



General Election 2024 - Political Party Manifestos: Commitments for Family Carers

Party	Commitments for Family Carers
<p>Fianna Fáil</p> <p><u>Moving Forward Together</u></p>	<p>Valuing Carers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate a min. €600m to increase the income disregards to qualify for Carer’s Allowance, with a view to abolishing the means test over the term of Government. • Ensure that on reaching pension age, carers can retain the rate at which they are paid their Carer’s Allowance, and concurrently receive the State Pension. • Provide full-rate Carer’s Allowance for those caring for two individuals and a Half-Rate Carer’s Allowance for any additional people. • Increase the annual Carer’s Support Grant to €2,500. <p>Respite and Recharge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest at least €15m more annually in respite services. • Increase funding for the Home Support Emergency Respite Scheme for unpaid carers in need of urgent respite. • Continue to support respite houses. • Enhance alternative respite options, including home sharing, after-school clubs, weekend breaks, and tea-time respite. <p>Reform Supports for People with Disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to reform and improve disability payments. • Increase the Disability Allowance and the Domiciliary Care Allowance. • Support individuals in accessing pathways to employment and examine the ‘ability to work’ criteria for certain payments. • Reform the Disability Allowance into a new Independent Living Allowance. • Redesign Census 2027 and future studies to enable detailed disability data. • Eliminate the biannual review of the medical card for everyone born with a congenital condition. • Review the Primary Medical Certificate criteria to include more people. <p>Helping Children Get the Therapies They Need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinstate on-site therapists to special schools. • Radically improve accessibility and effectiveness of therapy services through providing on-site support to children in special classes in mainstream schools. • Recruit additional therapy clinicians and therapy assistants. • Increase training places for Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy in third-level institutions. • Double the number of Regional Assessment Hubs. • Support families who are waiting too long for an Assessment of Need to procure assessments privately.

- Establish a Children’s Therapies Grant Fund to support organisations and groups to provide evidence-based therapies such as equine/dog therapy.

Supporting People Living at Home

- Design a Statutory Homecare Scheme to enable people who want to stay in their own home to do so for as long as possible.
- Increase home care hours by 1 million hours annually.
- Rollout the Care & Repair scheme nationally.
- Increase funding for the national Meals on Wheels network.
- Expand the delivery of new day centres to areas currently lacking access.
- Invest in expanding the Enhanced Community Care Programme and rolling out Community Health Networks.
- Increase investment in the Community Service Hub model.

Independent Living, Independent Lives

- Continue to increase the Housing Adaptation Grant and broaden eligibility.
- Provide annual funding to increase personal assistance hours by at least an additional 20,000 hours per year.
- Deliver more home support hours.
- Align Disability Home Support pay rates with Older Persons Services.
- Rollout Personalised Budgets nationally.
- Develop a multi-year capital plan for investment in residential and independent living options.
- Promote shared services in independent living housing developments.
- End the practice of placing young people with disabilities in nursing homes.
- Expand the role of Disability Access Officers in Local Authorities.
- Work with the Law Society to create a solicitor’s portal to simplify enduring Power of Attorney applications.
- Reform the Blind tax credit and examine the possibility of introducing a Deaf tax credit for congenital hearing loss.

Special Education

- Roll out the first national Therapy Service in Education, with therapists providing therapies in schools.
- Continue to hire more special education teachers and SNAs.
- Expand the availability of early intervention classes so children in need of an early intervention can access it in their local school.
- Expand the Summer Programme.
- Ensure that schools in every community have special classes so that all students can attend local schools.
- Continue the establishment of new special schools across the country.
- Introduce a national centralised application system for children applying for a place in a special school or in a special class within a mainstream school.
- Reform the Drumcondra Tests which are used to gauge student learning to include assessments for dyslexia.
- Complete the Review of the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act and introduce necessary legislative changes.
- Increase the number of post-primary school places for children with ASD.
- Implement mandatory disability education module during teacher training, along with a mandatory placement in a special class or school.

