

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

Tough on crime,
tough on criminals



Tough on crime, tough on criminals

Everyone deserves to feel safe in their home, in their community, on our streets and on public transport.

Central to this is public confidence in a garda force that is sufficiently resourced to tackle crime at all levels, and public confidence in a justice system that punishes offenders.

We cannot continue to police our streets on overtime. After 14 years of a Fine Gael Minister for Justice, the country now needs a sense of urgency and political leadership at the top of the Department of Justice to reform how we recruit and resource An Garda Síochána.

Structural reform is needed in how policing and related functions are overseen. Fianna Fáil is committed to establishing a standalone Department of Justice and Public Safety.



More Gardaí in our communities

There is not enough Garda visibility on our streets. People need to see Gardaí on the beat in their communities to feel confidence in the force, and to feel safe. Fianna Fáil is determined to deliver a force strength of 20,000 in the medium term.

We will reform the recruitment and training processes to increase capacity and to widen the talent pool. This will include the development of an accelerated graduate entry programme for people joining the Gardaí with a relevant undergraduate degree. The learning from the degree will be recognised for the purpose of the BA in Applied Policing.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Recruit 5,000 Gardaí over the course of the next five years.
- Reform the recruitment and training processes to increase capacity.
- Increase the Garda Training Allowance from €354 to €500 per week.
- Free up more Gardaí for frontline duties, including by increasing the number of civilian staff and transferring certain prosecutions from An Garda Síochána to State solicitors and the DPP.
- Create a standalone, dedicated Transport Police, focused on preventing and tackling crime and anti-social behaviour on our national public transport network.



Supporting our Gardaí

Day in and day out, the men and women of An Garda Síochána put themselves on the front line to protect us. Fianna Fáil is determined to support them through ensuring they have the equipment and technology they need to apprehend criminals and the powers they need to put criminals behind bars.

Our Gardaí need to feel safe as they go about their job. Anyone who assaults a member of An Garda Síochána should receive a mandatory minimum sentence. We need to send a strong message on this issue. The extension of Body Worn Cameras to all Gardaí will also work to improve Garda safety and will help to expediate investigations and improve the ability to collect evidence for trial.

We must harness advancements in technology to help keep our communities safe. The use of facial recognition technology and Artificial Intelligence could revolutionise the way we investigate crimes. Fianna Fáil will ensure that there are strong safeguards in place to balance the advantages of these technologies with ensuring we protect fundamental rights.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Provide all frontline Gardaí with Body Worn Cameras.
- Allow Gardaí to use facial recognition technology when investigating very serious offences, subject to appropriate oversight.
- Legislate for mandatory minimum sentences for people who assault emergency workers, including Gardaí, in the course of their duties.
- Increase funding for the Garda National Cyber Crime Bureau to ensure that cyber forensics keep pace with modern technology.
- Enact legislation to allow the Gardaí to request the preservation and production of data being held on IT systems controlled by internet service providers, to investigate and tackle crime.
- Support the Gardaí to use Artificial Intelligence in criminal investigations subject to clear guidelines and oversight - for example, to enable prompt trawling through thousands of child-sexual-abuse images to identify victims, and to monitor social media activity to prevent criminal activities being planned.

Tough on criminals

Too often, victims feel that the criminal justice system is weighted too heavily in favour of the accused. A criminal justice system must, of course, respect the rights of the accused – but also must meet the needs of victims.

An accused person enjoys a presumption of innocence and so, restricting an accused's liberty prior to trial is a very serious matter. Nonetheless, we need to strengthen our bail laws. Too many offences are being committed by a person who is out on bail. The people voted in 1997 to amend our Constitution by allowing Courts to refuse Bail if an accused was likely to commit another serious offence on bail. Section 2 of the Bail Act 1997 needs to be amended in order to give full effect to this amendment.

People accused of committing a criminal offence should be entitled to free legal representation if they don't have the means to pay for it. However, we need a more robust mechanism to assess the financial position of the accused. In applications for legal aid, we will require full disclosure of an accused's bank accounts and assets. It will be a criminal offence to make a false statement of financial position. We will claw back free legal aid from convicted offenders where they have or acquire significant assets postconviction.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Strengthen our bail laws by amending section 2 of the Bail Act 1997 to ensure that Courts will refuse Bail if an accused is likely to commit another serious offence on bail.
- Reform our criminal legal aid system.
- Legislate to allow for increased court capacity by way of Nightingale and off-site temporary courts to provide emergency or acute capacity as needed; for example, to clear backlogs, address public disorder cases or asylum matters.
- Build 1,100 prison places and increase the number of prison officers.
- Assess the need for a women's open prison.

Anti-social behaviour

We need stronger political leadership on anti-social behaviour. It is deplorable that the behaviour of a few can impact the wellbeing of entire communities. Fianna Fáil is committed to tackling this insidious behaviour head on.

An increase in high-visibility policing, supported by our commitment to hire 5,000 more Gardaí, will be crucial to tackling this issue.

