



CHARTER FOR

WOMEN & GENDER

EQUALITY

2024

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Key Priorities

Healthcare and Well Being

1. Decriminalise abortion.
2. Abolish the mandatory 3-day wait period & Increase the 12-week limit to allow for abortion on request.
3. Offer all pregnant people first-trimester screening and non-invasive prenatal testing.
4. Unlimited access to a dietician, physiotherapist, mental health supports — pre and post-natal (up to two years) — and during the menopause.
5. Free period products.

LGBTQI+ Right to Health

6. Free, accessible, GP-led trans healthcare, based on informed consent.
7. Include intersex and non-binary people in the gender recognition act and extend act to 16-18 year olds.
8. Free gender care through an Irish NHS, including services like psychotherapy, counselling, speech and language therapy, hormone therapy, hair removal, and gender reassignment surgery.
9. Non-Biased Sex Education to enable and empower adolescents to access comprehensive relationship and reproductive health care education.

Pay and Leave

10. End the gender pay gap - increase pay rates for traditionally female jobs and level up pay for part-time workers to full-time rates.
11. Mandatory maternity and paternity pay.
12. Increase statutory sick pay to 100% of wages and ensure all workers are covered from day 1 of their sickness.
13. Introduce paid care leave, without loss of income and increase annual leave for all workers.

Childcare

14. Establish a fully publicly owned and funded National Childcare Service to provide free childcare for all.
15. Provide free preschool meals for all children in the ECCE scheme.
16. An immediate €2 per hour wage increase for all childcare workers.
17. Extend paid Parent's Leave and amalgamate it with Maternity and Paternity Leave to provide 12 months' paid leave for each parent in the first two years of a child's life.

Gender Based Violence

18. Emergency funding for safe refuge and other domestic violence services - triple funding to provide a safe refuge in every county and for at least 472 places.
19. Invest in sexual assault treatment units and counselling for survivors.
20. More funding for civil legal aid services and for the courts to process cases promptly.

Public Services

21. Get the churches out of public schools and the health system - separate church and state.
22. Provide essential public services free at the point of delivery.

Introduction

People Before Profit stands for a radical improvement in the lives of women, men, and non-binary people. As a socialist organisation we are proud to fight for a society free from sexism, racism, misogyny, and exploitation. Our activists have been, and continue to be, centrally involved in the fight for full reproductive justice. People Before Profit members have also been central to the fight to eradicate gender-based violence and for the supports that women need to end abusive relationships. Ireland will not be liberated until women, trans and non-binary people are fully liberated, fully supported, and fully included.

To achieve this, we will need to work inside and outside the Dáil. We need to challenge issues at government level while also building mass movements on our streets, in our workplaces and in our communities. People Before Profit is proud to play a role in building these movements for liberation and for an end to all forms of capitalist oppression.

Women play an indispensable role in our society, particularly in healthcare, caregiving, and education — fields where they represent the majority of the workforce. Across the world, women make up 70% of the healthcare professionals on the frontline in hospitals and other health facilities. In their roles as wives and mothers, women provide a disproportionate amount of care and support, while doing most of the housework and often holding down a second job. Our children also rely disproportionately on women as childcare professionals, primary school teachers, special needs assistants and social care workers.

In each of these ways, women provide essential support that allows others to lead more rewarding lives. Their own reward in Irish society is to live with less wealth, lower incomes, and more precarious employment than their male counterparts. They also live in a state that refuses to provide full reproductive justice; a state that continues to create barriers to abortion services, even after the historic victory in repealing the Eight Amendment.

The lack of social and affordable housing has meant some women staying in abusive relationships longer than they should. Women are more likely to be responsible for household budgets and in lower paid jobs, which has left them severely impacted by the cost of living crises. Women have also been overlooked for vital healthcare services with medication such as HRT and vital services such as smear tests, breast-check, and gynaecology assessments often deprioritised.

