

**Scottish Green Party  
Council Elections Disability Manifesto 2017**

**POWER IN  
YOUR HANDS**



# POWER IN YOUR HANDS

It has never been more important to put power in your hands. This election brings huge opportunities and challenges. The councillors elected in 2017 will be faced with meeting the demands of a hugely energised democracy in Scotland. Greens are committed to rising to that challenge by placing power in your hands, by providing the money that councils need to run their services, and by making sure that you – as a citizen and as a community – have the opportunity to play a greater role in the decisions that matter to your life. This “mini manifesto” details the ways and means by which the Scottish Green Party aims to help disabled people and those important to them, including their carers. With one in five of our population having one or several disabilities, and as the decisions that impact their lives are largely made at a local level, we aim to show the ways the party will deliver for them.

We will do this in three ways:

## By protecting services

- We'll give you much more say over how council money is spent, by making sure every council has a participatory budget target and plan. This is particularly important for disabled people, because too often our services are being cut without our input or being asked how it will impact us.
- We'll keep schools in council control but give pupils, parents and teachers a real voice in how schools are run and how money is spent. We believe every council

should have a parent, pupil and teacher on their education committee. We also believe that every child should be taught in a way that helps them to truly learn, as too often disabled children are being failed by education that is not tailored to their needs.

- We'll champion those who care for the youngest and oldest in society, and those who are disabled, by introducing a Living Wage Plus for care workers and care providers.

## By connecting communities

- We'll campaign for cheaper, accessible and more frequent bus services, including accessibility training for drivers and support staff; and we'll introduce new participatory tools for making decisions at local level.

## By creating homes

- We'll help community groups own, run or have more say over their area – community buildings, parks, sports facilities, energy and much more – all with a focus on accessibility. Scotland has already made great progress with community buy-outs in rural areas and with crofting estates; and we will begin to see transformation in urban areas with the urban community right to buy.
- We'll tackle rip-off housing costs by making rents cheaper, and deal with fuel poverty. This disproportionately impacts disabled people, who depend on their fuel for medical equipment and to ensure their health does not deteriorate due to cold.

By electing Green Councillors to council Chambers across Scotland you can change how your council works. For Greens, giving power to people and communities is a core belief. We want to put power in your hands, to protect services, to connect and to build communities. Every Green councillor elected will work tirelessly to make this a reality.

## Protecting services

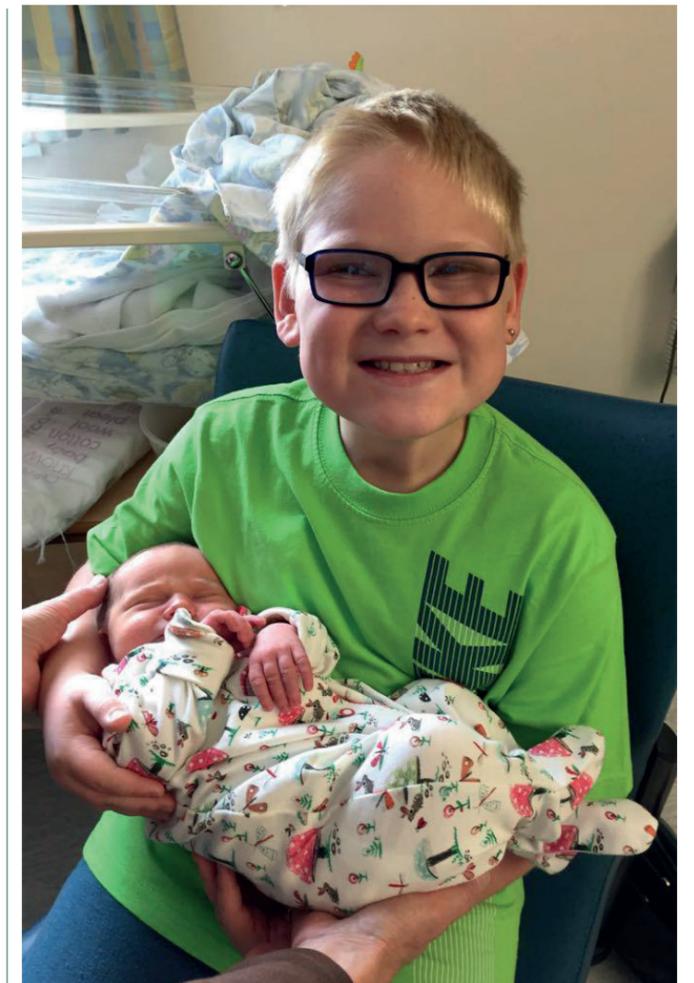
All too often as disabled people our services are being cut or removed with no notice or looking at how it impacts us. Greens will campaign to ensure that this does not happen.

