



HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

**Our plan to transform
the health service.**

Labour ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



TRANSFORM OUR HEALTH SERVICE

Our mission is a health service where everyone can get the treatment they need, when they need it, where we manage chronic disease and support people through their treatment and recovery, where staff are valued and get to work in modern facilities with technology that helps them do their job better and treat patients faster.

Over 700,000 people are on rising healthcare waiting lists with nearly 600,000 on a list for an outpatient appointment to see a consultant. Despite increased investment, there are ongoing problems that need to be resolved and Labour has a plan to do this.

LABOUR'S PLAN FOR BETTER HEALTHCARE

Labour will deliver on the promise of Sláintecare with consistent funding and political follow through, ongoing reform and value for money to transform our health service. We will review progress made to date and publish an updated Sláintecare model to account for demographic change.

Labour will establish a Sláintecare Transition Fund starting with an initial €1 billion to drive reform, and ringfence the Universal Social Charge as a Health contribution and place any future revenue increases due to employment growth in the new fund.

Despite record funding over the last five years, it has not been provided as part of a consistent and serious reform plan, but rather because of the pandemic or political rows at Budget time. This leaves the HSE with little capacity to plan for the long term. No rigorous provision is made for demographic change or maintaining existing levels of service. By reforming the budget process Labour will publish annual detailed plans to account for population change and the existing level of service (ELS) in early summer to allow for responsible budgeting and the proper provision of the healthcare people need.

Despite the growth in the annual health budget by €7.5bn since 2020 we still have serious capacity deficits with patients waiting too long and overcrowded emergency departments. There are constant staffing issues, a failure to invest in technology, and with a growing and ageing population. We need more hospital beds and healthcare facilities. To break the cycle of crisis we need a new approach to resolve the underlying problems in our health service. Labour has a Health Plan to transform our health service so that people get the care they need when they need it with four key objectives:

- 1. Invest in Primary and Community Care.** We will extend free GP to all, and ensure people have access to care at home, or at their local primary care centre to relieve pressure on our overcrowded hospitals and emergency departments.
- 2. Value Healthcare Staff.** We will develop a comprehensive workforce strategy to ensure we have enough trained healthcare workers in every discipline, with measures to ensure we retain those we have by recognising their concerns and valuing their contribution including with key worker housing and ensuring staff safety.

- 3. Use Technology to Improve Outcomes:** We will ensure that new modern drugs are available quickly to cure and treat people, improve the efficiency and quality of care with digital health records, and use new techniques like AI machine learning to speed up diagnosis and treatment.
- 4. Build Enough Beds and Buildings.** We will invest more to build enough new acute care and step-down beds, expand public nursing home care, ensure that our creaking hospitals are modernised and climate proofed, and that we build the new elective and maternity hospitals our health service badly needs.

PRIMARY AND COMMUNITY CARE

Labour will publish a new updated plan for the development of the Primary Care Centre network and focus on delivering the full suite of publicly funded community centred healthcare. We will fully staff the Enhanced Community Care Programme supporting specialist teams for older people, chronic disease, healthcare networks and intervention teams, while funding diagnostic and assessment hubs.

Ireland does not have enough GPs and people must wait too long for an appointment. Labour will:

- » Consider the findings of Strategic Review of General Practice when completed.
- » Develop a new model of salaried GPs employed directly by the HSE and allow GPs work in partnerships by addressing taxation issues.
- » Increase the number of training places and expand e-health GP services.
- » Fund more practice nurses who will be directly employed by the HSE.

FREE GP CARE

No parent should worry about money when their child is sick, and Ireland is the only country in western Europe without universal access to GPs. We would immediately act to provide free GP care to all children under 18, expanding eligibility for 500,000 children, and then seek to expand it further. We also make available a free medical health screening and mental health assessment for every young adult.

COMMUNITY PHARMACY

Labour supports the Community Pharmacy Model, and we will introduce a Minor Ailment Scheme and expand community prescribing. A new agreement must be negotiated for community drug schemes to address dispensing fees, administration costs and restoring indexation to public pay agreements.

