

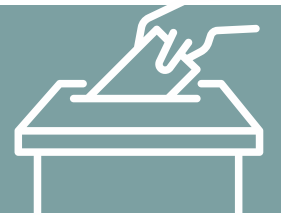
Liberty

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General Election 2020



Vote to STOP67

■ by Frank Connolly

Union members across the country should only vote for parties which have endorsed the STOP67 campaign demands to stop the increase in the pension age in the general election on Saturday, 8th February, according to SIPTU General Secretary, Joe Cunningham.

The SIPTU 'STOP67' campaign, which is supported by a coalition of organisations, calls for repeal of the section of the Social Welfare and Pensions Act which provides for an increase in the state pension age to 67 on 1st January 2021. It is also seeking the establishment of a stakeholder's forum to discuss other issues of importance for retired workers.

The other coalition members backing the SIPTU campaign include the National Women's Council of Ireland, Age Action and Active Retirement Ireland.

At the formal launch of the 'STOP67' coalition on Thursday (23rd January) in Dublin, Joe Cunningham called on Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil to back the campaign. He said these two parties' proposals concerning the rise in the pension age do not meet the demand to stop the increase to 67 next year or to 68 in 2028.

"Most of the other political parties are supporting the 'STOP67' campaign but Fine Gael clearly are not. Fianna Fáil has also stopped short of endorsing the campaign by merely promising to defer the increase," he said.

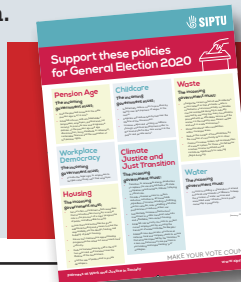
Joe Cunningham also called for support for the stakeholder's

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From left: Joe Cunningham, SIPTU General Secretary, Maureen Kavanagh, Chief Executive of Active Retirement Ireland, Ethel Buckley, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Paddy Connolly, Chief Executive of Age Action, Orla O'Connor, Director of the National Women's Council of Ireland and Michel Taft, SIPTU Economic Researcher at the launch of SIPTU's Stop 67 campaign on Thursday 23rd January in the Royal College of Physicians, Dublin.

Photo: Jimmy Weldon



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GENERAL ELECTION
WORKPLACE POSTER >**



WORKERS RIGHTS CENTRE

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8.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.,
Monday - Friday
wrc@siptu.ie

Make **your vote** count



The 2020 general election will be a defining moment for SIPTU members and for workers across Ireland. The result will

determine how our society and economy will be managed over the first years of this new decade. It will affect your income, your quality of life and the future for your family.

It will determine whether there is adequate provision of housing and shelter, decent healthcare and childcare services and fair pensions for all citizens over the coming years. The outcome will decide whether public services such as the supply of clean water and the efficient and sustainable collection of domestic waste are fit for purpose.

For workers, it will mean the difference between being able to bargain collectively for better wages and conditions with employers or being at their mercy. The election result will also decide whether a new government is able and willing to tackle the fundamental threat of climate change to our planet.

In order to assist you with the decisions you and your family must make in the coming days and weeks, we have prepared this special edition of Liberty for General Election 2020. It covers most of the policies we believe are of greatest concern to our members and for workers across the country.

There has been an attempt to make this election a simple choice between the two largest political parties and their leaders. This is a false choice. Based on recent elections, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil represent just over 50% of the

electorate with almost half of voters opting for other political parties or Independents.

We are not asking you to vote for any particular candidate or party. We are asking that you consider the policies and the manifesto published in these pages and to vote on Saturday 8th February for the candidates and parties that are most likely to deliver them.

We have also included a special poster with Liberty setting out the union's policies for GE2020, as agreed by the SIPTU National Executive Council, for display in your workplace.

Make your vote count.

**In solidarity,
Joe Cunningham,
SIPTU General Secretary**



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forum to discuss the wider issues affecting retirees. "This forum must include trade unions, employers, political and civic society. This is because the impact of any change to the pension age is so widely felt and, in particular, by the most vulnerable in our society."

At the launch, SIPTU Researcher, Michael Taft, explained how stopping the increase in the age of entitlement to the state pension would cost €217 million per year which should be funded out of the surplus in the Social Insurance Fund which is currently running at €1.4 billion a year.

Taft said that, "Talk of a future pensions timebomb is a myth. Ireland has the youngest population in Europe and one of the highest pension ages."

He added: "There is no doubt that in the future we will have to increase resources to pay for pensions. The problem we have is that the scaremongering that is used is actually limiting the ability to have an evidence-based debate on this issue."

Taft said a stakeholder forum could consider future costs of funding pensions based on a stronger economy.

Members of the SIPTU District Councils are bringing the message of the STOP67 campaign directly to election candidates around the country. The union has also ensured that the voices of members directly affected by the changes to

pension entitlements have been widely heard in the media. These include former hospital worker Sue Redmond who retired at 65 years of age in 2017 at the end of her contract. She said: "When I finished working, I had to go down and sign on the dole and apply for Jobseeker's Benefit. I had to tell the staff there that I was looking for work or they wouldn't process my claim.

"This experience made me feel absolutely horrible. You are asked all sort of questions and must bring in bank statements and other documents."

