

ON YOUR SIDE

a sinn féin policy for lesbian, gay, bisexual,
transgender, queer and intersex equality



Senator Fintan Warfield
Sinn Féin spokesperson for LGBTQI+ rights

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Introduction by Sinn Féin Senator Fintan Warfield

A chairde,

Despite the progress of recent years, inequalities continue to face the LGBTQI community and their families.

Sinn Féin has the energy and the political will to address such issues head on, and to implement lasting change.

Central to that work is tackling rising HIV rates, achieving island-wide marriage equality, listening to the voices of our trans community, introducing hate crime legislation, and ensuring that our education system and sex-ed curriculum is fully inclusive.

When we achieve such change, our society will be safer for all.

People, north and south deserve political leadership that will not compromise on basic human rights. For Sinn Féin, such rights are central to the agenda for change. Such rights are at the heart of republicanism.

We have a proud record of supporting the LGBTQI community here at home, and in working to highlight the injustices faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people across the globe.

This document is not exhaustive but it does include issues that have been raised with us, as well as the issues that I and Sinn Féin have been working on over the last number of years.

As ever, we welcome positive and critical engagement, and encourage you to start a dialogue with our party around the issues facing our LGBTQI community. None of the following issues will be achieved by Sinn Féin alone.

In solidarity,

Senator Fintan Warfield
Sinn Féin spokesperson for LGBTQI+ rights

April 2018

Introduction by Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald

A chairde,

Sinn Féin throughout its history has held equality as a core tenant of our values.

As Irish republicans, we were proud to stand in solidarity with the LGBT community and be part of the people's movement that delivered marriage equality in 2015.

Nearly three years on from the marriage equality referendum however, inequalities remain and Sinn Féin's progressive agenda seeks to deliver full LGBT equality.

While some political parties have allowed the momentum for change to slow, Sinn Féin recognises there are still many issues facing LGBT citizens in their daily lives that must be addressed; not least the delivery of marriage equality for citizens in the north.

While discrimination is diminishing, there remains much work to do to eradicate institutional discrimination and to build a true Ireland of Equals.

Our focus is on enhancing the lives of our LGBT community to ensure that future generations of LGBT citizens can grow up in an island without fear of prejudice, stigma and isolation because of their identity.

Some of the details of how Sinn Féin in government would seek to achieve this objective are detailed in this document and our proposals are concentrated on the diversity of the LGBT community and the myriad of challenges involved.

I am proud to lead a party that is committed to ending discrimination for one and all, and I want to commend the LGBT members of Sinn Féin and their allies who work so constructively to this end.

Is mise le meas,

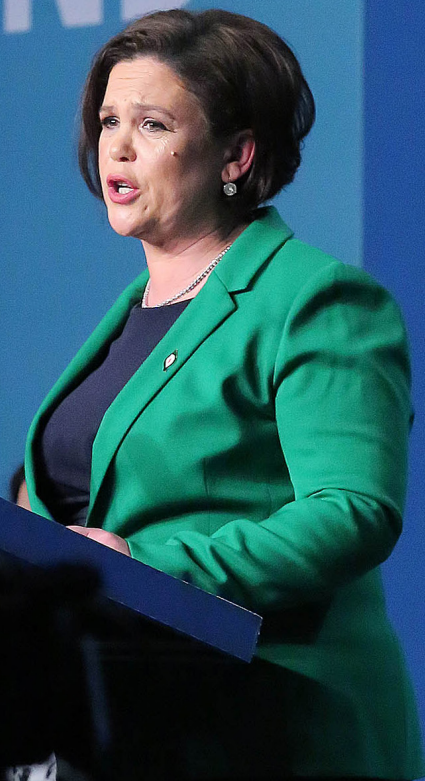
Mary Lou McDonald TD
Uachtarán Shinn Féin

April 2018

TOWARDS
A UNITED
IRELAND



join in



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1. ALL-IRELAND MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Island-wide Civil Marriage Equality is long overdue.

