

Fianna Fáil General Election Manifesto 2024:

Moving Forward. Together.

Law

- **Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence**
 - Introduce Valerie's law to ensure that those convicted of killing their partners or a parent of their child will lose guardianship rights over their children.
- **Civil Law**
 - Ensure the timely construction of a new, standalone Family Law and Children's Court Complex.
- **Prioritising the Wellbeing of Children in State Care**
 - Replace the Child Care Act, 1991 with modern legislation.
- **An Equal Society**
 - Publish and implement the successor strategy to the National Strategy for Women and girls.
 - Advance the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities
- **Accommodating Asylum Seekers**
 - Reduce further the accommodation delivered by commercial providers and move to a fully or predominately State-owned system.
 - Avoid entering into contracts for the use of properties providing essential services to communities, such as hotels and care homes, to accommodate asylum seekers.
 - Standardise state support to asylum seekers, bringing Ireland into line with other EU Member States.

Education

- **Amplify Active Travel**
 - Expand the Support the Safe Routes to School programme.
- **Clean, Affordable Irish Energy**
 - Fund solar panels for every school.
- **Helping Children get the Therapies they Need**
 - Reinstate on-site therapists to Special Schools.
 - Radically improve accessibility and effectiveness of therapy services through providing on-site support to children in special classes within mainstream schools.
 - Recruit additional therapy clinicians and Therapy Assistants.
 - Double the number of Regional Assessment Hubs.
- **Supporting Families and Workers**
 - Increase the Back to Education Allowance by 25%
- **Smaller Classes, Stronger Schools**
 - Continue to increase capitation funding for schools so that they have more resources for each pupil. We will increase capitation by 40%.
 - Establish a new DEIS Plus Scheme to support schools with the highest level of educational disadvantage.

- Target a reduction of the general Pupil Teacher Ratio at primary level to 19:1.
- Work with schools to build on our progress to date and eliminate very large classes.
- Expand the Home School Liaison Co-Ordinator service to every second-level school with an identified attendance problem
- Introduce a national Small Schools Project for all 1300 small primary schools enabling them to access and share additional resources, promoting active coordination for the benefit of pupils.
- Trial new administrative supports for Principals and Boards of Management to reduce their workloads.
- Implement an annual Summer Works Programme so that schools can carry out important improvement works.
- Increase the Minor Works Grants that are paid to schools on an annual basis to help meet maintenance requirements.
- Encourage the rotation of STEM teachers in an area so that clusters of schools can benefit.
- Reform the redeployment panels for both primary and secondary schools.
- Increase bursaries for student teachers to promote accessibility into the profession.
- Increase the number of training places on educational psychology courses to address workforce planning difficulties.
- Develop a common application system and standardised admissions time across schools.
- Expand the School Transport Service to include 100,000 students by 2030.
- Provide more Community Link Workers to schools to support Traveller and Roma students and their progression in education
- **Further Improve Outcomes for Students**
 - Continue the reform of the Leaving Certificate in order to broaden the range of learning and examination approaches involved.
 - Support the rollout of more international languages in primary and secondary schools.
 - Reform the Irish language curriculum so that a greater emphasis is placed on speaking the language and expand opportunities for students to attend Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí.
 - Introduce universal elements to all Transition Year programmes in each secondary school.
 - Expand the JCSP School Library Programme.
 - Introduce a single application process for students applying for third-level courses, further education courses and/or apprenticeships.
 - Overhaul guidance services in schools to ensure that all students have access to career guidance advice.
- **Safe, Healthier Schools**
 - Assess the ongoing Mental Health pilots to ensure that students experiencing mental health challenges can receive the support they need in school.
 - Set up a new dedicated PE Hall Fund in co-operation with the Sports Capital Fund to provide specific new Physical Education facilities to schools.

- Increase the number of schools offering Physical Education as a Leaving Certificate exam subject.
- Establish a new School Yard Fund for surface works and equipment.
- Expand the Active School Flag to a greater number of schools, especially secondary schools, through continued funding support.
- Build new Music Education Hubs so that more students can benefit from structured and sustained instruction in music.
- Expand the highly successful BLAST and Creative Schools Programmes
- **Special Education**
 - Roll out the first national Therapy Service in Education, with therapists providing therapies in schools. We will start with special schools, special classes and DEIS Plus schools.
 - Continue to hire more special education teachers and special needs assistants to ensure that every student receives the support they need.
 - Expand the availability of early intervention classes, under the remit of the Department of Education, so that those children in need of an early intervention can access it in their local school.
 - Continue to expand the free-of charge Summer Programme for students with special educational needs.
 - Ensure that schools in every community have special classes so that all students can attend local schools.
 - Continue the establishment of new special schools across the country.
 - Introduce a national centralised application system for children applying for a place in a special school or in a special class within a mainstream school.
 - Reform the Drumcondra Tests which are used to gauge student learning to include assessments for dyslexia.
 - Complete the Review of the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act and introduce necessary legislative changes to ensure that it meets the needs of students.
 - Increase the number of post-primary school places for children with ASD.
 - Implement a mandatory disability education module during teacher training, along with a mandatory placement in a special class or school for all student teachers.
- **Audience Development**
 - Mandate each of the National Cultural Institutions to develop a programme for Transition Year students
- **Sport for All**
 - Create a Next Generation Fund to support soccer academies.
- **Education**
 - Increase assistance through the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme.
 - Provide financial assistance to facilitate a greater number of less well-off students to go to the Gaeltacht summer colleges.
 - Increase the dedicated Irish-medium teacher training programmes to improve on the quality of Irish language teaching and learning in all schools

