

Political Party Manifestos: Commitments for Carers

Party	Manifesto Commitments
Fine Gael	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest an additional €5 billion per year to resource the health service. • Provide 2,600 extra hospital beds and 4,500 community beds. • Develop 3 elective hospitals in Dublin, Cork and Galway. • Cap the maximum daily charge for hospital car parking at €10. • Extend free GP care to recipients of the Carer Support Grant. • Will review the National Carers' Strategy. • Make homecare a statutory right and fund one million additional home care hours for every year in Government. • Increase Carer's Allowance and Benefit and Disability Allowance by a further €25 a week over the next five years. • Develop a pension solution for carers, particularly carers of incapacitated children that recognises the enormous value of their work. • Increase the Home Carer Tax Credit to €1,650 so that it is equal to the PAYE Tax Credit. • Increase the Living Alone Allowance • Recruit 3,840 primary care workers, starting with the recruitment of 1,000 this year, to include allied health professionals - occupational therapists, physiotherapists, dementia advisers and mental health professionals. • Reduce prescription charges and monthly Drug Payment Scheme to €75. • Implement the 2018 WRC agreement in relation to pay restoration for employees of 50 'pilot organisations' in the first instance. The WRC agreement recognised that some of the remaining Section 39 organisations may be likely to have pay restoration issues and a process to examine these will be agreed.
Fianna Fáil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish a new National Carers' Strategy • Increase the Carer's Allowance income disregard from €332.50 for a single person and €665 for a married couple to €450 and €900 per week respectively. Cost - €55m. • Increase the capital disregard for Carer's Allowance from €20,000 to €50,000. Cost - €2.5m • Expand more social protection supports by ensuring that PRSI contributors are eligible for the Carers' Benefit. • Provide additional five million hours home care support at a cost of €260m • Deliver a 'Carers Guarantee' proposal that will provide a core basket of services to carers across the country regardless of where they live. This measure will cost €3.4m. • Develop a statutory system of home care. • Develop a national strategy for the long-term care of our older people that includes current and future plans for the funding and financing of the statutory system of home care for those who need it. • Provide €10m of increased funding each year to enhance respite services.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the outsourcing of homecare to the private sector and promote social innovation so that a wider range of care services become available. • Double the National Treatment Purchase Fund to €200m • Reduce the monthly Drug Payment Scheme threshold to €100 per month • Fund a special €10 top-up payment for all Carer and Disability Benefits and increase the state pension by €5 per year. • Abolish Prescription Charges at cost of €68m • Remove car park charges in hospitals at a cost of €12m • Establish a commission to examine the state pension age, and defer any further pension age increase pending its completion • Expand Housing Adaptation grants by €20m. • Extend the Free Travel Scheme to children in receipt of DCA. • Put in place a further 15 dementia advisers so as to ensure one in each Local Health Office area at a cost €1.1m • Increase Fair Deal funding by €225m, implement proposed changes for farming families and ensure residents are not charged for services they don't use. • Commit and resource the 2,600 additional hospital beds recommended under the Capacity Review and aim for four-hour target wait for Emergency Departments. • Examine how the district hospital network can be utilised to provide step down facilities. • Prioritise mental health services including addressing the crisis in children's services, increased community services and access, quality and integration in mental health services. • Develop an Autism Empowerment Strategy • Provide additional €20m each year to provide extra adult day services. • Recruit an additional 800 therapy staff. This will cost €40.9m.
Sinn Féin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish a new and updated National Carers' Strategy with a dedicated budget and timeframe to ensure the implementation of all actions. • Increase the Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit rate from €219 to €255 • Increase the annual Carer's Support Grant to €2,000 at a cost of €40 million • Increase the provision of home help by delivering 12 million additional home help hours over five years, hire home help workers directly and introduce a statutory home-care scheme. • Increase respite care service provision by 20%. • Investing an extra €1 billion of capital and €480 million of current spending to increase the number of hospital beds by 1,500 over our first term of Government and then invest further bring up to 2,500 in subsequent term • Increase the state pension rate by €20 over the term of government at a cost of almost €700 million • Introduce free travel for the under 18s on all public transport and the School Transport Scheme.
