

## Sinn Féin General Election Manifesto 2024:

### The Choice for Change

#### Law

- **Protecting Children**
  - Reinstating funding for the Child Law Project which provides vital transparency and oversight of child protection Court proceedings.
- **Establish a New Immigration Management Agency**
  - Proper planning of our migration system.
  - Processing of IP applicants in a fair and efficient manner.
  - Returning immigrants who are not entitled to be here to their countries of origin including enforcement of deportation and other orders and investigating illegal immigration.
- **A Planned End to Temporary Protection Directive**
  - Setting up a new Immigration Management Agency with responsibility for processing enforcement, registration and accommodation at an additional cost of €5.5m.
  - Ensuring new IPAS centres are not placed in working class communities already under severe pressure. Criteria such as the availability of services and levels of economic and social disadvantage should be used to determine the selection of locations. This means that new IPAS centres would only be put in more affluent areas which have the capacity and services exist to support them.
  - Transitioning our IP accommodation system to greater use of purpose-built state-owned beds while reducing reliance on profit-driven commercial providers which are often of poor quality and in unsuitable locations and have allowed a small number of individuals to become multimillionaires.
  - Creating a standard, transparent and consistent approach to community consultation, including opportunities for submissions.
  - Trebling staffing across the system at a cost of €82m to allow fast and fair decisions to be made and ensuring greater follow-up on to ensure that those found not to be eligible for international protection actually leave and those who are eligible receive asylum status quickly and be supported to fully integrate.
  - Greater implementation of legal provisions for fines on airlines and other carriers transporting passengers with no documents and for prosecutions of individuals
  - Agreeing revised bilateral arrangements with Britain, including management of immigration at airports and ports, to ensure those IP applicants who should be processed in Britain are returned there.
  - Ending the two-tier system so that all those seeking international protection are treated equally irrespective of where they come from.
  - Ending the Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Green Party's Accommodation Recognition Payment scheme for Ukrainian Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection, so that new applicants cannot join the scheme, as it places other families and people seeking to rent private accommodation at a severe disadvantage

- Inviting the Children’s Ombudsman and HIQA to periodically report on the standards of all International Protection accommodation. It is unacceptable that so many migrants are in poor quality and in many instances tented accommodation.
- Exploring the introduction of registration requirements for EU/EEA Swiss citizens.
- An orderly conclusion to the status of Ukraine under the Temporary Protection Directive.
- **Human Rights, Equality and Non-Discrimination**
  - Assisting migrants, in accordance with their legal status, to participate in and contribute fully to Irish society.

## **Social Welfare/Protection**

- **Protecting Children**
  - Establish a steering committee to consult on a National Children in Care Strategy to transform the current care system to one that focuses more on early intervention, reducing the need for crisis response at a later stage.
  - Recognise the essential role of foster carers, including through extension of coverage for the state pension, and engage with the Irish Foster Care Association.
  - Recognise and support kinship care families.
  - Increased funding for Family Resource Centres.
- **Social Welfare**
  - Establishing a Social Welfare Adequacy Commission to provide objective, evidence based annual recommendations on adjustments to payment rates.
  - Retaining the Department of the Taoiseach’s Child Poverty and Well-Being Programme Office to help tackle child poverty.
  - Increasing One-parent Family Payment by €50.
  - Increasing the QCI for children under 12 years by €12.50 and for over 12s by €25 respectively.
  - Increasing the rate of Child Benefit by €25.
  - Increasing the age limit for the One-Parent Family Payment to 12 years and increasing the age limit of the Jobseeker’s Transitional payment to 15.
  - Increasing Disability Allowance, the Blind Pension and Invalidity Pension by €70.
  - Increasing the annual Carer’s Support Grant by €50 each year.
  - Introducing pay-related Carers Benefit.
  - Increasing the Domiciliary Care Allowance by €50.
  - Extending parents benefit so that a child can be minded by their parent for the first year of their life.
  - Expanding Fuel Allowance eligibility to include recipients of Working Family Payment.
- **Disability and Disadvantaged Background Access**
  - Extending the “Fund for Students” with a Disability (FSD) across Further Education and Training, so that it applies to all FET courses, not just PLCs at a cost of an additional €5m
  - Providing a Bursary to assist Traveller and Roma students and Care Leavers