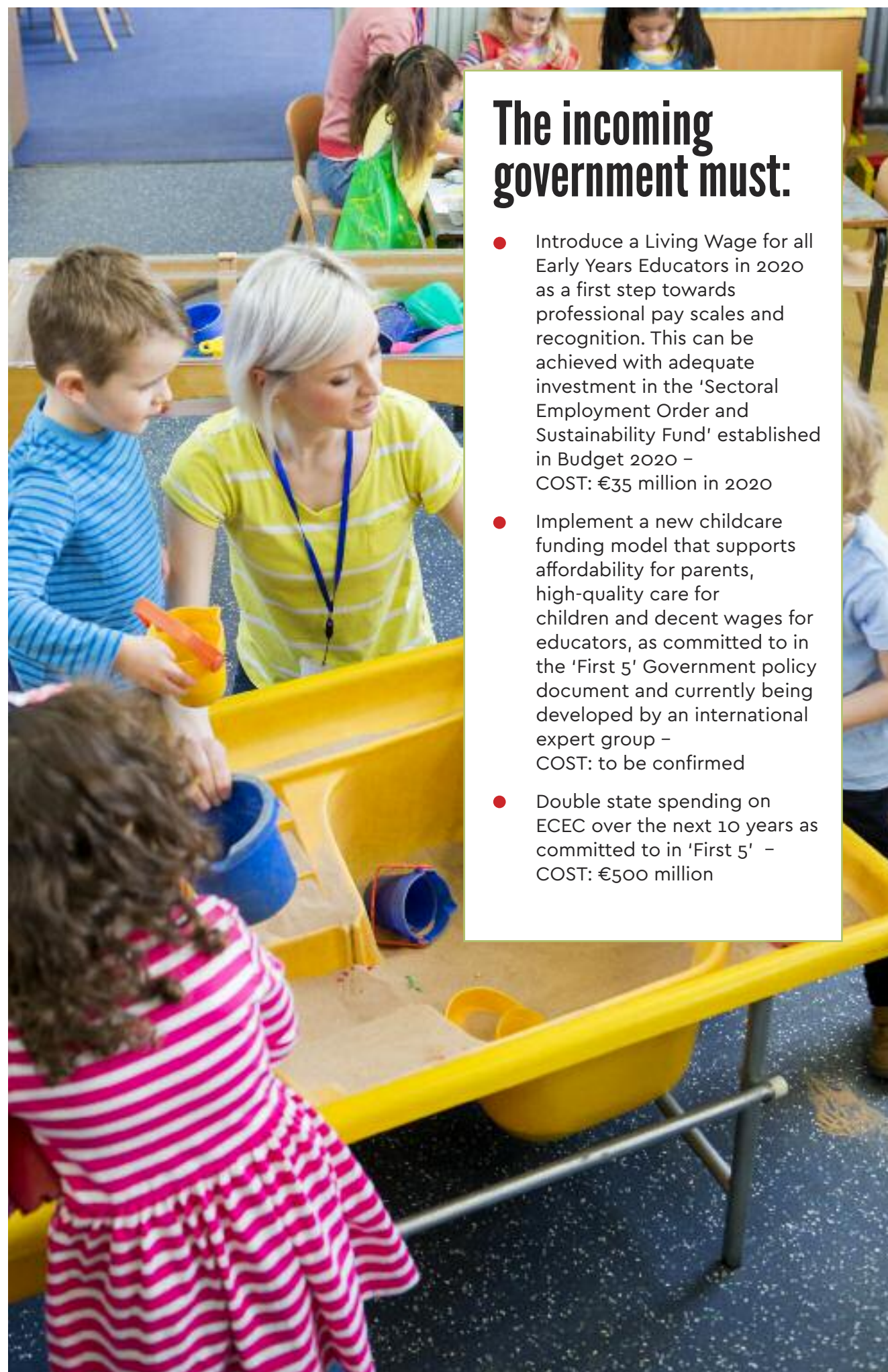
SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley, said: "SIPTU members have made the plan to raise the pension age to 67 one of the major issues of this election campaign."

She added: "If the STOP67 campaign succeeds, as I am sure it will, it should send a clear signal to everyone that there is power in our union."

Take action visit www.pensionage.ie

SIPTU members can contact their Organiser or SIPTU Communications Department for Stop67 campaign materials, posters etc.

Investing in our children



The incoming government must:

- Introduce a Living Wage for all Early Years Educators in 2020 as a first step towards professional pay scales and recognition. This can be achieved with adequate investment in the 'Sectoral Employment Order and Sustainability Fund' established in Budget 2020 – COST: €35 million in 2020
- Implement a new childcare funding model that supports affordability for parents, high-quality care for children and decent wages for educators, as committed to in the 'First 5' Government policy document and currently being developed by an international expert group – COST: to be confirmed
- Double state spending on ECEC over the next 10 years as committed to in 'First 5' – COST: €500 million

The enduring benefits of Early Childhood Education and Care...

INVESTING in high-quality, affordable Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) has long-term benefits for children, the economy and society.

High-quality ECEC raises educational outcomes, reduces child poverty and enhances future employability. Affordable ECEC also improves workforce participation, particularly for women.

However, extremely low pay and high fees are undermining these policy objectives. While Ireland has the highest childcare fees in the EU, ECEC professionals are some of the lowest paid workers in the economy.

Most are struggling to make ends meet and staff turnover is at 23% per year. This is undermining quality for children and the sustainability of services.

Unsurprisingly at 0.2% of GDP, Ireland's investment in ECEC is far below the EU average of 0.7% of GDP and the UNICEF recommended 1%.

Costings...

Pay and Sectoral Employment Order

Taking the latest POBAL figures, the cost of ensuring all ECEC professionals earn the Living Wage will cost approximately €35 million. The cost will potentially be lower as the calculation includes funding for service providers that can well afford to pay the Living Wage. The details of the funding mechanism have yet to be determined and may not benefit very profitable services paying less than the Living Wage.

Overall Spending

'First 5' is a government strategy for children and young people. It commits to doubling current spending on ECEC over the next 10 years. The benchmark is €502.2 million in 2018.

STOP the State Pension Age increase

Working longer...

2014

Pension age effectively rose from 65 to 66 years through the abolition of the Transition Pension

2021

Planned increase to 67 years

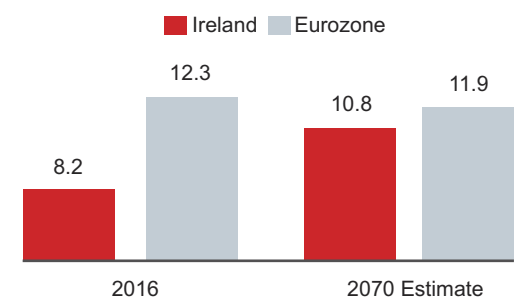
2028

Planned increase to 68 years



The 'demographic time-bomb' is a myth

Government Spending on Pensions: % of National Income



In 2016, Ireland spent 8% of national income on public pensions. This will rise by less than three percentage points over the next 50 years. Not only do we spend less on public pensions than any other Eurozone country today, in 50 years' time we will still be spending less than the amount Eurozone countries spend today.

