

Scotland can ensure equal opportunities for disabled people

Faodaidh Alba dearbhadh gum faigh ciorramach cothroman co-ionnan



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SCOTTISH GREENS MANIFESTO ON DISABILITY

Scottish Greens believe that disabled people in Scotland should have equal opportunities to participate in work, social and political life, free from discrimination and supported by a just society.

Green MSPs will ensure that Scotland can provide that support by being bolder in pushing for policies which help disabled people in employment, which care for carers, which promote a healthy society and protect human rights.

SCOTLAND CAN ENSURE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE BY:

- by providing a well funded, properly connected and fit for purpose health service
- supporting disabled people to get into and remain in work
- caring for carers
- providing a suitable social security net
- by combatting discrimination and protecting human rights

"Westminster Governments, both Tory and Labour, have singled out disabled people for life-destroying cuts. Greens believe that our social security system should be based on the universal principle of human dignity.

"This manifesto outlines how we will create such a social security system. We must remove the barriers that prevent disabled people playing a full role in society."

MAGGIE CHAPMAN, SGP co-convenor, MSP candidate for North East Scotland and social justice spokesperson



SCOTLAND CAN BE A HEALTHY SOCIETY



Austerity has led to widespread cuts in health and social care, which have disproportionately impacted disabled people and those who care for them. Green MSPs will seek to support disabled people by ensuring they have access to a well funded and connected health service while empowering local government to raise the necessary funds to provide adequate social care.

Furthermore, the Scottish Green Party will give mental health equal importance with physical health, seek to address disability issues in childhood and be proactive in assisting with maintaining good health while in employment.

Wellbeing at the centre of government

Scottish Greens support measures to make our society's good health, equality and wellbeing the foundation of all Scottish Government policy.

Green MSPs will fight for a health service that is designed for the future

The NHS in Scotland must be kept in public hands and we support a review of all contracts with private providers. Austerity measures and welfare reform have had a significant impact on large numbers of people who are already in the poorest health, and will continue to do so for years to come. Funding for NHS in Scotland needs to be increased to take account of this, and Health and Social Care integration needs to provide joined up care with strong links between social, primary and acute care.

Funding social care

Social care supports many thousands of people to lead a more independent life but funding is stretched to breaking point. The freeze on local tax powers and cuts to local budgets have led to increased charges.

Older people, disabled people and their carers – predominantly women – are at greater risk of poverty as a result. Local governments must be allowed to raise funds fairly, such as through progressive tax and not increased charges, to pay for social care which enables people to live full lives and avoids the social and human cost of poverty and inaction.

Tackling children's health challenges

Green MSPs will focus on creating a child-friendly society. We will support programmes aimed at providing young people with confidence and self-worth and campaigns to reduce stigma and social pressures on children. We will support action on identifying child mental health issues early and addressing child trauma, bereavement and loss. Tackling child poverty and the impact of Westminster benefit cuts on the people they have put at risk will be top priority for local authorities and Community Planning. This includes disabled people, refugees, women and their children. Green MSPs will fight for equal consideration for mental and physical health across all health and social care sectors and to ensure mental health care for LGBTI+ people that is person-centered and takes into account their specific needs.



SCOTLAND CAN BUILD GOOD HEALTH FOR ALL

Good mental health

Mental health has been secondary to physical health for too long, and too long seen as something separate from inequality, poverty and poor local environment. Green MSPs will fight for equal consideration for mental and physical health across all health and social care sectors. We support the Declaration of Rights for Mental Health to ensure that all people with mental health issues are treated equally, with dignity and respect. We will fight for more resources and professional training to meet the needs of people facing financial deprivation; LGBTI+ people, disabled

people, young people and other groups that often suffer poor mental health; and to counter the inter-generational effects that abuse can play in poor mental and social health.

Health in the workplace

We spend a lot of our time at work, and occupational stress and health hazards are a significant cause of poor health. Scottish Greens will press for providing advice and support on reducing occupational health risks to be a continuing priority.

"As the Disabled Greens' mini manifesto highlights, everybody who provides the essential assistance that people rely upon through care work deserves equal recognition and support, but as things currently stand, those who care are undervalued and all too often under-paid. Greens want to see increased financial and practical support for carers, to empower more disabled people to live the life they choose to.

"In addition to tackling the inequalities that act as a barrier between disabled people and employment and education, Green MSPs will fight to protect those faced with losing out from the disastrous introduction of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

"I am grateful to groups such as the 1 in 5 campaign for their ongoing efforts to raise awareness and gather support, and to the Disabled Greens for producing an excellent mini manifesto full of proposals I am proud to endorse."

ALISON JOHNSTONE

MSP candidate for Edinburgh Central constituency and Lothian list,
SGP spokesperson for health, wellbeing and sport



SCOTLAND CAN SUPPORT DISABLED PEOPLE INTO WORK

We believe that being disabled should not be a barrier to entering or remaining in employment and the Scottish Green Party will support disabled people into work by pushing for equal standards in recruitment, ensuring a job or further education place for every school leaver, devolution and expansion of the Access to Work scheme and also by introducing an Intermittent Work Scheme which will make it easier for disabled people to work in the creative or freelance sectors.

