

MOVING FORWARD. TOGETHER.
AG BOGADH AR AGHAIDH. LE CHÉILE.

HELPING WITH THE COST OF LIVING



**MOVING FORWARD. TOGETHER.
AG BOGADH AR AGHAIDH. LE CHÉILE.**

Helping with the Cost of Living

The Fianna Fáil plan to reduce the cost of living is:

- 1. Reduce energy prices.**
- 2. Progressive tax changes to put money back in workers' pockets.**
- 3. Make services cheaper including healthcare, childcare and education.**
- 4. Investment in critical infrastructure to reduce the cost of the weekly shop.**
- 5. Strengthening consumer rights.**

The cost of living is one of the most significant issues facing our people. Our economy is strong and following four years of responsible management of the public finances, the country is in a solid fiscal position. But many people are not feeling the benefit of our success. People are out working hard, many having had a pay increase, but feel that they don't have the same spending power that they once had.

The war on Ukraine and supply chain disruption has driven many increased costs. Inflation peaked at nearly 10% in 2022. Fianna Fáil took action to contain and bring down inflation by cutting the prices of public services such as healthcare, education and transport, and inflation is now below 1%. But people are still feeling squeezed.

A challenge for government is to find ways to help people through this cost-of-living crisis.

Over the term of the last government, we did this through a range of once-off and permanent measures:

We reduced consumer costs, including by:

- Providing €1,300 in electricity credits.
- Reducing of the VAT rate on gas and electricity bills to 9%.
- Increasing and broadening the eligibility for the Fuel Allowance and a number of lump sum payments.

We reduced the cost of service, including by:

- Reducing childcare costs by 50%.
- Introducing measures to help families with the cost of education - Hot School Meals programme, the Free Schoolbooks scheme, School Transport fee reduction and exam fee waiver.
- Implementing fare initiatives on public transport, including the Young Adult Card and the ninety-minute fare, and free public transport for children up to aged eight.
- Providing a €1,000 reduction in third-level fees and increasing grants and PhD stipends.
- Extending free public transport to children aged five to eight.
- Abolishing inpatient hospital charges.
- Ensuring over half the population are entitled to free GP care (Medical cards/GP visit cards).
- Reducing of the maximum monthly payment on the Drugs Payment Scheme to €80.
- Providing free contraception and HRT.

We sought to help put more money in people's pockets, including by:

- Increasing social welfare payments and a series of one-off payments.
- Cutting income tax and USC.
- Establishing in the Rent Tax Credit.
- Increasing in the minimum wage.
- Providing Mortgage Interest Tax Relief.

Fianna Fáil has a proven track record supporting those who need it most through the various challenges that risked our economic stability: the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Europe and spiralling inflation.

We recognise the very real struggle people are facing – that is why we put this issue front and centre of our Manifesto. We are the party who will put real supports in place to help people through the cost-of-living crisis.

Tackling energy costs

Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, and the reduction in energy supplies to Europe has caused unprecedented energy price spikes to European households.

The increased cost of electricity and gas has arguably caused the most pressure on household bills. We have in put in place a broad range of supports to help people, with more targeted measures for those at greatest risk of fuel poverty. We want to do more.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Create a new Minister of State for Energy to lead the energy revolution.
- Keep the 9% VAT rate on electricity and gas bills. Fine Gael has proposed increasing this rate to 11% and Sinn Fein will hike it to 13.5%.
- Switch to direct State subvention of the PSO levy, reducing bills by €40.
- Commission an independent investigation in the speed and extent to which reductions in wholesale electricity prices are passed on to consumers.
- Invest €2.5 billion into Ireland's electricity grid to modernise our power generation systems. This will bring down standing charges on people's bills.
- Accelerate the development of new renewable energy sources.

Lowering the cost of education

Fianna Fáil is proud of our work to reduce the costs associated with education. Education changes lives and ensuring equality of opportunity in this area is a key priority for us. We want to build on this legacy.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Expand the School Transport Service to provide 100,000 more places by 2030.
- Expand the Hot School Meals programme to all secondary schools.
- Increase the SUSI grant.
- Introduce a €500 placement grant for students on mandatory placements.
- Reduce student contribution fees for apprenticeships.
- Ensure rent caps for all student accommodation projects that receive State funding.
- Maintain reduced contribution fee for higher education students and apprentices.



Reducing the cost of healthcare

We have removed in-patient charges in public hospitals, expanded the eligibility for GP visit cards, cut the cost of medicines and introduced a range of new free schemes. We want to do more.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Extend Free GP Care to all children aged 12 and under.
- Reduce the Drug Payment Scheme monthly maximum payment from €80 to €40.
- Cap all remaining hospital car parking charges that exceed €10 per day.
- Agree a new Dental Treatment Service Scheme for medical card holders.
- Expand access to the orthodontic scheme for children.
- Further extend the provision of free contraception.



