

Labour General Election Manifesto 2024:

Building Better Together

Law

- **Support Lone Parents**
 - Labour will also improve, and reform family law supports, and develop an independent state system to assess, manage and enforce child maintenance payments.
 - We will place the Child Law Project on a permanent, funded footing.
 - Reform the legal gender recognition system for young trans people based on the recommendations of the Review of the Gender Recognition Act 2015.
 - Deliver a Charter on Children's Rights
- **Electoral Reform**
 - Lower the voting age to 16, starting with the 2029 local and European elections.
- **Pay Rates for Young People**
 - Labour will legislate to abolish lower rates of the national minimum wage for young people. There is no acceptable reason any longer for discriminating based on age with sub-minimum rates.
- **A Charter for Children's Rights**
 - The State will follow the example of Scotland and Labour will fully incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into our laws and adopt a child rights-based approach to budgeting.
 - The Child Poverty and Well-Being Programme Office in the Department of An Taoiseach will be retained and expanded to drive this task.
 - We will provide the necessary resources and political direction to achieve these ambitious goals to ensure a fair start for every child and address the ongoing failure to vindicate the rights of children and end child poverty.
- **Equality and Human Rights**
 - Discrimination based on a person's socioeconomic status is a reality for many people and disadvantaged communities in Irish society. Labour will update the Equality Acts and add discrimination on the grounds of socio-economic status to the law.
 - Labour will legislate for incitement or hate speech while protecting freedom of expression. We will reform the 1989 Act, refine the recently passed Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act and launch a public awareness campaign on the nature and impact of hate crimes.
 - Labour will combat all forms of systemic inequalities and discrimination against Travellers and Roma, and fund and implement the strategies and plans that have been recently published.
 - Labour will ratify the outstanding human rights treaties and optional protocols that Ireland has signed up to, develop a national Human Rights Action Plan as recommended by the UN, and an equality and human rights impact assessment mechanism.
- **A New Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum**

- Labour will establish a new stand alone, fully resourced, and staffed agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum (AIMA) modelled on the Portuguese example, and it will be responsible for the administration of migration and asylum. It will:
 - Support refugees, process asylum applications, and deliver publicly run, not for profit accommodation and reception centres to replace Direct Provision.
 - Regulate economic migration including employment permits and residence permits.
 - Deliver on integration policy and supporting communities hosting refugees.
- AIMA will be responsible for coordinating a whole of government response, implementing the plans to replace direct provision and bringing a new focus to integration. Addressing these will take time, investment into accommodation, ICT and processing systems, and the recruitment of new staff. Under Labour, the remit of this new Agency will include:
 - Management of the International Protection (IP) system, the timely assessment of IP applications and the repatriation of unsuccessful applicants.
 - Delivery of the comprehensive accommodation strategy for IP applicants and the direct public management of Reception and Integration centres and Accommodation centres.
 - Ensuring that when new centres are opened that access to healthcare, education, transport, and other services are coordinated and resourced.
 - Management of the Temporary Protection system and ensuring where hotels are used for accommodation that there is provision for dual community use.
 - Delivery of clear, transparent communications and the outstanding recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group and the 2021 White Paper.
- **Supporting and Protecting Migrants**
 - Labour will provide for immediate family reunion rights for legally resident migrants in full time employment as is the case for critical skills permit holders. The workers currently excluded provide essential services in areas like the care and agri-food sectors that are essential to the functioning of our society.
 - Labour will review the current system of direct provision payments to restore the original ratio with the supplementary welfare allowance and seek to introduce an international protection child payment as proposed in the White Paper. We will allow IP applicants to work after three months and seek to process applications within the same time period.
 - Migrants make a significant contribution to our economy and society but are vulnerable to exploitation, intimidation, and attack. To promote integration and protect social and employment rights Labour will:
 - Roll out information campaigns to inform communities of the positive impact of migration, what additional supports are being put in place, and debunk myths and misinformation.
 - Fully resource the National Action Plan against Racism, and pass hate speech legislation.
 - Develop more community-based initiatives inclusive of migrants and Irish citizens to grow local social networks and social solidarity.