- Improve the quality of Irish teaching and learning by investing in both initial teacher education and continuing professional development for existing teachers.
- Increase the opportunities for students to attend Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí.

Social Protection/Welfare

- **Supporting Families and Workers**
 - Extend and target the School Meals Holiday Hunger Project.
 - Increase the Child Benefit payment.
 - Increase the Child Support Grant across all welfare payments.
 - Expand the eligibility for the Fuel Allowance to families in receipt of the Working Family Payment.
 - Extend Parent's Leave and Benefit from 9 to 12 weeks.
 - Extend the duration of Parent's Leave and Benefit to allow parents to take leave and access benefits for up to five years following the birth or adoption of a child.
- **Smaller Classes, Stronger Schools**
 - Continue, expand, and improve the quality of the Free Hot School Meals programme.
- **Progressive Tax System**
 - Annually increase the specific and targeted personal tax credits as advanced in Budget 2025 to support families, carers, blind people, dependent relatives, and those with additional needs.
 - Widen eligibility for tax credits to provide additional supports to those with caring responsibilities and citizens with additional needs and their families.
- **Reduce Homelessness and Protect Vulnerable Households**
 - Continue to roll out the largest social housing programme in the history of the State, directly-building at least 12,000 per year.
 - Create 2,000 Housing First tenancies to help eliminate long term homelessness.
 - Continue the 'Tenant in Situ' Scheme.
 - Ensure full draw down of Traveller accommodation funds
- **Ensuring a Just Transition**
 - Enact the Energy Poverty Reduction Bill, requiring energy companies to divert surplus renewable energy which would otherwise be wasted to homes in fuel poverty.
 - Extend the Fuel Allowance to additional households to ensure that these homes are not impacted by fuel poverty.
 - Enact the Energy Poverty Reduction Bill, requiring energy companies to divert surplus renewable energy which would otherwise be wasted to homes in fuel poverty.
- **Dedicated Budgets for Children**
 - Implement a whole-of-government approach to addressing child poverty and ensure child poverty proofing is central to Government decision making.
 - Set a new child poverty target to focus work on improving the lives of children.
 - Ensure that the social welfare system continues to insulate families and children from rising living costs
 - Continue to reform means testing in social welfare schemes to address anomalies and create greater fairness in the system.

- Ensure that the voices of children and young people are reflected in the development of policies that affect them.
- **Strengthening Support for Foster Carers**
 - Recognise foster care through social welfare credits so that foster carers can access the State's contributory pension.
 - Extend the Back-to-School Allowance to foster carers.
 - Increase the After Care Allowance in line with the increase in the Foster Care Allowance for young people who remain living with foster carers after the age of 18 years and continue in education/training.
- **Prioritising the Wellbeing of Children in State Care**
 - Address staffing challenges in special care units by providing a Special Care Allowance.
- **A Supportive Welfare System**
 - Increase core welfare rates by at least €12 annually.
- **Reforming Supports for People with a Disability**
 - Work to reform and improve disability payments.
 - Increase the Disability Allowance and the Domiciliary Care Allowance.
- **Valuing Carers**
 - Allocate a minimum of €600m to increase the income disregards to qualify for the Carer's Allowance, with a view to abolishing the means test for this payment over the term of Government.
 - Provide full-rate Carer's Allowance for those caring for two individuals and a Half-Rate Carer's Allowance for any additional people.
 - Increase the annual Carer's Support Grant to €2,500.
- **An Equal Society**
 - Provide greater employment opportunities for Travellers and Roma through a strengthened Traveller employment support programme, a new Public Service Traveller and Roma Internship Programme, and enterprise supports.
- **Cost of Living**
 - Protecting family incomes through making sure that tax changes and social welfare benefit increases match, at a minimum, rising prices.

