

- **Family Carers**
 - Aontú seeks an abolition of the means test for the carers' allowance. This will cost €450m a year.

- Aontú wants better access to respite services and increased weeks of respite for those in receipt of round-the-clock care, to alleviate the pressures on family carers.
- Aontú are advocating for more regulated and public home care hours to be provided by the State, rather than agencies, so that people can receive care in their own homes and allow the family carer a daily break from their work.
- **Aontú will Lift Families and Communities out Poverty**
 - Aontú will provide an additional, second rate of child benefit would be means tested. This additional child benefit benefiting 100,000 households. This has potential to take more than 40,000 children out of poverty. We estimate that introducing this payment would cost around €700 million per year.
 - Aontú will delivering Child Benefit to mothers from 4 months of pregnancy will cost €60,000,000.
- **Family Policy**
 - Increase the Home Carers' Credit to equalise the tax treatment of one-income couples and two-income couples that was created by tax individualisation.
- **Social and Affordable Housing**
 - We need to ensure that the Traveller Accommodation Budgets are spent appropriately and fully by each Local Authority.
- **Home Ownership and Construction**
 - Aontú will introduce amendments to EU law to delete advantages that FF/FG give to international investment vehicles which allows them a competitive advantage over families seeking a home.
- **Homelessness**
 - Aontú will ensure that there is a standardised reporting of homeless deaths in each county.
 - Aontú will ensure better communication between various state entities and wrap around supports for homeless people in terms of the prison service, social work, mental health and addiction services.
- **Tenants' Rights**
 - We need the State to increase the number purchases of 'tenants in situ' house sales in Ireland
- **Zero Tolerance for Gender Based Violence**
 - Aontú will meet our responsibilities under the Istanbul Convention. We will accelerate the delivery of Women's Refuges and Rape Crisis Centres in counties without these services.
 - Aontú will increase funding to organisations supporting women suffering from domestic violence.

Education

- **Concerns About SPHE**
 - Aontú will ensure that all SPHE and associated materials will adhere to the ethos of the parents and schools their children are being taught in.
 - Aontú will ensure that students are taught about the growing dangers that exist to women and children because of the use of pornography.

- Aontú will ensure that all teaching is based on fact and science and age appropriate.
- **Gender Ideology**
 - Aontú believe that women and girls have the right to female only safe spaces.
 - Aontú will end the practice of deleting the word woman, mother or girl being removed from legislation, our health service and from education.

Online Safety

- In the previous Dáil term, Aontú submitted the Protection of Children (Online Pornographic Material) Bill (2020) to the Dáil, making the online provision of pornography by internet companies to children illegal. We will ensure it becomes legislation in Government.
- Aontú will ensure government funding for training for all schools and workshops for parents on the dangers of internet and implementation of filters on internet use in the home and on devices.

Early Years/Childcare

- **Aontú will Lift Families and Communities out of Poverty**
 - Aontú will provide a cap for childcare costs of €100 a week.
 - Aontú will invest more to provide more places. We will do this through existing providers and by delivery through the public system. We will do this with schools if possible.
 - We will make €3,000 childcare subvention available to mothers and fathers who choose to stay at home within the first 3 years of the child's life.

Health

- **Mental Health Services**
 - Aontú will allocate an additional €10 million in funding to establish 12 additional CAMHS teams.
 - The existing provision for specialist mental health staff in hospital A&Es, prisons and on campus medical centres in universities needs to be expanded, and should include out of hours mental health nursing cover to respond to mental health challenges and crises as they arise. The cost of this additional cover is estimated to be approximately €4 million.
 - Aontú aims to hire 40 additional specialist nurses in the areas of mental health, intellectual disability and suicide prevention. These nurses would help to boost existing frontline staff and be transferred to hospitals and centres where they are most needed.
- **Community Safety**
 - Aontú will invest in community centres, community sports facilities, drug rehabilitation, mental health services and interventions. We will extend existing services, reduce waiting times and improve the rate of early intervention
 - Aontú will invest in community detoxification and rehab services and facilities for young people in every city in the state.