People with Autism

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Centre for Autism/ Neurodivergent Services tasked with providing supports for children and adults with autism, from diagnosis and assessment to therapy and support groups. • Build on the Autism Innovation Strategy by co-developing initiatives with people with autism to address service gaps for the neurodivergent population • Expand the coverage of ‘Autism One Stop Shops’ in all regional health areas. • Create a public pathway for neuroaffirmative assessments and interventions for adults with autism. • Increase the Sensory Initiatives Grant for communities to develop sensory gardens, hubs and spaces. <p>Stronger Voluntary Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to achieve pay parity with the public sector for Section 39 staff. • Implement a Disability Service Sustainability Process for Section 38 and Section 39 organisations to ensure their long-term viability.
<p>Green Party</p> <p><u>Towards 2030: A Decade of Change</u></p>	<p>Valuing Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a non-means-tested basic income for all carers. • Publish an updated National Carers Strategy. • Fund the Carers’ Guarantee, implementing a statutory right to home support and respite and improving the coordination of healthcare, employment and support services. • Expand respite provision and develop greater alternative respite options. • Reinstate a ‘young carers programme’ for those under 18 who care. • Extend the Public Service EV grant to low-paid, car-dependent workers, such as home support providers. • Support parity of pay between Section 38 and Section 39 workers. <p>Progressive Budgets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise the rate of Carer’s Allowance and the earnings disregard. • Increase social welfare payments in line with earnings and inflation. • Increase the Home Carer’s Tax Credit to €4,000 and make available to unmarried but cohabiting parents. • Prioritise annual increases to Disability Allowance and Carer’s Allowance and introduce a €50 weekly cost-of-disability payment. • Annual payment of €3,800 to replace the Incapacitated Child Tax Credit with a refundable Child and Adolescent Disability Tax Credit. • Ban mandatory retirement before the pension age in most circumstances. • Reform the Social Welfare Appeals Office and consider if it would be better established as an independent body. • Entitle full time carers to 360 credits’ of free long-distance learning under the internationally recognised Credit Accumulation and Transfer scheme. <p>People with disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Disability Act 2005, with a focus on the Assessment of Need process and to incorporate disabilities not currently recognised. • Implement the new National Disability Strategy. • Implement a ten-year workforce strategy for disability services.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase funding by 25% in the first year and by 15% in every subsequent year for community-based disability services in line with the Action Plan for Disability Services. • Establish a Disability Information and Support Centre in every CHO as a one-stop-shop for people with disabilities and their families. • Review the Long-Term Illness Scheme. • We will put the Autism Innovation Strategy on statutory footing, incorporating recommendations from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Autism’s report and the Same Chance report. • Request that the CSO include a question on autism in the next census. • End the situation where children with dual diagnoses who experience both mental health issues and have a disability are denied access to mental health services. • End the practice of under-65s being placed in nursing homes. • Increase the number of Personal Assistant hours by 300,000 per year. • Evaluate the personalised budgeting pilot and make decisions about further implementation of a personalised budgeting policy. • Introduce a monthly subsidy for people who are blind or vision impaired to cover taxis and other private travel expenses. • Fund Approved Housing Bodies that provide tailored housing solutions to people with disabilities. • Raise the upper limit on the Housing Adaptation Grant to match construction cost inflation. <p>Elder Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a statutory support scheme for home support services. • Require one-fifth of new housing developments to meet universal design standards, ensuring appropriate housing options for older people and those with disabilities. • Increase the Living Alone Allowance on an annual basis. <p>Mental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint a national mental health champion within the HSE. • Implement the recommendations of the Independent Review of the Provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). • Pass an amended version of the Mental Health Bill. • Support NGOs that take an early intervention approach to mental health services. • Fund additional trainee psychological posts across professional doctoral programmes to meet current and future demand for experienced professionals in our health services. <p>Inclusion in Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund specific resources (particularly Special Needs Assistants) and special classrooms for children with Special Educational Needs to meet local demand. • Map school catchment areas to ensure enrolment for all learners at primary and post primary levels.
People Before Profit	<p>Income Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abolish means testing for all disability-related payments, including Carer’s Allowance, Disability Allowance, Blind Pensions and Invalidity Pension.