VALUING STAFF

Labour will resource and implement a comprehensive workforce planning strategy to support the training, recruitment, and retention of staff and address the impact of conditions on staff morale. Staffing across the health service will need to expand by over



30,000 over the next five years. Difficult conditions also damage our ability to both recruit and retain staff and often simple changes can make a real difference. We will:

- » Implement Safe Staffing ratios and a zero-tolerance approach to assaults on healthcare workers.
- » Engage with staff to identify problems and grassroots solutions to problems impacting on staff morale, including non-pay measures.
- » Restrict the use of agency staff only where required and ensure full time roles are hired instead of expensive outsourcing.
- » Develop key worker housing by refurbishing vacant HSE properties.

Labour will guarantee every healthcare graduate a job in the public health service and introduce bursaries and placement recognition payments for student nurses, and allied healthcare students. We will ensure students on mandatory placements and internships are properly compensated for their work.

SAFE STAFFING

The government sanctioned HSE recruitment freeze has severely impacted the ability to provide safe and timely care to patients who need it most. Unions representing healthcare workers estimate thousands of posts have been effectively abolished due to the recruitment freeze.

For patient-facing roles that are safety critical, Labour will introduce a safe-staffing framework across the health service. A revised approach to safe nurse and midwife staffing is crucial and must be mandated by legislation to enforce standards. We will expedite the passing of the Patient Safety (Licensing) Bill so that frameworks on healthcare staffing are underpinned by legislation.

Labour will seek to hire an extra 2,000 nurses and midwives over each of the next three years to ensure the health service is properly staffed, replace lost roles, and meet safe staffing requirements, including the ongoing hiring of Health Care Assistants.

Labour will lift the new recruitment moratorium under the HSE's Pay and Numbers Strategy and restore abolished positions. We will ensure that vacancies that arise in the health service due to normal retirement, career progression and maternity leave can be filled by local clinical management and fund the additional recruitment needed for appropriate staffing and the expansion of services to account for demographic changes and the implementation of Sláintecare.

ENOUGH DOCTORS

Non-Consultant Hospital Doctors are the backbone of the medical workforce but are very poorly treated. Labour will improve their conditions and treatment and implement the recommendations of the NCHD taskforce report.

There are hundreds of vacant consultant posts and Labour will invest in training and infrastructure to provide future recruits. We will create a new role of occupational health consultant and expand the number of radiologists.

ACCESS TO MODERN DRUGS

There is a growing public/private divide in access to new medicines and drugs, particularly in oncology. Between 1,000 and 2,000 public patients are denied access to medicines that could save their lives. Labour will set up a new clinically led pilot programme that would allow oncologists overseen by the National Cancer Control Programme to prescribe medicines that have been approved by the European Medicines Agency but are not available yet for reimbursement to public patients.

Ireland is a world leader in the pharmaceutical sector but lags other comparator countries in the number of clinical trials carried out here. We will put in place a new system to more than double the number of clinical trials in the Irish healthcare system and ensure patients with rare diseases have access to life saving orphan medicines. Patients should not have to wait longer than one year for access to treatments that have been approved by the EMA.

We will work to secure savings on the drugs budget through the greater use of generic medicines, and improved access to off-patent drugs.

DIGITAL HEALTH RECORDS

The rollout of digital health records and improved ICT across the health service is essential to boost productivity, improve outcomes and provide quicker access to care. Many health staff don't have access to a computer or even Wi-Fi, and patient records still are paper driven in most areas. Labour will deliver this essential project through the new regional health areas.

Labour will develop proposals to rollout new technology and digitalisation to speed up diagnostic processes and the analysis of health data while ensuring that a human remains in control, with medical professionals deciding on any treatment pathway.

REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Labour will ensure hospitals and regional health areas are fairly funded on the same proportionate basis with access to services like 24-hour cardiac care. University Hospital Limerick still lacks capacity and is underfunded compared to the national average for other Model 4 hospitals, and we would address this allowing it to hire more staff for new beds as additional capacity is delivered. Labour will provide a Model 3 hospital in the Mid-West with an Emergency Department and expedite the HIQA review on where that should be located. We will also ensure the community services are rebalanced to reflect the needs of the region and ensure more public nursing homes are built.

BUILD MORE BEDS AND HOSPITALS

Over 5,000 new additional public hospital beds will be needed by the end of 2030. Labour will commit additional capital funding to the health service to build new beds but also ensure existing facilities are fit for purpose and energy upgraded.

We will fund an extra 300 acute beds per year above existing levels to deliver at least an extra 1,500 over five years and meet our target of 5,000. A further 20 ICU beds a year will be funded, and a mix of step down and rehabilitation beds.



We will commit the funding needed for the delivery of the new National Maternity Hospital and ensure it is robustly managed and speed up delivery of the four elective hospitals. Labour will commence the delivery of the four elective only public hospitals and advance the opening of the planned surgical hubs.

Labour will carry out a review of HSE community nursing home facilities and develop a capital plan to provide at least 100 new community nursing home beds per year.

REDUCE PATIENT COSTS

Labour will reduce the Drug Payment Threshold to €50/month and phase out prescription charges for medical card holders. We will also reduce car parking charges by half at hospitals and waive these for patients attending for continuous treatments such as cancer patients.

Labour will expand provision of medical cards increasing income limits annually in line with wage growth, including to anyone with a serious disability. We will develop a long-term plan to phase in full free medical cover for all patients not covered by private health insurance.

CANCER SERVICES

Labour will deliver new development and multi-annual funding for the National Cancer Strategy every year. We will increase funding for treatment, address the delays patients face for chemotherapy and radiography, and ensure public patients have access to modern drugs. We will implement the findings of the National Radiation Therapist Review Report to address the 30% shortage of staff and address other staffing issues like the need for 99 more medical oncologists by 2028.

Labour will expand existing screening services for BreastCheck from 45 to 74, and BowelCheck from 50 to 74. We will develop new cancer screening programmes for lung, prostate and gastric cancers and assess screening proposals for ovarian and uterine cancers. We will also invest more in communications and awareness initiatives and improve accessibility for underserved groups.

Labour will continue to fund the 221+ Patient Support Group, fully fund the lymphoedema and lipoedema model of care, and ensure continued implementation of the Scally report recommendations. We will provide automatic medical cards for cancer patients, increased welfare supports, and legislate for a right to be forgotten so a diagnosis does not have to be disclosed after five years.

MATERNAL HEALTH

Labour will develop a new National Maternity Strategy, review the quality and capacity of maternity facilities across the country, and develop a building plan for three replacement maternity facilities for the Coombe, Rotunda, and Limerick. We will ensure safe midwifery staffing by recruiting more, increase menopause supports and expand provision of free period products.

Labour will seek to address the public health nurse shortage as outlined below and incorporate two additional GP visits for pregnant and postpartum women. One would be during pregnancy dedicated to infant feeding advice and another at six months postpartum

when most babies are being introduced to solid foods and mothers may be considering returning to work. To support breastfeeding, we will promote existing supports, double the number of lactation consultants in both community and hospital settings, provide free breast pumps where needed and fully implement and enforce the WHO code of marketing of breast-milk substitutes. We will also expand the national newborn screening programme by doubling the number of rare diseases screened for.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Labour will end the paternalistic attitude towards women in medicine especially for women experiencing pain and uncommon illnesses and ensure that age and ethnicity are properly taken into account during medical diagnosis and treatment. We will:

- » Invest in women focused medicine and training, ensure clinical trials are gender balanced and that the concerns of women are listened to.
- » Provide for lifelong cervical cancer screening, a further HPV vaccine catch up programme, and develop ovarian and uterine cancer screening services.
- » Invest in the National Maternity Strategy and perinatal healthcare, including the training and hiring of additional midwives.
- » Address the chronic understaffing in the public health nurse system and increase resources to provide postnatal support to postpartum women.
- » Support breastfeeding campaigns and employ more hospital and community lactation consultants.
- » Develop a comprehensive menopausal health policy with an increased level of services, provide free contraception up to the age of 50, and free HRT.
- » Develop proper services for those suffering from myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), endometriosis, vulvodynia, and fund research into autoimmune disorders that disproportionately impact women.
- » End period poverty and require public bodies to provide free period products in public buildings.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Labour will ensure universal free access to contraception, extend the provision of publicly funded fertility treatments, and regulate rogue crisis pregnancy agencies. We will introduce reforms to the Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy Act 2019 to end the three-day waiting period and extend the 12-week limit in line with medical advice, remove the criminalisation of abortion, and amend the definition of fatal foetal abnormalities and the restrictive time period for diagnoses.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Labour will ensure every child has access to the care and treatment they need. As outlined in our manifesto, we will end the shocking delays in access to mental health and disability services for children and young people. Labour will end the scandal over scoliosis and spina



bifida and commit all necessary resources to ensure access to paediatric orthopaedic and urology services within four months.

PUBLIC HEALTH

There is a major deficit in public health nursing numbers that continue to fall, and urgent action is needed to address the backlog of early developmental checks for children. The Capacity Review Report indicated 700 new PHNs are required by 2031. Labour will develop a new recruitment and training strategy for PHNs with increased places, retention of salary when training, and fast track pathways for community registered general nurses.

Labour will introduce greater restrictions on nicotine products and implement the ban on disposable vapes and restrictions on flavours, alongside increased support for people battling nicotine addiction. We will introduce stricter regulations on the sale and marketing of high fat sugar and salt foods, review the sugar sweetened drink tax, and seek to extend it to ultra processed foods, and invest a portion of revenues into measures to tackle childhood and adult obesity. Labour will introduce tax incentives to promote sports club membership and reduce costs for gym and activity classes.

VACCINES

Increasing the number of freely available vaccinations will reduce pressure on primary and acute care settings. Labour will increase uptake of the flu vaccine and progressively make it free for all. We will provide a catch-up programme for the chickenpox vaccine, and free shingles vaccine for those at risk, and restore funding for the Laura Brennan HPV vaccines catch up programme.

DISABILITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

Our population is growing and ageing, and disability services in our health and social care system must be resourced and equipped to meet existing needs and respond to growing levels of acquired disability through the life cycle.

There is massive unmet demand for disability services as outlined under the Disability Capacity Review and the commitments in the Disability Services Action Plan. Labour will fund these plans, and in our annual Alternative Budgets have outlined in detail how we would do this. But service improvements are constantly delayed due to a failure of workforce planning and underfunding of Section 39 organisations. Labour will resolve these critical issues.

If elected to government, Labour will carry out an immediate review of the Action Plan funding in place for 2025 to ensure essential services covering residential care, day services, PA services and home support, neurorehabilitation, respite care, and therapy services including Children's Disability Network Teams are resourced as required. We will put in place a successor programme as part of the review. We will implement the Neurorehabilitation Strategy and fully staff community teams in each health region.

Labour will develop an adult neurodiversity diagnosis and support service pathway, develop new service models, and focus on integration with mainstream health services and community supports.

DISABILITY SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Labour is deeply concerned at the failure to adequately resource the Progressing Disability Services (PDS) programme and meet the commitments contained in the Roadmap for Service Improvement in relation to Disability Services for Children and Young People.

There will be around 10,000 applications for an Assessment of Need under the Disability Act in 2024, and by the end of the year there will be nearly 19,000 AONs due for completion, with 11,131 overdue at the end of June. Separately, over 16,000 children were waiting for therapies under Children Disability Network Teams. We will 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.