For transgender and non-binary people the state's record is even more shameful. Both groups remain among the most vulnerable members of Irish society despite the state rhetoric of non-discrimination. Trans and non-binary people continue to face extremely high levels of stigmatisation and marginalisation with the state's lack of recognition for non-traditional identities a major contributing factor. Research by Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) shows that suicidality,

regular harassment, violence, and systemic discrimination are commonplace for trans gender and non-binary people who suffer gross abuse of their human rights as a result. There is only one Irish clinic offering public healthcare to trans people who currently face a six-year waiting list. There is also a ban on blood donation from gay and bisexual men unless they can prove they have been celibate for 12 months. These are forms of discrimination that have no place in a progressive Ireland.

Over the past 100 years of FF-FG rule, the inequalities in our society have only been amplified. Women, trans and non-binary people have faced the brunt of the rising cost of living. Higher inflation in energy and food has pushed more women and non-binary people into poverty, vulnerability, and insecurity. However, it doesn't have to be this way

This charter for Women and Gender Equality lays out key policies in four key areas that would, if implemented, radically improve the lives of women, trans and non-binary people. In the areas of Childcare, Reproductive Health Care, Working Conditions and Pay, and Sexism and Gender Based Violence this document shows what would be done by People Before Profit to build a more inclusive, progressive, and supportive society.

Gender Health Care and Well Being

Health Care is essential to human well-being, but our current services are highly unequal. The richest people have gold-plated access while poorer patients are made to wait. Poorer people suffer greater health problems and die earlier than their wealthier counterparts. People Before Profit want to end this health-based apartheid. Our goal is to use resources to track patients' needs rather than paperwork or private profits. This involves moving towards a **National Healthcare System** paid for through progressive taxation.

In Ireland, women's healthcare has never been a priority for the state. Historically, the influence of the catholic church as well as the push for privatisation of our health services has meant that women have suffered disproportionately in the treatment they received. There have been many scandals surrounding women's healthcare, including Mother and Baby Homes, Symphysiotomy, Thalidomide, and, more recently, Cervical Check.

We have a gender health gap in society alongside the gender pay gap: women are 25% less likely than men to receive pain relief; women, transmen and non-binary people are five times more likely to feel that they have not been listened to when seeking medical help for their reproductive health. Research shows that when people who identified as women came to their doctors with legitimate concerns around chronic pain, they were more likely to be described as 'emotional' and 'psychogenic' by their medical expert. Gender discrimination in accessing healthcare is amplified by socio-economic factors such as birthplace, housing, work, and income which often lead to less healthy diets, lifestyles, and outcomes. Equal access to healthcare is also more precarious for migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women.

In 2018, the Irish electorate voted 67% in favour of repealing the Eighth Amendment. Since then, laws have been enacted which have fallen short — not only of the Citizen's Assembly recommendations, but also of calls from activists during the campaign. The O'Shea report released in 2023 highlighted many barriers to abortion access that are still in place with not all counties or maternity hospitals providing abortion services. Some women still have to travel for the healthcare they require. During the campaign, there was also a government promise of non-biased sex education, which has yet to be enacted.

People Before Profit have always been a pro-choice party. We believe all people should have a choice in whether they choose to have children or not and that the state should support their choices. This position can clearly be seen in our childcare policies, along with our call for free IVF treatment for those that require it.

People Before Profit are aware that women's healthcare involves much more than reproductive healthcare. Demands will change over time due to best practice and scientific discoveries. But regarding abortion services we believe they should be free, safe, legal, and locally provided.

We call for:

- Decriminalise abortion. At present, healthcare professionals must police themselves while the fear of a possible 14-year sentence undermines care and puts women's lives at risk.
- Abolish the mandatory 3-day wait period which is intended to make women rethink their decision. This is insulting to women and creates a barrier to accessing abortion services.

- Increase the 12-week limit to allow for abortion on request.
- Removal of the PPS number requirement: Abortion should be free at the point of access for all users.
- Ensure all women with a diagnosis of severe or fatal foetal anomaly should be guaranteed compassionate care in their own country.
- Ensure abortion services are accessible on a 32-county basis.

