

**Party Political manifestos 2007: An analysis from the Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI) perspective:**

**May 14<sup>th</sup> 2007\***

RCNI Priority	Fianna Fáil	Fine Gael	Labour*	Sinn Féin**	Greens*	Progressive Democrats
<b>Resourcing for the Violence Against Women (VAW) sector</b>						
An extra 2.5million for the VAW sector	Under the heading domestic violence FF commits to ‘set up a domestic violence fund under which they will increase refuge places’. <b>No mention of sexual violence or other VAW services to receive any funding</b>	Increase HSE budget for Domestic Violence (DV) services. Commit to the 2.5m increase – <b>Sexual Violence (SV) services not explicitly included but we are assured that that is the intention.</b>	‘Our first priority is a commitment to adequate and guaranteed funding for frontline services.’		Commitment to fund Women’s Aid, NDVIA and Amen. - <b>no explicit commitment to sector more generally, which could include SV services etc</b>	‘we will double funding for victim support over the lifetime of the government’ – <b>unclear if that includes/means VAW services to victims of crime.</b>
A securing of current levels of funding for the VAW sector into the future	A DV fund – <b>unclear if other VAW aspects to be funded</b>	Ensure funding levels are up-to-date.		‘Offer victims adequate opportunities for support in recovering from these devastating crimes.’	‘We believe that the victims of crime in Ireland must be afforded access to the support services that will in some way ease the difficulties of	‘Continue to provide funding to tackle the problem of domestic violence, support victims..’

				‘Introduce a support system to encourage victims to report crimes’ – <b>unclear what elements of the criminal justice system and/or support services would be involved in this support system</b>	engaging with the system.’	
Rationalisation of statutory responses and resourcing to VAW	Set up COSC a DV prevention office – <b>unclear if other VAW aspects to be included.</b>	Under DV heading: commit to bringing together responsibility for DV under one department. – <b>need clarification this includes all forms of VAW</b>	We are committed to tackling and eradicating DV and VAW... this means an integrated response tackling DV, rape and sexual assault, prostitution, trafficking and pornography			‘Establish COSC – the Irish Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, to provide enhanced co-ordination and leadership to address the problem of domestic violence and violence against women.’
<b>Garda Reform</b>						
Improved initial and ongoing	Supplement existing garda procedures and training	‘an agenda for reform ... will inject professionalism and	‘Garda training will be enhanced in key areas including:..		‘Provide continued professional training and	Increased civilian staffing within the Gardaí will be involved

training in sexual violence offences		modernism’ ‘improve initial training and enhance on-going training’ Enhance training in... SV.	domestic violence and sexual offences.’		education’ – but do not explicitly specify specialisation in SV	in training. – but no specific reference to enhanced garda training.
Regional distribution of Specialised gardai	Specialised DV team in each region – <b>unclear if they will have SV specialisation</b>	‘will use performance data .. to drive innovation and initiative in tackling crime’				
A dedicated specialised officer for complainants of a rape case		There is a commitment to garda specialisation in SV – <b>but not clear if this role to be established within Gardai.</b> Establish a ‘schedule of Victim’s rights’ ‘ensure that all victims are kept informed at all stages throughout the Criminal Justice process’	‘Oblige gardai to maintain adequate contact, through identified liaison officers, with victims of crime and to report progress in the investigation and on the prosecution.’	‘Establish a system of victim liaison to ensure victims ... are kept fully informed throughout the investigative and prosecution process.’		
<b>Education and Prevention</b>						

<p>Make Stay Safe programme compulsory in every school</p>	<p>Require all schools to implement stay Safe programme</p>	<p>Ensure stay safe is offered in every primary school</p>				<p>‘will promote the strongest child-protection measures in schools by establishing a child protection unit within the Department of Education and Science. - unclear if their remit will cover curriculum issues</p>
<p>Make appropriate core modules on relationship and sexual education compulsory in the SPHE programme.</p>		<p>Ensure all second level students have access to RSE.</p>	<p>‘Extending Social, Personal and Health Education to all schools. The importance of SPHE will be emphasised in the national syllabus. Teachers will undergo pre-service and in-service training in Relationships and Sexuality Education, which will include an expanded section on sexual diversity.’</p>		<p>‘Develop a national sexual health strategy and update present sex education programmes.’</p>	

Involve the relevant professionals from outside schools in delivering SPHE	Involve 'community health professionals' in RSE and provide greater support to teachers					
Undertake a public awareness strategy aimed at preventing sexual violence		Provide a comprehensive schools awareness programme (under DV heading)			'Take a proactive approach to tackling the root causes of domestic violence and to invest in preventative measures' – unclear if this includes all forms of VAW	'Support awareness raising campaigns aimed at encouraging victims to seek assistance and fund campaigns to alert and alter public attitudes to the crime.'