The denial of rights that are enjoyed by communities across these islands has never been justifiable and has gone on for too long.

Civil Marriage Equality is about protecting our families, neighbours and friends. It is about two people making a commitment to share in the ups and downs of life. It is about ensuring that the state and our society value all of our relationships equally.

For many, the 2015 referendum for Civil Marriage Equality redefined what it meant to be Irish. It confirmed that there is no single proposition for Irish identity - only diversity.

The yes vote sent a positive message to couples who waited their entire lives to mark on the books of their state, a love for one another. It sent an affirmative and supportive message to young people coming to terms with their sexuality.

Civil Marriage Equality is an easy task for republicans.

In Stormont, Sinn Féin have consistently advocated and campaigned for its introduction. Self-determination is our core demand, not only as a nation, but as diverse communities within that nation.

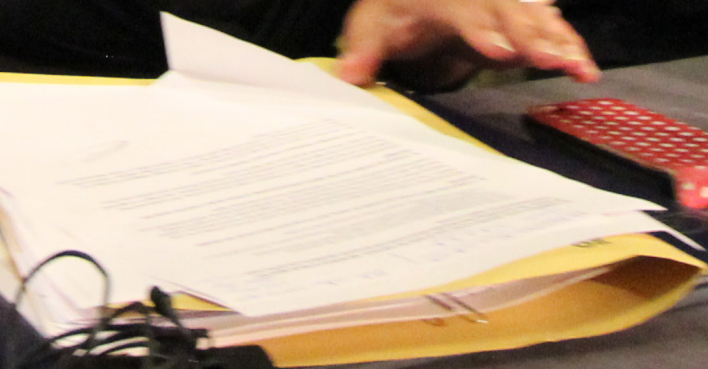
Sinn Féin want everyone on this island to have the same opportunity no matter who we are, what we look like, where we're from or who we love.

It is this spirit of love, of fairness and of justice that underpins our support and commitment to see the introduction of island-wide Civil Marriage Equality.



Sinn Féin
YES ☒
LITY

Sinn Féin
TÁ ☒
DO ... NAS



2. GENDER RECOGNITION

Ireland can be a model republic, and a beacon of hope for trans and LGBTQI people everywhere. We must continue to strengthen our global standing as a leader for trans rights and extend that recognition to young people. The existence and visibility of trans young people should be recognised in law.

The passing of the Gender Recognition Act in 2015 was a milestone for equality. Gender Recognition has enhanced the lives of many in the trans community, however the state in no way offers a pathway to legal gender recognition for citizens under the age of sixteen, while the current legal process facing 16 and 17 year olds and their families is invasive, gruelling, and problematic.

Sinn Féin's 'Gender Recognition (Amendment) Bill 2017' tabled by Senator Fintan Warfield seeks to amend three key areas of the 2015 principal act.

Sinn Féin would introduce a right to self-determination for persons who have reached the age of 16 years, ensuring access to a Gender Recognition Certificate for 16 and 17 year olds on the same terms as currently applies to persons who are 18 years or older. Furthermore, the medicalisation of gender recognition needs to be removed and this process should be treated as a personal matter.

Through family consent and the Circuit Family Court, the Gender Recognition (Amendment) Bill 2017 also seeks to open a legal pathway for those under the age of 16 to apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate. The Bill recognises that while medical practitioners can play an important role in transitioning processes for transgender and gender-variant children and their families, legal gender recognition for persons under 16 years should not be conditional upon medical assent.

The third element to our legislation focussed on the status of non-binary persons in the ongoing two-year Government review of the Principal Act. It would have required that the Minister specifically consider providing a Gender Recognition Certificate to persons who do not identify as male/man or female/woman.

Non-binary and intersex people should have access to legal certification, similar to a gender recognition certificate that would allow for the recognition of a gender other than male or female in law.