Equal access

Too many people are marginalised in the labour market including unpaid carers and disabled people. Green MSPs will support calls for public procurement laws that allow decisions to be based on sustainability, equality, community benefit and local supply, not just the short-term cost. Greens will also lay out the case for the devolution of equalities legislation.

Scotland Guarantee

Green MSPs will campaign for a Scotland Guarantee of a job, training or education for every school-leaver. Latest figures show 8% of school leavers left school without a job or more education, but this rises to 15% for pupils from the poorest areas. Local authority and Scottish Government action, such as the Edinburgh Guarantee and Opportunities for All, has helped reduce that number but too many young people are still left without the opportunity to work or study. Green MSPs will campaign for better opportunities for all young people leaving school.

Support for employment

Powers to support people unemployed for a year or more will be devolved to Scotland over the next Parliament. The largest scheme, the Work Programme, has failed to deliver for the people who need it and now faces a funding cut of 87%. Green MSPs will push for a new scheme delivered on a non-profit basis, contracted locally to the public and third sector, which recognises the value of voluntary work and makes a genuine investment in participants' skills. Such a scheme would address barriers to accessing work on account of age, disability, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Greens will also push for devolution and expansion of the Access to Work scheme which supports disabled people to start or remain in work.

Scottish Greens | Scotland can ensure equal opportunities for disabled people

Stand against benefit sanctions

We believe sanctions that punish people for unemployment have no place in a fair system. The sanctions regime is reserved but the UK Department for Work and Pensions relies on information from Work Programme providers to know who to sanction. Green MSPs will campaign for new provider contracts to include a clause preventing them from sharing information with DWP that would lead to a benefit sanction, thus ending sanctions for a significant number of benefit claimants in Scotland.

Intermittent Work Scheme

We will encourage diversity across the culture sector, with the introduction of an 'Intermittent Work Scheme' for working artists so that they are entitled to receive a monthly payment during breaks in work. This will help to ensure that disabled people are able to access employment and stay in the Creative Industries.



SCOTLAND CAN CARE FOR CARERS

Carers are the unsung heroes of our society and Green MSPs will campaign for better pay and conditions for carers as well as a 50% increase in the Carer's Allowance and introduction of a Young Carers Grant.

Better pay for caring

People who care are undervalued and underpaid. Social care workers do hard and vital work in people's homes, care homes and every community – but it remains one of the lowest paid sectors, fuelling the gender pay gap. Green MSPs will campaign for all care and support workers to be paid significantly above the Living Wage financed by progressive taxation not care charges. Green MSPs will campaign for a 'Living Wage Plus' of £9 an hour to be introduced across Scotland to help local authorities recruit the best staff and retain those with experience.

And better conditions

Better conditions for staff are a vital foundation for a better social care service, fully supporting professionals to put the needs of those being cared for first. Green MSPs will demand improved working conditions for social care workers, such as paid travel time, sick leave, skills training and an end to 'Zero Hours' care worker contracts.

Helping unpaid carers

Scotland has an estimated 788,000 people providing unpaid care to family and friends, more than half of whom juggle caring with paid employment and are affected by the financial cost of giving up work, refusing promotions or reducing their hours of employment. MSPs will fight for a better deal for carers. Power to increase the Carer's Allowance will soon be devolved to the Scottish Parliament and Greens will campaign for a 50% increase in payments to £93.15 per week. Young carers and student carers also need financial support and we will explore introducing a Young Carer's Grant.

A fair Carer's Allowance

We will also support a redesign of the Carer's Allowance to value care, tackle financial stress and reduce paperwork – this should include a lower threshold for hours of care and a top-up for people who care for more than one person. Any increase in payments will require a fair settlement with the UK Government and local authorities to guarantee such an increase does not reduce other benefits payments or increase care charges. We will press for clear guidance to local authorities when assessing income to determine non-residential care charges. We advocate the exclusion of Carer's Allowance from such income assessments, so that no carer must spend their allowance on these services.

Carers' rights

New carers' legislation requires local authorities to identify every carer's needs and create an individual support plan. Green MSPs will campaign for adequate resources to implement this and to help make sure those needs can be met with good quality support such as replacement care, short breaks, health checks and concessionary travel for carers on income support. Young carers also need extra support and we want to ensure their voices are heard in any discussion of carers' rights. We will also back the creation of an independent social care tribunal system to help carers and those they care for to realise their existing rights.



SCOTLAND CAN CREATE REAL SOCIAL SECURITY

The measure of a just society is in how it treats its most vulnerable members and the social security net has been eroded by generations of ideological reform. With many welfare powers soon to be devolved to the Scottish parliament, Scottish Greens believe that this trend must be reversed and a welfare system that provides real social security implemented.