**A Manifesto
for Disability
Justice**

- Provide universal payments that cover the real costs of having a disability and provide income security to disabled people and carers - begin by immediately increasing all weekly disability payments to €350 a week, to include a €50 cost of disability payment.
- Pay carers a living wage of at least €15 per hour, plus pension entitlements and a full medical card.
- Introduce an annual entitlement to 30 days' respite (equivalent to the standard annual leave of 20 days plus the number of public holidays).

Supports for Children with Additional Needs

- Ensure that AONs are carried out and recommended supports and therapies are given within the legal timeframe.
- Ensure proper coordination between health, education and disability services so children don't fall between the cracks.
- Reduce and clear waiting lists for services - including a plan for staff retention across relevant services addressing, in particular, pay and conditions
- Ensure full staffing of Children's Disability Network Teams and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, including speeding up the recruitment and recognition of the qualifications of international candidates.
- Double the number of Third Level places for therapeutic courses, such as Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy.
- Remove all barriers to further education for those in allied health and education professions, including by scrapping third level fees.
- Ensure delivery of adequate training and support for teachers, Special Education Teachers (SETs) and SNAs, and improve pay and conditions.
- Trust schools and parents to know the supports needed by their children, and allocate SETs, SNAs and other resources according to this principle.
- Ensure that every school in the State has an autism class and every school offers a Summer Programme.
- Legislate to end seclusion and restraint in schools.
- Establish a centralised database from the moment a child is diagnosed to provide better data tracking and forward planning for a child's needs and a seamless transition to adult services and supports.
- Provide accessible school transport to all who need it free of charge.

Healthcare and Support Services

- Introduce a single tier universal health service, free at the point of use.
- Take private healthcare into public ownership to ensure allocation of care on the basis of need, not ability to pay.
- End outsourcing of disability services: Incorporate community and voluntary sector disability services and personal assistants into the public sector to ensure consistency of services across the country, secure multi-annual funding for services and jobs, and better pay and conditions.
- Work with service users and frontline staff to develop a comprehensive plan to rapidly reduce and clear waiting lists.
- Massively expand personal assistance hours - personal assistance must be available to all who need it as a right.
- Increase funding for assistive technology.
- Introduce a legal right to homecare.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a centralised registration database for people with disabilities, holding records of their medical needs and social supports to enable easy access to all the supports and services they need. <p>Housing and Public Buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all public housing developments are of an accessible design and are fully disability proofed so disabled people can live independently. • Ensure that all schools and third level institutions are completely accessible with proper toileting facilities and all government buildings and buildings open to the public are accessible and have changing places installed so that people with disabilities can have dignity when it comes to living independently in our society. • Expand the Housing Adaptation Grant schemes and increase funding to clear waiting lists and ensure access for all. <p>Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in public transport so buses can accommodate more than one wheelchair user at a time • Remove the need for wheelchair users to give notice of inter-county travel by bus. • Ensure all stops, platforms and entry points are fully accessible. • Abolish public transport fares and expand service frequency and coverage. • Provide public on-demand accessible personal transport services free of charge for disabled people and others, such as some elderly people, who are unable to access scheduled public transport services. Until such services are fully up and running, provide a Mobility Allowance to disabled people to cover taxi costs. • Expand funding for vehicle adaptation and running costs so disabled people and their families who rely on personal transport can be supported in acquiring and running the transport they need. • Abolish fees for Disabled Person’s Parking Cards. <p>Legal Equality and Rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a constitutional amendment to assert equality for disabled people and to guarantee the right to the supports needed to fully engage in society as a basic democratic right. • Fully implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including the Optional Protocol.
<p>The Labour Party</p> <p><u>Building Better Together</u></p>	<p>A New Social Contract for Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
- Labour will replace the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant with a Transport Support Scheme.
- 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.

