

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

INVESTING IN AND REFORMING OUR HEALTH SERVICES

SUMMARY



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Investing in and Reforming our Health Services

Developing high-quality, accessible health services for all is a fundamental objective for Fianna Fáil. That is why we insisted on taking responsibility for Health following the last election.

Our management of the response to the Covid pandemic ensured that Ireland saved many lives and livelihoods. We delivered one of the most successful vaccine programmes in the world which made a real difference.

Investment and reform in healthcare in our country has worked. We have allocated an additional 40% funding (from €18.4bn in 2020 to €25.8bn in 2025) to our public health service, delivering record increases in staffing and hospital beds, reducing costs to all patients and expanding access to existing and new services.

Lifespan and quality of life has improved, while the provision of treatments for cancer, cardiovascular disease and stroke are unrecognisable from a generation ago.

We have removed in-patient charges in public hospitals, expanded the eligibility for GP visit cards, reduced the threshold for the Drug Payment Scheme, and introduced a range of new free schemes.

Fianna Fáil's leadership and investment in the last four years have delivered shorter waiting times for patients, reduced costs to patients, and expanded the care and services available to patients.

Where others fall short in ambition or direction, we're stepping up with a real commitment to transformative healthcare. Fianna Fáil is committed to really reforming our health service, cutting the cost of accessing care as well as delivering more for patients.



Urgent and Emergency Care

The reduction in trolley numbers since 2020 is no coincidence – it's the result of Fianna Fáil's commitment to increasing the capacity of our health service and making real change. Every day, between 4,000 and 5,000 people visit our Emergency Departments, and now, the vast majority are seen without ever needing to wait on trolleys. With more beds and 28,000 additional frontline health workers than when we took office, we're making a difference where it counts.

Enhanced patient management, a surge in weekend discharges, and steady improvements have eased hospital overcrowding, with trolley numbers down in 2023 and another 12% lower this year compared to last. We know there's more work ahead, but we're moving toward a healthcare system that serves everyone better.

If returned to Government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Reduce Emergency Department overcrowding further by building on the strong record of investment and reform over the last four years.
- Increase the number of Consultants in Emergency Medicine by a further 50%.
- Ensure patients have more access to diagnostics after hours and at weekends.
- Expand trauma services, including facilities in Dublin, Cork and Galway.
- Open an additional 12 Injury Units to provide patients with an alternative to Emergency Departments.
- Develop a network of Rapid Access Outpatient Clinics, so patients can get urgent access to a specialist and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions via Emergency Departments.
- Introduce Virtual Urgent Care, based on the model successfully introduced in Australia.
- Ensure full national coverage for GP On Call.
- Invest in our ambulance service and paramedics to further improve response times and enable them to treat more patients in their own homes.
- Continue the development of new ambulance stations, paramedic education and training facilities.
- Open more beds at University Hospital Limerick and across the Midwest.
- Implement in full the HIQA recommendations from the Midwest capacity review.
- Implement the Clarke Report recommendations on Septicaemia, Safety and Escalation protocols in all hospitals.

Waiting Times and Access to Care

Since taking office in 2020, Fianna Fáil has made substantial strides in reducing hospital waiting times and transforming healthcare access across the country. When we took charge of healthcare, wait times for outpatient consultations were averaging 13 months. Today, that figure has dropped to just 7 months – nearly a 50% reduction. There's still progress to be made, but we're moving steadily in the right direction.

Beyond shorter waiting times, Fianna Fáil has driven a record expansion in hospital staffing and bed capacity, introduced a groundbreaking public-only consultant contract, and boosted healthcare education by expanding college places by up to 40% in key disciplines. 6 surgical hubs are being progressed to ensure quicker access to treatment with the first to open within weeks in Dublin.

We're not just improving care – we're reshaping the future of healthcare for all.

If returned to Government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Further reduce waiting times, targeting all patients to be seen within the agreed 10 to 12 week targets.
- Fund a new targeted waiting list plan to further reduce waiting times for patients, and to speed up access to therapies.
- Utilise new funding and contracts to deliver more surgeries and care at weekends to ensure patients get faster access to treatments.
- Further progress the work to remove routine private care from public hospitals.
- Allow more health professionals to make direct referrals to specialist services or tests.
- Double the number of Advanced Nurse Practitioners.
- Increase the number of GPs by 1,500 through a combination of international recruitment and increased training places.
- Recruit additional health and social care professionals.
- Increase the number of healthcare college places in nursing, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and Health & Social Care Professions.
- Increase the number of public-only consultants working in our health service.
- Open 4,000 more hospital beds, making sure that patients have faster access to care.
- Open a further 100 ICU beds.
- Continue to increase funding to the National Treatment Purchase Fund.
- Build four new large elective hospitals to reduce waiting times for patients.
- Build a new surgical hub for the North-West and open the six hubs that are being completed.
- 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.
- Ensure a gender healthcare service that is based on clinical evidence, respect, inclusiveness and compassion.
- Establish an All-Island Institute of Rehabilitation.