3. HEALTHCARE

- A. HIV CRISIS**
- B. MENTAL HEALTH**
- C. DONATING BLOOD**
- D. PUBLIC HEALTH CAMPAIGNS**
- E. TRANS HEALTHCARE**

a. HIV Crisis

In 2004, Ireland was a signatory to the Dublin Declaration which committed the global community to accelerate the fight against HIV/AIDS. However, in contrast to the vast majority of signatories, Ireland is witnessing an increase in HIV transmission rates.

Today, those who are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection in Irish society are amongst those traditionally marginalised, such as men who have sex with men (MSM), migrants and sex workers.

HIV transmission rates have been rising significantly in recent years to above 500 new cases per year for the first time in 2016 and then again in 2017. Health promotion programmes have been underfunded and underutilised. As of January 2018, more than half-way through the 'The National Sexual Health Strategy 2015-2020', the only action taken to combat rising HIV infection rates has been Dublin-based testing, with no nationwide impact.

Scientific developments in terms of treatment and prevention mean that the eradication of HIV/AIDS is within our grasp. Political will is a key factor in meeting our goals.

There were 2,875 newly diagnosed people in the last 7 years. As part of the fight against HIV/AIDS, we need accessible testing so that those who are carrying transmittable HIV unknowingly can be identified and treated, and those who wish to access effective contraception can do so.

A Sinn Féin Government would seek to combat rising HIV infection rates in the following ways:

- Adequately fund PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) to be made available through the HSE on the basis of need and not ability to pay.
- Provide clinical support for PrEP users.
- Improve overall access to free contraceptives, PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) and rapid HIV testing.
- Increase LGBT visibility in public sexual health campaigns.
- A referral network of GPs who are LGBTQI friendly if they have undertaken training on LGBTQI issues.

b. Mental Health

Mental Health provision is in severe crisis. Waiting lists for CAMHS services are in chaos, with some young people waiting over 18 months for a first assessment. With the pressures faced by many LGBTQI young people, it is unacceptable that they would have nowhere to turn for professional support. Sinn Féin have long called for greater investment in children and youth mental health services in order to provide professional therapy and support for young people.

Well-being and prosperity should be fostered in all young people. LGBTQI young people deserve to have access to a supportive wider community that values their well-being. All well-being supports should be mindful, and inclusive of LGBTQI young people. Furthermore, LGBTQI targeted support in the area of mental health is severely lacking.

With targeted initiatives, Sinn Féin will work to reduce the mental health risks facing LGBTQI people. According to the LGBT Ireland Report, 47% of LGBTQI persons have experienced depression and 34% of respondents have self-harmed.

Sinn Féin would implement the recommendations of the LGBT Ireland Report. We would support LGBTQI helplines, work with the HSE to build a referral network for counsellors who are trained in LGBTQI issues, and we would ensure that public health campaigns focus on 'coming out', dealing with homophobia and transphobia and destigmatising LGBTQI identities.

c. Donating Blood

In September 2016, while serving as Health Minister, Leas Uachtarán Shinn Féin Michelle O'Neill ended the lifetime ban which prevented men who have sex with men (MSM) from donating blood. The lifetime ban was removed in favour of a 12 month deferral period.

This was followed three months later by the Minister for Health, Simon Harris TD who implemented a 12 month deferral period in the South.

Sinn Féin support removing the obstacles facing MSM who wish to give blood.

We will commence an outright review of the 12 month deferral period for MSM blood donation given developments in other countries. Such a review will also explore why the Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS) is also the only blood transfusion service worldwide to discriminate against users of PrEP.

d. Public Health Campaigns

Sinn Féin will work to ensure LGBTQI visibility in public health and awareness campaigns, such as sexual health, sexual violence, domestic violence, consent and mental health.

When it comes to public health campaigns, identity is key. A person must identify with the message that is being portrayed.

Public health and awareness campaigns are proactive undertakings aimed at informing the public as a means to preventing poor health and/or encouraging compliancy with the law.

