

LABOUR

An Equal Society

**A plain English guide to the Labour Party's
Manifesto**

1. We'll build homes

The private housing market has not worked.

Labour believes that the housing crisis could be ended by freezing and capping rents so that they do not go up, until enough homes are built. During the freeze, Labour will direct state agencies to build 80,000 homes on public land over the next five years.

We would also make sure that enough other services are put in place where houses are built, such as transport and jobs.

Stop Fine Gael waste

Fine Gael has wasted money and the chance to push for homes that people can afford.

- Fine Gael give more than €700 million every year to private landlords to house people. That is bad value for money.
- Developers have been allowed to make more money by building expensive student accommodation, hotels or “co-living” units, instead of building family homes that people can afford.
- Entire housing estates have been bought and rented out meaning that local people don't have the chance to buy a home in their community.

Labour will change how the tax system works so that developers will want to build homes that people can afford.

Controlling rent levels

The current system does not work. The way that Fine Gael is dealing with rent means that it is taking more and more of people's take home pay.

- People are struggling to pay rent or find a place they can afford.
- Adult children are living for longer with their parents.
- People are spending more time travelling to and from work or school.
- People in good jobs find it hard to save a deposit to buy their own home.

There are 'Rent Pressure Zones' but a 4% increase can apply every year and wages are not going up by 4%. Outside of these zones, rents are rising even faster than 4%, and all Fine Gael does is create new zones.

Labour will freeze rents for a longer period, giving time to build more homes.

Rents have never been higher; landlords can afford a rent freeze. Labour froze rents in the past by not letting landlords raise rents for two years after a contract was signed. This can be done again.

Labour will introduce rent caps for a limited time until the housing crisis is solved.

Many countries have a system, where the size and type of the house is used to set a maximum rent. We can do this by using the information from the Local Property Tax, the Property Price Register and the Residential Tenancies Board.

Build homes

In many European countries, local authorities provide secure, affordable homes. Sometimes as many as 1/3 homes are provided locally. Fine Gael has not funded local government to build and has instead relied on the housing market, which has failed to deliver.

The waiting list for council and social housing are very long and almost half of the people on it have been waiting for four years.

Labour believes that the way to solve the housing crisis is for the State and public agencies to build social and affordable homes. These homes should be high quality and energy efficient.

Because of Labour, land has been kept in public ownership, which means that we can now build more cost-efficiently than the private sector.

Many people who don't qualify for social housing, also don't earn enough to buy a home privately. Labour will fix this.

Labour will make sure houses are built

Labour will create a 'National Housing Development Agency', which will bring together all of the experts on housing. Unlike Fine Gael's proposed Land Agency, we will not sell off public land.

Secondly, we will establish regional Housing Executives as part of local government and accountable to Councillors. These Executives will be working regionally to restore local government's capacity to build homes.

Labour will allow public bodies to compulsory purchase land at current use value, building on the recommendations of the 1973 Kenny Report and to put an end to land hoarding.

Labour will use existing funds to pay for new houses

Labour will fund the building of 80,000 homes in five years at a cost of €16 billion. This money will come from existing funds such as the 'Ireland Strategic Investment Fund', by using the 'Rainy Day Fund' and by using some of the surplus that NAMA has announced.

Ending the homeless crisis

Labour will launch a stronger national homeless strategy and homeless youth strategy within 100 days of coming into office.

Labour will strengthen the Housing First approach.

This means that people will move into long-term homes and then receive whatever ongoing support they need. This way of doing things has been shown to be more humane, more successful and a better use of public money.

Promoting security of tenure

Labour will bring in long-term leases for renters and stop unfair evictions.

Labour believes that long-term renting should be an option so that people have security and a long-term home. Not everybody can afford or wants to own their own home but everyone deserves to live in a secure home at a cost they can afford.

Regulating the private housing market

Labour will change the way property development works and is taxed.

We will make changes to the tax systems so that developers will want to build homes that people can afford. We will put regulations to control the building of 'built-to-rent', student accommodation and co-living, so more long-term homes are built.

2. Equality in healthcare

Despite spending more than ever, hospitals are overcrowded and waiting times are worse than ever. After nine years of Fine Gael in charge of health, it is time for change.

