



€10 A DAY CHILDCARE FOR ALL

DELIVERING AFFORDABLE
CHILDCARE FOR PARENTS





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Introduction

Sinn Féin in government will deliver affordable childcare.

This means giving all parents access to childcare at €10 a day per child.

So, if you have a child who attends childcare full-time, five days a week, you will go from paying €800 per month to paying €200 per month.

This will be done by increasing the subvention to childcare providers and will also apply to childminders, at a cost to the state of €345 million.

€10 a day childcare is available in other countries where governments recognise the benefit of affordable childcare to working families and to the economy.

Denmark, Sweden, Finland and parts of Canada cap the price of childcare for parents.

Sinn Féin in government will deliver childcare at €10 a day because we recognise that good quality affordable childcare is essential for families and for the economy.

Childcare in Ireland has been far too expensive for far too long.

There is also a growing issue with the availability of childcare places. Thousands of our children are on waiting lists for spaces that are not there.

For too long the state has taken a hands-off approach when it comes to the provision of childcare.

In government Sinn Féin will ramp up capacity in the Childcare sector and extend benefits for parents to care for babies in their first year.

Childcare is an essential service, and it is time that it was given the investment and priority that it needs.

By delivering childcare at €10 a day per child, Sinn Féin will lift the burden off hardworking families, many of whom are under pressure.

We will make Ireland a better place to raise a family and build a future.



Affordability

Parents in Ireland pay among the highest costs for Childcare in the OECD. Childcare encompasses Early Childhood Care and Education, School Age Childcare and Childminding. Despite some improvements, parents are still paying hundreds and in some cases thousands of euros every month for childcare. This is not sustainable for parents and families, especially in the current cost of living crisis.

High childcare costs have been shown to present several challenges to both children and parents. They create a barrier to using formal childcare, with parents forced to rely on friends and family instead. They also create a barrier to female labour market participation and to improving child poverty rates.

Research for Ireland has shown that the challenges created by unaffordable childcare are more severe for lower income families and lone parents, particularly with regard to paid maternal employment.

Following sustained pressure from Sinn Féin among others, the Government introduced subsidies under the National Childcare Scheme in recent years in an attempt to bring costs down, but the reality is that they are still much too high for the majority of parents in the country. According to the 2022 Annual Early Years Sector Profile Report by Pobal, monthly full-time childcare fees average almost €800 per child.

Unaffordable childcare mounts pressure on parents, potentially forcing them to work less or not work at all. Sinn Féin is determined to make childcare affordable once and for all. We will ensure that a day of childcare will not cost any parent more than €10, and we have a plan to achieve this.

€10 A Day Childcare

Sinn Féin will deliver €10 a day childcare by giving subsidies to providers which bridge the gap between the actual costs of care and the €10 cap on the fees a parent can be charged per child. Therefore, if your provider is charging €40 a day for childcare, the State will provide a subsidy of €30 to bring the amount you pay to €10.

This means that if you have a child who attends childcare full-time, five days a week, you will go from paying €800 per month to paying €200 per month.



We would deliver this policy for children in centre-based childcare by September 2025. Extending the €10 per day cap to childminders will take longer because criteria for inclusion and registration will take time. We propose extending this scheme to cover between 90,000 – 100,000 additional children through the incorporation of childminders by the end of our first term in government.

Can it be done? International Precedents

Internationally, there are many examples of states capping childcare costs to deliver affordable childcare for parents.

In Denmark, for example, they operate a cap on the proportion of the parent contribution, often at a maximum of 30 percent of the cost. The State provides the funding for the remaining 70 percent of the cost. However, given that each municipal government sets the price of childcare, there is essentially a cap on the price parents pay.

Sweden operates a similar cap system, however, they do not cap the parental contribution at a percentage of cost, but at a percentage of family income. The cap depends on the level of household income. Like in Denmark, Swedish municipalities set the price of childcare in their jurisdictions, so once again, there is essentially a cap on the price parents pay.

The jurisdiction of British Columbia, in Canada, introduced a \$10 a day programme. Similar to Ireland, Canada employ a package of subsidies. They also offer a subsidy directly for reduction of fees and the top-up of wages for childcare workers.

The practice of capping childcare fees to achieve stability and affordability in the childcare sector is not uncommon across Europe and indeed further afield.

Cost

The cost of our proposal to deliver €10 a day childcare is estimated to be €345 million. In order for providers to avail of these supports, fee controls will apply so as to ensure that providers can run practices comfortably, but also so that the State gets value for money.