Online Safety

- **Helping People to Stay Healthy**
 - Ensure that children are safe online and implement the recommendations of the new Online Health Taskforce.
- **Keeping Children and Young People Safe Online**
 - Introduce new legislation requiring online service providers to verify users' age. We will hold them criminally liable and subject to fines for failure to do so.
 - Legislate for a new online Digital Passport and require internet users to verify their age using these electronic IDs.
 - Legislate to ban recommender algorithms in children's social media feeds and to fully supervise the use of all recommender algorithms by online platforms.
 - Introduce new direct reporting channels (akin to Childline) so that members of the public can report harmful or illegal content directly to An Garda Síochána and/or

Coimisiún na Meán. We will commence an appropriate advertising campaign to advise the public of the existence of these new reporting channels.

- Work at EU level to make the detection and reporting of child sexual abuse material by digital platforms a legal requirement.
- Implement the recommendations of the Online Health Taskforce in relation to the harms caused to children and young people by online activity.
- **Safe, Healthier Schools**
 - Ensure enforcement of a ban on smartphone use during the entire school day to protect students' wellbeing and learning.
 - Expand the FUSE anti-bullying and online safety programme to more schools and students.
- **Ensuring a Safe Digital Sphere**
 - Legislate to give An Garda Síochána and Coimisiún na Meán the power to seek a court order requiring the immediate removal of illegal or harmful content. We will extend the same powers under the EU Terrorist Content Online Regulation to require the removal of all illegal or harmful content.
 - Refresh Ireland's National AI Strategy and implement the new regulations including the EU AI Act that will focus on three areas:
 - Building trust in AI
 - Leveraging AI for societal and economic benefit including supporting businesses to adopt AI and harnessing AI for better public services
 - Require social media companies and online platforms to detect and remove fake advertisements.
 - Publish the National Counter Disinformation Strategy and an implementation plan to empower citizens through media literacy, education, and awareness so they have the skills to identify disinformation.

Early Years/Childcare

- **Deliver Affordable, Accessible Childcare for All**
 - Affordability
 - Increase the National Childcare Subsidy reducing parents' fees to €200 per month, going further should economic and fiscal circumstances permit.
 - Place the ECCE scheme on a legislative footing.
 - Establish a new National Childcare Price Register to ensure that there is transparency in fees for parents.
 - Increase Core Funding to services provided their fees are under the fee cap, that they maintain fee freezes, and that they pay staff in line with the Employment Regulation Orders.
 - Accessibility
 - Bolster the new unit within the Department of Children to forward plan on childcare needs and undertake a national audit to identify blackspots where there are insufficient childcare places for the local population.
 - Provide capital investment to build or purchase state-owned childcare facilities, which can then be leased to community childcare providers in these blackspots

- Work to provide more childcare on school sites, including Irish-medium naíonraí.
 - Make it easier for childminders to register with Tusla and help them in entering the contract for the National Childcare subsidy scheme. Childminders remain a valued and important part of childcare provision in Ireland
 - Quality and Inclusion
 - Continue to increase pay for childminders and early years educators through the Employment Regulation Order instrument.
 - Extend the AIM programme supports to all children with a disability aged 0 to 3-year-olds in childcare, building on the existent provision for 3 to 6-year-olds.
 - Establish a professional register for childminders and early years educators. This will help reduce the administrative burden on providers and reflects the professionalisation of the sector.
 - Deepen co-operation and shared learnings between early years education and the Department of Education Inspectorate.
 - Expand the remit of the Ombudsman for Children’s Office to investigate complaints received about childcare settings, including fully private settings.
 - Introduce an “Earn and Learn” apprenticeship model enabling childcare staff to gain qualifications and advance their careers while remaining in the workforce.
- Supporting Communities to Thrive
 - Provide €15m to fund early childhood visiting programmes across the country to focus on early intervention and parental support.
- Education
 - Roll out an Irish language familiarisation programme for crèches to encourage use of the Irish language from a young age.

Health

- Waiting Times and Access to Care
 - Staff the new National Children’s Hospital as soon as it is completed so that children can be treated there as early as possible.
 - Ensure our children’s hospitals have enough capacity to quickly and safely treat children with scoliosis and spina bifida.
- Cancer Care
 - Ban the sale of tobacco products to people under the age of 21.
- Care in the Home and Care in the Community
 - Develop a new national policy on palliative care for children and increase funding to children’s hospice care.
- Cutting Costs for Patients
 - Extend Free GP Care to all children aged 12 and under.
 - Reduce the Drug Payment Scheme monthly maximum payment from €80 to €40 over the next five years
 - Expand access to the orthodontic scheme for children.
- Helping People to Stay Healthy
 - Expand the RSV immunisation programme.