- Work with social partners and civil society organisations to ensure migrants are supported in the workplace to tackle exploitation and know their rights.
 - Ensure every recipient of an employment permit is provided with information, independent of their employer, about the right to join a trade union, and their employment rights in Ireland, along with contact details for ICTU and the WRC.
 - Introduce a pilot ongoing mechanism for undocumented people to regularise their immigration status with regular close monitoring.
- **Integration and Pathways to Citizenship**
 - Labour will develop a new national migrant integration strategy, make available free English and Irish language, civics, and cultural courses to all migrants, and encourage participation in our communities and political system. We will seek to improve the recognition of qualifications from non-EEA countries, and work with professional bodies to fast-track conversion courses where necessary.
 - Labour will streamline the naturalisation process after a review of citizenship pathways and develop proposals for the introduction of an English or Irish language and a civics test as is required in other countries like France. We will also:
 - Reduce the cost of citizenship fees, waive these for children and address the long waiting times for naturalisation.
 - Ensure that every child born here has a pathway to Irish citizenship.
 - Review residency rules and ensure that when naturalisation is not an option or desire for long term residents provide clear pathways for permanent residency.

Social Welfare/Protection

- **A Children's Budget to End Poverty**
 - In our Charter on Children's Rights Labour outlines our commitment to end child poverty and introduce a new targeted second rate of child benefit. Under Labour, every Budget will be developed to reduce child poverty and vindicate the rights of children through the delivery of improved public services.
- **Homelessness**
 - Labour will put more support in place for families and children, particularly lone parent families which comprise nearly 60% of families in homelessness. Labour will pass our Housing (Homeless Families) Bill to require local authorities to recognise and prioritise the needs of the child when assessing families for housing supports, and:
 - Ensure that every child experiencing homelessness is assigned a Child Support Worker, dedicated school transport and mental health supports.
 - Establish a statutory limit on the time a family or individual can spend in emergency accommodation and introduce regulations on the appropriate type of accommodation and introduce quality inspections.
 - Labour will hold a referendum to protect the right to a home and access to adequate housing in our Constitution.
 - Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness, particularly for women. Labour will strengthen our laws to ensure that victims of domestic violence are not forced to flee their home and can remain in possession of the property or tenancy rather than the

perpetrator, and where they cannot return home have alternative accommodation made available to them.

- **A Full Year of Paid Paternal Leave**
 - Labour will ensure new parents can take a year of combined paid leave and extend it further by expanding parents' benefits over time in line with existing parental leave entitlements. We will increase the rate of maternity, paternity and parents' benefit due to the low-income replacement rate and introduce pay related payments starting with maternity benefit. The Health and Safety Benefit for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers will be increased to the same rate as maternity benefit.
- **Target Payments to End Child Poverty:**
 - Labour will introduce a new targeted second rate of child benefit to drastically reduce child poverty as recommended by the ESRI and the Commission on Taxation and Welfare. This will require significant design work to avoid unintended consequences from interactions with other payments.
 - Labour will also deliver increases in child benefit and the child support payment with targeted improvements for lone parents who are most at risk of poverty, and we will introduce a Poverty Act to make targets legally binding, ensure all policy is poverty proofed and restore the Combat Poverty Agency.
- **Stop Child Homelessness:**
 - Expand the Tenant in Situ scheme so that families facing eviction can remain in their home.
 - Pass Labour's Housing Homeless Families bill to ensure the best interests of the child are at the centre of decision making by local authorities.
- **Safeguard Children in Care**
 - Labour will ensure children are not placed in unregulated care settings, and we will resource Tusla with the capital spending and staffing budget necessary so that there are enough appropriate care placements for children at risk. It is unsustainable for the State to continue to rely on private providers. Too many vulnerable children are at risk of being criminally or sexually exploited. The reliance on special emergency arrangements must be phased out.
 - Over five years Labour will deliver at least 250 new public residential care places, and resource Special Care provision and step-down placements.
- **Tackling Poverty**
 - Labour will introduce a Poverty Act to make targets legally binding, ensure all policy is poverty proofed and restore the Combat Poverty Agency. The remodelled agency will have a strong focus on research and the development of economic and social policies to reduce poverty and economic inequality. Ireland's income inequality is the highest in the OECD before taxes and social welfare placing the welfare system under significant strain to correct market inequality.
- **Support Lone Parents:**
 - Labour will support lone parents by ensuring incomes are adequate to protect against poverty by reforming and streamlining social welfare payments for one parent families. As interim measures we will increase the income disregard in line with minimum wage increases, extend eligibility to the Working Family Payment when in receipt of the