The so-called demographic time-bomb is a myth, used to justify cutting the living standards of people in retirement.

The difference is...

State Pension v Jobseekers Benefit

	Jobseekers Benefit	State Pension	Weekly difference
Single person	€203	€248	€45
With adult dependent (aged below 66)	€338	€414	€76
With adult dependent (aged over 66)	€338	€471	€133

The incoming government must:

- Stop the planned increase in the state pension age to 67 in 2021.
- Establish a forum with all stakeholders (employees, employers, political and civil society) to promote new and progressive policies on pension age and age discrimination, living standards in retirement, sustainable finances and the restoration of full pension rights. This requires a pension system that accommodates the needs of people, including flexibility in pension age.

Lack of consultation

THE planned increases in the pension age over the next eight years were implemented with little consultation or debate.

Increasing the pension age was supposedly taken for budgetary reasons. However, the Government has yet to publish a detailed impact on public finances as the result of increasing the pension age.

One thing is certain – the Government did not take the decision to increase the pension age to promote the living standards of those in retirement. In fact, it will have the opposite effect – cutting retirement income and forcing people to apply for unemployment payments.



Pensions campaign banner on Liberty Hall.

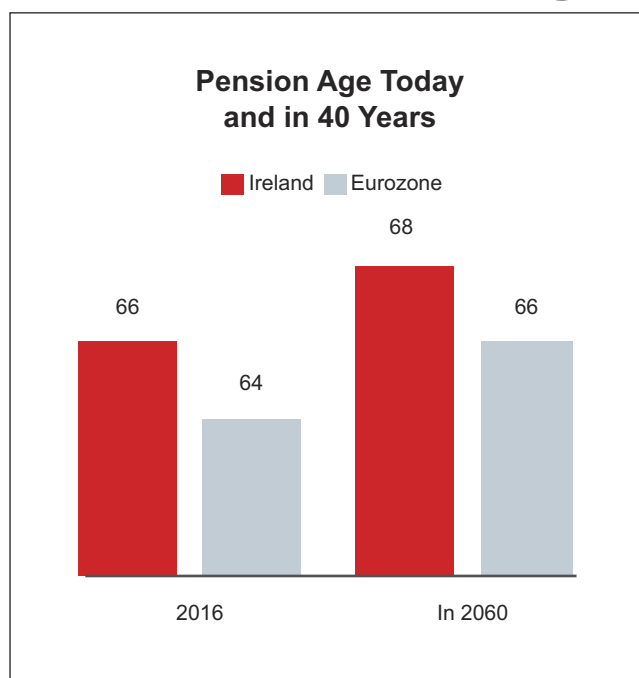
Our high pension age versus EU average

Ireland's current pension age of 66 stands in contrast to an EU average of 64 years. Yet we have far fewer older people – nearly 30% less than other EU countries.

The Government intends to increase the pension age to 68 by 2028. The OECD projects that based on current policies, the average EU pension age will only rise to 66 by 2050.

The Government intends to increase the pension age faster than almost any other European country even though in 50 years Ireland will still have the lowest number of older people – nearly 20% less than other EU countries.

We have far fewer older people but we have – and will continue to have – one of the highest pension ages in the EU. There is no logic to this unless it is seen by government as a crude revenue saving measure introduced at the expense of retired workers.



SIPTU is pursuing a three-step strategy. First - the priority is to stop the pension age from rising in 2021.

Second, the establishment of a Forum with stakeholders to engage in social dialogue on all issues relating to pensions and retirement, including the pension age.

Third, in the Forum, SIPTU will campaign for a new flexible pension age regime which would not only include the restoration of the Transition Pension but allow people to access their pension after a lifetime of contributions and to allow people to work beyond the pension age without discrimination if that is what they want.

A slashing of living standards...

THE increase in the pension age will mean a cut of between 15% and 20% in pension income over a person's lifetime in retirement.

Even though the Government is raising the pension age it has not solved the problem of people being forced to retire at the age of 65 or earlier. People forced to retire but who cannot get a pension are being forced on to unemployment payments even though they have worked and paid taxes all their lives.

Being forced on to unemployment payments, rather than receive a pension, means a loss of nearly €2,400 a year (and up to €7,000 for a couple).

This is a massive cut in living standards. Reaching 65, or 66 in 2021, an unemployed worker moving from Jobseekers Benefit to the means-tested Jobseekers Allowance may face no income for a year or a search for work at this advanced age. The budgetary gain is marginal, at best. Increasing the pension age to 67 in 2021 will 'save' the Government approximately 0.2% of national income in pension payments. But this doesn't include the cost of rising unemployment and related payments for those who have retired but have to wait for their pension.

A cross-party consensus for suspension...

In 2017, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social Protection called for a suspension in the pension age increase given the unsolved issues involved.

It said: "The Minister should review the disparity between the retirement age and pension age and the proposed increases in pensionable age should be suspended."

This Committee recommendation had the support of TDs and Senators of all political parties.

SIPTU members are only demanding what a parliamentary committee has already recommended.

SIPTU members speak out:



Tom Melia

"I will be retiring in 2026 and I won't get the State pension until 2028. I will get the Jobseekers

Benefit for the first nine months but then will have to rely on a meagre workplace pension, which was reduced by 25% during the downturn. I will have to spend whatever lump sum I have to survive."

Co-operative store worker



Broc Delaney

"The financial impact, particularly for people who are in bad health, can be devastating. For

those who are forced to work on because of such financial issues it can result in a further deterioration in their health."