## Education

- **Reducing the Cost of Essentials**
  - Tackling Back to School costs, including so-called voluntary contributions
- **Political Reform**
  - Developing educational outreach programs that bring the workings of the Dáil to schools and community centres
  - An information and education programme in all schools to ensure students are aware they are registered and how to go about exercising their vote
- **Gaeltacht**
  - Delivering a Rescue Package of €2.85m for the Gaeltacht Summer College Sector, including restoring the capitation grant for the colleges themselves, increasing the Irish Learners Scheme for Mná Tí, an allocation for scholarship funding to support DEIS schools, disadvantaged students and students from the Six Counties to attend a summer college.
- **Reducing the Cost of Education**
  - Ending schools' reliance on so-called voluntary contributions by increasing annual core capitation funding and the ancillary services grant to schools by €150m and legislating to end the contributions
  - Expanding the hot school meals scheme to all primary schools and commencing rollout to secondary schools
  - Increasing the School Book Grant from €80 to €110 for primary school children and extending the scheme to senior cycle in secondary schools from September 2025
  - Introducing a scheme to alleviate the cost of digital devices faced by parents commencing with DEIS secondary schools and increasing ICT grants for primary and secondary schools
  - Providing an additional €10 per child for every school library
- **Prioritising Special Educational Needs**
  - Providing for a reduction to the pupil teacher ratio with a focus on the most overcrowded classrooms
  - Providing the NCSE with greater powers to ensure that sufficient, appropriate school places and classes are provided, and the needs of children are met alongside robust appeals mechanisms
  - Recruiting additional educational psychologists along with greater administrative support to make better use of their time
  - Providing funding for the recruitment of 1,000 additional Special Education Teachers and 1,300 additional SNAs on average per annum
  - Modernising and ensuring the needs of the individual students are at the centre of reform of the reasonable accommodation scheme with respect to state exams
  - Utilising the network of Technological Universities to increase the provision of courses for gifted children like the programme provided by DCU's Centre for Talented Youth
  - Ensuring the latest approaches to special education are included in initial teacher training and during continuing professional development
  - Ensuring data on educational outcomes for people of the deaf and hard-hearing community and people with SEN is collated and progression reviewed

- Introduce Irish Sign Language as a leaving certificate subject in 2025
- Introduce systems to monitor the academic attainment of children who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired to better ensure these pupils are not left behind
- **Tackling Educational Disadvantage**
  - Introducing a DEIS+ scheme to target additional resources at the DEIS schools with the greatest level of need by building on the City Connects pilot project
  - Phasing out the subsidies to private schools over the term of government saving €131m
  - Increasing the minor works grant ceiling
  - Increasing the number of guidance counsellors by 10%
  - Increasing investment in the School Completion Programme
  - Expanding the Creative Schools programme to deliver a Creative Plan for all schools
  - Develop a comprehensive policy for the Arts in Education, in partnership with artists, schools, and communities
  - Ensuring grants and funding are allocated and paid in a timely manner
- **Tackling Staffing Shortages in Schools**
  - Comprehensive review of the PME
  - Ensuring full-time, permanent posts are more quickly available to teachers and greater opportunities for career progression including through the restoration of posts of responsibility at a cost of €10m
  - Awarding full incremental credit for experience teaching abroad in jurisdictions like Australia and Dubai where the equivalence of experience can be demonstrated at a cost of €1.3m
- **School Transport**
  - Reducing the distance criteria to 1km for primary and 2km for secondary school pupils
  - Facilitating routes for pupils to a school other than their nearest school where sufficient demand exists
  - Delivering 100,000 additional places on school transport by 2030
- Appointing a Junior Minister in the Department of Education to oversee delivery of the aims and objectives of More than just the way it's taught, Sinn Féin's national policy for Irish in Education
- Developing and implementing an evidence-based state policy on Irish in Education from naíonra through to third level rooted in the principle of not only meeting but growing demand for Irish-medium schooling and treating access to Irish medium education as a right
- Setting progressively increasing targets for attendance at Irish Medium schools in the 26 Counties, including:
  - At primary level by doubling provision within a decade and working towards a quarter of overall provision by 2045
  - At post-primary level, with a view to ensuring the demand naturally created from the growth at primary level is accounted for, starting with an increase to match the 6% currently at Gaelscoileanna within a decade, and working towards an aim of delivering a Gaelcholáiste in every county
- **Irish Language in Education**
  - Amending the selection process for patrons at second level to prioritise delivery of Irish medium Gaelcholáistí where none exists to meet demand from Gaelscoileanna

