

Labour – Manifesto 2020. Read more [here](#)

Social Protection

- Labour will develop and implement an ambitious strategy to eliminate child poverty. Labour agrees with the goals of the NoChild2020 campaign: making primary school genuinely free-of-charge; healthy school meals; meeting children's healthcare needs; access to arts and culture; more comprehensive childcare; and targeted payments to families at greatest risk of poverty. Labour will resource the CSO to publish reliable, frequent data on the detail of child poverty. The restored Combat Poverty Agency will have a central remit in developing a strategy to eliminate child poverty. Labour will also restore full social protection payments to under-25s and ensure the incomes of lone parents are sufficient.
- Labour will require local authorities to have regard to the needs of children and families who are homeless, by enacting Labour's Housing (Homeless Families) Bill

Health

- Labour will extend free-of-charge GP care to all under-18s, and to everyone with a longterm illness or disability. We will train more GPs and invest in practices, so your community has access to a doctor.
- Labour will deliver on child and adolescent mental health services. Ireland has a very high suicide rate among teenagers. One essential missing piece is the lack of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) in so many parts of the country. Staffing these services is a challenge, but as part of Labour's wider commitment to staff local primary care centres, CAMHS can be properly staffed in every area to deal with the wide range of mental health issues presenting among children and young people.
- Labour will extend the sugar tax to more processed foods, and will use the funds to supply healthy school meals in primary schools.
- Labour will improve access to healthcare for people who are transgender, to speed up access to treatments such as hormone replacement therapy
- Labour will review the health and addiction problems associated with e-cigarettes and implement measures to discourage young people from taking up vaping.
- Labour will introduce stricter regulations for sale or marketing of high fat, sugar and salt foods to children, including on social media and in school
- Labour will promote a bike-to-school scheme, with incentives for the purchase of bicycles by schoolchildren along the same lines as the bike-to-work scheme.

Education

- Labour will make primary education genuinely free-of-charge, to fulfil the guarantee in the Constitution, including free schoolbooks, a uniform grant and healthy school meals.
- Labour will end the two-tier pay system for teachers and school secretaries.

- Labour will reduce primary class sizes to the EU average by 2025 on a cost-neutral basis. This is possible because a reducing population of children is lowering the demand for primary school places, creating the opportunity to move towards European norms on smaller class sizes. These are especially beneficial for children with special needs or who do not have English as a first language.
- Labour will strengthen supports for schoolchildren to learn European languages, including opportunities for teachers to work abroad for a term to improve their own foreign language competence. The skill of languages is essential for Ireland as part of the EU and the world market.
- Labour will examine the introduction of local flexibility for school starting times to better align the schedules of parents and students while also reducing the numbers commuting at peak-times
- Labour will require all schools to develop and enforce a policy on smartphone use by pupils. Labour will require education on sex and relationships in all schools to be objective and inclusive.
- Labour will continue to implement the programme for changing patronage of primary schools, to provide parental choice and to recognise the growing diversity in the population.
- Labour will progressively remove state subsidies from the 7% of secondary schools that are private fee-paying. At present, access to highly competitive university education is dominated by students from private schools who have an unfair advantage of having additional resources from fees combined with teachers whose salaries are paid by society as a whole. Labour wants all schools to foster excellence and to provide genuine equality of opportunity to access university courses, further education and apprenticeships
- Labour will reduce DEIS class sizes in proportion to reductions in regular class sizes, and increase capitation to DEIS schools.
- Labour will continue to expand the provision of Special Needs Assistants in schools. We will set continuously higher targets for school improvements in literacy and numeracy. These basic skills are the foundation for social inclusion and access to later opportunities, and Labour will push for every child to have a sufficient level of literacy and numeracy, regardless of their background.
- Labour will conduct a review, and implement its findings, to ensure that the teaching of history in secondary education is adequate, including the option of restoring history as a mandatory subject.
- Labour will require all schools to ensure children receive a minimum number of hours of physical activity every week. This will reduce obesity and improve physical and mental health. Physical activity can include formal PE but also initiatives like “Daily Mile” walks and runs, bike-to-school schemes and walking buses.