A New Fair Deal for Care

- Legislate for a statutory home support service and strong regulatory framework.
- Reorientate policy to public provision of home support and publish annual targets to progressively increase the proportion of home support hours provided directly by the HSE.
- Ensure enough funding is in place to meet demand for home support and directly hire more health care support assistants in the HSE.
- Put in place a long-term plan to increase the provision of public long term residential care by investing in new community nursing homes.
- Support the expansion of alternative models of long-term care such as the Housing with Supports scheme.
- Reform the Fair Deal scheme to give people the option of remaining in their home, with the State contributing to their care costs.
- Provide ongoing funding to the Fair Deal scheme to meet demographic needs while also expanding public provision.
- Fund the work of the Commission on Care and appoint a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing.

Valuing Care Workers

- Ensure health care support assistants are paid a living wage, mileage expenses and travel time between care locations along with guaranteed hours and continuity of income.
- Introduce a commitment in outsourced contracts under the HSE Authorisation Scheme for home support and the Fair Deal scheme that providers engage in collective bargaining.
- Establish Joint Labour Committees to negotiate Fair Pay Agreements with binding minimum rates of pay to address recruitment and retention challenges and ring-fenced state funding for both home care (HCSAs) and nursing home HCAs.

Disability Rights and Services

- Establish a new office of the Disability Ombudsman to provide an accessible method to bring complaints about rights violations.
- Ensure all legislation and budgets are disability and equality proofed.
- Strengthen and adequately fund the National Advocacy Service and place it on a statutory footing.
- Resource the community and voluntary sector, bring the terms and conditions of staff in Section 39 bodies in line with the public service

	<p>through pay parity, and ringfence multi-annual funding for Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) to build capacity and self-advocacy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Legislative reforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform the Disability Act through the lens of UN CRPD and ensure the review of the Equality Acts addresses disability discrimination. • We will review the statutory regulation and oversight of disability services by HIQA and the scope for a new system to uphold standards and ensure a person-centred and outcomes-based approach inclusive of individual preferences. • We will pass mental health reform, address the failure to commence parts of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act and provide legislative clarity and safeguards on the deprivation of liberty. • The EPSEN Act will need to be amended and then finally commenced. <p>Independent Living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully implement and resource the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People, including funding for technical advisors in local authorities. • Ringfence at least 10% of social and affordable housing for people with disabilities with universal design standards and fully wheelchair accessible. • Reform Part M building regulations to require wheelchair liveable housing, and more universally designed homes (both UD+ and UD++). • Review and improve the Capital Assistance Scheme so that sufficient housing can be built by AHBs to meet the level of demand. • Invest in decongregation and ensure individuals under 65 are moved out of nursing homes. » Increase Housing Adaptation Grant limits up to €60,000 and index income thresholds. • Expand the role of local authority Disability Access and Equality Officers as full-time positions with appropriate powers and budget. • Continue the work of the Autism Innovation Strategy and implement the recommendations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Autism. <p>Social Protection and Poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the impact of the current qualifying criteria for the State Contributory Pension on women and carers to ensure their lifelong contribution to society is fully recognised. • Labour will introduce a Principles of Social Welfare Act to adopt a rights-based approach to social protection. This would require officials to maximise the income of recipients and to simplify the range of forms used to apply for social protection payments. • Working with disabled person’s organisations and in line with the UNCRPD we will seek to develop a new integrated single taxable benefit to replace existing schemes and the income disregard system, and phase in a permanent Cost of Disability payment.
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Caring for our Carers