Our wider societal demands concerning reproductive healthcare are:

- Define 'health' in line with the WHO's definition: 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'.
- All hospitals to be state-owned and run free of religious regulations.
- Non-Biased Sex Education to enable and empower adolescents to access comprehensive relationship and reproductive health care education.
- Make the free contraception scheme universal and introduce free HRT for all women who need it including consultation and prescription charges.
- Accurate and accessible material relevant to each stage of the reproductive life cycle.
- Free period products.
- Appointed gynecologist for the duration of reproductive life.
- Offer all pregnant people first-trimester screening and Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing.
- Unlimited access to a dietician and physiotherapist and mental health supports — pre-and post-natal (up to two years) — and during the menopause.
- Appointed midwife and gynecologist for the duration of pregnancy.
- Fully support pregnant people's birth plan based on best practice and evidence-based health checks.
- Access to a lactation consultant and all infant feeding supports/equipment.
- Increased public health nurse visits in the first six weeks of returning home after birth.
- Access to a dedicated mental health professional during pregnancy and post birth for at least two years.
- Free at-the-point-of-use fertility treatment.
- All medicines associated with reproductive healthcare to be free, including treatment for PCOS, Endometriosis, Pregnancy, Abortion, Menopause.
- All additional costs other than medical associated with health issues to be free at the point of use.

LGBTQI+ Right To Health

In 2015 the Gender Recognition act was passed enabling trans people to achieve full legal recognition of their preferred gender. This was also the year that there was a huge campaign that won marriage equality. Although these were huge strides forwards for the LGBTQI+ community a number of legal and social issues remain, homophobia and transphobia are still a significant problem. Despite the huge progress made in Ireland in the past 25 years, depression, suicide and addiction rates among LGBTQI+ people are still significantly higher than among the general population. Isolation is also a serious issue, especially in more rural areas, and among older LGBTQI+ people.

Currently there are no public healthcare options available to trans people under the age of 17. For those over 17, there is only one clinic, Loughlinstown. This is inaccessible for many, with waiting lists of over six years, and outdated methods of assessment.

We call for:

- Free, accessible, GP-led trans healthcare, based on informed consent.
- Ban Intersex Genital Mutilation.
- Include intersex and non-binary people in the gender recognition act.
- Full equality for gay or bisexual men donating blood. This means ending the twelve-month celibacy rule that currently exists.
- Extension of gender recognition act to 16-18 year-olds.
- Access to gender-neutral toilets in schools, workplaces and public buildings.
- A third gender option for non-binary people on all official forms.
- Make anti-retroviral drugs, such as pre-exposure prophylaxis, free to all those that need it.
- Legislation to allow all LGBTQI+ people fleeing persecution to live in Ireland.
- Free gender care through an Irish NHS, including services like psychotherapy, counselling, speech and language therapy, hormone therapy, hair removal and gender reassignment surgery.
- Restoration and improvement of funding for mental health and addiction treatment services.
- Proper funding for LGBTQI+ organisations and resource centres.
- Age-appropriate sex education that deals with issues around gender, sexuality, safe sex, consent and contraception.
- Anti-bullying initiatives for schools, youth groups, sports clubs etc.
- LGBTQI+ awareness training for workplaces, community organisations, sports clubs etc.
- People Before Profit is a 32-county organisation. We support full equality for LGBTQI+ people across the island.

Working Conditions & Pay: Against Gender Discrimination

Women are more likely to work part-time and to have precarious, insecure, or seasonal working conditions. They are also four times more likely than men to be unable to work outside the home due to caring responsibilities. Ireland is a low-pay economy overall compared to other European countries, but women workers are even more likely to be low-paid compared to men.

The gender pay gap of 9.6% does not fully capture these realities. It fails to account for differences in the number and reliability of hours worked, or the lifetime earnings gap between women and men which means lower pensions and harsher poverty in old age.

All this means women are poorer on average than men and less economically independent. This, in turn, greatly contributes to sexism, harassment, and discrimination inside and outside the workplace.