Sinn Féin will ensure that public health and information campaigns must have a proportional LGBTQI element where there are specific and differing needs from heterosexuals as well as LGBTQI-specific campaigns. For example, we will work with the Department of Children and Youth affairs and the HSE in developing an information and resource park for 'coming out as LGB' and 'coming out as transgender' for teenagers and their families.

e. Trans Healthcare

We must begin to broaden health services to ensure greater access for the transgender community. Trans people in rural areas are particularly at risk of isolation from services.

There is currently one psychiatrist (based at St Patrick's Hospital, Dublin) qualified to diagnose Gender Identity Disorder available for all transgender people living in Ireland, and one full time public endocrinologist (based in St. Colmcille's Hospital, Dublin) with expertise in hormone replacement therapy who currently serves the needs of all adult transgender people in this state. As of January 2018, the endocrinology clinic has been reported to have waiting lists of two years. By providing additional training to GPs, and by effectively regionalising services for gender transition, we can move beyond the current Dublin-centric service.

In Government, Sinn Féin will work with the HSE to develop strategies to meet the healthcare needs of transgender people. Such strategies will encompass professional training and development, and the provision of accessible information on services, and criteria for accessing such services. We would also seek to include provisions that ensure Dublin-based transgender healthcare services provide regular operation beyond the Dublin region.

Furthermore, we would work with the HSE to broaden which medical professionals can monitor and administer HRT.



SUPPORT MARRIAGE
EQUALITY



Ar DO Thaobh  OnYOURside

4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- A. RELATIONSHIP AND SEX EDUCATION**
- B. COMBATting BULLYING IN SCHOOLS**
- C. LGBTQI HISTORY MONTH**
- D. AN IRISH AIDS MEMORIAL**
- E. TRAINING FOR PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDERS**

a. Relationship and Sex Education

Sinn Féin believes that all of our young people should be accepted, welcomed and accommodated in our school curricula. The Relationship and Sexual Education curriculum should be more inclusive and it should reflect the reality of sexes, sexual identities and gender identities.

The formal school curriculum particularly Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) lack diversity outside of the heteronormative context.

In Ireland, children come to realise their LGBTQI identity at an average age of 12 years. A diverse and informative sex and relationship education model must therefore equip our young people with a confident and healthy outlook on their identity as they enter their formative years.

A narrow heteronormative model isolates LGBTQI young people, and leads to a lack of understanding around issues ranging from safe sex to consent. No child should feel that their identity is outside of an accepted or approved model of heterosexuality as prescribed by their school, the ethos of that school or by their teacher.

Sinn Féin will ensure that LGBTQI identity is reflected throughout the RSE curriculum by ensuring that any child who wishes to engage in a fully informing RSE curriculum cannot be denied that by their school.

b. Combatting bullying in schools

Sinn Féin will support workshops with the aim of ending homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, and support the development of a strengthened inclusivity policy for schools.

We believe that schools should be fully LGBTQI inclusive and that no child should be discriminated against in school based upon their sexuality or gender identity. By doing so, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying must be eradicated.

Currently, the prescription of Anti-Bullying procedures lean towards anti-harm measures but largely neglect to support positive aspects of diverse school communities. While anti-harm elements are absolutely necessary and should be a core tenant of any procedure, there should equally be the objectives of teaching young people about the positive values of a diverse school community combining many demographics and enriching its culture.

ShoutOut and BeLonGTo are two NGO's who between them give LGBTQI inclusion workshops to school children, run youth support groups, author guidebooks for teachers to aid inclusivity and organise homophobia, biphobia and transphobia awareness weeks.

In Government, Sinn Féin would work with ShoutOut and BeLonGTo to develop a further state-wide inclusivity program.

Additionally, Sinn Féin will work with the Department of Education and Skills to standardise anti-bullying and inclusivity policies with appropriate guidance and support.

c. LGBTQI History Month

While strides have been made towards LGBTQI equality in recent years it would be remiss to forget the arduous struggle of the LGBTQI community through the last century. In order to achieve equality in the future, we must give justice to the past.

Sinn Féin advocate for an LGBTQI History Month as a means of increasing LGBTQI visibility and destigmatising LGBTQI identities.