Jobseekers Transition Payment and ensure OPFP, JST and child maintenance are excluded as means for medical card assessments to remove barriers to employment.

- **Reduce Energy Poverty**
 - Extend eligibility for the Fuel Allowance and adapt the scheme to ensure it meets the needs of vulnerable households including those on the Working Family Payment to support children at risk of energy poverty.
- **Support Family Carers**
 - Phase out the Carer's Allowance income disregard as part of the development of a new Family Carer Payment.
 - Progressively increase the half rate Carer's Allowance in recognition of the value of care work and as part of the systemic change to a participation income.
 - Increase the number of hours a Carer can work or study per week to provide for more flexibility.
 - Increase the Carer's Support Grant up to €2,500 and ensure all those in receipt of it are entitled to Carer's Allowance.
 - Implement a Respite Strategy to guarantee access for all family carers with a comprehensive system to map demand, and the range of capacity available.
 - Reform the application and appeals process for Domiciliary Care Allowance to make it fit for purpose and provide for payment increases.
 - Fully fund the Carer's Guarantee and review the long-term carers contribution scheme to identify cohorts that have been excluded.
 - Ensure Kinship Care and Foster Carers are properly supported.
 - Support family carers to enter or remain in employment or education.
 - Address anomalies with Carer's Benefit such as the €450 earnings limit and introduce a pay-related Carer's Benefit.
 - Review the Home Carer and Dependent Relative tax credits to address impacts on single people and those caring for a nonchild relative.
- **Protecting Vulnerable Children**
 - Labour will carry out a root and branch review of child protection services and map out a strategy to address deficits in care. This will include a detailed five-year funding programme underpinned with a statutory guarantee to ensure the level of resources required is committed to child protection.
- **Foster Care and Kinship Care**
 - Extend eligibility for the State Pension to Foster Carer's by awarding credits for time spent caring.
 - Ensure increases in the foster carer allowance is indexed to the cost of living.
 - Introduce a €500 setting up allowance and increase reimbursement for travel costs.
- **Family Resource Centres and Staffing**
 - Labour will increase the minimum core funding for Family Resource Centres, support them in securing their own premises, and enhance the counselling and therapeutic supports they provide. There is an urgent need to fill vacant posts in the Child and Family Support Network and Labour will develop a workforce plan to train, recruit and retain more social workers and social care workers.
- **Care Leavers and Homelessness**

- Labour will fund the development of more bespoke housing to support young people exiting care through the CAS for Care Leavers Scheme to reduce the high levels of homelessness they face. We will also increase funding to support more independent advocacy for care-experienced children and young people.
- **Care and Homelessness**
 - Labour will increase and introduce new targeted supports for young people aged 19-24 when transitioning to adult services to ensure a continuum of care. We will also expand aftercare services for young people exiting care, and ensure they have their immediate housing needs met to address the high levels of homelessness they face.
- **Gender Equality**
 - Provide paid leave for parents to cover the first year of a child's life and increase the level of payments.
 - Address the specific needs of lone parents in accessing work or education, other public services, childcare and income supports
- **Traveller Housing**
 - Labour will work with Traveller representative organisations to develop a new National Traveller Housing Strategy based on the 2019 Expert Review to end the poor conditions faced by many in the Traveller community, give local authorities binding targets and ensure that culturally appropriate housing is made available to members of the community on the social housing list.