A caring social security system

Two decades of welfare reform has warped our social security system, making it unfair and in some cases fostering insecurity and undermining people's welfare. This is in direct opposition to the principles on which the system was founded. With a number of welfare benefits being devolved for the first time, Scottish Greens believe now is the time to radically re-found the benefits system in Scotland. This should start with the setting up of a Social Security Commission to explore and recommend the principles on which a Scottish benefits system should be established. The Commission will also consider how the benefits system can help to tackle inequality, how needs should be assessed, and how support should be delivered. Commissioners should be drawn from groups representing benefit claimants and welfare service users, as well as from local government and the third sector.

Real security for disabled people

The introduction of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) has been ruinous for thousands of disabled people in Scotland, taking away much-needed support and putting them at risk of poverty. In advance of a total review of disability benefits, Scottish Greens will fight for all PIP claims to be granted initially to ensure disabled people receive immediate support, rather than facing delays of up to a year whilst awaiting a stressful and undignified assessment that treats claimants as guilty until proven innocent. Where additional evidence is required to make a decision on a claim, Scottish Greens will fight for paper, online or telephone procedures to be used rather than face-to-face assessments, unless a claimant requests one. We will also push for repeat assessments for people with chronic or degenerative illnesses with a low chance of improvement to be abolished, and for a minimum re-assessment period which would be decided between government, claimants and other stakeholders. Scottish Greens will also call for a review of DLA and PIP to examine the current stoppage of support during hospital stays, the appeals procedure and the PIP points assessment system.



SCOTLAND CAN GUARANTEE A FUTURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

We believe that disability should not be a barrier to education or work and that every individual deserves to live free from bullying and discrimination. As such, Green MSPs will promote inclusive education policies, strengthen links between education and children's services, guarantee a job or further education place for every school leaver and widen access to further and higher education.

Equality and diversity

Scottish Greens will show leadership on inclusive education policies for all pupils and families from primary age regardless of race, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, including a strong stance on bullying. We want to see all schools become UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools, where children's human rights are embedded in a school's ethos and culture to help all pupils realise their potential. Scottish Greens also support the Time for Inclusive Education campaign, which promotes inclusive LGBTI+ school environments. We will also push to strengthen links between education and other children's services with child poverty strategies. We believe in funding training for teachers so that they are able to tackle diversity issues in the classroom.

Widening access

Green MSPs will support action to break down the barriers to further and higher education. Scottish Greens' student support proposals are designed to remove financial barriers to education and we agree with the Commission on Widening Access that "inequality in higher education is unfair, damaging and unsustainable". We will use its findings and recommendations published in March to ensure action on access to education is as bold as it can be.

Scotland Guarantee

Green MSPs will campaign for a Scotland Guarantee of a job, training or education for every school-leaver. Latest figures show 8% of school leavers left school without a job or more education, but this rises to 15% for pupils from the poorest areas. Local authority and Scottish Government action, such as the Edinburgh Guarantee and Opportunities for All, has helped reduce that number but too many young people are still left without the opportunity to work or study. Green MSPs will campaign for better opportunities for all young people leaving school.



SCOTLAND CAN BE A JUST SOCIETY



Scotland can be proud of the progress made towards a more equal and diverse society, but we do not yet live in a country where everyone has equal access to opportunities. The Scottish Green Party stands for zero tolerance against all forms of discrimination and will seek to tackle barriers to services, employment and participation in society, and defending access to justice for all as a fundamental human right.

Action for equality

Bold, proactive measures are needed to achieve real equality in Scotland. Our Green MSPs will champion a Strategy for Inclusion co-produced with disabled people.

Equality budgeting

Public spending must reflect Scotland's policy commitments to increase equality. We will support measures to improve equality impact assessment and budget analysis, which take stock of how decision-making impacts differently on groups protected under equality law. Equality concerns must be embedded in all resource allocation and policy development.

Strategy for Inclusion

Disabled people still experience exclusion across social, economic and political life in Scotland to the detriment of our society as a whole. We must work to break down the barriers that prevent disabled people from realising their rights. Scottish Greens will take a lead from disabled people's organisations to promote a co-produced Strategy for Inclusion which works towards equal access to resources, fulfilling employment, public services, and participation in politics and public life.

Rights-based approach

We will call for more rights-based training for police and staff within the justice system on equality issues including hate crime, violence against women, trauma, and learning impairments.

"We believe that this manifesto demonstrates the Scottish Green Party's commitment to helping disabled people and carers have equal opportunities to participate in work, social and political life free from discrimination. We'll do this by supporting carers, by providing better funded and more suitable healthcare, by tackling economic inequality and eliminating prejudiced attitudes. We hope that a larger group of Green MSPs leads to a tangible improvement in the lives of disabled people in Scotland and lays the foundations for more radical and comprehensive policies in the future."

- SGP Disabled Greens committee



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