



Scottish Labour Women's Manifesto

Scotland is an amazing country with huge potential, but after 20 years of SNP government too many people feel our country is being held back. That's what we hear from women and girls in communities across our great country who are ambitious for their families, their communities, and for Scotland, but who are tired of broken promises and excuses.

It's time for change.

Scottish Labour has a plan to fix the mess, get the basics right and build a better future for women and girls across Scotland.

Making life more affordable

In recent years, the increased cost of living has been felt by every household. Scottish Labour will help women who are struggling with the cost of living and keep everyday costs down by:

- ✔ **Not increasing the rates of income tax** for the whole five years of the next Parliament, with the ambition to lower the tax burden the SNP has placed on Scots as we get the economy growing once again.
- ✔ **Introducing breakfast clubs in all primary schools**, helping parents get to work on time and ensuring no child starts the day hungry.
- ✔ **Reducing the costs of childcare** for working parents, providing two weeks of funded holiday clubs during the summer and increasing the value of tax free childcare so it is worth £3,000 per child.
- ✔ **Improving the flexibility of the childcare system**, with funding following the child, support for childminders and action to ensure care is accessible for single parent families, parents who work shifts, and children with additional support needs.

- ✔ **Tackling school meal debt**, maintaining write off funds and reviewing the thresholds for free school meals in secondary schools so all those in need can access a nutritious and warm school meal.
- ✔ **Maintaining the Scottish Child Payment** and increasing it to £40 a week for children under one to help low income families at the start of a child's life.
- ✔ **Boosting uptake of the Warm Homes Discount**, increasing automatic roll out so all 500,000 households who are eligible get £150 off their energy bills.
- ✔ **Helping with transitions into work**, ensuring that Scotland's social security system removes barriers for people who want to take up paid work or increase their hours.

An NHS there when women need it

Scottish Labour will always defend the NHS. That is why we will act to drive down waiting lists and modernise Scotland's health service by:

- ✔ **Driving down NHS waiting lists**, with funding following the patient so that anyone who is willing to travel can be offered treatment wherever capacity is available.
- ✔ **Ending the 8am rush for a GP appointment** and bringing back the family doctor so everyone can get a GP appointment within 48 hours when they need one.
- ✔ **Launching an emergency mental health response service**, so that people in mental health crisis get specialist NHS care, not merely a police response.
- ✔ **Legislating for Milly's Law** to end the culture of cover-up and get the truth for families.
- ✔ **Creating a new national neurodevelopmental pathway** so that neurodivergent women and girls can get the right support instead of being stuck on inappropriate mental health waiting lists.

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- ✔ **Tackling delayed discharge**, with 300 step-down beds in care homes and 1,000 more care at home packages.
- ✔ **Recognising the role of unpaid carers**, improving access to respite and support for them to manage their own health and wellbeing.
- ✔ **Delivering £15 per hour for social care workers**, working to improve terms and conditions in the sector.
- ✔ **Cracking down on poorly run care homes**, prioritising more regular inspections and improving transparency for residents and their families so quality services are easier to identify.

Protecting women's health

Women's health has long been overlooked and too frequently women are ignored or dismissed when they raise their concerns. It is time for this to change and for women's health to be given the priority it deserves. To improve health care for women, Scottish Labour will:

- ✔ **Deliver safe maternity services in every part of the country**, with a national plan to drive improvements where services have fallen short and ensure that women can access quality maternity care no matter where they live.
- ✔ **Guarantee support for new families**, training and recruiting the health visitors needed to provide home visits between pre-birth and a child turning five.
- ✔ **Reverse the decision to downgrade Wishaw neonatal unit**, pausing the plans to centralise specialist neonatal units across Scotland and commissioning a new review of services.
- ✔ **Tackle long waits for gynaecological procedures**, improving speed of access to colposcopies, laparoscopies and hysterectomies, and diagnosing endometriosis faster.
- ✔ **Provide menopause clinics in every health board region**, so women can access the support, advice and medical interventions they need.
- ✔ **Protect women's reproductive rights**, ensuring that they are able to access the full range of reproductive services, no matter where they live.
- ✔ **Modernise screening programmes**, rolling out lung cancer screening and cervical self-sampling across the country.

Developing skills and creating good jobs

If we are to deliver growth, tackle poverty with new opportunities and improve our quality of living, Scotland needs world-class skills and training. We will help women of all ages to upskill and train so they can find work and progress by:

- ✔ **Guaranteeing apprenticeships** for qualified applicants, with 9,000 new apprenticeship places.
- ✔ **Establishing a Parent Works Scheme**, funding colleges to deliver dedicated training and employment support for parents who are unemployed or in low paid work, so they can fill local skills gaps, boost their household incomes and help lift children out of poverty.
- ✔ **Developing short reskilling courses**, tailored to fill skills gaps in the local economy and delivered by local colleges.
- ✔ **Establishing a Scottish Council for Employment Injuries** to advise on the removal of barriers in the current system, particularly for women.
- ✔ **Working with local authorities on resolution of equal pay cases**, ensuring job revaluations take place without delay.

Government spending power should also be used to back Scottish jobs and industry, supporting strategic supply chains. Scottish Labour will:

- ✔ **Embed social and economic value weighting into public contracts**, delivering long overdue reforms to Scottish procurement laws so public money delivers public good.
- ✔ **Expand procurement challenges for Scottish businesses**, with dedicated mentorship and financial support for Scottish businesses, including women-owned and run, to develop and test innovations that government can adopt as first customer.
- ✔ **Revamp business support and training** so Scottish SMEs are encouraged and helped to bid for and deliver public contracts.
- ✔ **Pilot a creative entrepreneur's allowance**, supporting up to 1,000 creatives and artists who have a commercial business plan with their living costs as they establish their enterprise.