The cost-of-living crisis is hitting low-paid women workers especially hard. Research shows that the lower your income, the higher your personal rate of inflation. The starting point for winning better pay and working conditions for women is to organise ourselves in trade unions and fight together with our male co-workers for better pay and conditions for all, including shorter working hours and more family-friendly working environments.

We demand and campaign for:

- Automatically increase wages in line with inflation.
- Increase the minimum wage to at least €15 an hour.
- End the gender pay gap — increase pay rates for traditionally female jobs (such as childcare, care work, nursing, SNAs etc.) and level up pay for part-time workers to full-time rates.
- Abolish the USC for workers earning less than €100,000.
- Reduce the working week to 4 days or 30 hours without loss of pay or intensification of work — this will encourage a more equal sharing of caring responsibilities and cut carbon emissions by up to 20%.
- Mandatory maternity and paternity pay.
- The state pension to be paid at 65. Mandatory provision for pension schemes in all jobs.
- Protection of the standard employment contract to ensure workers on these contracts remain at low risk from precariousness. A financial penalty for companies over-reliant on temporary contracts. Bogus self-employment should end.
- Protection from dismissal from day 1 in the job.
- Increase statutory sick pay to 100% of wages and ensure all workers are covered from day 1 of their sickness.
- Introduce paid care leave so workers can look after sick children or elderly relatives without loss of income and increase annual leave for all workers.
- Introduce a real right to work remotely, including a meaningful right to appeal management decisions on remote and hybrid working.

- Repeal all anti-trade union laws — replace with a Charter of Workers’ Rights which includes full collective bargaining rights, mandatory union recognition, the right to act in solidarity with picket lines and workplace occupations, and to engage in political and sympathy strikes.
- Zero tolerance for workplace sexism, harassment, and discrimination.

Childcare: Free Access As A Social Right

Ireland remains among the worst countries in Europe for childcare. Female employment has reached a record high, but the Irish childcare system consistently fails to deliver. Childcare provision compares poorly with other countries. The percentage of four-year-olds in early childhood and primary education in Ireland is one of the lowest in the OECD. Government investment in childcare is only half the EU average.

The current free Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is inadequate. It is meant to provide two years of free pre-school education to children in Ireland, but it covers just three hours of care per day, during the school term only. Childcare fees are unaffordable. Fees nationally for childcare average €810 per month and in some areas of Dublin its over €1200 per month. This is totally unacceptable. The 2022 Universal Child Subsidy Scheme now applies to children up to 15 years, but the amounts given are pitiful.

There is a pay and conditions crisis in the childcare sector. For the 25,000 employed in the Early Years Sector, average pay is just over €13 an hour. Over a third of providers are unable to recruit employees with half unable to retain staff. More than 40% of those currently working in the sector are actively seeking alternative employment. This leads to double discrimination: for parents and for those who work in the sector. Three quarters of childcare services are provided for profit and large childcare chains like Giraffe and Safari are making millions

Successive governments led by FF and FG have left childcare provision - as they do with everything else - to the market. Childcare is mainly in the hands of private providers who are subsidized by the government. Huge childcare costs mean that many parents in paid work are forced to get by with 'informal childcare' — provided through family and friends.

People Before Profit would transition rapidly to a fully publicly owned and funded National Childcare Service, available to all parents for free. A National Childcare Service is the best model to guarantee universal, free quality childcare for all children as well as excellent pay and conditions for workers.

We call for:

- Immediately abolish childcare fees for parents.
- Establish a fully publicly owned and funded National Childcare Service to provide free childcare for all.
- As part of a programme to transition to a publicly owned and funded childcare system we would immediately invest €1.5 billion to expand the number of childcare places including by making better use of suitable state-owned buildings and through compulsory purchase of suitable privately owned buildings.
- Provide free preschool meals for all children in the ECCE scheme.
- An immediate €2 per hour wage increase for all childcare workers.
- Extend paid Parent's Leave and amalgamate it with Maternity and Paternity Leave to provide 12 months' paid leave for each parent in the first two years of a child's life.