### Additional RNCI recommendations and Issues

#### Children's Rights and Protection

Put the children's referendum to the people	Hold referendum within one year	Hold referendum – no deadline written into manifesto but public commitment has been given to hold within one year	Labour shares the commitment of all political parties to put to the people, as a priority, an appropriate	'Amend the 1937 Constitution to expressly recognise children's rights' – nowhere stated that they will put	'Amend the Constitution to include the specific rights of children and implement the Convention on the	'The PDs will bring forward comprehensive proposals designed to create a consensus on the constitutional protection of children
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			constitutional amendment to enshrine in explicit form the rights of the child. <b>no deadline written into manifesto</b>	<b>the child protection elements of the referendum before the people</b>	<b>Rights of the Child into Irish legislation' - no deadline written into manifesto</b>	from sexual abuse, including the absolute zone of protection for younger children'. 'We will put the necessary constitutional referendum to the people as a matter of priority'. <b>no deadline written into manifesto</b> 'We will restore the absolute liability of child sex abusers in line with the recommendations of the recently published All Party Committee Report on Sexual Offences.'
Implement the recommendations of the Joint committee on child protection (bar no 19)	No direct mention but many of the proposals mentioned elsewhere.	Commit to implement all bar 19 (age of consent), including imposing the zone of absolute protection at 16				
Maintaining the age of		Maintain age of consent at 17		<b>(Sinn Fein has a party policy to</b>		

consent at 17				lower the age of consent but this is not in the manifesto.)		
<b>Criminal Justice System Reform</b>						
Sentencing guidelines	<p>‘Establish a Judicial Commission under the auspices of the Courts Services’</p> <p>‘Build on the “two strikes and you’re out” mandatory sentencing regime ... in respect of sexual offences.’</p>	<p>Establish a register of sentences [to enhance transparency and consistency]</p> <p>‘draw up sentencing tariffs or guidelines with the Oireachtas’</p>	<p>‘introduce a new Sentencing Act, which will provide for sentencing guidelines, binding on the courts, ... the Act will specify aggravating and mitigating factors to be taken into account.’</p>	<p>‘Introduce increased transparency in sentencing and sentencing guidelines’</p>		<p>Establish a Judicial Council which will ‘Ensur[e] that sentencing guidelines are developed and applied;’</p>
Specialised training and education for judges and legal professionals		<p>Enhanced training and education for judges ‘likely to deal with sensitive cases such as sexual offences...’</p> <p>‘undergo a certain level of training as a condition of appointment to the bench’</p>		<p>Under D &amp;SV heading – ‘ensure ... training for judges to ensure more appropriate sentencing outcomes.’</p>		<p>New Judicial Council will take responsibility for ‘Educating Judges on a continuing basis’ and ‘dealing with complaints of judicial misconduct.’</p>

<p>A strategy to overcome delay</p>	<p>‘conduct a root and branch reform of court procedures’ including: ensuring evidence is not thrown out on a technicality, reform of the organisation and management of trial procedures</p>	<p>‘Appoint more judges’          appoint more clerks and judicial support staff          increase staffing resources in the chief state solicitor office          more venues for hearings across the country          ‘allow evidence which breaches the exclusionary rule where breach is minor and technical’</p>	<p>A second immediate priority (under VAW heading) is reform of the courts system .... Foremost among necessary court reforms is the need to tackle the delay in hearing cases’          ‘Introduce case management procedures for criminal trials’ – labour give a detailed account of what this would involve.</p>			<p>Courts will have discretion to ensure evidence is not thrown out on a technicality. A number of measures to ensure effective management of cases ‘Establish an independent Commission to prepare a report on the structures, composition, working methods and efficiency of the Court system within 18 months and to make proposals for reform.’</p>
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**Pre releases assessment, post release monitoring and vetting of individuals known to pose a risk**