Stop Fine Gael waste

We need a world-class National Children's Hospital, but does it really need to be the most expensive hospital ever built in the world costing over €2 billion? Fine Gael has overspent on the project, ignoring advice about the rising costs.

Fine Gael is now spending over €320 million every year on agency staff. Instead of relying on temporary workers, we could get better value for money by filling the staffing gaps with permanent jobs.

Ending overcrowding and shortening waiting lists

Labour is committed to creating a single health system that works for everyone.

That means getting equally good medical treatment, and treatment based on medical need or disability, not on how much you can afford to pay.

The way to get this system is through the SláinteCare Report. This policy is agreed by all political parties, yet the Government has not made serious headway in delivering this system since the report was published.

Labour will invest in more hospital beds and the staff required, to end the crisis of overcrowding and waiting lists.

We will end what is, in fact, a stay on HSE recruitment. We will fill posts on a permanent basis. We will end the over-reliance on agency staff.

Labour will make sure that health funding lines up with medical need.

Right now, Ireland is the only country in the European Union that has a health system controlled by market forces and the ability to pay. There is a deep inequality between regions and a widespread lack of medical staff.

Labour will redirect funding to local primary care centres.

We will make sure that health services are brought closer to communities. More staff in primary care centres such as nurses, home help workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and counsellors, means that fewer people will need to travel to hospitals.

Better local primary care services cost less and are more accessible, which reduces inequality. They also help overcrowding and waiting times in hospitals.

Primary care centres will be able to carry out medical tests, early intervention, prevention of illness, disability supports, eldercare and mental health services.

Services will be free-of-charge at the point of access.

Labour will increase funding for home help and respite care.

This will mean that more people can be cared for in their homes. Labour will also increase the number of step-down beds, which allow people to move from hospital settings back to their own home.

Labour will extend free-of-charge GP care to all under-18s and to everyone with a long-term illness or disability.

Every community should have access to a GP so we will

- Train more GPs and invest in practices.
- Give a larger role to advanced nurse practitioners, physician associates and community pharmacists to help fill the gap while additional GPs are being trained.
- Attract and keep GPs by using primary care settings to support them.
- Develop schemes to encourage graduate doctors to practice in rural areas and less well-off urban areas.

3. Better pay, job security

Work is changing. A job for life doesn't exist anymore. But that doesn't mean we can't have better pay, job security and the ability to balance work, family and other commitments. Too many people are underpaid, and wages aren't keeping up with the cost of living.

People need a pay rise.

Labour will guarantee everyone the right to be represented at work by a trade union.

We will bring in a right to collective bargaining where an employer has to deal with an employee's representative and trade unions. Many of Europe's strong and productive economies already use this system.

We will make sure that trade unions have a right to access workplaces and we will change the Constitution to help this happen.

Labour will raise the minimum wage to be a real living wage.

We will make sure that the minimum wage is enough to have a minimum essential standard of living. The Low Pay Commission will be given the role of ensuring that this is the case.

Labour will tackle the gig economy.

We will get rid of bogus self-employment and 'if and when' arrangements and we will enforce a right to be sure of working hours, for people in precarious employment.

Labour will maintain the State Pension age at 66

There is enough in the National Insurance Fund that we can afford to continue to provide the State Pension from age 66 onwards.

We are living longer, and we do need to prepare for longer working lives, but some people who are now reaching the age of 66 have already made 45 years of social insurance contributions, and many are affected by mandatory retirement at the age of 65.

4. A fair start for every child

It costs a lot to raise a family in Ireland, but we can make sure no child is left behind.

Ireland is now a diverse society, home to people from around the world. Labour will not tolerate racism or any other form of discrimination, such as sexism, homophobia or religious prejudice.

We must make sure that all of our children are treated equally and given the chance to fulfil their potential without harassment or abuse.

Labour will make primary education genuinely free-of-charge.

The Constitution guarantees free education and to do this, we will bring in free schoolbooks, a uniform grant and healthy school meals. We know that school meals programmes help all children to learn and they can help the most vulnerable children who may come to school without having eaten breakfast and with no school lunch.