End Sexism & Gender-Based Violence

Despite the gains women, LGBTQI+, and non-binary people have made over the last century, we still live in an extremely sexist society. Women continue to face sexual harassment, abuse, and violence - in addition to the countless ways we experience discrimination, 'mansplaining', or outright dismissal of our ideas.

- One in four women in Ireland has reported experiencing physical or sexual violence since the age of 15.
- Over 60% of women avoid public places for fear of sexual assault.
- 267 femicides — that is, women and girls killed by men — have occurred since Women's Aid began collecting data in 1996. (this does not include Savita Halappanavar or any other women who died because, until 2018, women and pregnant people were denied control over their own bodies).

Men are also deeply harmed by sexist ideas that define males as hyper-masculine and dominant. This teaches men that part of being male involves dominating and controlling women, that you are the 'head of the household' and responsible for your family. Compared to women much fewer men are teachers or nurses or full-time carers for their children for example.

The fight against sexism is also about ending the rigid gender binary that prescribes certain sexual behaviour and desires, as well as relationships as 'normal' and supported by the state and society at large. Sexism is not the result of biological differences between men and women, nor has it 'always been this way'. It is capitalist society that reinforces and reproduces the ideas that 1) men are — and always have been — better, stronger, and smarter than women, or are more capable and 'natural' leaders and, 2) that women are the property of men — first, their fathers, then their boyfriends or husbands.

This sexism is reproduced in the rise of the far right in Ireland who have directed their anger towards migrants, women, and trans people. They have stated they will repeal Ireland's abortion laws and women have been referred to as breeders. They have also wrongly claimed that asylum seekers are more likely to inflict violence towards women. In fact, most gender-based violence is inflicted by men who women live with or know. Women's Aid say one in four women in Ireland who have been in a relationship have been abused by a current or former partner. More than half (52%) of women report experiencing sexual violence in their lifetime. The Istanbul Convention, which Ireland has signed, requires 476 family refuge places. Yet the government is only committed to 280 units nationwide by the end of 2026.

The movement in Ireland against all forms of gender-based violence is part of a new global feminist wave. Ultimately, no single policy will prevent all future violence, nor stop that which is already happening daily. We need to pull out the roots of gender-based violence and that means building a powerful grassroots movement to end the sexist capitalist system.

We call for:

- Emergency funding for safe refuge and other services — triple funding to provide a safe refuge in every county (9 counties currently have no refuge) and for at least 472 places.
- Objective, pro-LGBTQI+, sex and consent education in schools and colleges.
- Invest in sexual assault treatment units, counselling for survivors and rehabilitation for offenders
- More funding for civil legal aid services and for the courts to process cases promptly, prioritising them so they are dealt with faster to ensure victims aren't forced to wait endlessly.
- Trade union campaigns to organise women dominated workplaces and an education campaign to inform workers about the prevalence of domestic violence in society and the power of organised workers to both demand action now and ultimately stamp it out.
- Get the churches out of public schools and health system — separate church and state.
- Provide essential public services free at the point of delivery.

Conclusion

This Charter for Women and Gender Equality is a call to arms. It shines a light on the injustices perpetuated by the Irish state under Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. It demands justice for those currently being discriminated against, oppressed, and exploited. The policies outlined in the document would be implemented immediately by a left government.

People Before Profit is proud to demand much, much more. We are proud stand with women, trans and non-binary people in their struggle for justice. We believe in a society freed from all forms of oppression and exploitation and we actively fight to create it. We organise against structures of sexism, racism, and exploitation and fight for social relations underpinned by emancipation, solidarity, justice, and support for all. An ethic based on human need and human flourishing not one based on profit, selfishness, and competition. Indeed, we hope the ideas contained in the document will be used as a marker of what can be done if socialists are elected to fight for a fairer, more progressive society – one that genuinely values every life equally.

We will fight for this society inside and outside of the Dáil.