Education

- **Tackle Disadvantage**
 - Labour will fund a new DEIS+ model. It will be a focused stream of investment to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and trauma in areas with long term socioeconomic and education disadvantage. It will provide for clusters of multidisciplinary teams modelled on the City Connects programme so that each child can access the services, therapies, or resources they need to succeed, thrive, and achieve their full potential complemented by staffed nurture rooms and an expanded teacher support service. Schools will also receive increased capitation, and a further lowering of the pupil teacher ratio.
 - Labour will commission a full review of the DEIS scheme with input from all stakeholders, and we will introduce lower pupil teacher ratios for all DEIS schools including a benchmark of 15:1 in urban band 1, and increased capitation grants to address historic underfunding. We will ensure that specialist emotional counsellors and/or therapists are available to each DEIS primary and secondary school.
 - We will also continue to invest in literacy and extend the JCSP Library Demonstration Project to more DEIS schools, progressively increase funding for the School Completion Programme and appoint more Home School Community Liaison Coordinators.
 - Introduce a programme during school holidays to provide students with meals.
 - Improve the nutritional content and quality of meals and phase out disposable/single use containers by investing in kitchen facilities.
 - Transfer responsibility and oversight for School Meals to the Department of Education and encourage the involvement of local social enterprises in the provision of meals.

- **An Autism Guarantee for Special Education Places**
 - Labour will introduce an Autism Guarantee to secure an appropriate school place for every child and develop a fully inclusive model of education that vindicates the right to education for all children across the range of disabilities and complies with the UNCRPD and UNCRC. That means better long-term planning, multiannual funding, an overhaul of the EPSEN Act, and the use of Ministerial power to open classes when necessary.
- **Realise the Rights of Children with Disabilities**
 - Update the EPSEN Act and introduce a right to assessment of educational needs and individual education plans.
 - Provide sufficient current and capital funding to meet demand for special school places and classes integrated in mainstream schools and ensure school designs are fully accessible and take sensory processing into account.
 - Change the resource allocation model for special education teachers to ensure greater information on complex needs is taken into account. Schools should not be losing out, and disability advocacy organisations and DPOs must be part of the process when developing new policy initiatives.
 - Expand the Educational Therapy Support Service through the NCSE for more in school therapists and provide better training for teachers during their degrees.
 - Invest in child-centred SNA provision, and value SNAs by removing the 72-hour obligation and provide training to a QQI Level 6 equivalent.
 - Undertake an Autism Audit of all schools and provide Autism CPD training to school staff to ensure that mainstream schools can facilitate the inclusion of children with Autism to the greatest extent possible.
 - Increase funding for the Summer Programme so that no child with additional needs is left without a place.
 - Provide additional time and supports in State exams for young people with dyslexia and other learning challenges.
 - Invest in pathways to further and higher education, apprenticeships, and bridging services for school leavers with additional needs.
- **Make Education Truly Free**
 - Ban voluntary contributions and increase capitation grants to ensure these meet the real operating costs of schools.
 - Introduce a universal back to school clothing and footwear allowance, with provision of free uniforms where those are used.
 - Expand hot school meals to all schools and improve the nutritional quality of the food to ensure it is healthy and wholesome.
 - Make school transport free for all children, including on public transport, and provide enough 'concessionary places' to meet demand. We will provide free school transport and invest in enough bus places.
 - Permanently abolish State Exam fees.
 - Ensure every child has access to the assistive technology they need.
 - Provide material grants to cover additional costs for practical courses like Home Economics and Art.