Cancer Care

Since 2020, Fianna Fáil has continued to build on a strong legacy of transformative cancer care, delivering new therapies, higher survival rates, and cutting-edge facilities like the National Cervical Screening Laboratory.

Our commitment to cancer care shows in the numbers: over €140 million in additional capital funding under the National Cancer Strategy since we came into Government has unlocked faster diagnostics, advanced treatment options, and critical patient supports. From new radiation oncology centres in Cork and Galway to modernised oncology day wards, this investment is making a real difference in the lives of cancer patients across Ireland.

Ireland now leads in cancer screening uptake among EU nations:

- 7th for breast screening (BreastCheck),
- 3rd for cervical screening (CervicalCheck), and
- 6th for bowel screening (BowelScreen).

With an ambitious goal to eliminate cervical cancer by 2040, we're on track to make it a reality. Our three-decade national strategy for cancer control has revolutionised care, and survival rates have soared by 25% over the last thirty years thanks to this evidence-driven approach.

Looking forward, we know challenges lie ahead as cancer rates continue to rise, but Fianna Fáil remains committed to prioritising investment and support for our national cancer services. Together, we're changing the story of cancer care in Ireland.

If returned to Government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Allocate €35m in ringfenced additional annual funding to cancer services.
- Extend the BowelScreen cancer screening programme to everyone aged between 55 and 74.
- Build on the current lung cancer screening pilot and work towards developing a national cancer screening programme.
- Extend the ages for BreastCheck screening programme in line with updated standards from HIQA.
- Continue to invest in local cancer support groups, providing essential supports to those living with and beyond cancer.
- Fund Genetic and Genomic Medicine for better patient outcomes.
- Ban the sale of tobacco products to people under the age of 21.
- Double the number of clinical trials with a strong focus on cancer patients to ensure access to the latest treatments.
- Fund research and a public awareness campaign into preventing skin cancer.

Care in the Home and Care in the Community

We believe everyone should be able to access high-quality care right in their homes and communities.

Since 2020, we've delivered over 4.5 million additional homecare hours, expanded GP training places by two-thirds, and significantly increased funding for General Practice. Nearly 50 new Primary Care Centres, 100 Primary Care Teams, and a new nationwide network of Community Care teams are now in place, along with substantial investment in our hospice system.

We've also taken steps to enhance pharmacy care, with legislation in place and formal negotiations just around the corner.

Our commitment is clear: to bring healthcare closer to every community across Ireland, ensuring access to essential services and support right where people live.

If returned to Government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Design a Statutory homecare scheme to enable people who want to stay in their own home to do so for as long as possible.
- Open another 100 enhanced primary care centres.
- Continue to expand our community care teams.
- Further expand the services pharmacists can provide and streamline community pharmacy HSE reimbursement procedures.
- Ensure that pharmacists are supported to adopt a more proactive approach to managing medicine shortages.
- Continue to invest in palliative care to achieve full national coverage of hospice and community services.
- Develop a new national policy on palliative care for children and increase funding to children's hospice care.

Cutting Costs for Patients

Cutting healthcare costs has been central to Fianna Fáil's commitment to easing the cost-of-living burden on Irish families. In 2023, we extended free GP care to half a million more people, including all children aged 7 and 8, and made it available to everyone earning up to the median income. Thanks to these changes, more than 40% of people now have access to free GP care.

We've also slashed monthly medicine costs for families to €80 – down from €124 – saving families up to €528 annually. Hospital charges for both inpatient and outpatient services have been eliminated for children and adults alike.

Additionally, Fianna Fáil has introduced free HRT product for all women who require it, publicly-funded IVF, and free contraception for all those aged 17-35, underscoring our commitment to making healthcare more affordable for all.

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 over the next five years.
- Agree a new Dental Treatment Service Scheme for medical card holders.
- Cap all remaining hospital car parking charges that exceed €10 per day.
- Expand access to the orthodontic scheme for children.



Helping people to stay healthy

As the party that introduced the world's first national workplace smoking ban, Fianna Fáil remains firmly committed to advancing public health. Since 2020, we've taken bold steps forward – banning the sale of vapes to under-18s and launching Ireland's first RSV vaccine programme for newborns.

But we're not stopping there. We're driven to create a society where everyone is safer and healthier, from protecting children online to supporting older adults and uplifting disadvantaged communities. Fianna Fáil will never apologize for prioritising the health of our nation – we're committed to pushing forward for a safer, healthier Ireland.

If returned to Government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Introduce wide-ranging restrictions on vaping, including packaging, flavours, point of sale, advertising and a ban on disposable vapes and vaping in the workplace. We will work with the Northern Ireland Executive to make this an all-island policy.
- Increase the excise rate on e-liquid by 50c per annum.
- Expand the RSV immunisation programme.
- Ensure that children are safe online and implement the recommendations of the new Online Health Taskforce.
- Introduce restrictions on the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks, to include a ban on their sale to children.
- Establish a new Emerging Health Threats Agency to strengthen Ireland's ability to respond to emerging health and pandemic threats.
- Legislate to limit the administration of dermal fillers to trained healthcare professionals.
- Develop a DEIS-style programme of intensive health supports for disadvantaged communities.
- Expand the number of conditions babies are screened for.
- Support the work of the Covid-19 inquiry.