Labour will develop a public Childcare Scheme for Working Parents.

Parents should never have to choose between their children and their job but the simple fact is the current model is not working.

Our European neighbours take a different approach when it comes to childcare, and we can follow their lead. Parents in Ireland are paying three times the EU average cost, but the Labour model would make sure childcare costs would be set at the EU average. Our model will involve community-led, not for profit providers who are regulated and inspected.

In the first phase, we will roll out the service in a number of areas around the country to parents who cannot currently work because of the cost of childcare. The service will include early drop-off times and late collection to take account of working hours and commute times.

This scheme is the first step towards Labour's vision of a public childcare service for all parents, which over time will replace other existing schemes and subsidies.

Labour will introduce new safeguards to protect young people from abuse and discrimination.

This will include having online safeguarding. Labour will continue to push for a new law to deal with harassment and bullying on the Internet, mobile phones and social media. We will also make sure that online platforms are regulated so that harmful content on suicide, self-harm and eating-disorders etc. is quickly removed.

Labour will not tolerate racism or other forms of discrimination.

This will include anti-Traveller prejudice. All of our candidates and elected representatives will be required to uphold the highest standards, and not just respect diversity but promote anti-racism. The same standard will apply to all the grounds of equality such as gender, disability etc.

Labour will introduce a 'Welcoming New Irish' policy.

We will introduce a policy like Scotland's, to recognise that being a member of Irish society is about being born in Ireland or choosing to make a long-term commitment to life in Ireland.

Labour will deliver on child and adolescent mental health services.

Ireland has a high suicide rate among teenagers and as a society, we must do everything we can to prevent suicides. It is important that the causes of suicide and self-harm are looked at. The child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are missing in so many parts of the country and Labour is committed to staffing local

primary care centres, CAMHS can be properly staffed in every area to deal with mental health issues presenting among children and young people.

5. Climate justice

Time is running out, so we must invest in climate action now. Labour brought in Ireland's first climate change law and the city bike schemes. We can be trusted to cut emissions and build a low carbon economy.

Labour will fund local government to deliver home insulation.

We will work towards a target of insulating 100,000 homes per year as recommended by the Climate Change Advisory Council. This will be rolled out to all council-owned properties, and will be available on a street-by-street basis for home owners to avail of subsidised home insulation.

Grants, low-cost credit and repayment as part of lower energy bills will also be available. All of this will give people warmer homes and lower energy bills, while reducing Ireland's carbon emissions. This will also create new apprenticeships and sustainable jobs.

Labour will invest in the ESB, Coillte and Bord na Móna to create new sustainable jobs

These jobs will be in clean energy, recycling and land management. This will make sure that there is a positive future for workers and regions of the country that are most at risk from the loss of some industries that cause pollution.

Labour will support the trade union campaign for a 'Just Transition' to a low carbon economy.

This policy makes sure that worker's rights are part of the plan to move to a low-carbon economy. We will set up a 'Just Transition' Fund and Task Force to invest in businesses that are helping workers and communities to move to a low carbon economy.

Labour will invest in public transport and cycling.

- We will encourage people in cities and large towns to use transportation that is healthier and more sustainable.
- We will make sure public transport is affordable.
- We will make sure of disability access to public transport and reduce barriers such as the notice periods for a train ramp.
- We will look at the possibility of extending the Metro to the South West rather than the South East.
- We will make sure DART Underground plans allow for efficient transfers to Metro and to other transport services.

Labour will target electric vehicle grants to those who need them

Labour does not think that the Fine Gael plan to help everyone buy an electric car is realistic. It would only mean that wealthier households were subsidised and those who cannot afford car ownership are left out.

We will make sure that people who need the grant get it, such as those who live in rural Ireland and people with a disability.

Labour will require the halving greenhouse gas emissions by 2030

We will make the halving of greenhouse gasses a legal requirement. Labour will publish annual carbon budgets that set a ceiling on the amount of greenhouse gas emissions allowed in different sectors of the economy. Public agencies will be required to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Other key Labour policies

As well, as our 5 core policies, the Labour Party has detailed plan for each Government Department. Read our full manifesto for more information.