- Establishing a unit within the Department of Education to facilitate the transition of English medium schools to Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí to meet existing demand for Irish medium schools
- Restoring the Irish Medium and Gaeltacht Teaching Allowances
- Creating a dedicated Capital Fund for Irish Medium Schools to address the inadequate accommodation that disproportionately affects Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí
- Keeping Foundation Level at Leaving Cert, and restoring it at Junior Cert, to ensure every child has the opportunity to study Irish, irrespective of their standard, even if they attend an Irish medium school
- Increase focus on spoken Irish at Junior Cert by introducing an oral exam worth at least 40% of the overall mark
- Replacing the current framework for exemptions from Irish with an entirely new inclusive approach to second language learning tailored to the needs of all students, in consultation with pupils, past and present, parents, educators, experts and groups representing people with learning difficulties, special educational needs and immigrant students
- Developing a national strategy for improving both teaching quality and number of teachers competent to teach Irish and at Irish medium schools as part of a common All-Ireland pool
- Ensuring the free Irish classes a Sinn Féin government would provide adults cater to parents with little to no Irish who wish to support their children through Irish medium education
- Expand scholarships to Gaeltacht Summer Colleges, and set a goal that in future every student of Irish medium education would have the opportunity to attend
- **Human Rights, Equality and Non-Discrimination**
  - Implementing the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools to make schools safer for all children, including LGBTQI+ young people
- **Arts**
  - Developing a comprehensive policy for the Arts in Education from pre-school to third level and adult learning, expanding Creative Schools, restoring the School Libraries Fund, and delivering our Activity Card of €130 per child to support participation in arts and sports activities
- **Gaeilge**
  - Providing a free Irish language book to every child and teenager, tailored to their level of Irish, once during primary school and again during secondary school

## **Online Safety**

- **Protecting Children**
  - Review the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act to ensure children are better protected online, making any necessary amendments to it and supporting parents to make the best decisions for their own children

- **Media**
  - Ensuring Coimisiún na Meán is equipped to fulfil its regulatory and media development roles
  - Immediate establishment of an individual complaints mechanism for large social media platforms to protect users from bullying and abuse in cases where the company is not taking action or removing content

### **Early Years/Childcare**

- **Cost of Living**
  - Introducing €10 per day childcare.
  - Increasing the number of available childcare spaces.
  - Full review of Core Funding, with financial provision to allow for an increase.
  - Increasing the wages of early years educators by €1.50 per hour in our first year of government, with money allocated for future increases as a result of sectoral negotiations.
  - Supporting the expansion of the use of the Social Enterprise Model to provide childcare services.
  - Reviewing the AIMS scheme with a view to expanding it outside of the ECCE .
  - Extending benefits so that a parent can care for their baby in their first year of life if that is their choice.
- **Human Rights, Equality and Non-Discrimination**
  - Working with relevant stakeholders and citizens organisations to develop mechanisms to increase the participation of disabled people, members of LGBTQI+, Traveller and Roma communities, working class and rural women’s participation in politics and all levels of decision-making.
  - Celebrating Traveller culture and heritage and promoting greater inclusion, participation and representation in decision making and politics.
  - Ringfencing specific funding of €1m current and €5m capital to support Traveller culture, heritage and language, and examining the feasibility of establishing a specific body for conserving, developing and promoting Mincéir cultural heritage based on the Foras na Gaeilge model

### **Health**

- **Health**
  - Hiring public dentists and dental care teams to target school screening for children and medical card holders and increasing dental training places by 32%
- **Revolutionising Mental Health**
  - Implementing Sinn Féin’s €250m Mental Health Action Plan to deliver comprehensive early intervention, primary, community and acute mental health services, particularly for young people:
    - replace CAMHS, which would provide integrated early intervention services for children and young people to the age of 25.
    - expand access to Jigsaw and primary care mental health services.
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- fund the full complement of inpatient and intellectual disability CAMHS teams.
  - deliver twenty more early intervention in psychosis teams.
- **Delivering a Rights-Based Approach to Disability Services**
  - Developing a workforce plan to fully staff Children’s Disability Network Teams and conduct an evidence-based and independent review of the service delivery model and end pay disparities for core service providers.
- **National Strategies**
  - Developing a No Child Left Behind health waiting list strategy to improve paediatric orthopaedic and urology services, expanding dental screening in schools, revolutionising children and youth mental health services and improve children’s disability services.
- **Children’s Disability Services**
  - Developing a common, compliant, and efficient process for assessment of need under the Disability Act
  - Conducting an evidence-based and independent review of the service delivery model for children’s disability services
  - Developing and resourcing a comprehensive workforce plan to fully staff CDNTs, linked with community care and schools as appropriate; streamlining the recruitment process; providing a job guarantee to health and social care graduates
  - Temporarily funding access to approved community and private psychology and therapy services, particularly for those waiting longest for assessments and intervention, with a view to phasing out reliance on private providers as we build public capacity
  - Ending pay disparities between core service provider Section 39 organisations and the HSE

## **Other**

- **Reducing the Cost of Essentials**
  - Introducing a new Activity Card scheme providing €130 worth of free afterschool sport, arts and cultural activities for every child
- **Strengthening Communities**
  - Increasing funding for youth services including capital investment
- Restoring the Irish Speakers Scheme at €500 per year per child, aged three to 18, raised through Irish in the Gaeltacht at a cost of €2.1m