Childcare

- Labour will develop a high-quality public Childcare Scheme for Working Parents, because parents should never have to choose between their children and their job. The simple fact is the current model is not working. We need to try something new and bring Ireland into line with our European neighbours when it comes to childcare. The costs to parents would be moderate and set at the EU average level of childcare costs.
- As it stands, parents in Ireland are paying three times the EU average cost. In the first phase, we will roll out the service in a number of areas around the country, targeting parents who cannot currently work because of the prohibitive cost of childcare. The service will include

early drop-off times and late collection to reflect modern work practices and commute times, and be based on best practice education, play and early learning. Only appropriately regulated and inspected childminding services will be eligible to provide Government funded schemes, which will prioritise community-led, not-for profit childcare models. This scheme is the first step towards Labour's vision of a universal public childcare service for all parents, which ultimately will replace other existing schemes and subsidies.

- Labour will raise the pay floor in childcare to a higher minimum wage through a Sectoral Employment Order for that sector, while developing a professional career pathway in recognition of the number of graduates in the sector. Those working in the public scheme will be paid at the very least a Living Wage and Labour will implement a programme to raise qualifications of at least 60% of staff in the early years sector to degree level (Level 7 on the NFQ) by 2025.

Law

- Labour will introduce new safeguards to protect young people from abuse and discrimination, including online. Labour will continue to press for its Harassment and Harmful Communications Bill 2017 ("Coco's Law") to be enacted, to update the law to include harassment and bullying on the Internet, mobile phones and social media.
- Labour will review all legislation to ensure that the 2012 referendum recognising children's rights is fully implemented in law. Labour will introduce a Statutory Child Maintenance Agency based on best international practice.
- Labour will introduce a welcoming New Irish policy, similar to Scotland's New Scots policy, which will formally recognise that being a member of Irish society is not about parentage or formal citizenship, but about being born in Ireland or choosing to make a long-term commitment to life in Ireland
- Labour will maintain a zero-tolerance stance on racism and xenophobia, including anti Traveller prejudice.
- Labour will support the introduction of a European Child Guarantee to help ensure that every child at risk of poverty or social exclusion has access to the most basic of rights like healthcare and education.
- Labour will commence all sections of the Children and Family Relationships Act. Labour will amend the Gender Recognition Act 2015 to address shortcomings, such as lack of recognition of non-binary, identified in the 2018 report on the operation of the Act.
- Labour will redirect resources towards early intervention with young children who have a disability and special needs, including neurodiversity, to reduce waiting times and to improve outcomes. This has been shown internationally to be more cost effective, as well as much better for children and their families.
- Labour will restore the right to citizenship to children raised in Ireland and whose primary affiliation is to Ireland. At present, many children brought up in Ireland do not have an automatic right to citizenship because their parents are not Irish citizens, even though they have never known another home. This can cause serious problems for them after school, such as an inability to go to college, to work or to travel. This legal change can be made under existing provisions in the Constitution, despite the 27th Amendment
- Labour will regularise undocumented children, young people and adult workers, including migrants fleeing domestic violence who are reliant on their partner's residency status. Labour will support those brought into Ireland by human traffickers, not least those traumatised by the experience of forced prostitution

- Labour will review international attempts to control child and young people's access to inappropriate material on the Internet, and we will introduce controls in Ireland that have been shown to work and to benefit children and young people.
- Labour will implement new pilot programmes to prevent anti-social behaviour by young people, drawing on best practice in the "Dundee Model" of wrap around care and the "Iceland Model" of providing constructive activities to deter substance misuse. The findings of these pilot programmes will be implemented more widely.
- Labour will progressively abolish the current system of Direct Provision and move responsibility for accommodating asylum seekers to the Department of Rural and Community Affairs. We will phase out for-profit provision of accommodation. Smaller scale tenders will be issued to approved housing bodies, and community consultation and support will be improved. Working rights for asylum seekers will be improved