

**Standing up
for women**



OnYOURside

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SINN FÉIN IS ON YOUR SIDE

Despite the advances of recent decades, fundamental inequities remain for women and their families. Radical change is needed. Be it access to social and affordable homes, tackling low pay or protecting women from domestic violence; people north and south need political leaders who will deliver the policies and resources necessary to ensure equality for all.

Sinn Féin is committed to economic policies that are rooted in social justice and committed to delivering prosperity for all. We believe a roof over your head, security of person and access to health care should be universal provisions in a modern and wealthy country like Ireland. Ending family homelessness or introducing a living wage are not aspirations, they are deliverable policy objectives for any government with the political will to do so.

Sinn Féin's Budget 2018 proposals put paid to the myth that there is no alternative to the Fianna Fáil/ Independents/Fine Gael insiders' agenda. Our proposals would invest public monies into policies, services and supports that would improve the lives of women and their families for generations to come. We are about real and lasting change in the interests of all

people. Sinn Féin is on your side. Our politics and policies put equality, sound economics and the public interest first.

Sinn Féin's alternative Budget 2018 proposals will:

1. Tackle low pay and support low income households
2. Reshape and resource childcare
3. Transform the health system for women and their families
4. Provide supports to women and their children escaping domestic violence
5. Support Traveller women and their families
6. Encourage alternative paths to work
7. Progress gender proofing and equality budgeting across government departments

Budget 2018 is just an annual snap shot of the budgetary decisions Sinn Féin would make in government. Our longer term economic and social policies, election manifestos and legislative commitments can be found on our website www.sinnfein.ie. To download Sinn Féin's alternative Budget 2018 document, go to www.sinnfein.ie/budget2018

1. TACKLE LOW PAY AND SUPPORT LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

Sinn Féin has committed in government to introduce a living wage. In the absence of a similar commitment, we are calling on the confidence and supply coalition government of Fianna Fáil/ Independents/Fine Gael to close the gap between the current minimum wage of €9.25 and the living wage of €11.70 per hour. Two out of every three minimum wage workers are women. Introducing a living wage is a progressive mechanism to address the gender pay gap for low income workers and boost the local economy. Sinn Féin Budget 2018 proposals also include a number of income supports increases for carers, jobseekers, and one parent families, the majority of which are headed by women, who remain most at risk of poverty and deprivation. We will restore the pre-2012 pension bands and rates to tackle this shameful discrimination against women in the calculation of their state pension payments.

- In government, Sinn Féin would introduce the Living Wage and in the absence of the current government making a similar commitment we are calling for an increase to the minimum wage in 2018 to €10 per hour

- Introduce a Living Wage across the civil service (€3.8m)
- Increase the Carers Allowance, Carers Benefit and One Parent Family Payment by €5 per week, increase the Family Income Supplement payment by 5% and restore the pre-2012 pension bands and rates (€64.57m first year cost).

2. RESHAPE AND RESOURCE CHILDCARE AND EARLY YEARS

The absence of universal childcare in Ireland has wide economic and social implications for women and their children. Expensive childcare costs act as barrier to women securing decent secure jobs. Instead, they can be left with no option but to take up insecure low paid shift work, in the retail sector for example, to accommodate alternative childcare arrangements.

High quality childcare also provides children with an important educational and social experience. Childcare workers are also losing out under the current childcare provision structures with the average wage across the sector at just €10.79 per hour and workers often facing unemployment during the summer months. Sinn Féin's Budget 2018 proposals seek to address some

of the fundamental flaws in the system to better support families and childcare workers.

- Halve average crèche fees by increase childcare subsidy for children aged between 6 months and 3 years (€37m first year cost)
- Extend the ECCE scheme by 2 weeks (€16.5m)
- Introduce a sector wide pay increase averaging €1 per hour (€40.58m)
- Increase the Sustainability Fund for Community Providers (€3m)
- Open an additional ten Family Resource Centres (€1.9m)

3. TRANSFORM THE HEALTH SYSTEM FOR WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Sinn Féin proposes to transform the public health system for patients and staff. Included in our budgetary commitments are increased resources for maternity services, emergency departments, disability services and mental health services including child and adolescent services. We would also fund counselling and other mental health services for women and their families in Direct Provision by providing additional hours through primary care in areas with Direct Provision Centres for people who have experienced

trauma before and during seeking refuge in Ireland.