LGBTQI+ HEALTHCARE

Ireland consistently ranks last in the EU for the provision of, and access to, trans healthcare and Labour will change this. We will make sure that all members of the LGBTQI+ community can access the healthcare that they need and expand and improve on existing services. We will:

- » Provide a model of gender-affirming care in primary care settings based on informed consent and international best practice.
- » Increase funding to end new HIV transmissions with resources focused on improved accessibility to PrEP, free condoms, and rapid HIV testing.
- » Increase access to sexual health services for men who have sex with men by supporting community based and delivered services as well as enhanced HSE services and provide dedicated supports for lesbian and bi women.

Ensure mental health, early intervention and residential care and homecare services have dedicated LGBTQI+ supports in place, and that training for health and social care professionals includes community perspectives.

STRATEGY PLANS AND TARGETED SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Labour will provide consistent funding for the implementation of national strategies to improve care and treatment in focused areas. Many specialist areas of the health service also require urgent reform and additional resourcing. Labour will pursue targeted service improvements, including the following:

- » Develop a new national cardiovascular policy after publishing the review of cardiac services, fully implement the National Stroke Strategy, and resource acute stroke units and community services, rehabilitation, and patient support.
- » Fully fund and implement the Dementia model of care over the next five years and prioritise brain health.



- » Publish, resource, and implement a new rare disease strategy and expand screening programmes.
- » Resource and expand the National Ambulance Service to adequately respond to emergencies and meet target response times.
- » Improve awareness of sepsis through care pathways, monitoring, and research.
- » Build a world leading Genetic Service and invest in genomic medicine.
- » Develop a new National Obesity Plan that takes into account new drugs.
- » Future proof eye and ear services to support an ageing population and expand community clinics.
- » Introduce and resource a new National Hearing Plan to support the 300,000 adults with significant hearing loss and the 20,000 on HSE waiting lists.
- » Invest in an allergy research programme and improve support for families.
- » Invest in LGBTQI+ healthcare as outlined in our manifesto.
- » Invest in improved palliative care and hospices, and in particular palliative care services for children with life limiting conditions.
- » Extend the asthma management programme to all people with asthma and add asthma to the long-term illness scheme.
- » Set up a taskforce to develop a ten-year National Diabetes Strategy and fund increased free access to continuous glucose monitors.
- » Improve multiple sclerosis services and resource a National Care Centre.
- » Ensure annual radon testing of 50,000 homes in at risk areas and provide remediation grants.

Provide improved funding for public eyecare schemes and standardise the provision of eyecare for children over eight by introducing a new national programme.

ORAL HEALTH AND DENTAL SERVICES

There is a real crisis in our dental health services with over 100,000 children on a waiting list for the school dental screening service. Labour will:

- » Publish a new National Oral Health Policy and rebuild the Public Dental Service, invest in preventative and specialist dentistry, and ensure children get their three school-based appointments.
- » Introduce a new Dental Bill to replace the 1985 Act and reform the regulatory framework and increase training capacity.
- » Resource the Dental Treatment Service Scheme to ensure medical card patients can be seen by their local dentist and increase the number of subsidised treatments available under the PRSI scheme.

A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR 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.

Labour will consider the future recommendations of the Commission on Care however 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 geographic and economic barriers to access.

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.
- » Promote care co-operatives as a not-for-profit alternative to private operators in communities throughout the country.

MENTAL HEALTH

Our mission is the development of a health service and community network that promotes the well-being of our people and invests in better mental health so that the necessary supports and services are available when they are needed.

Labour will adopt a person-centred early intervention and prevention-based approach to mental health, properly resourcing statutory and community and voluntary sector mental health service providers and respecting and upholding the human rights of people in crisis.

Over 40% of people in Ireland experience mental health difficulties, and the number of people seeking mental healthcare has increased dramatically in recent years. Despite this, many services receive unstable and insufficient funding, and although there have been budget increases, it still only amounts to less than 6% of the overall health budget. Labour will:

- » Resource and implement the national mental health strategy *Sharing the Vision*.
- » Invest in the provision of inpatient mental health units and facilities.
- » Meet the Sláintecare commitment to increase funding to 10% of the health budget and move towards a preventative approach.