Improving health outcomes

Ireland's healthcare investments are yielding impressive results in key health outcomes, showing the quality of care our health services deliver.

Ireland is one of just seven EU countries where life expectancy has surpassed 82 years. We also hold the second-lowest mortality rate among EU27 nations, with deaths from cancers, heart disease, and strokes dropping significantly over the past decade.

Our commitment remains strong: we'll continue prioritising strategies that improve health outcomes and ensure lasting benefits for all. This includes new, forward-looking strategies for diabetes, rehabilitation, and rare diseases, aimed at enhancing the well-being of every community across Ireland.

If returned to Government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Develop a new National Rehabilitation Strategy.
- Develop a new Strategy for Diabetes Care.
- Launch and implement the new National Rare Disease Plan, improving access to Orphan Medicines.
- Develop a new National Cardiovascular Policy and establish a dedicated programme, based on the success of the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP).
- Develop a new dedicated alcohol strategy to address problematic alcohol use.
- Review the legislation for manual handling in healthcare settings.

Productivity

In Government, Fianna Fáil has launched a transformative drive to boost productivity in patient care, making it a core priority for the HSE. With the establishment of a dedicated productivity unit reporting directly to the HSE's CEO, we're seeing real results – about 10% more patients were treated this year compared to last.

A key part of this shift is the new public-only consultant contract, which has been a major success, with over 2,500 consultants now exclusively treating public patients in public hospitals. This contract extends care access by requiring doctors to be available on weekends and evenings, helping to reduce waiting lists and improve patient access.

We're also increasing transparency by regularly publishing hospital productivity data and directly linking funding for new hospital developments to productivity.

Through these improvements, Fianna Fáil is maximising healthcare efficiency and ensuring that funding is used to provide fast, quality care to as many patients as possible.

If returned to Government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Ensure full transparency in published data on hospital productivity and use of public funds, including the implementation of agreed service improvements.
- Publish regular reports on the implementation of the public-only Consultant contract, including the expansion of activity at weekends and late in the evening.
- Ensure even more routine healthcare services are available in the evenings and weekends.
- Continue the transition to regular hospital care being available to patients 7 days a week.
- Ensure greater use of expensive diagnostic equipment and operating theatres at nights and weekends.



A New Era of Innovation in Health

With rapid advancements in science and technology, Fianna Fáil is committed to bringing transformative innovation to the Irish health service – improving patient access, experience, and outcomes across the board.

Since 2020, we have provided record-breaking funding for new medicines, launched a new National Patient App, and developed a National Shared Care Record to streamline care and empower patients.

Our vision is clear: to harness the power of innovation and bring the Irish health service into a new era, ensuring continued improvements that benefit everyone. Fianna Fáil remains dedicated to leading these advancements and enhancing healthcare for all.

If returned to Government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Overhaul our existing adversarial system for dealing with medical negligence claims to it easier and less stressful for patients when things go wrong. We will establish a dedicated medical negligence court.
- Establish an advanced leadership training programme for managers and senior clinicians.
- Continue to work towards the full digitisation of Irish healthcare records and information systems.
- Pass the Health Information Bill 2023 to provide the legislative basis for health record information systems.
- Double the number of clinical trials to make Ireland a global leader, ensuring patients can access innovative new treatments and medicines.
- Develop an overarching AI in Health strategy to ensure that the Irish health service harnesses the transformative potential of AI to improve the quality of care and to drive efficiency.





Drug Use

Recent years has seen a huge effort centred on building consensus across politics and society on the need for a more compassionate, health-led approach to drug use. We've listened to experts, stakeholders, and the recommendations of both the Citizen's Assembly on Drugs and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Drug Use. Our belief is clear: we are advocating for a health-ed response to drug use.

In supporting this position since coming into Government, we've allocated significant funding to enhance drug services in communities across Ireland. We've also launched an interactive map that highlights 442 publicly funded services and are currently auditing these services to guide future improvements and ensure they meet the needs of those affected.

Fianna Fáil is committed to addressing drug addiction with compassion and understanding, treating it as a public health issue rather than a criminal one.

If returned to Government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Continue to develop our health-led response to drug addiction.
- Support the decriminalisation of the possession of cannabis for personal use, with some conditions, in line with the recommendations of the Citizens Assembly and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Drugs Use.
- While possession of controlled drugs would remain illegal, investment in a comprehensive health-led and harm reduction response to the possession of drugs for personal use is proposed.
- Introduce legislation to require those found in possession of illegal drugs for personal use to attend educational or treatment programmes.
- Continue to work closely with international bodies on drugs policy, including the British-Irish Council, the European Union, the new Drugs Agency, and the Council of Europe to ensure strategic alignment of policies on 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.
- Prepare and publish a formal national position on cannabis regulation following engagement with other countries and health professionals.



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