

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ALLIANCE

Uniting Voices For Children

The Next Programme for Government

We all want our children to grow up with every opportunity to reach their full potential. Right now, there are over 100,000 children living in consistent poverty and many young people don't get to participate fully in society.

What is needed is action.

We are calling on our political parties to put children first in the next Programme for Government.



#EveryChildEveryChance

End Child Poverty

Poverty is not inevitable. National budgets and actions can be used to reduce the rate of child poverty. The new government has a choice: ignore the scale of child poverty and lock out a generation of young people from the opportunities and childhoods they deserve; or face up to the challenge. We know that when the government prioritises child poverty and shows leadership significant progress can be made.

How:

Make Ending Child Poverty a National Priority in next Children and Young People's Strategy

- Make ending child poverty the primary focus of the next National Children and Young People's Strategy and establish a dedicated implementation team and budget.



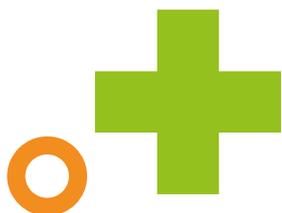
Universal School Meals

- Ensure that all children have access to a hot nutritious meal every day in educational settings by expanding the School Meals Programme nationally.



Decent Housing for Every Child

- Invest in a major public housing programme and introduce a Child and Family Homelessness Strategy that includes strict limits on the length of time children and families spend in inappropriate accommodation.
- Transform the lives of children seeking international protection by providing own door accommodation and developing alternatives to Direct Provision.
- Make HIQA the inspection body for refugee accommodation to ensure it meets the new National Standards.



Establish a Dedicated a Child Health Workforce

- Invest in creating a dedicated public health nurse service for children and develop a strategy for 'home visits' to ensure every child has access to prevention and early intervention supports they deserve in their own community.

Invest in Early Years

- Improve quality in universal early childhood education and care by introducing a programme that supports early years' professionals obtaining a qualification, and establish a system to monitor the quality and consistency of professional qualifications.
- Make quality childcare affordable for parents by increasing investment and introducing price caps on fees. Make childcare free for lone parents and families on low incomes intending to access training or education.
- Ensure quality early years' services for all children, particularly those most in need by establishing an early years' programme for marginalised children with wraparound family supports in the community.



Free Primary Education

- Make primary education free for all children by providing free school books, eliminating voluntary contributions and reinstating capitation rates for schools.

Fairer and Faster Climate Action

- Introduce free public transport for all children and young people under 18.
- Improve living conditions for families struggling with fuel poverty by delivering a 'Warm Homes' programme focused on reducing energy use and costs.

Enable Youth Participation

Children and young people today deserve the chance to participate fully in society, to have their voice heard and respected. The next Programme for Government must enable and empower children and young people to participate in society. There are simple actions the next Government can take to ensure that the voice of children is protected and respected.



How:

Invest in youth services

- Invest an additional €20m in youth work services by 2025 to strengthen voluntary youth work to provide more supports and activities for young people.
- Ensure that 24/7 crisis mental health services are available for children and young people in every community across Ireland.

Ensure children and young people's voices are heard in the court system

- Ensure that all children, especially those from low income families, have their rights respected in court by expanding civil legal aid for under 18s.
- Introduce a comprehensive court welfare system which includes access to representatives for every child to ensure their voice is heard in public and private family law proceedings.

Empower young people online

- Introduce high quality education on digital rights that focuses on the development of critical and technical skills to enable children and young people's full and safe participation in the online community.
- Ensure online providers safety-proof and privacy-proof their services and establish a Digital Safety Commissioner to regulate them.

Every child deserves every opportunity to reach their full potential.
Show your support for children and families this General Election.

#EveryChildEveryChance

www.childrensrights.ie

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