- We will introduce a new Family Carer Payment of €325 per week in recognition of the vital role carers play in our society.
- We will increase the weekly income disregard for Carer's Allowance to €1,250 for a single Carer and €2,500 for a couple in Budget 2026. We will continue to progressively increase these limits in each Budget with a view to ending the means test and transforming into a Family Carer Payment over the lifetime of the next Government.
- Increase the Annual Carer's Support Grant to €2,500
- Increase the Half-Rate Carer's Payment: We will examine enhanced support to Carers over 66 who are currently in receipt of the Half-Rate Carer's Payment in addition to their State Pension
- Remove the current earnings limit of €450 per week for people in receipt of Carer's Benefit and examine the feasibility of a Pay Related Carer's Benefit payment.
- We will provide training, establish clearer pathways to services, improve access to respite care, and fully fund the Carer's Guarantee.

Older Persons Guarantee

- Raise the State Pension to €350 over the lifetime of the next government.
- Remove mandatory retirement age of 65 in employment contracts.
- Extend the Household Benefits Package to include pensioners 66 and over,
- Extend eligibility for the Fuel Allowance to persons aged over 66.
- Provide a universal companion pass for Over 70s.
- Appoint a Commissioner for Positive Ageing.
- Appoint a standalone Minister of State for Older People.
- Guarantee that individuals with long-term care needs have access to a decent standard of living.
- Examine and enhance the mix of professional care options, including homecare, community-based care, independent living and residential care ranging from family-owned and operated care homes to public and private care homes.
- Promote digital health solutions to avoid unnecessary hospital stays.

Healthcare

- We will introduce a statutory homecare scheme and ensure that every individual has the right to homecare, regardless of their location.
- We will deliver more home support hours and increase the number of hours for individuals with dementia.
- We will implement progressive increases in medical card income limits to ensure more individuals and families qualify for essential health services.
- Extend free GP services to all individuals under 18 years of age.
- Introduce hospital-based patient advocates to assist parents caring for a child with a disability helping them navigate the health service and providing information on accessing social protection income supports.
- Enhance our network of day centres to provide essential support.
- Publish and implement the Commission on Care for Older People report.

Disability

- Introduce a €500 Annual Cost of Disability Support Payment
- We will reform the Disability Allowance Payment and remove anomalies in the current means test for the payment.

- We will increase the weekly payment by €12 each year bringing it up to at least €300 per week over the lifetime of the next Government.
- Increase the monthly Domiciliary Care Allowance
- Extend the Free Travel Pass to children receiving DCA.
- Increase the number of Dietitians, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Psychologists, Social Workers, and Speech & Language Therapists to enhance support for individuals with disabilities.
- Focus on identifying solutions and actions to create both immediate and long-term workforce supply in our disability services.
- Create additional residential places for both adults and children.
- Increase the availability of day service places for school leavers.
- Increase respite services, including the introduction of alternative respite options to better support families.
- Increase the number of new personal assistant hours and disability home support hours each year, alongside increasing intensive support packages.
- Put the Autism Innovation Strategy on a statutory footing.
- Autism-One-Stop-Shops: Ensure these vital supports in every CHO to provide information and direct support.
- Prioritise the European Disability Card
- Disabled Drivers Scheme: Examine the criteria for the Primary Medical Certificate, as well as the introduction of a grant scheme for necessary vehicle adaptations.
- Support the Decision Support Service and full implementation of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015.
- Work with the Law Society to create a solicitor's portal simplifying enduring Power of Attorney applications.
- Implement the Time to Move on from Congregated Settings Strategy.
- Implement Ombudsman 'Wasted Lives Report'.