Hospital worker



Susan Redmond

"When my contract ended at 65, I was forced to go onto Jobseekers Benefit. It was degrading to have to jump through

hoops to prove you were seeking jobs when you expected to be receiving a pension after a lifetime working."

Health worker



Lynda Scully

"As a community sector worker the proposed rises in the retirement age mean that my contract was

unilaterally changed without consultation so that I will not now retire until I am 68. Of course, I am very unhappy about this and believe it is unacceptable that I have to work for three years more than I expected."

Community sector worker



#Stop67

To view the full policy document visit:
www.pensionage.ie

The incoming government must:

- Set out a firm commitment which recognises that local authorities must play a central role in the provision of public and affordable housing.
- Ensure that local authorities are given additional funding and powers to have the responsibility for the design, funding and building of public housing.
- Ensure that maintenance apprenticeship programmes be rolled out across each local authority to generate trained staff to service existing and new local authority housing stock.

Housing crisis our top priority



Private sector has been tested and it has failed

Failure to meet existing housing demand and employment growth means that an increasing number of people find themselves in unsustainably expensive private rented accommodation or overcrowded housing.

Reliance on the private sector to resolve the housing shortage has been tested and has failed.

We believe that the amount of public and affordable housing required to meet the current demand can only be delivered through a massive local authority-led investment programme. SIPTU believes that there are two parts to this increased role:

- (i) planning for future housing demand and providing accordingly over the medium-term; and
- (ii) direct responsibility, control and management by local authorities of the design, funding, building and operation of the public housing programme.

Direct control of design, funding and construction

SIPTU believes we need to expand the capacity of local authorities to directly design, fund and oversee the building of public housing. The standard model of developer-led, contracted-out house building delivered on behalf of local authorities is grossly expensive.

It typically involves the sale of state lands or houses built on that land for big profit margins and it fails to deliver on sufficient numbers in public housing.

Municipal housing agencies must be established across a number of local authorities with the aim of delivering mixed income public housing.

In a major departure from the current reliance on the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, municipal agencies would have direct borrowing access to the Housing Finance Agency. It would also reduce the five-year, four-stage development process for local authorities in bringing projects from inception to completion.

Ultimately, the primary purpose of these municipal agencies must be to move beyond the sole provision by local authorities of social housing and to provide for the development of mixed-income public housing on a cost-rental basis.

Time to repair broken maintenance function

The current system of outsourcing the housing maintenance function is broken.

What exists is an expensive system of contracting of maintenance services that ultimately fails to deliver the necessary planning and quality or quantity of service. An alternative system is required.

Across the 31 local authorities in the Republic of Ireland, there is significant ongoing maintenance work required to ensure that social housing stock remains fit for purpose.

Instead, staffing levels in the housing maintenance functions of local authorities have been reduced to skeletal levels.

This has pushed local authorities to rely on private contractors for much this work. And yet, thousands of social housing tenants report exceptional and unacceptable delays in basic and very necessary housing maintenance.

All this has led to an inefficient system, where the outsourcing of planned maintenance work has become the norm rather than a temporary back-up service in the event

Not a new concept

From the foundation of the State until the 1970's, local authorities were responsible for up to a third of total housing output in this country.

The structure of how housing was produced in the first 60 years of the State offers key lessons for a solution to this major problem now.

of an under-capacity within the local authority system. SIPTU believes the following must happen:

- Maintenance apprenticeship programmes must be rolled out across each local authority to generate trained staff to service existing local authority stock.
- Central government must increase the spending line for local authority maintenance.
- Provision of planned maintenance must be by directly employed local authority staff. This ensures continuity of quality of service, local intelligence on quality in housing stock and cost effectiveness.

To view the full policy document visit:
www.siptu.ie

Raise the Roof

Help solve the housing crisis on Feb 8th

Vote for candidates who back public housing, affordable homes & fair rents

Invest in Public Housing

In 1975 local authorities built 8,794 new homes, when resources were scarce. In 2018 – during the biggest housing crisis in our history – they built just over 800. This is because the Government has outsourced housing to private developers, who seek high prices and profits. We need to invest in building high quality 'green' public housing on public land to solve the crisis. The State owns enough public land to build over 100,000 new homes.

Build Affordable Homes

House prices in Dublin are 9 times the average wage and 'unaffordable' in over half the country. The Government's failure to tackle spiralling prices means a generation of families and young workers is locked out of the housing market. Controlling the price of land, building more public housing and tackling speculators will help deliver affordable homes and sustainable living for families, children and older people. Experts agree affordable homes could be delivered for €250,000 or less, if government acted.

Fair Rent & Secure Tenancies

Soaring rents and lack of security leave tenants exposed to eviction and homelessness. Tenants here face some of the highest rents in the EU but have less protection – while vulture fund investors get huge tax breaks. The Dáil backed a rent freeze for tenants, but the Government refused to make it law. Tenants need fair rent and stronger protection, including students living in 'digs accommodation'.

Stop Evictions into Homelessness

Evictions are the single biggest cause of family homelessness and over a third of the over 10,000 people listed as homeless are children. The rate of female homelessness is more than double that of other EU states, while 60% of homeless families are headed by lone parents, most of whom are women. Travellers make up less than 1% of the population, but 11% of homeless people in Dublin. The Expert Review on Traveller Accommodation must be implemented without delay.

Government housing policy has failed. More public housing, affordable homes and a secure rental sector will help end the crisis. Evicting people into homelessness must cease.

A Right to Housing

The Right to Housing exists in some 81 countries worldwide. Many experts believe a Right to Housing would help resolve the current crisis and create a fairer housing system. It would protect people threatened with homelessness and ensure official policy treats housing as a human right and 'a public good', like education and health care.

Raise the Roof is comprised of trade unions, housing and homeless agencies, women's groups, political parties, representatives of older people, children's advocacy groups, community organisations, student unions, Travellers' groups, housing academics and experts.

