



**A NEW
SOCIAL CONTRACT
FOR CARE**

Our Plan to support family carers, care workers and reverse the privatisation of care.



Our Mission is the realisation of a new social contract for care, that values family carers and care workers, reverses the creeping privatisation of social care services, and delivers a new fair deal for older people.

We believe in a society that values care, and invests from cradle to grave, so that people have access to the services they need when they need them. Labour will reverse the over-reliance on for-profit care services and the outsourcing of essential public services.

Through our manifesto Labour outlines detailed policies including our plan for a public system of childcare, and comprehensive supports for people with disabilities. Here we outline our proposals for a new social contract to support family carers and care workers and a new fair deal for older people.

For many years Labour has campaigned for family carers and care workers with motions passing in the Dáil and Seanad in 2023, but government parties have ignored those proposals. Real change is needed over the next five years.

Labour will consider the future recommendations of the Commission on Care and in the meantime, we will establish a National Planning Unit for Care to oversee all aspects of care planning and implementation, and the de-privatisation of care services. A priority will be the mapping of existing services and infrastructure, demographic modelling of future demand, and identifying the geographic and economic barriers to access.

SUPPORT FAMILY CARERS

There are over 500,000 family carers in Ireland, and their unpaid work saves the State over €20 billion a year. The 2022 Census shows the number of unpaid carers increased by 53% to over 299,000.

Labour has proposed long needed policy changes to support family carers such as removing the restrictive means test, and the low rate of payment which is not sufficient to meet the financial needs of those caring for dependents. We will carry out an evaluation of Carers' Allowance and other supports as part of a full Cost of Care review. Parents have consistently told us that the application and appeals process for Domiciliary Care Allowance is simply not fit for purpose and Labour will reform it

Labour is committed to implementing the Carer's Guarantee, and we have long supported the removal of the means test for Carer's Allowance. We will:

- » 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.

Labour will replace the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant with a Transport Support Scheme. We will also:

- » 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 non-child relative.

FOSTER CARE AND KINSHIP CARE

As part of a national strategy on alternative care, Labour will invest more in foster care and kinship care to support children in family settings. We will:

- » 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.
- » Increase the level of the Guardian payment, improve processing times, and ensure access to appropriate therapeutic and social supports including respite and medical cards.

A NEW FAIR DEAL FOR CARE

Labour will deliver a new fair deal for care and a key objective is investing in public services to reverse the privatisation of home care and the provision of more publicly run nursing care homes, a living wage and improved terms and conditions for care workers. The current system incentivises residential care settings over home care and Labour will change this after years of delay.

Labour will establish the long overdue statutory home support scheme that is adequately resourced, rights-based and person centred. To achieve this Labour will also address the shortage of home care staff with improved pay and working conditions.

We will:

- » 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.

Currently support under the Fair Deal scheme is only available when an older person enters long-term nursing care. However, there are many older people, often supported by the family and neighbours, who – with some additional assistance – can remain in their home instead. Some families are facing a significant financial burden in meeting these home care costs. Labour will:

- » 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

Labour will value care workers in the home support and nursing home sectors and initiate a plan to in-source these services with more direct recruitment by the HSE, and provision of publicly run community long-term residential care.

The HSE will fund 24 million hours of home support in 2025, but only about 40% of that is delivered directly by the HSE with over 5,000 home support healthcare assistants. The recruitment embargo has limited further public expansion resulting in more outsourcing to private for-profit providers and some not-for-profit services.

Labour will implement the report of the Strategic Workforce Advisory group on Home Carers and Nursing Home health care assistants, and we will:

- » 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.

**BUILDING
BETTER
TOGETHER**



2 Whitefriars, Aungier Street, Dublin 2, Ireland. D02 A008
Tel: +353 1 6784700 Email: info@labour.ie
www.labour.ie