Children with additional needs

- Provide funding for private Assessments of Need for long waiting families and introduce a similar initiative to access therapies and mental health supports, while legislating for the NTPF to increase access in longer term.
- Establish a dedicated therapy service for students in all special schools and extend over time to special classes within mainstream schools.
- Introduce a common application process at primary level for children with additional needs.
- Review and improve transition supports, including career guidance in special schools.
- Implement a multi-year capital programme to provide early accommodation for special classes and special schools.
- Establish a service to help parents navigate admissions policies, processes, and language barriers, ensuring they have access to clear information.
- Increase the number of special classes at primary and post-primary levels. In 2025, we will open five new special schools.
- Deliver therapy supports to children at the earliest possible stage.
- Increase funding to allow more schools to offer Summer Programmes.
- Develop a curriculum for Irish Sign Language for primary and post-primary students, including a standalone Leaving Cert subject

Voluntary Organisations

- Engage with the voluntary sector through the Dialogue Forum.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to achieve pay parity for staff in Section 39 organisations with the public sector.
<p>Sinn Féin</p> <p><u>The Choice for Change</u></p>	<p>Social Welfare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abolish the means test for Carers Allowance and increasing the rate by €60. • Establish a Social Welfare Adequacy Commission to provide objective, evidence based annual recommendations on adjustments to payment rates. • Retain the Department of the Taoiseach’s Child Poverty and Well-Being Programme Office to help tackle child poverty. • Increase One-parent Family Payment by €50 • Increase the QCI for children under 12 years by €12.50 and for over 12s by €25 respectively • Increase the rate of Child Benefit by €25. • Increase Disability Allowance, Blind Pension and Invalidity Pension by €70 • Secure medical cards for people with disabilities • Increase the annual Carer’s Support Grant by €50 each year • Introduce pay-related Carers Benefit • Increase the Domicilliary Care Allowance by €50 • Expand Fuel Allowance eligibility to include Working Family Payment. • Increasing the state pension rates by €50 • Reintroduce the State Pension (Transition) for 65-year-olds • End mandatory retirement. <p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a landmark public GP contract, employing 250 public GPs, improve out-of-hours and urgent care and increasing GP training capacity by 60% • Hire public dentists and dental teams to target school screening for children and medical card holders and increase dental training places by 32% • Deliver a Pharmacy First model for common conditions and the provision of health advice, with an expanded and integrated role for pharmacists in primary care • Pursue a ‘home first’ approach to care, develop a modern home care scheme and prioritise public home care delivery of five million additional home care hours. • Deliver 5,000 hospital beds by 2031, including replacing 1,000 unsafe beds • Deliver 2,000 community beds, including 1,200 short and long-stay residential care, nursing and rehabilitation beds, and deliver full regional community neuro-rehabilitation networks. • Implement Sinn Féin’s €250m Mental Health Action Plan to deliver comprehensive early intervention, primary, community and acute mental health services, particularly for young people. <p>Rights based approach to disability services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a workforce plan to fully staff Children’s Disability Network Teams and conduct an independent review of the service delivery model and end pay disparities for core service providers. • Double the number of Personal Assistance hours, provide an additional 1.5 million disability home care hours, provide over 3,000 additional