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour will implement a Carers' Strategy. • Increase the Carer's Allowance income disregard and increase the Carer's Support Grant by €100.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will start the process of introducing paid Carers’ Leave, in line with the new EU Work-Life Balance Directive. • Redirect funding to local primary care centres, which will bring health services closer to communities including medical tests, early intervention/prevention of illness, disability supports, eldercare and mental health services. • Extend free-of-charge GP care to all under-18s, and to everyone with a long-term illness or disability. • Ensure that no one with a serious disability or long-term illness is without at least a GP Visit Card if not a Medical Card. • Redirect resources towards early intervention with young children who have disability and special needs, including neurodiversity, to reduce waiting times and to improve outcomes. • Further develop individualised budgeting for care services to give recipients more autonomy and choice, and we will increase funding for personal assistance services (including in educational settings) and housing adaptation grants. • Labour will improve services for people with neurodiversity, including breaking down barriers to social inclusion and employment, as well as providing healthcare services. • Extend State Claims Agency cover to Section 38 and 39 bodies, to ensure that health and social care service providers who are mostly or fully funded by the HSE have their public liability insurance costs met by the State Claims Agency. This will significantly reduce their insurance premiums and free up more resources for frontline healthcare and disability services. • Labour will require local councils to achieve evidence-based targets for specialised forms of housing, including accessible social housing for people with a disability. • Ensure disability access to public transport and reduce administrative barriers (like notice periods for a train ramp) that can make accessing public transport inflexible for people with a disability. • People with a disability who are also car dependent will be given an electric vehicle grant.
Green Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting carer-led service provision through consultation to ensure that the most appropriate services and supports are put in place. • Entitling full time carers to 360 credits’ worth of free long-distance learning under the internationally recognised Credit Accumulation and Transfer scheme for recognised and accredited third level institutions. • Recognising the immense contribution of carers to Irish society by raising both the basic rate of payment of Carer’s Allowance and the scheme’s earnings disregard. This will allow carers to divide their time between working in the paid economy and the unpaid economy in a way that best suits their needs. • Supporting the move to a Total Contributions Approach for calculating eligibility for the State contributory pension that values the work of carers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing adequate respite care places and staff in a flexible manner for families dealing with disability. • Committed to the provision of a statutory right to adequate levels of respite care for all Irish residents. • Review and increase in resources in therapy service areas that impact many people with disabilities. • Implementation and adherence to the existing Disability Act which places a statutory obligation on the Health Service Executive to begin an assessment for disability within three months, and complete the assessment within another three months, of an application being made. • Urgent review of the private provision of Home Care to people with additional needs. • Continued development of an independent advocacy service for participants in daycare and residential services. • Considering the significant number of young persons with disabilities currently residing in elderly care or nursing homes, Green Party will provide more appropriate holistic and medical care to these people and their families through Community Respite Centres linked to primary care providers. • All public transport vehicles to be fully accessible to all users and an end to unmanned bus and train stations. • Creation of specific services for people with disabilities who live in rural settings in current and future budgets and transport policies.
Social Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overhaul the means testing and financial compensation to family carers and review the option to provide Refundable Tax Credits and PRSI Pension rights to those with limited earnings capacity due to performance of their caring role • Amend rules so that more people can qualify for Carers' Allowance, introduce better training for carers of people with high needs, and improve supports for carers in terms respite and respite options. • Recognise the extra costs of living for people with disabilities and, where appropriate, their carer families and helping them to stay out of poverty through a specific cost of disability payment; • Abolition of Home Care waiting lists through investment in providing home care packages and step down facilities. • Expanding diagnostic services, such as x-rays, in local Primary Care Centres to make services more accessible to patients and cheaper to provide. • The phased extension of free GP Care including a new GP contract and the recruitment of salaried GPs by the health service. • Additional funding for dementia services and for palliative care. • Improvements in a range of supports for people with disabilities including extra personal assistant hours and an assistive technology passport plus funding for the monitoring of the UNCRPD. • Additional funding for mental health including counselling, community programmes, and adult mental health teams. • Extra funding for addiction and dual diagnosis services beginning with the restoration of Drug and Alcohol Task Force funding to pre-austerity levels.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved funding for housing adaptation grants. • Recruitment of 1,000 therapists and other front line healthcare workers. • Examine extending the Home Carers' Scheme to pensioners born before 1 September 1946. • Abolition of the Habitual Residency Condition for carer payments.