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Stronger communities

Scotland's towns, cities and neighbourhoods should be places where women can grow up, raise families, live well and grow old together in community. Scottish Labour will empower women and rebuild the resilience of our communities, so they once again promote fairness and improve lives for the better by:

- ✔ **Delivering fair funding for local services**, agreeing a new funding formula for local government so that local areas can never again be shortchanged by central government.
- ✔ **Agreeing a statutory New Deal for the third sector**, with multi-year funding and shared objectives for tackling social inequality, reducing poverty and increasing social prosperity.
- ✔ **Taking steps to close the disability pay gap**, ensuring that our reforms to employability support include targeted programmes to help disabled people into well paid work.
- ✔ **Giving local people a say over service closures**, requiring statutory consultations whenever councils plan to shut local libraries, sports and leisure facilities, or community venues.
- ✔ **Fast-tracking bus franchising** so that we can bring bus services back under local control to boost bus routes and improve affordability.
- ✔ **Providing the leadership needed to tackle digital poverty**, with free SIM programmes and a digital mentors network to ensure no one is locked out of digital services.

Standing up for women's rights

Scottish Labour believes in the right of everyone to live healthy, happy lives in Scotland, free from discrimination. We will ensure that women's rights are protected and upheld by:

- ✔ **Delivering single-sex spaces on the basis of biological sex**, in schools, sport and everyday life by upholding the Equality Act and delivering clear instructions to public services on how to comply with their legal obligations to women and to trans people.
- ✔ **Recommitting the NHS to delivering single sex wards** on the basis of biological sex and ensuring patients can request same sex provision wherever possible.
- ✔ **Keeping women's prisons for women**, instructing the Scottish Prison Service to remove all biologically male prisoners from women's prisons within days of the election.

A safer Scotland

Scottish Labour will restore security and make our neighbourhoods safe again by:

- ✔ **Returning police officers back to the front line** and giving every neighbourhood a named community and crime prevention officer.

- ✔ **Criminalising the exploitation of children**, holding to account those who seek to take advantage of young people.
- ✔ **Scrapping the sentencing guidelines for under-25s**, so sentences are fair and no one escapes justice because of their age.
- ✔ **Protecting workers from assault**, bringing in stronger sentences for those who attack people in the course of their work.
- ✔ **Legislating for tougher regulation on the sale of all knives** to prevent shoplifting and a reviewing the sale of domestic knives to under 16s.
- ✔ **Agreeing on a sustainable approach to legal aid**, ensuring that funding protects access to legal services across the country.
- ✔ **Creating a specialist victims' support team**, to act as a single point of contact for victims of crime to answer questions in a trauma-informed way and modernising the victims' notification scheme and communications.

Tackling violence against women and girls

Domestic abuse is still prolific in our society, with men overwhelmingly the perpetrators. Misogynistic attitudes and violence are also on the rise, often fuelled by online discourse. Scottish Labour is determined to protect women and girls in Scotland by:

- ✔ **Establishing a Misogyny Reduction Unit**, to treat violence against women and girls as an issue of public health with research and evidence-based interventions.
- ✔ **Closing legal loopholes around sexual deepfakes**, ensuring the law criminalises the non-consensual creation of images, as well as the sharing of them.
- ✔ **Preventing bail for those with histories of violence to women**, tightening bail laws so perpetrators of domestic abuse and violence cannot be bailed to their current or previous partner's address.
- ✔ **Boosting uptake of the Equally Safe Programme in schools**, with a graded participation award so that young people and parents can see the work that schools are doing to counter the impact of online misogyny and abusive behaviour.
- ✔ **Continuing funding for Rape Crisis and Women's Aid**, ensuring resources are delivered to local services which support victims around the country.
- ✔ **Removing parental rights of child sex offenders**, meaning parents convicted of serious sexual offences against children can no longer make decisions in their child's life.
- ✔ **Expanding pilots for independent legal representation for victims of serious sexual crime**, ensuring that victims are fairly advised and represented in considerations regarding the disclosure of historical evidence.

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Homes for all

Scottish Labour believes that everybody should have a home that is safe, warm, secure and affordable. That is why we will end the housing emergency in Scotland by:

- ✓ **Establishing fit for purpose local housebuilding targets**, ensuring that local authorities have housing plans that will deliver our national targets and meet local housing needs.
- ✓ **Building at least 52,300 affordable homes**, including more council and social homes, helping to drive down housing waiting lists.
- ✓ **Helping households save on rent**, building over 20,000 mid-market rent homes which save tenants an average of £2,700 a year off market rents and setting aside 5,000 homes for those who want to save for a mortgage deposit.
- ✓ **Reviewing accessible housing plans**, to ensure disabled households are properly prioritised for accessible homes and housing supply is future proofed to meet the needs of an ageing population.
- ✓ **Eradicating rough sleeping** with an Ending Homelessness Unit to drive action across government.
- ✓ **Granting homeowners more control over factoring**, with higher penalties when factors breach their obligations

This election is a straight choice between more of the same with the SNP or a government ready to build a better future with Scottish Labour.

The SNP has had 20 years in charge; they don't deserve another five.

On May 7, vote Scottish Labour on both votes for the change Scotland needs.