	<p>residential places, deliver on de-congregation commitments, significantly expand day services and double investment in respite services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a common, compliant and efficient process for assessment of need under the Disability Act. • Review the Disability Act 2005 and EPSEN Act 2004, ensuring the state is compliant with disability and equality legislation, and work towards full compliance with the UNCRPD. • Recognise and support kinship care families. • Introduce tiered grant-based supports for the purchase, adaptation and operation of private cars and allowances for the use of taxis. <p>Prioritise Special Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce pupil teacher ratio with a focus on the most overcrowded classrooms. • Provide the NCSE with greater powers to ensure that sufficient, appropriate school places and classes are provided, and the needs of children are met alongside robust appeals mechanisms. • Recruit additional educational psychologists along with greater administrative support to make better use of their time • Recruit 1,000 additional Special Education Teachers and 1,300 additional SNAs on average per annum • Ensure the needs of the individual students are at the centre of reform of the reasonable accommodation scheme with respect to state exams • Ensure the latest approaches to special education are included in initial teacher training and during continuing professional development • Ensure data on educational outcomes for people of the deaf and hard-hearing community and people with SEN is collated • Reverse cuts to the Summer Programme • Revise the allocation of special education teaching hours to include complex needs • Introduce Irish Sign Language as a leaving certificate subject in 2025 • Introduce systems to monitor the academic attainment of children who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired to better ensure these pupils are not left fall behind. <p>Cost of Living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove USC for all workers on the first €45,000 of their income. • Introduce €10 per day childcare. • Provide minimum payment of €1,000 for each adult renter and ban rent increases for three years • Provide temporary and targeted Mortgage Interest Relief, with a maximum annual benefit per household of €1,250 • Free prescription medicines for all households, abolish prescription charges for medical card holders, deliver median-income medical cards and phase out hospital parking charges • Will not proceed with the annual increases to carbon tax that have been scheduled. • Reverse the two most recent hikes to excise duty on petrol and diesel for 12 months and offset the toll increases that are due in 2025. • Abolish student fees within three years
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<p>Social Democrats</p> <p>For the Future. It Starts Here.</p>	<p>Caring for Carers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a new National Carers Strategy. • Abolish the means test for Carer’s Allowance. • Ensure that the rate of Carer’s Allowance is set at a level that reflects the work carried out by carers and the contribution that they make to society. • Invest to ensure carers have proper access to necessary Respite. • Create a suite of policies that support carers to enter (or remain in) employment or education where they wish to do so. • Continue to develop the supports available to family carers throughout the country, including with adjustments to the Carer’s Support Grant, DCA, Home Carer Tax Credit, and other policy levers. • Expand the Free Travel Scheme to include people in receipt of DCA. • Recognise that parents of children with disabilities and certain carers have particular demands on their time and require further flexibility. • Introduce replacement schemes for the Motorised Transport Grant and Mobility Allowance based on assessment of individual needs. <p>Homecare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a statutory right to homecare and provide a budget for a person-centred homecare scheme with equality of access and availability. • Invest in homecare packages to abolish waiting lists and develop step-down and rehabilitation facilities. • Implement the recommendations of the Strategic Workforce Advisory Group on Homecarers and Nursing Home Health Care Assistants, and ensure that carers benefit from good pay, adequate terms and conditions, and opportunities for career development. • Re-examine the Critical Skills list for visas to ensure as much as possible is being done to allow skilled workers for the sector be found. • Introduce nationally mandated staffing ratios for nursing homes. <p>Healthcare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully staff Child and Adolescent Mental Health Teams (CAMHS) and expand Adult Community Mental Health Teams. • Reduce waiting times for CAMHS and address regional imbalances. • Massive investment in the recruitment of psychologists for the National Educational Psychology Service and CAMHS • Reduce prescription charges by 50c with a cap of €5 per month • Reduce the Drug Payment Scheme maximum payment to €60 per month. • Cap car parking charges for patients undergoing hospital treatment. • Begin a process of creating pay parity for Section 39 workers. • End the placing people aged under 65 in nursing homes and develop appropriate supportive housing facilities. • Allow for automatic renewal of medical cards for people with terminal and chronic conditions. • Enact robust adult safeguarding legislation. • Address children’s spinal surgery waiting lists and honour the four-month target for scoliosis surgery <p>Ensuring Equality and Inclusivity in Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Citizens’ Assembly to make recommendations on the future of the education system, including how it could serve a more modern, inclusive and diverse Ireland.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the EPSEN Act to bring it in line with the UNCRPD. • Develop a road map on Special Education and Inclusive Education, codedigned with children and families. • Invest in more speech and language support. • Ensure every child with additional educational needs gets access to a school place in the same time frame as every other child in the country • Ensure that all schools are resourced to meet the needs of all children with adequate special education teachers, SNAs and any other resource children require to access their right to education. • Provide additional funding for accessible educational material for deaf, blind, or vision impaired students. • Compile disaggregated data on the education experience of disabled children and children with additional educational needs. • Recruit additional Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) and provide improved job security, further education opportunities, and a clearer career pathway. • Reconstitute NEPS and expand it as the National Educational Psychological and Counselling Service to provide specialist Emotional Counselling and Therapeutic Supports, on site, in all schools. • Reduce the barriers for many young people accessing their right to education, e.g. the use of reduced school timetables. <p>Tackling the Problem of Low Income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark social welfare rates to the MESL to ensure income adequacy. • Implement a weekly Cost of Disability payment to reflect that disabled people have a higher cost of living. • Develop and implement a successor to the Roadmap for Social Inclusion. <p>Supporting Older People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End the auction politics on pensions by linking the State Pension to at least 34 per cent of the average wage. • Use indexed increases to welfare payments and schemes, including the Living Alone Increase, the Fuel Allowance, the Household Benefits Package, and Free Travel Scheme to ensure that older people can have a decent standard of living in Ireland. • Increase funding to the suite of housing grants for older people and people with a disability: The Housing Adaptation Grant; the Mobility Aid grant; and the Housing Aid for Older Persons grant. <p>Supporting the Community and Voluntary Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make multi-annual government funding the default model for the C&V sector. • Create parity of treatment for staff delivering services in HSE-funded organisations, including the disparity in pay and conditions between Section 39 organisation staff and their public sector counterparts.
<p>Aontú</p> <p><u>Our Common Sense Manifesto 1</u></p>	<p>Family Carers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aontú seeks an abolition of the means test for the carers' allowance. • Aontú wants better access to respite services and increased weeks of respite for those in receipt of round-the-clock care, to alleviate the pressures on family carers. • Aontú are advocating for more regulated and public home care hours to be provided by the State, rather than agencies, so that people can receive