Through the Department of Culture, Heritage, and Gaeltacht Affairs, a Sinn Féin Government would support cultural events to remember LGBTQI history in Ireland and around the world.

d. An Irish AIDS Memorial

In Government, Sinn Féin would commence a public consultation, in order to develop an Irish AIDS Memorial.

In 1987, 'HIV Ireland' began to organise. They did so against a backdrop where homosexual acts were deemed illegal, within a world that was struggling to come to terms with the brevity of the AIDS crisis. While the scientific community laboriously investigated the causes of infection, prejudice and stigma gained strength. The community faced new forms of discrimination from which to defend itself.

According to a 'HIV in Ireland 2017' report, stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS remains alive and well. 24% of people incorrectly believe that HIV can be transmitted through kissing, while 9% incorrectly believe that the virus can pass through contact with a toilet seat. Perhaps even more worrying - the misconceptions heightened amongst young people. This stigma has its effect on those living with HIV. 17% of respondents living with HIV felt suicidal in the last year - more than four times the national average. While a fear of rejection by friends, loved ones and society remains widespread.

A 'National AIDS Memorial', a physical site of remembrance, can serve as a place to grieve and remember loss and to give hope to the future, as significant advances have been made in treatment and methods of prevention.

Sinn Féin support the concept of a memorial in consultation with civil and civic society. It would represent a commitment to HIV prevention and act as a tool of acceptance by a state that has historically served on the side of stigma. Any consultation process must best represent the wishes of those who have lost loved ones and friends, in location and design.

e. Training for Public Service Providers

Sinn Féin would introduce developmental LGBTQI equality and awareness training for all public service providers in education, health, social care, elderly care and parental services, and enact policy to improve the lives of those who use these services, including specialised training for GPs to aid transgender patients.

Sinn Féin believe that to achieve full LGBTQI equality we must reverse marginalisation fuelled by decades of public policy discrimination and societal exclusion. How our public services deal with the LGBTQI community is an indication of how accessible these services may be.

We believe in building a diverse and capable public service that is equipped to deliver the highest standard of service possible.

5. HATE CRIME LEGISLATION

Sinn Féin supports the full implementation of hate crime legislation.

Ireland is one of the few EU member states without effective hate crime legislation meaning that crimes, including theft, rape and assault, motivated by “hate” such as homophobia, or transphobia are neither recorded nor prosecuted as such within the state.

Hate crime happens in Ireland. The LGBTQI community has been targeted for no other reason than sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. In order to rid our society of homophobia and transphobia, we must protect the LGBT community from these vicious attacks.

When we consider the rise of alt-right and conservative forces in western politics, we must future proof against those who seek to further marginalise and isolate the LGBTQI community and others.

The ‘Burning Issues 2’ report conducted by NXF, which surveyed over 2,600 LGBTQI people prioritised hate crime legislation. This priority is already established by the community but we need the political will of Government.

Sinn Féin would enact the Irish Council for Civil Liberties ‘Criminal Law (Hate Crime) Amendment Bill 2015’ to address racism, ableism, sectarianism, bigotry and homophobia in Irish society.

Sinn Féin would also LGBTQI proof sexual violence legislation including sex offender legislation and support measures that raise awareness of sexual violence against LGBTQI people in ways that engage with and are led by members of the LGBTQI community.



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, SOLIDARITY
Fighting with POICE for LGBT Rights in Ireland

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, SOLIDARITY
Fighting with POICE for LGBT Rights in Ireland



6. TACKLING EXCLUSION

- A. LGBTQI OLDER PEOPLE**
- B. COMBATTING RURAL ISOLATION**
- C. YOUTH HOMELESSNESS**
- D. GOVERNMENT WORKING GROUPS**
- E. PROHIBITION OF 'CONVERSION THERAPY'**

a. LGBTQI Older People

LGBTQI older people in Ireland are likely to have endured a wealth of discrimination.

While much of the conversation around equality can veer towards enhancing the lives of younger LGBTQI people and creating societies that ensure those growing up LGBTQI do not have to face discrimination in future, this narrative excludes those later in life.

