



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

Party	Commitments for Family Carers
Fianna Fáil <u>Moving Forward. Together</u>	<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. • 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
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