## Schools and childcare

Scottish Greens believe in education that offers children and young people much more than qualifications – one that supports their development as adaptable individuals equipped to explore the opportunities and face the challenges that our fast-changing world brings. We will also challenge any teaching that is not fully inclusive, and ensure proper education regardless of sexual orientation or gender.

### Green councillors will:

- Fight to keep school class sizes down and replace teachers and support staff lost to cuts. Ensure that disabled children are taught in ways which assist their learning in the best environment to suit their individual needs and ensure that all staff are trained in inclusion and barriers to education from a disabled perspective.
- Emphasise learning over standardised testing.
- Support pupils at risk of falling behind and support alternative provision for those for whom mainstream provision isn't working, in order to reduce exclusions and children dropping out.
- Campaign for more staff and better support for children with additional support needs – including making



this a promoted post – and greater support in schools for any children from marginalised groups, including refugees and asylum seekers and LGBTI+ young people. We support the Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) campaign.

- Create or support schemes like the Edinburgh Guarantee to give every young person leaving school the opportunity to work, train or study regardless of any barrier which they face to ensure inclusion.

## Social care, health and independent living

Scottish Greens believe high-quality social care is essential to support people's health and maintain their individual freedom, choice, dignity and control of their lives and, like NHS healthcare, should be free at the point of use. Investing in social care helps to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and get people home from hospital quickly. This not only relieves pressure on key NHS services, but keeps people connected to their homes, friends and families. Social care staff and unpaid carers do vital work and we will campaign for better pay, conditions, support and recognition for all carers. Social care in rural areas has particular challenges. The cost of dealing with all these challenges is beyond the capacity of local authorities, and we need a national review of the funding of social care. One particular source

of increases to the cost of delivering social care is increasing privatisation of services, and we should seek to reverse this trend.

### Green councillors will:

- Campaign to pay social care workers a "Living Wage Plus" of £9.20 per hour, helping local authorities to recruit the best staff and retain those with experience.
- Ensure the living wage is implemented fairly, protecting people's working conditions and pushing for sleepover shifts to be paid at the living wage.
- Support fair working practices by tackling zero-hours contracts, and ensure social care workers are paid for shift handovers, for time spent travelling between jobs and travelling expenses.
- Recognise that all social care workers should have better pay and conditions, including personal assistants and staff working in day centres.
- Value social care staff and support their professional recognition by



creating more opportunities for staff to develop their skills, gain qualifications and plan their careers in the sector.

- Support and enable locally led social care partnerships and social enterprises to provide good quality care at home.
- Promote continuity of care, keeping carers and the people they support connected, and tackling loneliness.
- Support the development of "rapid response" care teams, who can provide care quickly in urgent circumstances and help people avoid stressful trips to hospital.
- Provide better local support for unpaid carers. All local authorities have a duty to create an individual support plan for carers, and we will push for all carers to receive high-quality support for their own physical and mental health needs, including access to respite care and counselling.
- Take steps to improve unpaid carers' financial health, like providing income maximisation advice to all carers and providing concessionary travel for carers on income support.
- Make sure income assessments for care charges don't include Carer's Allowance, while we work to eliminate care charges entirely
- Support young carers by minimising childrens' practical caring responsibilities whenever possible, providing access to peer support and developing local forms of financial support.
- Ensure that the development and delivery of health and social care integration and provisioning of services is fully informed by the views and suggestions of disabled people who use those services.

- Investigate ways that more health and social care services can be delivered via publicly owned services and partnerships with local disabled people's organisations.
- We are proud to have signed up to the Carer's Charter and will work to ensure that carers are not penalised emotionally, physically, mentally or otherwise for providing care for relatives, especially because of the reduction they provide on NHS charges.

## Crisis and anti-poverty services

Scottish Greens believe councils have a key role to play in tackling child poverty and helping people avoid crisis. Local councils can help tackle inequality, and we will prioritise progressing equalities, working closely with those whose opportunities are reduced owing to class, race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

### Green councillors will:

- Campaign to secure funding for support services for those who have experienced domestic abuse or sexual violence, ensuring there are accessible services for those who are disabled and experiencing abuse.
- Help people to claim the social security benefits they are entitled to by supporting "income maximisation" projects through the NHS and advice services.

# Connecting communities

Councils can help build our communities. Green councillors will help to connect people with a thriving local economy, strengthen neighbourhoods with good services and celebrations of local identity, and connect places with better public transport that is accessible for all, involving disability training for the drivers and support staff.