Some of our other key policies are:

1. Labour will develop and implement a national food strategy.

Everyone should be able to afford a healthy, nutritious diet. We will introduce rules for sale or marketing of high fat sugar and salt foods to children, including on social media and in school.

2. Labour will develop and implement a regional jobs strategy.

We want people in the towns, suburbs and rural areas that have been left behind to have good careers. We will put more public jobs outside the big cities. We will give local authorities the power to introduce a “holiday rate” for new start-ups in less-developed regions to give owners breathing space when opening a new business.

3. Labour will fully implement the employment strategy for people with disabilities.

We will develop supports to encourage employers to take on workers with disabilities. This will include grants for work space adjustments and training. Ireland lags behind many European countries in getting people with disabilities into employment. This policy can improve people’s quality of life and their financial independence, while also reducing the need for social protection payments. This strategy will include actions on neurodiversity.

4. Labour will implement a right to lifelong learning.

Ireland has low uptake of training and education by people who are in work. We will work with trade unions and employers at the National Economic and Social Council, and with public agencies like Solas and employers will be encouraged to make sure that all employees have access to training and learning opportunities. We will consult with organisations like the Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed (INOUE) to make sure training is aligned with people’s needs.

5. Labour will extend state care for 18- to 24-year olds when it is needed.

A range of young adult supports will be developed, to support young people aged 18-24 to move to fully independent living or adult services.

6. Labour will make sure all Defence Forces personnel have proper pay, allowances and working conditions.

The Defence Forces were not treated the same as other public servants in looking at pay terms and conditions. We will rectify this.

7. Labour will provide more Special Needs Assistants in schools.

We will set targets for schools to improve literacy and numeracy. These basic skills are essential for social inclusion and access to opportunities. We will push for every child to have a sufficient level of literacy and numeracy, regardless of their background.

8. Labour will link social protection payments, including pensions, to the cost of living.

An independent group should recommend any social protection increase, to make sure they are not decided for political reasons. The payments should be based on the cost of living on a sufficient income. We will fix the issues relating to pensioners who worked in commercial semi-state companies.

9. Labour will support Local Employment Services.

We will improve capacity to involve people not currently in the labour market.

10. Labour will improve Community Employment (CE) schemes.

We will set up long-term CE schemes in non-profit organisations for people who have disabilities or who have been away from the labour market for a long time.

We will make provision for CE Supervisors who don't have pensions. Labour will seek to involve people not currently engaging with the labour market in CE schemes.

11. Labour will make reproductive healthcare available to all.

Free of charge reproductive healthcare options will be made available, including long-term contraceptive options. Fine Gael's policy excludes people both by age and contraceptive option.

We will include time off work for fertility treatment in the definition of 'medical leave'. We will make sure every woman has access to sanitary products to end "period poverty".

12. Labour will establish local commissions to deal with violent drug gangs.

These gangs are across the whole country and the local commissions will make sure violent criminals and gang leaders are brought to justice. We will

develop supports to address the social and economic marginalisation of young people that often results in getting involved in the drug trade.

We will provide the Gardaí with all the resources they need to bring violent gang leaders to justice.

13. Labour will develop and implement a national strategy for age-friendly villages.

This will include bespoke retirement villages in larger towns and suburbs, so that older people can enjoy independent living close to all the shops and services they might need.

14. Labour will work to save community grassroots football and to strengthen football's role in social inclusion.

Most bets are placed on football and we will take some of the tax on betting into a new Football Fund. This funding would be directed into communities who have been failed by the FAI. We will give more state funding for the grassroots underage game, building on the model already emerging from the football community. This model will tackle low education levels within the domestic game and to encourage school completion. A pilot programme with 5 DEIS secondary schools to provide football academies will mix football coaching with regular schoolwork and progress towards qualifications. We will work with local authorities to co-fund more Football Development Officers.

This plain English guide to the Labour Party manifesto is an easier to read and understand version of the full Labour Manifesto.

The full Labour Manifesto should be read for all of our positons in full.
(www.labour.ie)

This plain English guide has been produced by Easy to Read Ireland
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