Raise the Roof is supported by...

Trade Unions:

Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU); Services, Industrial, Professional & Technical Union (SIPTU); Mandate Trade Union; Forsa Trade Union; Communications Workers Union (CWU); Unite the Union; Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO); Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI); Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI); Irish Nurses & Midwives Organisation (INMO); Financial Services Union (FSU); Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT); Association of Higher Civil & Public Servants (AHCPS); Energy Services Union (ESU); Building & Allied Trades Union (BATU); Prison Officers Association (POA); Operative Plasterers & Allied Trades Society of Ireland (OPATSI); Guinness Staff Union (GSU); Connect Trade Union; One Cork Movement; One Galway Movement; Dublin Council of Trade Unions; Waterford Council of Trade Unions; Kildare Trades Council.

Political Parties & Senators:

Sinn Féin, People Before Profit/ Solidarity, The Labour Party, Social Democrats, The Green Party, Independents4Change, Sen. Frances Black, Sen. Colette Kelleher, Sen. Lynn Ruane, Sen. Alice Mary Higgins

Homeless & Housing Agencies:

Focus Ireland, Simon Community, Inner City Helping Homeless (ICHH), Fr. Peter McVerry, Mercy Law Resource Centre, North Dublin Bay Housing Crisis Committee.

Civil Society:

National Women's Council of Ireland, National Housing & Homeless Coalition, Age Action, Children's Rights Alliance, Irish Traveller Movement, Home for Good, Inner City Organisations Network (ICON)

www.raisetherooft.ie



Activists with the Raise the Roof campaign march through Dublin city centre in May 2019 demanding houses for all and more to be done to help those who are homeless, including those in Direct Provision, students and people living in hotel rooms across Ireland. Photo: Rollingnews.ie

Our **change** agenda for

SIPTU MANIFESTO FOR THE 2020

Pension Age

The incoming government must:

- Stop the planned increase in the state pension age to 67 in 2021.
- Establish a forum with all stakeholders (employees, employers, political and civil society) to promote new and progressive policies on the pension age and age discrimination, living standards in retirement, sustainable finances and the restoration of full pension rights.
- This requires a pension system that accommodates the needs of people, including flexibility in pension age.

Workplace Democracy

Workplace democracy delivers significant economic and social benefits. The reason is simple: those with detailed knowledge of the operations of a business are best placed to identify shortcomings, correct failings and highlight what works.

Employees are not only the natural source of feedback on how things are going on the shop-floor, factory-floor, in the offices and on building sites but also the natural source of ideas and insights into how to improve work and performance.

The incoming government must:

- Provide the legal right to employees to bargain collectively with their employer.

Housing

The biggest crisis facing Ireland is the housing crisis. Excessive rents and house prices, local authority waiting lists, homelessness: this is a crisis created by government policy failure and can only be resolved by changing that policy.

We have the land, finances and builders to ensure affordable rents and home ownership and to end homelessness.

The incoming government must:

- Set out a firm commitment which recognises that local authorities must play a central role in the provision of public and affordable housing.
- Ensure that local authorities be given additional funding and powers to have the responsibility for the design, funding and building of public housing.
- Ensure that maintenance apprenticeship programmes be rolled out across each local authority to generate trained staff to service existing and new local authority housing stock.
- Reduce homelessness by half in the first two years and end homelessness over the lifetime of the government.
- End the sale of public land to private developers.



Childcare

The current model of childcare is broken. We have the highest fees in the EU with ultra-low pay levels.

Workers are leaving the sector due to poor working conditions and providers are finding it difficult to recruit or retain staff. We need a new public service model. Childcare should not be a commodity.

The incoming government must:

- Substantially reduce costs to providers by taking over the payment of wages in the sector (similar to what happens in the early childhood scheme and primary school system).
- Regulate and reduce fees by half over the lifetime of the government. Given that the main cost (labour) should be taken over by the Government, fees can be reduced while still providing adequate resources to providers.
- Increase wages and working conditions through a Sectoral Employment Order (SEO) to the level of like-for-like care workers in the public and private sector.



a better, fairer Ireland

2020 GENERAL ELECTION...

Climate Justice and Just Transition

To create a carbon-neutral economy we need 'A Green New Deal' - a sustained, substantial and transformative investment programme into renewable technologies, carbon reduction and a Just Transition for workers and communities.

The incoming government must:

- Transition to renewable energy production to replace the use of fossil-fuels with state companies (Bord na Móna, ESB, etc.) playing a critical role.
- Provide universal access to carbon-reduction activities to all households regardless of income, including retrofitting, electric vehicles, solar paneling and other programmes to reduce carbon use.
- Substantially increase Infrastructural investment in public transport networks and affordable, zero-carbon housing.
- Establish Job Security Councils: to protect current employment by ensuring the transition of workers into like-for-like jobs, while expanding new employment and enterprise, led by state companies.
- Establish new democratic structures at national, local and company levels to ensure that all those impacted by the transition to a zero-neutral economy are partners in formulating and implementing 'just' strategies.



Waste

Ireland's waste collective system is highly inefficient. In some areas, there are three or four competing waste collectors while in other areas there are none while illegal dumping is widespread. The sector is marred by low wages and poor working conditions.

The incoming government must:

- Change the current system of waste collection across Ireland so that domestic waste is collected in an environmentally sustainable manner, illegal dumping is radically reduced by ensuring that every household is provided with an affordable service and that the workers in the industry earn decent wages and work in a safe environment.
- Eliminate side-by-side competition within municipal areas.
- Introduce a tendering regime by local authorities which would incorporate EU green procurement criteria and worker protection clauses.
- Reduce the number of household bins by the creation of community bins in cities.
- Establish a service provider of last resort.
- Construct a waiver system. The re-introduction of a waiver system for those who fall below a certain income-threshold would contribute significantly to reducing illegal dumping.

Water

The incoming government must:

- Commit to holding a referendum to amend Article 28 of Bunreacht na hÉireann to keep the provision of water services and associated water infrastructure in public ownership in perpetuity.