- 250 additional nurses and midwives(€9.77m first year cost)
- 47 additional obstetricians & gynaecologists (€6.01m first year cost)

4. PROVIDING SUPPORTS TO WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN ESCAPING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The lack of refuge accommodation for women and their children fleeing domestic violence situations is intolerable and must be addressed. Homeless figures do not include the 4,300 women and children in emergency refuge accommodation.

We know from Safe Ireland figures that 4,831 women were refused refuge in 2014 alone due to a lack of refuge places available. These women and their children have become the hidden homeless, with many left with no other option but to remain in violent homes because they simply have nowhere else to go. Sinn Féin wants to increase funding for domestic violence refuge, step down & support services by €60m by 2021 with an initial increase in funding of €9.4m for 2018. We would

also support women seeking free legal aid by reducing the minimum financial contribution required towards civil legal aid from €130 to €50.

- Increase funding for domestic violence refuge, step down & support services €60m by 2021 (€9.4m first year)
- Reduce minimum financial contributions towards civil legal aid from €130 to €50 (€0.5m)
- Instruct Tusla to collect figures for women and children using domestic violence refuges and step down accommodation on a month-by-month basis for inclusion in the monthly Department of Housing homeless figures

5. SUPPORT TRAVELLER WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Many women and their families from the traveller community continue to live in appalling conditions on sites across the state that are not fit for purpose. The provision of adequate traveller accommodation with the necessary facilities is a key responsibility for local authorities under the Government's Traveller Accommodation Programmes. Whilst some local authorities have failed to invest existing budget allocations for

traveller accommodation the overall departmental budget is not adequate to deliver the housing needed across the state. We would restore funding to 2008 levels.

- Restore funding for traveller accommodation to 2008 levels (€31m)

6. ENCOURAGE ALTERNATIVE PATHS TO WORK

Sinn Féin will allocate funding to increase the number of people in the apprenticeship system to a total of 21,000 and provide funding for the development of 13 new apprenticeship programmes over a five year period.

These changes will focus on increasing the number of female apprentices, and making apprenticeship learning and training more accessible to people with disabilities. Other changes will include greater involvement of trade unions, abolition of apprenticeship fees and a better integration of the apprenticeship system in the wider third level sector.

Sinn Féin has also committed to establish a Cooperative Development Unit aimed at co-ordinating and establishing worker co-ops across Ireland, giving workers the opportunity

to own and run the businesses they work for. This unit would provide capital and technical assistance to harness the collective entrepreneurship that exists within the Workers Cooperative Network. We believe the Cooperative model create unique opportunity for women to establish and develop their own businesses in an environment that is both innovative and supportive. It would also assist in the establishment of new worker co-ops through advice and networking.

- Expand and reform apprenticeship programmes to include increasing the number of female apprenticeships and make apprenticeship learning and training more accessible to people with a disability (€45.87m)
- Establish a Cooperative Development Unit (€2.25m first year)

Budgeting legislation in 2013 and again in 2016 when our Public Expenditure Spokesperson introduced the Equality Proofing Bill to provide for equality-proofing of government policy, budgets and public bodies through equality impact assessments. Both the current Programme for Government and government's budget for 2017 contained gender and equality proofing commitments, but the meat has yet to be put on the bones of the necessary implementation and reporting processes.

Sinn Féin supports the National Women's Council of Ireland Budget 2018 recommendation that government publish a Gender Equality Statement alongside Budget 2018 setting out its equality objectives for the coming year, however we would include the gender statement within a wider human rights and equality statement as advised by the Human Rights and Equality Commission alongside equality impact assessments.

We also support the NWCI's recommendation that training and capacity building on gender equality and gender budgeting within the civil and public service be adequately resourced. We will continue to ensure in our engagement with the Budgetary Oversight Committee that Equality Budgeting becomes central to its work.

7. PROGRESS GENDER PROOFING AND EQUALITY BUDGETING ACROSS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Sinn Féin has long advocated for the inclusion of equality budgeting/proofing across government department budgetary and policy development processes. We first introduced Equality



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