- Take the steps needed to digitally resource learning in schools by providing enough tablets and IT equipment for all children.
- **Public Services**
 - Labour will increase the ICT grant for schools and ensure all children have access to modern learning methods such as tablets, not just those who can afford it.
- **Inclusive and Reformed Education**
 - Labour will hold a new National Convention on Education, inclusive of young people and children, stakeholders, and an assembly of citizens to plan for a modern, secular, and equality-based model of education. Our objective is to secure a State run school system with religious instruction separated from the school day and the Convention must assess the constitutional underpinning of education.
 - We will implement an ambitious programme of patronage divestment to multi-denominational patronage bodies like Educate Together and Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to provide more parental choice and recognise the growing diversity of our population.
 - Under Labour the process will recognise the local pride and importance of primary schools developed historically through the parish system. We will seek to develop a renewed option of divestment to Community National Schools with reforms to ensure much stronger local control, democratic participation, and independence for the school board through the overall patronage of ETBs.
 - Every child should be treated equally when applying for a school place, and Labour will end the archaic policy of up to a quarter of school places being reserved for children and grandchildren of past pupils, while retaining the sibling rule.
 - Provide financial incentives to support schools that divest to multi-denominational patronage, and that end gender segregation, acting to phase out state supported single sex schools within a decade.
 - Move religious instruction outside of daily teaching hours while respecting the beliefs of parents and children.
 - Phase out state subsidies for private fee paying second level schools.
 - Implement and resource the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy.
 - Address the use of reduced timetables, and the impact on vulnerable and disadvantaged students, with more tailored supports.
- **The Leaving Cert**
 - The Leaving Certificate, even with continuous assessment and project work, is still an outdated system bound by rote learning and terminal exams that cause mental stress for students. In a digital age it is time to fundamentally review and replace our current system. The National Convention on Education will address this and ensure the voices of young people are heard.
- **Curriculum**
 - An Gaeilge will remain central to our schools and Labour will trial the teaching of a full year at primary level in Irish and additional subjects at second level as Gaeilge. We will ensure education on sex and relationships is objective and inclusive. Primary schools will be resourced for the new foreign languages' initiative, and technology and digital skills

will continue to be integrated in the school day. We will review existing subjects and the provision of new additions for the second level curriculum including Irish Sign Language.

- **Digital Literacy**
 - Labour will introduce a curriculum on digital media literacy, make schools smartphone free, ensure a robust legislative and regulatory framework is in place to protect children, and provide increased funding and resources for awareness campaigns, wellbeing training and support services.
- **World Class Schools**
 - Reduce class sizes to the European average and ensure the capital programme is accurately profiled to our growing population to provide classrooms and school where they are needed.
 - Resource schools to adequately support children who are homeless or refugees.
 - Equalise the primary school day with the same hours for all classes.
 - Set continuously higher school standards for literacy and numeracy, assess the progress of Cineáltas: the Action Plan on Bullying, and continue to review curriculums at all levels.
 - Ensure tuition at higher level is available in every core subject in every school in the country, using remote learning and technology where necessary.
 - Review the complex school grants system to ensure it is fit for purpose and meeting the modern needs of schools at both primary and second level and increase the level of the Minor Works grant to cover increased maintenance costs.
 - Expand the NEPS service by hiring more educational psychologists, extend the pilot counselling support to all primary schools, and increase guidance and counselling posts in secondary schools.
 - Provide recurring annual funding for school libraries and develop a new national school library policy strategy incorporating the value of reading for joy.
 - Invest in modern PE halls, science labs and equipment.
 - Develop a comprehensive plan to upgrade the energy efficiency of all schools.
 - Increase grants for digital technology and develop a new Digital Strategy for schools.
- **Addressing the Staffing Crisis**
 - Restore school leadership and middle management posts and invest in continuous professional development.
 - Put in place additional financial and support systems for educational staff when they are assaulted at work and develop proposals with educational stakeholders to extend assault leave for the duration of medically certified leave.
 - Support a more diverse teaching workforce with supports like the outreach learning hubs for improving Irish, and other pathfinder projects to encourage new entrants from disadvantaged backgrounds.
 - Value all educational and support staff with decent pay and conditions for school secretaries and caretakers.
 - Develop key worker housing to support the provision of public services in our cities and towns.