Protest in Lanesboro in support of Bord na Móna workers, July 2019.
Photo: Courtesy Agriland

Water as a human right

Keep water public – it's what the people want

The incoming government must:

- The incoming government must commit to holding a referendum to amend Article 28 of Bunreacht na hÉireann to keep the provision of water services and associated water infrastructure in public ownership in perpetuity.

Water provision is perhaps the most essential service for the functioning of our communities.

There is widespread public and political support for a call by trade unions to have the public ownership of water services given constitutional protection.

Constitutional protection would demonstrate a recognition and commitment by the Irish State to the provision of water as a human right provided by the public service.

It would also provide a constitutional guarantee that our water services and supply networks remain in public ownership and operation.

This is in order to ensure the essential long-term investment and democratic control of their operation.



Experience elsewhere: privatisation reversed

There has been a move in previous years across some European and North American municipalities to privatise the provision of water services with very negative consequences in terms of water quality, security of supply and customer cost in accessing water services.

However, this disastrous experience has led some countries – such as Scotland – and major cities, such as Paris, Berlin and Barcelona, to bring back water services under public ownership and control (remunicipalisation).

In England and Wales, the cost to the public of water services is estimated to have risen by 40% in real terms since privatisation, while £18 billion (€20 billion) has been paid out in dividends to private shareholders in water companies. As a result, the UK Labour Party has committed to the re-municipalisation of water services in England and Wales.



SIPTU members protest outside the Dail over European Union policies which promote the privatisation of water resources.

Why there needs to be a referendum on water

The timing of our call is not accidental. In July 2018, the Government set out proposals to create a single water utility for the State. SIPTU is very clear that any such an organisation must remain in the control and ownership of the State.

Despite this, it is clear from our discussions with Irish Water that the method of service provision towards which they are working is to rely solely on private contractors.

Within time, the drive towards effective cost management of our water and waste-water treatment system would suggest pooling this series of private contractors into a single multi-annual contract with one provider. The argument would be that this is justified on economies of scale grounds and value for money for government. Instead, it would hand over control of our water system to a private operator.

The experience within Irish Water is that local authority water service workers who are directed to work under Irish Water management frequently report that they have to return to rectify poor quality work done by private contractors who are only focused on short-term profits. This results in extra cost for the public which is not reimbursed by the private contractors.

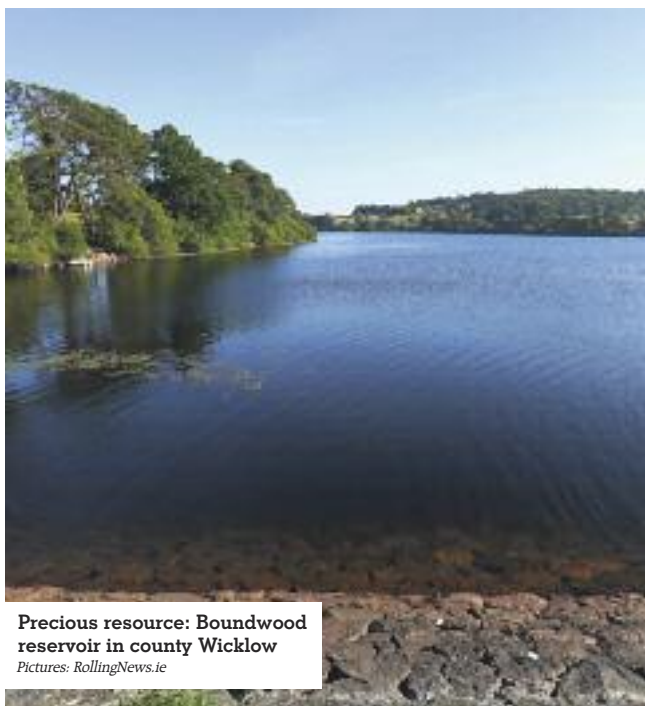
Political backing...

Following the 'More Power to You' campaign by SIPTU, Fórsa and Connect Trade Union, TDs from most political parties, and many leading Independents have committed to working for a referendum to constitutionally safeguard publicly provided water services from the threat of privatisation.

The political parties with members in the current Dáil, which have pledged their support for the holding of such a referendum include Sinn Féin, Solidarity-PBP, the Labour Party, Green Party, Independents4Change, Social Democrats and some Independents.

Leading members of Fianna Fáil have also signed the pledge to commit to the holding of a referendum and to the maintenance of the public operation of water services.

To see the full list of politicians who signed the SIPTU/Connect Trade Union Water Guarantee, go to www.siptu.ie/waterguarantee



Precious resource: Boundwood reservoir in county Wicklow
Pictures: RollingNews.ie

To view the full policy document visit: www.siptu.ie

Workplace Democracy

Why Ireland needs collective bargaining...

Collective bargaining, the ability of workers to come together in their workplace and negotiate with their employer concerning wages and conditions of employment while represented by persons of their choice, is the cornerstone of 'workplace democracy'.

In Ireland, unlike most other developed economies, the right to collectively bargain is not adequately protected by law.

SIPTU is calling on politicians to ensure that collective bargaining by workers is made a right so allowing for workplaces to benefit from the greater productivity, flexibility and innovation it produces.

Workplace democracy delivers significant economic and social benefits. The reason is simple: those with detailed knowledge of the operations of a business are best placed to identify shortcomings, correct failings and highlight what works. Employees are not only the natural source of feedback on how things are going on the shop-floor, factory-floor, in the offices and building sites but also the natural source of ideas and insights into how to improve work and performance.



Enjoying the benefits of Workplace Democracy...

To capture these benefits we need to allow employees to bargain in the workplace – to bargain together. That's why we need new 'Democracy in the Workplace' legislation.

Ireland is one of the few countries in the industrialised world that does not vindicate the right of employees to bargain together with their employee – to engage in collective bargaining.