Reducing the cost of childcare

Since 2020, we have doubled State investment in childcare. This has reduced creche fees for parents by 50%. We want to do more.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Reduce parents' fees for childcare to €200 per month.
- Establish a new National Childcare Price Register to ensure there is transparency in fees for parents.

Strengthening consumer rights

Fianna Fáil has a plan for a new approach to empower and protect consumers. The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission's dual mandate for competition and consumer protection is not adequate to support consumers.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Establish a new and separate statutory body, the Consumer Protection Agency, to deal with consumer protection issues. The remit of the new Agency will include consumer advocacy, information and advice, exposing price gouging and enhancing competition by promoting price transparency in more sectors.
- Raise the limit of the small claims' procedure from €2,000 to €10,000.
- Enact the Access to Cash Bill.
- Introduce a compensation scheme for consumers who hold a policy of motor insurance with a motor insurer that becomes insolvent.

Reducing the cost of the weekly shop

The rise in the cost of the weekly shop is something that all households are feeling.

No single factor can explain why food is so much more expensive now than before the pandemic. Food prices remain high because of the combined impact of rising operating costs and supply-chain disruptions caused by global events, severe weather and disease that affect essential crops and livestock.

There are some issues that no government can address, but we believe that there are actions we can take to help reduce grocery costs for consumers.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Invest in roads, rail and ports to lower shipping and transportation costs for goods, and ultimately reduce the costs for consumers.
- Invest in improved efficiency in logistics chains to reduce costs of moving products.
- Support policies that drive retail digitalisation.



Driving down insurance costs

Fianna Fáil is committed to targeted action to reduce premiums across all types of insurance.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Introduce tougher penalties for those who commit insurance fraud.
- Expand the Office for the Promotion of Competition in the Insurance Market.
- Publish a new Action Plan for Insurance Reform with a focus on encouraging further competition in the market.
- Legislate for the 'Right to be Forgotten' for cancer survivors, requiring insurers to disregard a cancer diagnosis where treatment ended more than 7 years prior to application (or more than 5 years if the applicant was under 18 at the time of the diagnosis).



Putting more money in people's pockets

As well bringing costs down, we also want to help increase the money coming into households. We will do so by continuing to prioritise a strong economy with tax and welfare policies designed to help low and middle income households.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Increase the entry point to the higher rate of income tax to at least €50,000.
- Continue progressive reductions in the USC.
- Abolish the USC surcharge of 3% on non-PAYE income of more than €100,000 a year.
- Increase income tax credits annually by at least €100.
- Increase the pension to €350 per week.
- Increase all core social welfare rates by at least €12/year.
- Double the rent tax credit.
- Introduce a tax credit on gym membership.
- Introduce a tax credit for apprentices for apprenticeship-related income.
- Make public transport free for all children under the age of 15.

Investing in infrastructure for our future

Investing in our critical infrastructure including water and energy systems is essential to keeping costs down for consumers and households.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Invest €4 billion in the LDA to deliver thousands of additional homes
- Invest €2.5 billion in Ireland's energy grid to modernise it and bring down energy costs.
- Invest €3.6 billion from the Escrow Account into Ireland's transport system to improve our road and public transport network.
- Invest €3 billion in Uisce Éireann.
- Set up a unit in the National Treasury Management Agency to include infrastructure oversight and delivery to ensure that our investments deliver real value for the Irish public.



Supporting business and enterprise to reduce costs

Fianna Fáil understands that many of the price increases households and consumers are struggling with is a result of cost pressures further up the supply chain. We want to support small businesses, the backbone and lifeblood of our local economies, with the cost challenges they face. This will in turn have a direct, positive impact for shoppers. We have a range of initiatives to help businesses reduce cost and enhance their competitiveness:

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Invest €300m into a Business Support Fund to enhance the viability of businesses in villages and towns.
- Establish a €2 billion Towns Investment Fund to upgrade and redevelop spaces and infrastructures within our towns, making them more attractive places to live, shop and work.
- Roll out and fund Town Centre First plans for all towns, requiring joined-up thinking when it comes to our urban spaces.
- Introduce a successor to the Power Up grants scheme to help businesses with the increased costs of living.
- Establish a Cost of Business Advisory Forum to facilitate consultation and dialogue with business on the current cost environment including a review of all business costs and taxes. This Forum will be consulted before introducing new legislation or policies that affect small businesses.



**MOVING FORWARD. TOGETHER.
AG BOGADH AR AGHAIDH. LE CHÉILE.**

Head Office 65-66 Lower Mount Street,
Dublin 2, D02 NX40

Tel: 01 664 9209

Email: info@fiannafail.ie

www.fiannafail.ie

