

# Is Ireland on the cusp of a childcare revolution? <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** McMullan, Dominique

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

### Excerpts

When it comes to early years childcare, Ireland has been in crisis for many years. Despite recent investment, childcare remains prohibitively expensive, places near impossible to find, and staff underpaid, undervalued and leaving the industry in droves. So what are the proposals to clean up this mess once and for all?

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### Sinn Féin

In their €10 a Day Childcare for All plan, Sinn Féin aims to make childcare affordable by “bridging the gap” to achieve a €10 per day fee through increased subsidies, but it stops short of proposing a fully public model. They propose raising Early Years educator pay, expanding capacity through a social enterprise model using vacant buildings, and accelerating childminder subsidies. The plan also includes extending parent leave to allow more time with newborns in the first year.

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### Labour

Labour takes a stronger stance with its *Campaign for Universal Childcare*, aiming for a fully state-funded universal childcare model, where Early Years staff are paid in line with primary educators. The party proposes flexible, nearby childcare with a fee cap of €200 per month, alongside a €60 million investment to establish a public Early Years care system. The Labour vision includes guaranteed spots for all children as parents return to work.

Labour’s model is bold, seeking to overhaul the current system and provide universal, affordable, high-quality childcare. The proposal includes supporting educators and creating a structure that could lay the foundation for a fully public system.

### Social Democrats

The Social Democrats propose building a public model with a National Childcare Agency to oversee fees and pay standards, with fees capped at €250 monthly. They pledge €100 million *annually* to add more facilities and aim to develop a public-sector pay structure for Early Years educators. Additionally, they suggest voluntary state acquisition of existing childcare services to expand availability.

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The recent investment in Early Years in Ireland has resulted in a much needed reduction in fees for parents who were suffocated with costs that competed with their mortgages each month. But looking at the big picture, these wins feel insignificant when so many parents face not being able to return to work because they simply can’t find a place for their child. The hundreds of millions of euros the current government has pumped into Early Years, feels a bit like water being poured into a leaky bucket.

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We hope whoever gets the vote remembers that a childcare model is not just for Christmas. Achieving a fully public model will require sustained commitment, legislative support, and a long-term vision to meet the needs of Irish children, parents, and educators alike. One thing is sure; no one is winning in Ireland’s current childcare model. The time has come to make childcare affordable, accessible, and sustainable, and to finally recognise it as the essential service that it is.

**Related link:** England is one of the worst countries in Europe for access to childcare <sup>[3]</sup>

**Region:** Europe <sup>[4]</sup>

**Tags:** government funding <sup>[5]</sup>  
system building <sup>[6]</sup>

#### Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/24/11/ireland-cusp-childcare-revolution> [2] <https://www.image.ie/agenda/image-writes/is-ireland-on-the-cusp-of-a-childcare-revolution-912388> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/24/09/england-one-worst-countries-europe-access-childcare> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/europe> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/government-funding> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9240>