



# General Election Manifesto 2020

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**Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA)** is an alliance of eighteen diverse community and voluntary organisations in Cork city, coming together with a common goal of social inclusion and social justice. The alliance is supported by the HSE Social Inclusion Services in Cork and works to address issues of disadvantage in Cork city. The alliance was established in 2014 to work together across the nine equality grounds and socio economic status. This innovative collaboration also aims to progress as well as protect the vast experience and excellent work of these front-line organisations that are at the heart of social inclusion services in Cork city. For more information see CESCA's [Facebook page](#).

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To address the issues of inequality and sustainability for communities in Cork city, CESCA is calling on the next government to:



**Address the housing and homelessness crisis**



**Review the equity of the National Childcare Scheme**



**Ensure everyone has access to health care and mental health supports when and where they need it**



**Support a strong and sustainable community and voluntary sector**

Cork city like much of the rest of the country is experiencing significant economic growth. However despite these trends we know that these benefits are not being felt equally and there are social justice issues in the city, that urgently need addressing by the next Government.

**Access to a home**, is a significant issue in Cork city. The percentage of people in employment and on the Social Housing Waiting List for Cork city has close to trebled since 2013 and now stands at 33%, indicating people's increasing difficulty in accessing the housing and the rental market. In November 2019 437 adults were recorded as staying in emergency accommodation in Cork. This represents an increase of 46% in 24 months.

Access to affordable **childcare and support** is essential for families and children in Cork city. While the National Childcare Scheme was introduced with the intention of providing a user-friendly scheme with universal financial support

towards the cost of childcare, it is increasingly creating additional challenges and barriers for both marginalised communities and the community organisations who support them.

Unequal health outcomes and **access to health care, specifically mental health** support is an issue that urgently needs addressing by the next government. One quarter (29%) of the 519 small areas making up Cork city are defined as being disadvantaged or very disadvantaged. Evidence tells us that living in a disadvantaged area or being from a marginalised community means you are three times more likely to have severe depression and are more likely to die younger.

And finally underpinning all of these issues is the need for the next government to recognise, enable and **support the Community and Voluntary sector** in playing their part in addressing issues of social justice and enduring inequalities in Cork city.

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**In order to address the issues of inequality and sustainability for communities in Cork city, the next government must:**



### **Address the housing and homelessness crisis**

Cork is in the midst of a housing and homelessness crisis. Increasingly unaffordable house prices in Cork city are driving more people to look for, and stay longer in, rental accommodation, further increasing demand in the private rental sector. Solving the housing crisis in Cork is a viable option but access to housing cannot remain firmly embedded in private sector provision. **The next government must:**

- Ensure that the right to housing is a constitutional right
- Commit to providing housing and support to those who have been long term homeless
- Ensure that sustainable housing policies are implemented, making the best use of vacant properties and land
- Recognise the importance of access to green spaces and the quality of a built environment for people's long term health outcomes.

- Ensure that the number of social housing and low income units made available reflect population growth and local need
- Ensure that housing policies reflect and address the specific needs of marginalised communities.



### **Review the equity of the National Childcare Scheme**

With many members of CESCA, directly providing childcare and family support to disadvantaged communities in Cork city, our direct experience raises concerns about the equity of the new scheme and its impact on community organisations. The new scheme assumes that every parent or guardian is able to navigate the MyGovID site and register for a 'chick' number for their child. Yet, one in six adults in Ireland cannot read, understand and act on basic (health) information. Furthermore a childcare provider will only receive a subsidy for each child when the parent has successfully navigated the site and submitted an application. This can take a significant level of time and payments to providers are not backdated. Not for profit community organisations are often waiting a couple of months for a subsidy to be received and are therefore operating at a loss.

**The next government must ensure:**

- There are alternative means for parents to register for and access the National Childcare Scheme
- That childcare providers receive payment for the services they provide, including for periods when applications are pending.



**Ensure everyone has access to health care and mental health supports when and where they need it**

Who you are or where you are from should not dictate the care and support you receive. Yet we know that for too many this is the case. In 2018 Cork city ranked highest of all administrative counties in respect of male self-harm rates and third in respect of female self-harm. And yet Cork’s mental health services are not accessible 24/7. CESCA therefore supports both [Mental Health Reform](#) and [the Community Platform](#) in **calling on the next government to:**

- Fully implement the all-party Sláintecare plan for reforming the health service and ensure it addresses health inequalities
- Substantially invest in Cork’s mental health services.
- Ensure crisis mental health services are accessible to every community in Cork, for people of all ages, 24/7

And yet they face increasing demands both in terms of the needs of the communities they support but also the requirements being placed on them from both a commissioning and regulatory perspective. For this reason CESCA supports [The Wheel](#) in **calling on the next government to:**

- Recognise and support the value the sector adds to society
- Support sustainable funding models
- Enable responsive services through streamlined compliance systems
- Embracing collaborative partnership working

Specifically CESCA has concerns about the current drive towards commissioning type models for community and public services and the increasing demands for data gathering. There are for example broad ethical and legal concerns regarding the requirements being placed on community organisations to gather personal data. Furthermore the move towards commissioning models does not recognise the wider role that community organisations play and the societal value they add in Cork city. Increasingly services for vulnerable groups like children, people with disabilities and older people are being delivered by private and for profit organisations. This raises concerns about profit being the focus of service delivery, rather than the needs of the most vulnerable members of society. CESCA is **calling on the next government to:**

- Review commissioning type models and the impact they have on smaller community organisations and marginalised communities
- Ensure that access to funding for community organisations and access to support for marginalised communities is not dependent on the gathering of personal data.



**Support a strong and sustainable community and voluntary sector**

The past eleven years have seen significant cuts to the budgets of the community and voluntary sector.

**CESCA is made up of:**