Even the United States and United Kingdom have 'right to collective bargaining' legislation.

Because this right is denied, employees are denied a voice in the workplace – the fundamental pre-condition of democracy. As a result, employees' living standards suffer, business under-performs and economic efficiency suffers.

EU Rights Charter...

Workers and employers, or their respective organisations, have, in accordance with Community law and national laws and practices, the right to negotiate and conclude collective agreements at the appropriate levels ...

European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights 2000

'Democracy in the Workplace' legislation would:

- Provide the legal right to employees to form a trade union in order to bargain together with their employer

This would build on the current industrial relations architecture such as Sectoral Employment Orders (SEOs) and Joint Labour Committees (JLCs). Workplace democracy is nothing new – either here or throughout Europe.



To view the full policy document visit: www.siptu.ie

Higher Productivity

Enterprises that engage in collective bargaining achieve higher levels of productivity and innovation - because employees' input, based on their experience and knowledge is respected and included.

Higher Wages

Employees who bargain together in the workplace through a trade union earn 10% higher wages than in workplaces where they are denied this right.

Safer Workplace

Workplaces where employees bargain together have higher health and safety conditions because workers can negotiate better conditions and safeguards.

Gender Equality

The pay gap between men and women is lower in workplaces where employees bargain together, collectively because wages are managed through negotiation, not left to uncertain market or managerial choices.

Business Flexibility

Where a business is suffering an economic downturn, or expanding in an upswing, employees in collective dialogue with managers can more easily reach solutions when each side contributes to a shared response.

Greater Social Cohesion

Society is suffering a breakdown in trust leading to divisions, conflict and inequality, giving employees the right to bargain together helps build co-operative action at workplace level.

We've no time to waste

The incoming government must:

- Change the current system of waste collection across Ireland so that domestic waste is collected in an environmentally sustainable manner, illegal dumping is radically reduced by ensuring that every household is provided with an affordable service and that the workers in the industry earn decent wages and work in a safe environment.
- Eliminate side-by-side competition within municipal areas.
- Introduce a tendering regime by local authorities which would incorporate EU green procurement criteria and worker protection clauses.
- Reduce the number of household bins by the creation of community bins in cities.
- Establish a service provider of last resort.
- Construct a waiver system. The re-introduction of a waiver system for those who fall below a certain income-threshold would contribute significantly to reducing illegal dumping.

Seriously flawed State policy in need of reform

SIPTU believes that the State's policy in the area of domestic waste collection is seriously flawed and requires significant reform.

The present structure of domestic waste collection in Ireland has resulted in a chaotic situation whereby almost a quarter of all households have no domestic waste collection service, there are unsustainable levels of illegal dumping and low pay and poor working conditions are widespread across the industry. It is time to overhaul the way Ireland collects its domestic waste.

The aim of SIPTU's policy is to ensure that: domestic waste is collected in an environmentally sustainable manner, illegal dumping is radically reduced by ensuring that every household is provided with an affordable service and that the workers in the industry earn decent wages and work in a safe environment.

In order to achieve these goals the country needs to adopt a model of domestic waste collection in line with EU norms. The key finding of the report by the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (The Operation of the Household Waste Collection Market, September 2018) is that Ireland is now exceptional within the EU in persisting with "side by side" competition within "a market area". The principal recommendation of the report by the CCPC is the need for increased regulation.



Waste collection: a vital but low paid job

in getting this right...

Increased concern over environmental impact

There is a rising public awareness of the need to organise our economy in an environmentally sustainable manner.

This environmental awareness also informs attitudes towards waste; the public increasingly recognises the need to both reduce waste drastically and maximise re-cycling.

An entirely free-market approach to the collection of domestic waste is not sustainable. In some respects, the waste industry is a microcosm of the dysfunctional effects caused by the increased tendency to commodify services which up until relatively recently had been firmly within the realm of public services.

In effect, everyone loses under the current policy – the environment, the citizens and the workers.

Eyesore: Illegal fly-tipping in the Baldoyle area of north Dublin



Picture: RollingNews.ie

Scourge of fly-tipping and illegal burning

One of the key findings of the CCPC report is that nationally 23% of households do not avail of a domestic waste collection service.

The same report suggests the cost to the State of cleaning up after illegal dumping was €7 million in 2017. Side-by-side competition in the domestic waste collection market has resulted in multiples of the trucks required operating in some municipal authorities.

The current policy allows for multiple providers to operate within the same municipal area, thereby increasing both carbon emissions and traffic congestion in our towns and cities.

Illegal burning of waste is also widespread and is grossly underestimated, contributing to additional carbon emissions and the release of other pollutants/toxins into the atmosphere at a time when Ireland is failing miserably to meet the Paris Climate Agreement targets.



Unightly and unhealthy: refuse bags in an urban side street

Waste collection: what it costs your pocket...

Until 1977, Ireland was typical of most European states, i.e. households contributed through local taxation to the running of local authorities.

This changed with the elimination of domestic rates in 1977. Local authorities began a slow withdrawal from domestic waste collection from the late 1980's.

Local authorities typically provided a waiver system where poorer households did not have to pay for a domestic ser-

vice. This ceased when local authorities withdrew from direct provision of the service. The average cost per household in 2018 was €228 per annum, an increase of 11% from 2012.

SIPTU believes that a long-term, environmentally sustainable service can only be achieved through reform of the 1996 Waste Management Act. Ultimately, it would be more economical for local authorities to provide the service rather than have the State, through a number of agencies, incur the costs of policing, regulating and ultimately cleaning up after private sector provision.

In the medium to long term, there is a compelling logic for local authorities to take back provision of domestic waste collection on environmental, cost and service grounds.

The CCPC report found that the provision of a domestic waste collection service was "a natural monopoly" which, in our view, should be provided by the state.

At a very minimum, local authorities must at least be in a position to compete in the market that has been created, but for this to happen side-by-side competition within a municipal area must be eliminated and replaced with a tendering regime for the entire 'market'.