- **Infrastructure and Promotion**
 - Ensure safe routes to school with safe footpaths and segregated cycle lanes provided in the vicinity of every school, college and crèche or other educational facility. Ensure public buildings also provide storage areas for children's scooters.
- **School Transport, Rural Transport and Taxis**
 - Prioritise the connection of all education centres, from creches up to colleges to local housing, with safe footpaths and cycle lanes.
 - Reform the School Transport system, have the Department of Transport take over responsibility for the operation of the scheme with a plan to electrify the fleet and ensure every child that needs a place can access one, for free.
 - Integrate the reformed school transport system with Local Link and rural bus services to achieve new local connectivity using existing infrastructure.
 - Review the commissioning of taxis by public agencies, such as the school transport system and use by the HSE, to make sure that commissioning processes are open and competitive and support an accessible fleet through a larger weighting in contract tenders.
- **Education, Community, and Society**
 - Continue to tackle anti-LGBTQI+ bullying to make schools safer and more inclusive places and build on the positive trend of third-level institutions becoming more LGBTQI+ friendly.
 - Promote inclusive LGBTQI+ education curriculums, support local authorities in promoting LGBTQI+ friendly libraries and protect library staff.
- **Access to Education**
 - Labour will introduce new supports and access routes to education and employment for people with disabilities. As outlined in our Education proposals we are committed to commencing the EPSEN Act and reforming its provisions. We will provide an autism guarantee to deliver inclusive education and ensure an appropriate school place for every child with additional needs.
- **Reinvigorate Irish in the Education System**
 - Support the development of new Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí to meet existing demand and provide incentives for the transfer of English medium schools to teaching in Irish.
 - Pilot the teaching in Irish of a full year of primary school, a second subject in primary schools in Irish such as art, music or drama, additional subjects in secondary schools and third level courses in Irish.
 - Ensure reform of Leaving Certificate Irish leads to a radical change in the approach to the learning of the language, giving particular recognition to native and fluent speakers of the language and enhancing the attractiveness of studying the language in a new and progressive manner.
 - Provide for a public consultation on the draft policy on Irish-medium education.
 - Increase funding for An Comhairle um Oideachas Gaeltacht and Gaelscolaíochta to support development and purchase of teaching and learning aids, including textbooks and digital tools.

- Provide new training routes, grants, and funding for extra courses to support teachers to gain stronger levels of Irish and explore using the Teastas Eorpach sa Ghaeilge to improve fluency.
- Seed a funding pool to support pop up Gaeltachtaí in secondary schools and third level institutions.
- Provide increased funding for scholarships for students to attend the Gaeltacht, starting first with DEIS schools.
- Review the exemptions policy for Irish at primary and second level.

Online Safety

- **Protect Children Online**
 - Labour will make our primary and secondary schools smartphone free, resource online safety educational programmes and ensure digital literacy is a key pillar of the education system.
 - We will support parents and schools and invest in public awareness campaigns and wellbeing training. Resources will be committed to a public health study research programme on the impact of devices and online platforms on children.
- **Digital Inclusion**
 - Labour will develop proposals to introduce digital skills as a core subject in our schools with a defined syllabus and implement the DigComp framework from early childhood to adult education.

Early Years / Childcare

- **Guarantee an early year's place for every child through a public childcare scheme**
 - Labour will introduce a guaranteed, publicly provided early years place for every child, as we have for primary school children. This will be delivered through the provision of 6,000 new childcare places a year, every year under our plans for a public childcare system, rolled out through Education and Training Boards across the country.
 - We will cap costs for parents at €50 per week and ensure children with disabilities have access to places through an expanded Access and Inclusion model.
- **Childcare and Child Protection**
 - We will retain the Department of Children with a child-rights-based approach to budgeting a commitment to multiannual funding, and a root and branch review of child protection services.
- **Public Early Years Education and Care**
 - Begin the multiannual rollout of a public system of early years education and care by delivering 6,000 new places a year across an average of 100 services.
 - Guarantee equal access and prioritise the opening of new services in areas with a shortage of childcare places.
 - Develop a 'childcare in situ' scheme for existing services to join the public system.
 - Cap costs for parents at €50 per week, to bring the cost of childcare closer to average European levels.
 - Achieve professional wages for early year educators with a minimum rate of €15 per hour and recognise qualifications and experience.

