

Call for ramped up investment in childcare and family leave ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

National representative bodies for trade unions and business have called jointly for the next government to make childcare a priority by increasing investment and strengthening family leave provisions.

Start Strong – a coalition group campaigning to improve government policy on early years in Ireland – have asked election candidates to make a Promise to Children as part of their Early Years #GE16 campaign.

Start Strong want to ensure affordable, accessible, quality childcare services and strengthen family leave.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (Ictu) and Chambers Ireland have thrown their weight behind the campaign.

Ciairín de Buis, chief executive of Start Strong said strengthening family leave through the addition of six months' paid parental leave will mean parents can care for their children for the first 12 months.

"Today our nation's youngest children are being short-changed. Most parents can't stay at home with their baby until their first birthday. And while parents work, they worry about placing their young children in expensive childcare which can vary hugely in quality," said Mr de Buis.

"By significantly increasing investment, linking that funding to quality services through direct subsidies, and placing a cap on fees for parents, we can realise affordable, quality, accessible early years for young children – meaning parents can afford to work, knowing their child will be well cared for," he said.

Affordable care

Mark O'Mahoney, director of policy and communications at Chambers Ireland said access to affordable, high-quality childcare "has long been a problem for both parents and employers here".

"Until we rethink our approach to childcare services our businesses will continue to lose talented employees, parents will be forced out of work, and Government will lose out on potential additional taxation revenue," said Mr O'Mahoney.

"Investing in young children will reap huge economic benefits – not just through long-term improvements in education and career outcomes which quality care can provide to children – but also in the short term. Currently Ireland is suffering an extraordinary loss in skills and talent because half of all of women with two or more children do not re-enter the workforce," he said.

David Joyce, equality officer with Ictu said: "Family leave and childcare measures that are high quality, affordable and accessible to all would take huge pressures off these families."

-reprinted from The Irish Times

Region: Europe ^[3]

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