People Before Profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reverse the cuts to health. Reopen hospital wards; hire nurses and support staff; reverse the downgrading of local health facilities; reach the target of 15,000 hospital beds; provide pay parity and restoration for health workers. • Stop all support and tax breaks for private hospitals and healthcare facilities. Take the private system under public ownership and turn it into a National Health System. Taper off tax breaks for private health insurance. • Abolish the HSE and replace it with democratically elected Community Health Councils. • Create an Independent Agency of Public Health Promotion that works with a responsible and accountable Department of Health to coordinate an effective and efficient health service. • Create a network of community primary care centres and provide free GP care for all and align these to a community-based system of social care. • Guarantee access to healthcare within 18 weeks. • Abolish car parking charges in hospitals. • Provide proper supports for those with autism and those with dementia. • Take mental health and loneliness seriously. Implement the progressive proposals from Vision for Change 2020. Increase the mental health budget. • A return to a 'home help' system that is organised on a community cooperative basis. • Reverse all cuts that people with disabilities have suffered under consecutive governments. • Provide a universal health service free at the point of delivery, funded by progressive taxation and democratically planned by health workers and service users, which emphasises prevention and social support. • Protect wages and conditions for social-care workers and full support for home carers, including proper provision for respite. • Provide people with disabilities with the right to choose the services which best meet their needs. Ensure the right of people with disabilities to live as autonomous adults. • Ensure publicly-owned and funded disability services; oppose privatisation. • Provide accessible education for all. Ensure all children can access education through mainstream channels by investing in staff and facilities to make schools and communities truly inclusive. • Make public transport accessible for all. Equip all stations, stops and vehicles to be genuinely accessible. Train and employ staff to assist access.
Renua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairer tax system for families and will stop tax policy that forces both parents to work by significantly increasing the Home Carer tax credits for families and will end tax discrimination against married couples. • Against the unfair and unnecessary imposition of increasing carbon taxes.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Commission on the Future of Taxation and Welfare to deliver a simplified and fair system of taxation and welfare that does not punish families or those who work. • Invest in post-natal palliative care to provide families whose children have been born with life-limiting conditions the help and support they need. • Support the development of hospice care throughout Ireland to provide a positive alternative to euthanasia for those who are terminally ill. • Support a Disability Policy that puts the person at the centre of decision making and funding. • Review Fair Deal Scheme so that those that have saved to provide for the next generation are not unfairly taxed as they are at present. • Will convene ‘Good Friday Agreement’ style talks to tackle the national emergency in our health service.
Aontú	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press for 10% of the current health budget being assigned to development and delivery of Primary Care in communities. • Incentivise GP’s to offer a wider range of services, either directly or through an Integrated Group Practice. • Greater integration of Primary, Secondary and Tertiary care. Indicative Care Pathways, based on Best Practice, should be used to channel patient flows between Emergency Departments, Out-Patient Departments and delivering care that is more appropriately delivered in a community setting. • Aontú seeks a publically funded health service however realise that this is not going to be achieved in the short term. In the short term all available capacity – private as well as public – should be used to mitigate and then eliminate our excessive waiting lists and that the public system should be properly funded. • Aontú believe that additional “Home Care” services, together with more nursing home capacity, would deliver a more balanced and cost-effective healthcare service.