<p>Our Common Sense Manifesto 2</p>	<p>care in their own homes and allow the family carer a daily break from their work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the Home Carers' Credit to equalise the tax treatment of one-income couples and two-income couples that was created by tax individualisation. <p>Health Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aontú would impose a recruitment freeze for admin and management. • 3,500 new nurses and midwives. • Bring nurses, consultants and other healthcare workers home to Ireland with a return package. • Aontú would allocate an additional in €10 million in funding to establish 12 additional CAMHS teams. • The existing provision of specialist mental health staff in hospital A&Es, prisons and on-campus medical centres in universities needs to be expanded, and should include mental health nursing cover available to respond to mental health challenges and crises as they arise. • Aontú seek to employ an additional 400 Consultants next year at a cost of €88m. <p>Cost of Living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aontú will reverse the last two Excise increases on petrol and diesel and pause all carbon tax increases until the cost of living crisis subsides. • We will commit to ensuring no further toll increases over the next three years. Zero rate Electricity on VAT while electricity prices remain high.
<p>Independent Ireland Common Sense Solutions for a Better Ireland</p>	<p>Carers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abolish means testing for carers. • Improved funding for caregivers • Increase salaries and enhance training for those caring for individuals with profound disabilities. • Invest in and resource additional residential care facilities to provide essential services and respite for families of individuals with profound disabilities. • Increase funding for the construction and development of accommodation and respite facilities for individuals with profound disabilities. <p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase salaries of doctors and nurses to ensure they remain in Ireland • Provide interest-free loans for Irish students to study medicine. • Subsidise rental accommodation for healthcare professionals on low wages for a period of up to five years. • Increase the number of medicines a pharmacist can prescribe to reduce demand on doctors • Issue medical cards to all cancer sufferers for the duration of their care. • Introduce a new healthcare model to allow for 24/7 treatment • Increase funding to smaller, regional hospitals that can provide urgent and routine care to people who do not reside in large cities. • Introduce a reimbursement scheme for Republic of Ireland private hospitals and continue the Northern Ireland reimbursement program. • Introduce outpatient mental health respite facilities, to address the gap between acute admission and community care.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand college places and training programs for Occupational Therapists (OTs) and Speech and Language Therapists to address shortages and meet the needs of people with disabilities.• Create a watchdog, independent of HSE, to ensure accountability by HSE and hospital management. <p>Special Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase funding for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs).
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