<p>That all sex offenders should have a pre release risk assessment carried out</p>	<p>Ensure all sex offenders are assessed before release from prison.</p>	<p>‘will guarantee that every prisoner will have access to a rehabilitative programme’ – <b>this is to include comprehensive pre release assessment and post release</b></p>		<p>‘increased funding to Probation Service and to prevention and rehabilitation’           ‘comprehensive post-release community</p>	<p>‘Double the resources of the Probation and Welfare Service to allow for greater numbers [of offenders] to receive community</p>	<p>‘Strongly support the further development of the Irish Probation Service to ensure that persons at risk of re-offending are given a clear pathway to leading law-abiding lives.’</p>
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		<p><b>monitoring</b>  FG will ‘take action to reduce the current rate of re-offending’ by managing release in appropriate stages</p>		<p>supervision’</p>	<p>based sanction programmes, also to ensure supervision and support of young offenders on re-entry into the community;’  ‘Develop an after-prison support system, i.e. supports for accommodation, education, employment.’</p>	
<p>That vetting should be extended to all those in authority over children and vulnerable adults</p>	<p>Increase probation and garda vetting unit resources. Enhance garda powers to monitor and police sex offenders.</p>	<p>‘Ensure’ vetting of all teacher and school support staff and apply it retrospectively.</p>				
<p>A referendum allowing soft information should be held and</p>	<p>Underpin garda vetting unit with soft information lists once referendum is passed.</p>	<p>‘Ensure that soft information ... forms part of the vetting process’  ‘Establish a register</p>			<p>‘Establish the Register of Persons considered unsafe to work with children and ensure</p>	

legislation and enforcement brought in thereafter		of persons considered unsafe to work with children and vulnerable adults’			that the Garda’ Vetting Unit is adequately resourced.’	
<b>Other relevant commitments</b>						
DPP Reform	Allow the DPP to appeal lenient District court sentences	DPP to make submissions during sentencing hearing	‘a new protocol for communications by the DPP with victims of crime’			
Right to silence	‘Extend in legislation the inference that can be drawn from the failure or refusal to answer reasonable questions’	‘Examine and implement the recommendations of Dept of Justice comm. On Re-balancing the Criminal Law.’		‘reintroduce the right to silence’		‘The Progressive Democrats will bring forward proposals to deal with the issues raised and considered in the Report of Balance of Criminal Law Group published in March 2007.’
Free legal Representation	Entitlement to free full separate legal advice and representation for complainants in Sexual offences cases.			‘Ensure ... priority access to free legal advice for victims.	‘Afford victims of crime the same access to legal representation and court access as the accused.’ – <b>but may only be free subject to a successful</b>	

					<b>conviction.</b>	
SATUs	Mandate the HSE to provide regional SATUs				‘Implement SATU review 2006 recommendations to provide regional SATUs.’	‘We will fully operate the Sexual Assault and Treatment Units pioneered under this government and further review additional centres when existing units have a track record to analyse.’
Drug facilitated rape	New offence of supplying and administering ‘date rape’ drugs.					
Trafficking	Tougher penalties for trafficking and increased resources to services for victims.	Pass human trafficking law to enhance prosecution of traffickers and to allow the seizure of assets			‘Bring into law the EU Council decision on combating trafficking in human beings which obliged all member states to legislate to criminalise human trafficking;’ ‘Adopt and	

					implement a comprehensive strategy to combat trafficking in women and girls.’	
Pornography	Allow for the seizing of material gains made from illegal pornography.					
Sexual Offences Bill	Introduce a Sexual Offences Bill to rationalise existing legislation.					‘Enact a single Sexual Offences Act as part of the recently established Criminal Law Codification Project. ‘

\*The Greens, Sinn Féin and Labour Party have separate policy papers on Women which offer much more detail on comprehensive commitments to addressing VAW.

\*\* Sinn Féin’s manifesto is being launched publicly on the 16<sup>th</sup>.