

GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 2024

In this manifesto, we outline the key issues that have been highlighted by the people who use our services and the funding challenges we face as one of the largest disability service providers in the country. We make recommendations on actions that you can take to address these issues.

We ask you to pledge that, if elected, you will work to address the following issues:



COST OF DISABILITY

Everyday we hear how the people who use our services are struggling to afford the basics. People with disabilities often encounter a range of additional costs, including medical expenses, adaptive equipment, additional transport costs and personal care, which put significant pressure on their limited budgets. The extra financial burdens makes it difficult for them to afford basic necessities such as food, housing, and healthcare.

We ask you to pledge to:

- Implement the recommendations of the report this Government commissioned Indecon to carry out in 2021 and introduce a Cost of Disability Payment.



HOUSING & INDEPENDENT LIVING

The people who use our services report being forced to live at home with their parents and struggling to get the services they need.

We ask you to pledge to:

- Increase investment in housing provision and supports to enable people with disabilities to live independent lives.
- Fund the implementation of the Housing Strategy for Disabled People (2022-2027), with specific reference to carrying out the review of the Capital Acquisitions Scheme (CAS) which is not meeting needs as intended.
- Increase the number of Personal Assistance Hours and Home Support.

TRANSPORT

Transport is an essential tool to access every aspect of society. Our service users have stated that lack of accessible transport impacts their education, employment, and social inclusion.

We ask you to pledge to:

- Put in place the long-promised Transport Support Scheme to replace the Motorised Transport Grant and the Mobility Allowance as recommended by the Ombudsman.
- Provide financial support for individualised transport, including subsidies for people with disabilities to avail of driving lessons.
- Increase investment in Local Link to expand on the service it already provides and to ensure those services are viable and accessible to disabled people.



EMPLOYMENT

Structural, policy, and societal barriers are preventing people with disabilities from entering employment. Ireland has the worst employment rate of people with disabilities in the EU.

We ask you to pledge to:

- Invest in and develop a clear, comprehensive strategy to support people with disabilities to gain and retain employment.
- Commit to an annual review of the Wage Subsidy Scheme and link to increases in the National Minimum Wage.
- Support a funding stream for the Work Ready Programme within the Social Protection envelope.
- Support a Public Procurement policy to facilitate reserved contracts for organisations employing people with a disability.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

The next government must address the need for greater supports for people with disabilities in further education and training. It must also address the funding challenges faced by the service providers who provide further education and training to people with disabilities.

We ask you to pledge to:

- Ensure a first-class education experience for NLN students with disabilities, through the funding for core costs at 2024 rates, provision of capital investment, and make provision for students' extracurricular activities.



ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Assistive Technology can be as basic as a magnifying glass for someone with a visual impairment or as technical as a computer that speaks for a person who cannot speak. Rehab wants the next Government to make sure Assistive Technology is available and affordable for people with a disability to ensure technology can aid their independence.

We ask you to pledge to:

- Invest in the development of an Irish Assistive Technologies ecosystem that supports the active inclusion and participation of disabled people in all aspects of life.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

There are significant obstacles to people with disabilities accessing healthcare. The costs associated with healthcare present significant barriers for disabled people to access general, mental, and dental healthcare.

We ask you to pledge to:

- Address hidden healthcare costs by ensuring all medical and dental needs are covered by the medical card and ensuring speedy access to mental health services.
- Recognise that supports for mental health go beyond clinical and invest in greater social inclusion opportunities.
- Ensure funding is in place for people who acquire a disability or who present later in life requiring day services.
- Include funding for transport running costs (driver, insurance etc.) for adult day services.



FUNDING, PAY & REFORM

There is an urgent need to deal with the funding crisis in disability services, which stems from the absence of a policy or strategy defining the role of the sector in delivering disability services for which the state is responsible.

We ask you to pledge to:

- Ensure equality and pay parity for service providers consistent with those of staff in state-delivered services.
- Provide adequate, ongoing, multi-annual and sustainable funding for disability services delivering vital services to disabled people on behalf of the HSE and the State.
- Provide funding to meet the targets outlined in the Action Plan for Disability Services and to resource implementation and oversight of the forthcoming National Disability Strategy.
- Ensure that funding is in place for S39 organisations to include Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) supports within their services .
- Provide funding to cover the full cost of regulation including payment for bank holidays, increases in the minimum wage etc.