

# Let's talk about childcare <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Labour Women: Childcare Working Group Report

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## AVAILABILITY

Full report PDF <sup>[2]</sup>

## Overview

We all know that raising children requires huge effort. It requires time, money, lots of energy and love. We in Labour Women believe that there has never been appropriate investment by the state in our youngest children. This is not something which arose because of the recent recession; as a country we have never really tackled the issue of early childhood care and education. While resources went into child benefit, we have never committed enough funding to this key area to allow for a complete and functioning set-up to take place. As things begin to turn around and we start to have some options as to the direction that we want our country to go in, it's clear that we have to prioritise doing more when it comes to supporting families raise their children in Ireland.

Just as there are many different types of families in Ireland, there are many different forms of childcare. What suits one family might not work for the next. We want to make sure that families and parents still have the many excellent varied and different childcare options available to them in the future - this is not about dictating to parents about how they should raise their children or what childcare system they should use. This is about supporting parents in their choices and making things that bit easier for working families.

We want to build on the first-rate childcare models that are already in existence across Ireland. Be it stay at home parents, childminders, grandparents or centre based care - families should be able to choose what is right for them. Ensuring high quality care and education also means that the childcare providers and all workers in the sector need to feel valued and feel that they have an opportunity to progress in their chosen career. One thing we are sure of is that children need to be at the heart of any childcare system. The quality of the care and education that our children receive is of the utmost importance and it's time we made commitments to ensure that there is enough funding and resources in place to ensure our children get the care and education that they rightly deserve.

## Working Group

In July 2015 An Tánaiste and Leader of the Labour Party Joan Burton TD set up a Working Group to look at the issue of childcare in Ireland and to advise on the exact make-up of the package that the Labour Party will put to the electorate in relation to this issue in the run up to the next election. The Working Group comprised of Deputies Michael McCarthy, Ciara Conway, Arthur Spring and Joanna Tuffy. The provision of affordable, good quality childcare will be a priority for Labour if we are returned after the election.

This Working Group Report is the culmination of a months-long series of grassroots community engagements and consultation across urban and rural Ireland as part of this campaign. Through our direct community engagements throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, we have both met and listened to parents, grandparents, families, and service providers. They have all voiced their unique experience of childcare in Ireland, what works for them, what does not and how things could be made easier for families.

The goal of this Working Group Report is to identify and acknowledge the unique experiences relating to childcare across Ireland and to lead the debate as to what change is required to our childcare structures and systems. The Report also sets out clear and constructive approaches of how we can offer more supports to parents, higher quality childcare for children and better working conditions for childcare workers.

We need to ensure that our children are provided with the best quality childcare that is affordable for all. There is no doubt that this will require considerable investment, however the outcomes of such investment will mean that it will repay itself in terms of increased participation in the workforce by parents, particularly mothers, and enhanced opportunities and outcomes for children.

## Let's Talk about Childcare Survey

As part of this childcare campaign, the Working Group drew up a survey (at the end of this Report) asking parents about their childcare arrangements. This survey was advertised online and it was promoted by our TDs and Senators in their local communities. People who attended the many public meetings we held on childcare we also asked to complete the survey. There were over 650 responses to this survey from across Ireland these responses have informed our research and helped us to write this Report. The key results are outlined [in the report].

**Related link:** The childcare conundrum [3]

**Region:** Europe [4]

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