An immediate priority is perinatal mental health and the opening of the in-patient Mother and Baby unit.

Labour will seek a Minister of State for Mental Health and Wellbeing within the Department of Health and put in place a HSE National Lead for Mental Health and Regional Mental Health Leads for each of the health regions.

EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

The best way of addressing Ireland's mental health crisis is through early intervention and prevention. Too much of government policy is based on reactionary responses when issues arise rather than prioritising prevention in the first instance, which accounts for only about 1% of our overall health budget. Labour will:

- » Invest in early intervention and prevention services through the community and voluntary sector, with the provision of multi-annual and sustainable funding to allow for better service planning.
- » Increase funding for early intervention programmes to ensure the availability of timely support, evidence-based interventions, and patient-centred care.
- » Promote close collaboration between statutory services and the community and voluntary sector.
- » Fund and implement a national data management system that amalgamates data on the impact and reach of voluntary and community mental health services.



MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

The Mental Health Bill 2024 represents a step in the right direction, but Labour will strengthen it further. We will:

- » Address issues with the legal frameworks within the Bill which allow for three legal processes to be occurring simultaneously by streamlining them into a single process.
- » Introduce a statutory right to independent advocacy alongside the new provisions for a “nominated person” to support individuals receiving care.
- » Establish an independent complaints mechanism separate from the existing HSE process that is available to both adults and children.
- » Include an explicit prohibition against admitting children to adult inpatient psychiatric units.
- » Introduce safeguards around the role of Gardaí in mental healthcare and ensure that the exercise of Garda powers in relation to assisted admissions are carried out to ensure the least amount of distress to the individual concerned.
- » Further strengthen family involvement in the provision of care.

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Recent reports from the Mental Health Commission and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child highlight the serious inadequacies in our system of mental health services for children. The Families for Reform of CAHMS report presents a harrowing picture from those with lived experience of engaging with or trying to access youth mental health care for their loved ones.

Labour will prioritise filling vacant CAHMS posts and putting additional training posts in place. We will work to implement the recommendations made in the independent Review of the Provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in the State. This will:

- » Give independent regulatory oversight of CAHMS to the Mental Health Commission.
- » Integrate services so that children and young people can move seamlessly between services in a timely manner and according to their needs.
- » Ensure that every child can access a mental health assessment in a time of crisis by properly trained and supported staff in a safe and suitable environment.

Labour will expand access to Jigsaw and prioritise and recognise non-statutory community-based youth mental health services and resource them with multi-annual funding. It is essential that the voices of young people are heard when decisions that affect them are being made. We will ensure they are included in policymaking and we will increase grants for school-based mental health support for pupils.

COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Labour will significantly expand access to talk-therapies, with a focus on direct provision through the HSE. We will protect high standards of training for psychotherapists to ensure the best possible care for patients and remove VAT on psychotherapy services in line with other health and social care services.

We will also restore pay parity for Section 56 workers to address the ongoing recruitment and retention crisis in community therapy services and provide multi-annual funding through Tusla to ensure the continuity of services and allow for effective planning and stability.

SUICIDE AND SELF-HARM PREVENTION

Suicide remains the leading cause of death for people under the age of 25 in Ireland and has a deep and lasting impact on families and communities. Labour will invest to provide secure, sustainable, and multi-annual funding to suicide and self-harm prevention services and to ensure timely access to care for people experiencing a mental health crisis. We will promote the coordination of services to support those currently in crisis and to work with families and communities that are bereaved.

EATING DISORDERS

Ireland only has three public eating disorder beds, despite commitments to increase that by twenty as far back as 2018, forcing many suffering from eating disorders into costly private care or general psychiatric units where they do not receive specialised care. Labour will significantly expand the number of eating disorder beds and ensure that those suffering receive the care they need.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

The current staffing levels of mental health professionals in higher education institutions is unsafe. Labour will work towards achieving a counsellor to student ratio of 1:1000, which is recognised as international best practice, with multi-annual funding so that students can receive reliable and adequate support when they need it.



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