Such a tendering regime could incorporate EU green procurement criteria and worker protection clauses that currently exist under the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA).

Welfare of workers

There are approximately 6,000 workers employed in the domestic waste collection industry.

Typically, the rates of pay and the conditions are poor. General Operatives are on the minimum wage or less and drivers' rates vary between €10 - €13 per hour. Agency workers are also becoming an increasing phenomenon within the sector. The workforce is largely comprised of foreign nationals.

There is, in the main, outright employer hostility to trade union organisation. The rates of pay are so low in the industry that the State ends up subsidising substandard pay by providing Family Income Supplement and other social supports to employees and their dependents.

To view the full policy document visit:
www.siptu.ie

CE Supervisors and Section 39 workers set to strike

The SIPTU Community Sector and SIPTU Health Division will be combining forces in an industrial campaign which will commence with a one-day strike and rally in Dublin on Friday, 14th February.

Community Employment (CE) Scheme supervisors as well as workers in specific Section 39 organisations in the health sector will be balloted for industrial action over the next two weeks.

The CE dispute concerns the failure of successive governments to implement the terms of a Labour Court recommendation that dates back to 2008 which provided for the establishment of a modest pension for the supervisors of these schemes. The outgoing Fine Gael administration invited the two unions which represent CE Scheme supervisors, SIPTU and Fórsa, into a talks process following strike action by the supervisors last year.

However, Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty or Minister for Finance, Paschal Donohoe, have failed to present any proposals to resolve this long running dispute.

A SIPTU campaign has been successful in achieving pay restoration for significant numbers of members employed in Section 39 Organisations. However, other members, particularly in smaller workplaces, have yet to have the terms of the deal, agreed at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) in October of 2018, applied to them. The ballot for industrial action arises in this sector following the failure by the HSE at a recent WRC conciliation conference to commit to the date of application of the first phase of restoration namely 30th April, 2019 as had been applied to other section 39 employments.

SIPTU Public and Community Division Organiser, Adrian Kane, said: "These disputes are symptomatic of a greater



malaise. The community sector has for too long been the poor relation of the public sector. The community sector has typically 'stepped in' where the state has not provided necessary social and health services.

"However, within the sector there is often a blatant disregard by employers for industrial relations norms. Many workers in the sector were subject to pay cuts during the austerity years that equalled those imposed on their colleagues in the public sector. However, this government has

failed to recognise that they have a right to restoration and pension provision in line with the improvements secured in more recent years by public sector workers."

He added: "The position of SIPTU representatives in any talks concerning a new Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) will be influenced by the extent to which any incoming government is prepared to extend pay increases



and collective bargaining facilities to community sector workers."

While the details are still being finalised, the campaign will begin with a one-day work stoppage on Friday, 14th February across Community Employment Schemes and specific Section 39 organisations. There are also plans for a rally in Dublin, details of which will be confirmed closer to the date.



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- CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION HELPLINE
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SIPTU WORKERS RIGHTS CENTRE

1890 747 881

8.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., Monday - Friday
wrc@siptu.ie

Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil will not mend our broken childcare system

The promises on childcare contained in the Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil election manifestos are not adequate to deal with the worsening crisis in the childcare sector.

SIPTU Head of Organising and Campaigns, Darragh O'Connor, said: "The childcare policies outlined in the Fine Gael manifesto are a continuation of those that have done nothing to reduce fees or improve working conditions."

"The party is proposing a means-tested programme which will have little impact on average and middle-income households. These subsidies are even more likely to fuel increases in childcare fees as they are driving demand without addressing the supply of quality childcare places."

He added: "Fianna Fáil proposes to increase the universal childcare subsidy to providers by €60 per week over the next five years. This will have little impact on reducing fees. When the universal subsidy was first introduced, fees rose by between 6% and 12%. There is nothing to suggest increasing the subsidy will reduce fees."

END THE ECEC CHILDCARE CRISIS

National Protest March
Wednesday, 5th February 2020

Assembly: 11.30 a.m., Parnell Square, Dublin 1

Standing up for high quality, affordable Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) delivered by professionals paid a decent wage in sustainable services.



Larkin Commemoration

Friday, 31st January 2020
Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin
12.15 p.m. - 1.30 p.m.

**Assemble at 12.15 p.m. at the
Museum, Glasnevin Cemetery for wreath laying and a
graveside lament followed by an address by
John King, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary**

*Light refreshments to follow.
Event to conclude by 1.30 p.m.*

This event is organised by SIPTU Dublin District Council



Members views crucial to decision on union campaign priorities

The views of SIPTU members expressed through surveys and at delegate conferences will be the crucial factor in deciding campaigning priorities for the union, the National Executive Council has decided.

In a recent survey pay, stress at work and having enough to live on in retirement emerged as the top three priorities for union members in the workplace. Two of these issues are now the focus of SIPTU campaigns - for pay increases across the private sector and to STOP67, which is aimed at halting increases in the pension age.

The views of the membership expressed at Divisional and Biennial Delegate conferences are also a key indicator of members' concerns. The proposal to raise the pension age to 67 in 2020 was brought up in numerous motions at recent conferences and led to the launch of the STOP67 campaign.

The extensive survey of more than 3,000 SIPTU members was conducted between September and October 2019. This survey

found that issues surrounding the housing crisis, the increasing cost of living and healthcare were the top three priorities for respondents, who were drawn from SIPTU members across the country. More than 80% of respondents placed problems with buying a home, high rents and homelessness, all aspects of the housing crisis, among their top three priorities.

The next two priorities were the rising cost of living and healthcare. Approximately two thirds of respondents highlighted living costs and over 50% focused on the problems in the healthcare system. Other issues of importance to members included access to public transport, childcare and having a real say in society.

SIPTU Deputy General secretary, Ethel Buckley, said: "The National Executive Council decision to prioritise as campaigns action on issues which emerge through consultation processes and the democratic structures of the union ensures that the members maintain their rightful place as the real leaders of our organisation."

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