- **A Public Childcare System**
 - Open new services first in areas with a shortage of places and prioritise enough places for children under the age of two.
 - Identify locations through existing publicly owned sites and buildings in the education sector and local authorities, then build out bespoke new facilities.
 - Additional capital funding will be allocated to build bespoke new buildings for the public system and the school building programme will be adapted to provide for co-location of public childcare settings and after school facilities.
 - Administration such as payroll and corporate services would be initially built out through existing systems in Education and Training Boards bringing early childhood education and care into the education system.
 - Over time overall responsibility for the public system would transfer to a new state agency for early learning childcare and school age childcare with a stronger role for local authorities in the delivery of services.
 - There will be a complaint mechanism through the national agency, with a second independent tier through the Children’s Ombudsman.
 - Support will continue to be provided for new community and not for profit cooperative services.
- **‘Childcare in situ’ for existing providers**
 - In parallel, Labour will develop a ‘childcare in situ’ scheme for existing services to join the public scheme, and endeavour to take over services when an operator decides to close their service. Priority will be given to existing smaller, pre-school services that wish to move to the public model.
 - Labour will provide a statutory right to a guaranteed early years education and care place, beginning with the ECCE programme.
- **Professional Pay**
 - Labour is committed to a professional wage for early years educators, and we will use the allocation of ringfenced core funding to guarantee a minimum €15 per hour rate, with additional increases across other grades, and recognition of experience and qualifications. For the public system, staff employment will initially be through ETBs, with responsibility eventually resting with the new national agency. Once the service is fully established, negotiated pay scales will then be agreed for a new category of public employee.
- **Inclusion and Equality**
 - Labour will expand the Access and Inclusion Model beyond pre-school so that children with disabilities are supported at both early years and in school age care. We will also seek to integrate the existing early intervention classes for children with autism into the new model.
 - Co-locating new childcare facilities with schools will provide for significant planning efficiencies and improve access for children with additional needs.
 - Labour will expand the rollout of the Equal Start programme supporting children experiencing disadvantage to participate fully in early learning and childcare and review the staffing ratios in place at pre-school level.

- **Prevention and Early Intervention**
 - Labour will recognise the importance of Home Visiting schemes and agree on a national approach, building on the First 5 action with a centralised national office within the Parenting Support Policy Unit. We will adequately fund the programme with increased resources, expand it to new areas and professionalise the sector.
- **Gender Equality**
 - Introduce a publicly provided universal model of early years education and care.

Health

- **Free GP Care**
 - We would immediately act to provide free GP care to all children under 18, expanding eligibility for 500,000 children, and then seek to expand it further.
 - We also make available a free medical health screening and mental health assessment for every young adult.
- **Children's Health**
 - Labour will ensure every child has access to the care and treatment they need. As outlined in our manifesto, we will end the shocking delays in access to mental health and disability services for children and young people. Labour will end the scandal over scoliosis and spina bifida and commit all necessary resources to ensure access to paediatric orthopaedic and urology services within four months.
- **Strategy Plans and Targeted Service Improvements**
 - Invest in an allergy research programme and improve support for families.
 - Invest in improved palliative care and hospices, and in particular palliative care services for children with life limiting conditions.
 - Provide improved funding for public eyecare schemes and standardise the provision of eyecare for children over eight by introducing a new national programme.
- **A Charter for Children's Rights**
 - Include an explicit prohibition against admitting children to adult inpatient psychiatric units.
 - Tackle the scandal of waiting lists for disability services and therapies.
 - We will train more therapists and specialists, and ringfence the funding needed to hire future staff.
 - As a bridging measure Labour will invest in a waiting list initiative to provide outsourced diagnostic assessments for children waiting longest and put in place a process for reimbursing parents who must resort to private therapies and assessments.
 - Resource and regulate the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
 - Labour will pass the Mental Health Bill to ensure community CAMHS are regulated after recent scandals. We will commit and ringfence the additional resources needed to tackle the lack of services in many parts of the country and put in place the workforce planning needed to double the number of staff in the service over the next five years.

- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services**
 - Labour will prioritise filling vacant CAMHS posts and putting additional training posts in place. We will work to implement the recommendations made in the independent Review of the Provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in the State. This will:
 - Give independent regulatory oversight of CAMHS to the Mental Health Commission.
 - Integrate services so that children and young people can move seamlessly between services in a timely manner and according to their needs.
 - Ensure that every child can access a mental health assessment in a time of crisis by properly trained and supported staff in a safe and suitable environment.
 - Labour will expand access to Jigsaw and prioritise and recognise non-statutory community-based youth mental health services and resource them with multi-annual funding. It is essential that the voices of young people are heard when decisions that affect them are being made. We will ensure they are included in policymaking, and we will increase grants for school-based mental health support for pupils.
- **Disability Services for Children and Young People**
 - We will fund a Waiting List Initiative to provide AONs for the children waiting longest while capacity is built up in the public service and put in place a system to reimburse parents who have had to resort to private therapies while waiting for public appointments.
 - To improve transparency and accountability Labour will provide for the monthly publication of waiting lists for assessment of needs, and therapies.
- **Funding**
 - Review the Sugar Tax and invest a portion of revenues into measures to tackle childhood obesity such as school sports clubs and the Active School Flag programme.
- **Eating Disorders**
 - Ireland only has three public eating disorder beds, despite commitments to increase that by twenty as far back as 2018, forcing many suffering from eating disorders into costly private care or general psychiatric units where they do not receive specialised care. Labour will significantly expand the number of eating disorder beds and ensure that those suffering receive the care they need.

Other

- **Our Vision for Transport**
 - Continue to progressively reduce the cost of public transport, with the introduction of a six-month trial €9 climate ticket, provide free travel for children and young people under 26 over the next five years, and focus on improving the reliability of timetabled services. The additional funding to cover the cost of the climate ticket will come from the national exchequer not existing public transport or active travel budgets.
- **Youth Work**
 - Labour will expand UBU Your Place Your Space projects across Ireland, build a national network of Universal Youth Work hubs, and increase funding to support both national and volunteer led youth groups.

- Increase core funding for youth work and provide pay parity for youth workers, to deliver on the National Youth Work Strategy.
- Provide multi-annual funding for youth service providers to allow for long-term programme planning.
- Invest in the provision of new dedicated recreational spaces and facilities for young people and ensure existing infrastructure is maintained and upgraded by restoring annual capital grants.
- Continue support for Youth Information Services so young people can access trusted information in a time of pervasive mis- and dis-information.
- Consult with and listen to the voices of young people and youth workers when developing policy.
- Increase recognition of Gaisce - The President's Award and remove barriers to participation among disadvantaged and marginalised groups including in DEIS schools.
- We will also expand targeted programmes focused on integration, employment, youth diversion and education for refugees and asylum seekers, Traveller and Roma young people, LGBTQI+ young people, and young disabled people.
- **Facilities and Recreation**
 - Deliver improved changing facilities for women and girls at all public sporting grounds and facilities, and ensure that combined toilet, shower and changing rooms are designed, and available for use by people with complex and multiple impairments or other disabilities.
 - Develop and resource a PE Hall Development Plan to ensure every school has access to modern sporting facilities that can also be accessed by the local community.
 - Improve and fund more recreational facilities such as playgrounds, scooter, and skate parks, and ensure the OPW, Coillte and Waterways Ireland work with local authorities to further develop outdoor facilities.
 - Introduce holiday sports schemes for students and expand current after school sport programmes.