## Local economy

Scottish Greens believe a thriving local economy is one based on what's good for people not just profit. Our economy should be sustainable, connect people with decent jobs without barriers and help to bind our society together.

## Leisure and recreation

People and communities connect through council services such as libraries, swimming pools and sport facilities. These should be accessible for all to encourage participation.

### Green councillors will:

- Improve sport facilities where they are too hard to access or expensive to use and support grassroots sporting activities such as running clubs or wheelchair football and ensuring provision of low-cost "community-use" sports facilities for hire at affordable rates.
- Oppose the closure of local leisure facilities and the selling off of common good assets.
- Support festivals and community events.

## Better buses, roads and trains

Being able to travel broadens our opportunities. Scottish Greens want to improve our buses, make walking and cycling more attractive, and make our streets safe and healthy for everyone to use, including ensuring our pavements are wheelchair accessible.

### Green Councillors will:

- Connect communities with better bus services. Routes, fares, shelters and information can all help, and we will explore creating a publicly owned bus company in areas without it.
- Argue for money to be spent on fixing our existing roads and pavements rather than building new ones, which simply encourage more traffic.
- Support and develop plans to reopen rail lines and stations, including increasing capacity where lines are single-track ensuring that they are fully accessible at all times.
- Ensure that drivers and support staff are trained to recognise barriers to public transport, and ways to combat these, so that disabled passengers can be best served.

# Creating homes

Councils help create the places and neighbourhoods where we live. Green councillors want them to be safe, green, accessible and attractive places.

## Housing

Our vision for housing is for good-quality homes that are affordable to buy, affordable to rent and affordable to heat. There should be more social housing, better control of rents and better management in the private sector.

### Green councillors will:

- Continue to campaign to make energy efficiency of existing houses a priority, to create warm homes, reduce fuel bills and tackle fuel poverty. Fuel poverty disproportionately impacts disabled people so we will ensure that people no longer have to suffer ill health through not being able to heat their homes or use powered medical devices.
- Support new social rented homes to be built each year – we need at least 12,000 across Scotland each year just to meet population growth and replace older housing. This will need land to be available at low cost through a new council power to buy land for housing at "existing use value".
- We will support action to drive up space standards, designing houses which are easy to adapt for independent living.
- Explore ways of taking into social ownership facilities, like care homes and student housing, where their owners cannot continue to manage them.



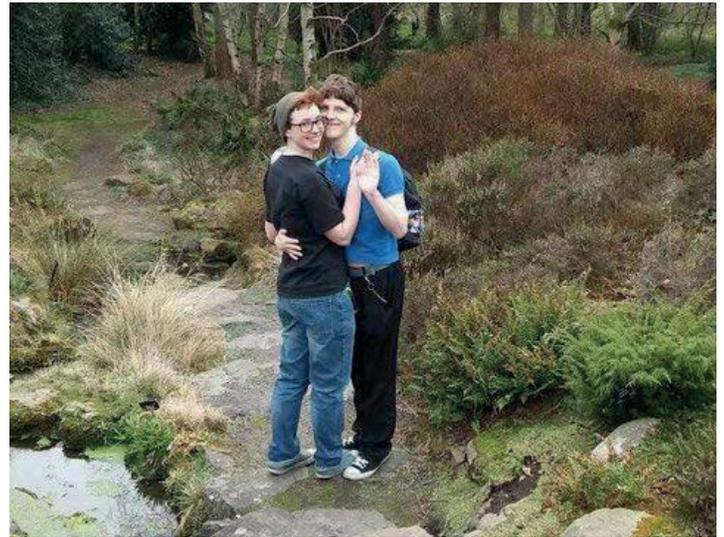
## Streets and green spaces

Our streets should be neighbourhoods and communities we can enjoy and be proud to call home. Green spaces within our cities, towns and villages should add value to our lives as well as provide places for wildlife to flourish. They should be available for everyone to use including wheelchair or trike users.

### Green Councillors will:

- Prioritise pedestrians and wheelchairs as the most important users of roads and pavements, creating attractive communities for people to live and work in.

- Extend 20mph speed limits in residential areas to improve road safety, reduce air pollution, and give streets back to communities.
- Work with the police and communities to help prevent antisocial behaviour and improve community connections.
- Protect parks and greenspaces and manage them to provide places for people to enjoy and wildlife to flourish, including removing any access barriers.



## Revitalising local democracy

Scottish Greens believe that local government can put power in your hands. Green councillors will listen to community concerns, then work hard to create solutions and make councils open and accountable, from street lighting – which impacts on disabled people being active outside their homes – to shops and buildings not enabling wheelchair users to access them.