We will change legislation to provide the Gardaí with the powers they need to police crimes of this nature.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Introduce Dispersal Orders allowing Gardaí to disperse groups involved in anti-social activities.
- Implement Public Space Protection Orders to protect public spaces from anti-social behaviour. This would include orders designating zones where conduct aimed at impeding/obstructing access, influencing decisions, harassing/causing fear or causing public disorder is prohibited, for example outside public libraries or politicians' homes.
- Strengthen knife crime legislation to ban specific types of blades and to give the Minister agility to expand the knife types by statutory instrument.
- Legislate to allow Gardai to remove face masks at protests.
- Increase the penalty for public order offences and in particular for threatening and abusive behaviour in public places.
- Create a Safe Public Places Unit that can advise Local Authorities and planning authorities, as well as Community Safety Partnerships, on best practice in public lighting, estate and street design.

Domestic, gender and sexual based violence

As a society, we must work collectively to combat domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. An enormous body of work has been done and some progress has been made, but we must not lose focus of our commitment to a zero-tolerance approach.

Domestic, gender and sexual based violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children. Fianna Fáil's number one priority in this area to speed up the delivery of refuge units around the country.

Fianna Fáil is committed to establishing a Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Scheme that would enable An Garda Síochána to provide women with information about a new partner's prior convictions for violence against women. The law, which would be known as 'Jennie's Law', would also enable the Gardai to provide this information to a close family member of the person in the new relationship. Fianna Fáil is grateful to the family of Jennifer Poole, murdered by her ex-partner, for their work in this area.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Expedite the delivery of 150 more refuge units.
- Increase funding to Sexual Assault Treatment Units across the country.
- Introduce a **Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Scheme** by enacting the Sex Offenders (Amendment) (Coercive Control) Bill. This would establish a coercive control register, so that a person could obtain information on the offences committed if entering a relationship with someone on the register. This would give you the ability to know if your partner had an abusive past.

Rural crime

Policing our rural communities presents distinct challenges. Fianna Fáil is committed to introducing specific measures to support those living outside of our towns and cities.

The success of Garda Operation Rototiller, set up following the brutal attack of a farmer in Clonmel and a spate of burglaries in the area, is evidence of what can be achieved with targeted policing. Fianna Fáil is committed to ensuring our policing response meets the needs of the areas it serves.

Fianna Fáil's promise to increase the number of Gardaí visible on our streets will help isolated communities feel safer. This will be augmented with increased funding for community CCTV and community watch schemes.

If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Enhance funding for community CCTV.
- Tackle rural crime by expanding nationwide the successful Garda Operation Rototiller.
- Continue to fund community watch schemes.
- Establish a dedicated Rural Crime Unit.
- Rollout out Community Safety Partnerships nationwide.



Tackling drugs supply

Drugs destroy lives. They destroy the lives of individual users. They destroy families, communities and the very fabric of society. Their pernicious reach now extends far beyond urban centres and into every town and village.

Fianna Fáil recognises the need for a differentiated response to treating drug addiction on the one hand, and tackling drug supply on the other. Whilst we are committed to treating drug addiction in a humane and compassionate manner, let there be no doubt, criminals who are flooding our villages, towns and communities with drugs will be met with the full rigour of the law.

We have seen a change in the profile of drug users, with an explosion in the recreational use of cocaine and other designer drugs. There is a direct link between recreational drug use and gangland crime. Those taking drugs “recreationally” will not be allowed operate as if they are above the law.



If returned to government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Intensify our partnership with Interpol, Europol, and other international agencies to detect the illicit trafficking of drugs before they enter the Irish market.
- Expand the Remit of the Special Criminal Court to ensure that organised crime groups engaged in drug trafficking are prosecuted in the Special Criminal Court.
- Introduce specific legislation requiring social media companies and online communication platforms to provide An Garda Síochána with any information they have on their platforms relating to the supply of illegal drugs.
- Legislate for new criminal offences relating to items used in drug trafficking and serious crime, including 3D printer firearms templates and tablet presses, electronic devices, and vehicle concealments.
- Fund innovative law enforcement technologies including unmanned drones to patrol our coast and detect the trafficking of illegal drugs.
- Increase Garda monitoring of logistics hubs and digital channels that are being exploited for medium and small-volume drug distribution.
- Strengthen the powers of the Criminal Assets Bureau to target the proceeds of crime. We will amend existing law to ensure that once a Court determines property is the proceeds of crime, immediate action will be taken to remove the criminals and to secure it.
- Increase sentences for those involved in the supply of drugs. The punishment imposed must reflect the destruction and devastation that those drugs impose on our communities.
- Increase investment in our Naval Service including enhanced radar capability and an integrated monitoring and surveillance system across sea, land, and air.
- Introduce x-ray body scanners for visitors to our prisons and fund the upgrading and improvement of netting over all prison yards.
- Increase investment in Forensic Science Ireland to clear the backlog in analysing drugs for criminal investigations.



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