Furthermore, meeting the healthcare needs of our aging LGBTQI population is a challenge. This challenge will only grow as the aging population increases. According to the CSO in 2016, those aged 65+ make up 13.4% of the population which is due to rise to 22% by 2041.

Responses should include training for healthcare providers and the potential provision of LGBTQI-exclusive or LGBTQI friendly nursing homes or housing.

The LGBTI+ Youth Strategy, co-ordinated by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, is a welcome initiative which to date has compiled the issues of 3,882 LGBTQI young people across the state. Sinn Féin would initiate a LGBTQI Older Persons Strategy modelled on this, in order to address the needs of older generations as part of government policy.

b. Combatting Rural Isolation

Sinn Féin would integrate LGBTQI inclusion within all rural policy as part of the ministerial brief of the Minister for Community and Rural Affairs to ensure that the needs of LGBTQI rural people are central to rural policy.

According to 'Burning Issues 2' conducted by NXF, more than 85% of LGBTQI people in rural areas do not have enough community supports, services, or opportunities to socialise. Rural isolation has a dual effect on the rural LGBTQI community through marginalisation from essential services and from services specific to LGBTQI persons available in large urban centres.

Sinn Féin would resource and help to sustain LGBTQI community centres in regional towns and cities.

c. Youth Homelessness

While homeless figures continue to rise, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government still has no data on the extent of LGBTQI youth homelessness.

Numerous other countries show worrying trends that LGBTQI youth are disproportionately more vulnerable to homelessness. In the U.S., studies indicate that about 40% of all young people accessing homeless services identify as LGBTQI. In the UK, a recent study found that a quarter of young homeless people are LGBTQI.

Sinn Féin believes that a realisation of the problem needs to start immediately and that a targeted response should follow.

Sinn Féin would fund research into the issue with the intention of establishing a project modelled on the Purple Door Project in Britain. The project gives young people places to stay, counselling, and career advice.

d. Government Working Groups

Sinn Féin will ensure that LGBTQI representation on gender or sexuality based Government working groups is a reality.

A common problem with LGBTQI based policy has been the lack of input from the LGBTQI community. While efforts are continuously made, policy cannot fully purport to cater for LGBTQI people if it lacks sufficient input from the community.

This is why Sinn Féin will LGBTQI proof gender and sexuality based legislation but also, involve the LGBTQI community in the drafting of legislation and policy.

e. Prohibition of ‘Conversion Therapy’

So-called “conversion therapy” is a range of dangerous and discredited practices that falsely claim to change a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Such practices have been rejected and discredited worldwide and by institutions such as the Irish Council for Psychotherapy and by the World Psychiatric Association (WPA).

Due to continuing discrimination and societal bias against LGBTQI people, some practitioners continue to conduct conversion therapy. Minors are especially vulnerable, and conversion therapy can lead to depression, anxiety, drug use, homelessness, and suicide.

Sinn Féin Senator Fintan Warfield has recently launched the Prohibition of Conversion Therapies Bill 2018, legislation that will prohibit conversion therapy as a deceptive and harmful act or practice against a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity and, or gender expression. Additionally, it will make removing a person from the State for the purposes of conversion therapy an offence.

On both sides of the border, conservative groups advocating for these “therapies” have held conferences promoting their use. Furthermore, investigative journalists have, on numerous occasions reported of the use of conversion therapies being active on the island. These practices are largely secretive and are carried out by referral in certain circles. They are done so in the absence of any standard medical or counselling practice

To allow these practices to continue in any form would be regressive. They leave LGBTQI people vulnerable to psychological torment and allow an unregulated “faith healing” industry to prey on young people in particular and espouse a conservative view of morality into the private lives of those we should protect.

Sinn Féin will outlaw these practices.



YES
EQUALITY



SINN FÉ

LESBIANS & GAY
AGAINST
H-BLOCKADE





**Working for LGBT rights
for over 30 years**

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