



Family Friendly London

Manifesto for the next Mayor of London



London is a great city – full of energy and opportunity. But it can also be unequal, expensive and unfriendly to children, young people and the families who make London their home.

Despite the clearly visible wealth in the capital, London has the highest child poverty rates in the UK with almost four in every 10 children growing up in poverty. This is a blight on the childhoods and lives of young people in the city. We call on the Mayoral candidates to affirm their commitment to ensuring every child and young person in London has access to equal opportunities.

This manifesto seeks to put together a series of solutions to the challenges many hard pressed families, children and young people face in the capital. We call on the Mayor to create an independent taskforce to ensure that effective action is taken to reduce child poverty in London.

We also ask the next Mayor to ensure they are monitoring a broad range of metrics that measure how well London is developing to become more family friendly. We can support candidates to set up metrics to measure impact and an independent taskforce to measure progress.



Jobs that support families

How do we create jobs that enable parents and carers to move into work, stay in work and progress?

We know that mothers want to work but too many find the combination of low wages, unsuitable working hours and high transport and childcare costs makes working impossible. The employment rate for mothers in couples in London is 12 percentage points lower than in the rest of England.

The next Mayor needs to commit to building a bank of high quality jobs that are flexible enough to allow parents to balance family life with working life.

We call on candidates to:

- Task the London Enterprise Panel to prioritise work on **parental employment**, recognising the barriers parents with a wide range of backgrounds and needs face in entering the workplace in London including support to help parents to maintain and progress in employment
- Advertise all vacancies in the GLA family on a flexible basis unless there is a specific, good business reason not to. The Mayor should act and recruit business leaders as ‘flexible working’ champions, and should encourage private sector employers to adopt **flexible recruitment practices**
- Commit to halving the numbers of Londoners earning below a **London Living Wage** by 2020, including halving the number aged under 25
- Monitor the **pay gap between part-time and full-time workers** in London and commit to eliminate the gap within the GLA family

Best start in life for every child

What should we do to ensure every London child gets the best start in life?

Work by the Marmot review has shown that what happens in early childhood and developing years has an impact on health, well-being and life chances in adulthood.

The next Mayor needs to improve the supply of high quality, affordable childcare and ensure that children can access London’s many opportunities.

We call on candidates to:

- Ensure there is **enough childcare available for working parents** by supporting local authorities to fulfil their duties under the Childcare Act 2006. This should include drives to increase supply of certain types of childcare, including for children with disabilities, across London where supply is not meeting demand.
- Look for opportunities to **use public buildings to provide childcare**, helping to reduce costs. This could include using school buildings more effectively out of school hours or on-site crèches for GLA family employees.
- Offer opportunities to enable all families to participate in London life, including **free travel for families days** on TfL services
- Ensure new **bus designs maximise space for buggies and wheelchairs** to make it easier for families to get around London

A safe and secure home

What should we do to ensure that London's children are able to live in good quality, affordable homes?

London house prices are rising by more than 20% annually according to latest ONS figures. The proportion of people living in the private rented sector is rising, with owner occupation falling. Many families find themselves trapped in high cost and low quality housing, with little prospect of the secure and affordable homes their children need. Nearly 50,000 homeless families are living in limbo in temporary accommodation and almost 400,000 children are growing up in overcrowded conditions, which impact on their health, education and life chances. At the same time, around 3,700 vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds present as homeless to London boroughs every year. The definition of affordable housing has changed so that much higher rents are included and security of tenure is eroded.

The next Mayor needs to commit to ensuring a safe and secure home for every child in London.

We call on all candidates to:

- Work to **improve the quality, affordability and stability of the private rented sector (PRS)** by influencing central government legislative approach and/or securing additional powers around the PRS in London
- Commit to a target for at least **50,000 new homes built** each year with at least 30 per cent for social rent
- Commit to halving the numbers of children living in **overcrowded housing** by 2020 and engage with local authorities to deliver this objective locally.

Meeting the cost of a child

What can be done to help parents meet the costs of a child?

Raising a child in London is expensive with housing and childcare driving costs higher than other parts of the country. This means that two parents working full-time on a minimum wage still fall short of earning enough to meet the costs of raising a child.

For lone parents - the majority of whom are women - working full time even on median wage does not fully cover these costs.

We call on all candidates to:

- Expand **universal free school meals** for primary school children from four boroughs to all London boroughs through a phased implementation, starting with boroughs with highest levels of free school meal entitlement.
- Create a pan-London **childcare brokerage service** that helps parents to find suitable childcare. This service should monitor areas where demand outstrips supply and provide start-up grants to increase supply in these areas.
- Improve **access to advice** services to help every family to get the financial support they are entitled to and encourage local authorities to adopt a 'breathing space' scheme, allowing debts to be placed on hold for 21 days to enable families to seek independent and free debt advice before the debt escalates. This is particularly important for the 123,000 low income Londoners falling behind on their council tax.



www.familyfriendlylondon.org.uk