Delivering more childcare places

With thousands of children waiting on childcare spaces it is critical that the capacity of the sector is expanded.

Sinn Féin would not simply reduce the cost of childcare. We will also work to increase capacity in the sector, so that parents can not only afford childcare but so that they can actually access childcare. We would expand capacity by addressing the crisis in recruitment and retention, extending supports to childminders, increasing and reviewing Core Funding, as well as through promotion of the social enterprise model and extension of benefits for parents to cover the first year of a child's life.

Workers and Wages

The recruitment and retention crisis in the sector is one of the main reasons for the lack of capacity, and this is largely due to low wages.

Wages in the sector are not reflective of the vital role that Early Years Educators have in our society and economy. Hourly rates are close to minimum wage and with little recognition for obtaining advanced qualifications.

Sinn Féin would provide public funding of €53.8 million to pay for an increase to the hourly wage of childcare workers of €1.50 initially. This funding would be ring-fenced for wages. Our five-year expenditure plan also makes further provision to fund the outcome of sectoral negotiations on pay increases over the subsequent years of our term of Government.

These wage increases would make it more viable for childcare workers to remain in the sector and would also attract new staff. This would allow for increased capacity which is desperately needed to provide affordable and quality childcare services.

In Government, Sinn Féin would initiate a review into the current pathways into Early Years to ensure those with a passion for Early Years and who work well with children are not locked out of the sector due to barriers to education.



Childminders

There is also potential to increase the capacity of the childcare sector by extending subsidies to childminders.

It has been highlighted by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) that the main effect of the current subsidy structure has been a shift of demand from childminders and other informal childcare providers to crèches, i.e. formal childcare providers. This is despite a preference of parents in Ireland for informal childcare.

Therefore, Sinn Féin propose to make childminders eligible for delivery of our €10 a day childcare scheme. We have allocated €240.4 million to incorporate childminders into this scheme. We would extend the scheme to childminders who are registered with Tusla under the current system in our first year of government.

We would also work with stakeholders in the sector, including the Regulator Tusla, to ensure the registration process for childminders is improved and accelerated, while ensuring the right balance between practicality and health and safety of children is struck. This would allow for the transition of remaining childminders onto the scheme from our second year of government onwards.

The addition of childminders would lessen the pressure on crèches and could free up capacity in the centre-based care sector as a result.

Core Funding

Core Funding is a stream of funding that was created to improve the capacity in the childcare sector through supporting wages and other operational costs. However, information on the amount of funding that providers are receiving and the amount they need to substantially increase capacity is sparse.

In Government, Sinn Féin would conduct a review of Core Funding based on data the Department of Children has collected through Core Funding financial reporting, HIVE service profiles and Core Funding applications. This review will examine the efficacy and equitableness of the distribution of Core Funding.

Our five-year expenditure plan makes financial provision for an increase to Core Funding following this review.

Social Enterprise Model:

There are many underused Community Centres across the State, particularly in rural towns and villages that would provide perfect spaces for childcare settings. This would reduce the time needed to establish new facilities by avoiding planning permission and building.

There are a number of existing childcare facilities in shared community hubs in the State – sharing costs such as energy, rent and insurance. These Centres also have existing car-parking and outdoor spaces which are needed for any childcare facility.

Extending benefits for parents to care for babies in their first year

Evidence tells us children do better when they spend their first year of life with a parent. Maternity Benefit is currently available for just 26 weeks, Paternity Benefit for 2 weeks and Parent's Benefit for 9 weeks. Sinn Féin would invest an additional €100 million approx. in order to ensure that 52 weeks of leave is covered so that children can be with a parent for the first year of their life. This measure would also serve to relieve some pressure on capacity in the formal childcare sector where staff to child ratios are at their highest for this age group.

Conclusion

Childcare is a priority for Sinn Féin and we are committed to delivering affordable childcare for parents as well as significantly increasing capacity within the sector.

For too long, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have set the bar too low in terms of what parents should expect when it comes to affordable childcare. Irish parents have been left behind, struggling with some of the highest childcare costs in the OECD.

Looking at what has been done in other countries we know this can be done. We also know that investing in childcare is good for the economy, good for parents and good for the educational outcomes of children. What is needed is a government committed to delivering affordable childcare.

Sinn Féin in government will deliver €10 a day childcare for parents.







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