- Introduce restrictions on the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks, to include a ban on their sale to children.
- Develop a DEIS-style programme of intensive health supports for disadvantaged communities.
- Expand the number of conditions babies are screened for.
- **Drug Use**
 - Implement a new Urban Communities Initiative focused on city centres and the areas of highest disadvantage, which would bring together all state agencies to implement community development planning, schemes for disadvantaged youth and expanded education programmes.
- **Prioritise Child and Youth Mental Health Services**
 - Continue to resource CAMHS teams to reduce waiting lists.
 - Continue to implement the 'No Wrong Door' admissions policy nationwide, ensuring proper clinical triage for young people.
 - Establish targeted supports for children with autism experiencing mental health challenges.
 - Develop a new care model for HSE Primary Care Psychology to expedite services for young people with less complex issues in Clinical Psychology Doctorate training.
 - Extend the funding of the HSE Assistant Psychologist pilot programme so more patients get support.
 - Enhance youth mental health services for those up to age 25, focusing on smoother transitions from CAMHS to adult services.
 - Increase staffing in under-18 dual diagnosis services to better treat young people with mental health and substance abuse issues.
 - Legislate to regulate CAMHS.
- **Strengthening Suicide Prevention**
 - Expand the Recovery Colleges initiative nationwide, to empower and educate young people about their mental health and wellbeing
 - Prioritise culturally appropriate mental health supports for Traveller and other minority communities.
- **Strengthening Access, Supports and Community-Based Solutions**
 - Expand specialist services for eating disorders, ADHD, intellectual disabilities, early psychosis intervention, self-harm, and others.
- **Revamping Youth Support Services**
 - Create a pathway for youth workers to access mental health supports for the young people in their care.
 - Establish advanced drug treatment centres for young people suffering from addiction, developing a health-led approach to addiction.
- **People with Autism**
 - Establish a Centre for Autism/ Neurodivergent Services tasked with providing supports for children and adults with autism, from diagnosis and assessment to therapy and support groups.
 - Build on the Autism Innovation Strategy by co-developing initiatives with people with autism to address service gaps for the neurodivergent population

- Expand the coverage of 'Autism One Stop Shops' in all regional health areas
- Increase the Sensory Initiatives Grant for communities to develop sensory gardens, hubs and spaces
- **Helping Children Get the Therapies They Need**
 - Support families who are waiting too long for an Assessment of Needs to procure assessments privately.
 - Establish an annual Children's Therapies Grant Fund to support organisations and community groups to provide evidence-based therapies such as equine/dog therapy.
- **Prioritising the Wellbeing of Children in State Care**
 - Establish a high support model for step-down units so that any child in special care is not there for any longer than they need to be.
 - Implement a clear policy on the rights of children living in informal kinship care, together with supports for those providing the care.
 - Expand the Barnahus model nationally to support children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse.
 - Put supports in place for all young people as they age out of State care.
 - Guarantee that children have a voice in decisions relating to their care.
 - Subject non-statutory residential care services to independent inspection by HIQA.
- **Respite and Recharge**
 - Enhance alternative respite options, including home sharing, after-school clubs, weekend breaks, and tea-time respite
- **An Equal Society**
 - Strengthen supports for suicide prevention and provide funding to improve the long-term health and wellbeing of Traveller and Roma communities.

Other

- **Enhancing Access to Leisure Activities and Cultural Experiences**
 - Make public transport free for all children under the age of 15.
 - Establish a fund for every Local Authority to develop, update and adapt playgrounds to make them more accessible for children with disabilities.
 - Set up a new Parks & Pitches Fund to acquire new lands for parks and playing pitches to help build liveable communities.
 - Support young readers through a Republic of Readers scheme - establishing a national free book scheme, an automatic library card for every child when they begin primary school, and a national literary bursary fund.
- **Revamping Youth Support Services**
 - Develop a new Youth Services Action Plan within the first 100 days to provide a strategic direction for the delivery of youth services.
 - Reform the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme and the UBU Scheme so that multi-annual funding is available, and that open-access youth work is funded.

- **Integration**
 - Transfer responsibility for integration policies, currently under the remit of Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, to the new Department of Domestic Affairs.
 - Have in place a community support fund for every community hosting asylum seekers and refugees. While funding will be competitive, a ring-fenced amount will be available to each community to guarantee supports for schools, health facilities and general community resources
- **Supporting Farming Families**
 - Work to attract young people into farming.
 - Investigate ways to encourage young people to live and work in rural Ireland through supportive taxation measures and additional support in CAP schemes.
- **Audience Development**
 - Increase financial support for the Creative Schools and Music Generation projects.
- **A Living Language**
 - Provide broadcasting licenses for mainstream Irish language radio stations which focus on young listeners.
- **Dedicated Budgets for Children**
 - Ensure that the voices of children and young people are reflected in the development of policies that affect them