



Children in Scotland Manifesto for 2021-26

Children and Young People's Version



What is a
manifesto?

A **manifesto** is a document containing the ideas, aims and opinions of an organisation or political party. They are usually launched before an election.



The next Scottish Parliament elections will take place in May 2021, when people across Scotland who are aged 16 and over will get a chance to vote for a person to represent their views and act on their behalf. Some people think politics is boring, but it isn't! The decisions politicians make have a big impact on all our lives including how much money we have, what our local community is like and how our schools and hospitals work.

? What's in our manifesto?

Ten themes with big issues that affect children, young people and their families.

Under each theme, there are actions we want the people in power to take that will improve the lives of children and young people.

We know that these calls will make a difference because we have looked at reports and research to help us develop them.

We have also spoken to people with years of experience of working with children and young people.

Most importantly, we listened to what children and young people have been saying and made sure their views were at the heart of our manifesto.

? What do we hope to achieve with this manifesto?

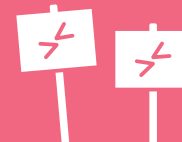
Too many children, young people and their families are not able to live happy, healthy and safe lives. We want this to change.

We want political parties to take our ideas on board and put them into their own manifestos. That way, whichever party wins the election and forms the next Scottish Government, they will take actions to improve the lives of children and families.



There is a **glossary** of words at the back of this document if you want to know what words marked * mean

! This version of the manifesto was written to be accessible for children and young people. If you want to read the full version of the manifesto, **click here**.



Aim *We want Scotland to be a welcoming country that recognises people's rights, and we want Scotland to work well with other countries across the world*

Everyone has rights. They are very important. They are things that we are allowed to be (such as free from harm), to do (such as express our opinion) or have (like food and water).

Soon the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*** will be included directly in Scottish law. This will make sure that children can feel the positive effect of their rights every day. A big part of the UNCRC is making sure that the views of children are heard.

It is going to take a lot of work to make sure that every child in Scotland understands and can stand up for their rights. The government must work with everyone including parents, carers, children and young people to make this happen.

We want Scotland to give children and young people a bigger say in decisions that affect them. We want to make sure that children and young people are not hurt by big decisions, like the UK leaving the European Union (also known as "Brexit"). We want Scotland to be safe for everyone, no matter where they were born. Lastly, we want Scotland to protect human rights around the world.

What we want to happen



We want the next Scottish Government to:

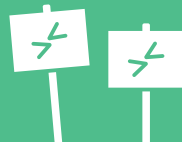
- ! Make sure there is enough money and support to apply the UNCRC in a way that makes a real difference to children's rights
- ! Give children and young people a say in important government* decision-making processes
- ! Bring more international human rights agreements into Scottish law to improve the human rights of children, young people and their families
- ! Change the minimum age that children can be treated as criminals when they do something illegal to 16
- ! Work well with the UK government to make sure that those coming to the UK from other countries for their safety have the money, support and homes they need.



"Brexit will heavily alter Scotland's future, whether it's for the better or worse. The youngest generation, who will be the first to grow up in Scotland outside the EU, will be the first people to experience the consequences of Brexit. It is us who will grow up to be the electricians, the engineers, the entrepreneurs of tomorrow. It is our future, decided by adults – so far without the inclusion of our voice"

Quote from 'Listen to Us', a report by the Children and Young People's Panel on Europe, published February 2019

*Source: the **Children and Young People's Evidence Bank**, a free online resource collecting direct quotes and views by young people from projects across Scotland*



Aim *All children, young people and families should have enough money to live happy and healthy lives*

We think all children, young people and families should have access to the money and support they need to live full and happy lives.

Experiencing **poverty*** means that you don't have enough money for your basic needs, such as clothing, food or shelter. Being in poverty also means not being able to access things that help young people thrive such as activities and opportunities for play. Sadly, lots of children and young people in Scotland are living in poverty and we are worried that the coronavirus pandemic will make things worse.

We want the Scottish Government to provide more support for families who are experiencing poverty. We also want jobs to be stable and well paid so that adults who are working have enough money for their families.

Poverty can have a big effect on people's health and wellbeing, and sometimes people do not treat people living in poverty with kindness and respect. We think this is unfair.



"I have to have conversations with the kids about adult stuff, they are older than they should be because of being poor"

"Being poor takes away your control of your life, and choices"

*Quotes from **Child poverty in Scotland: what we know and what the public's views are** (Scottish Government, 2017)*

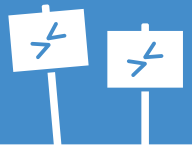
What we want to happen



We want the next Scottish Government to:

- ! Make sure that everyone who works, whatever their age, is paid enough to live on
- ! Listen to the views of children, young people and families who have experienced poverty when creating new plans for support
- ! Agree to the ideas of the **End Child Poverty Group*** who have suggested ways to make things better for families and put these ideas into action.





Aim *All children have the best start in life and families have the support they need to cope with the challenges of bringing up babies and young children*

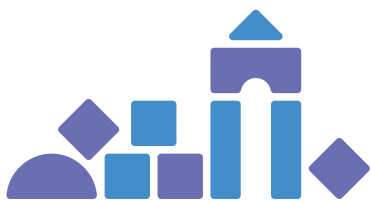
The first few years of a child's life are very important. These "early years" can have a big impact on health, learning at school and the rest of children's lives.

Having good relationships with family members and people outside the home is really important. These relationships help children's health and teach them how to communicate well with others.

The impact that adults have on how children grow and learn is huge. Raising a baby or child can be hard at times, and all parents and carers need help.

Every family is different. Some families have lots of support from other family and friends, but others need more help. Things like how much money a family has, or if a child is unwell can mean that a family needs more support.

The Scottish Government provides support to families with young children, but many families are still not receiving the help or support they need.



"He was in [nursery] two days a week – Thursday and Friday – and it cost me £500 a month... there's hardly any point finding a job"

Quote from Status of Young People in Scotland, the Young Women's Movement, 2016

Source: Children and Young People's Evidence Bank

What we want to happen



We want the next Scottish Government to:



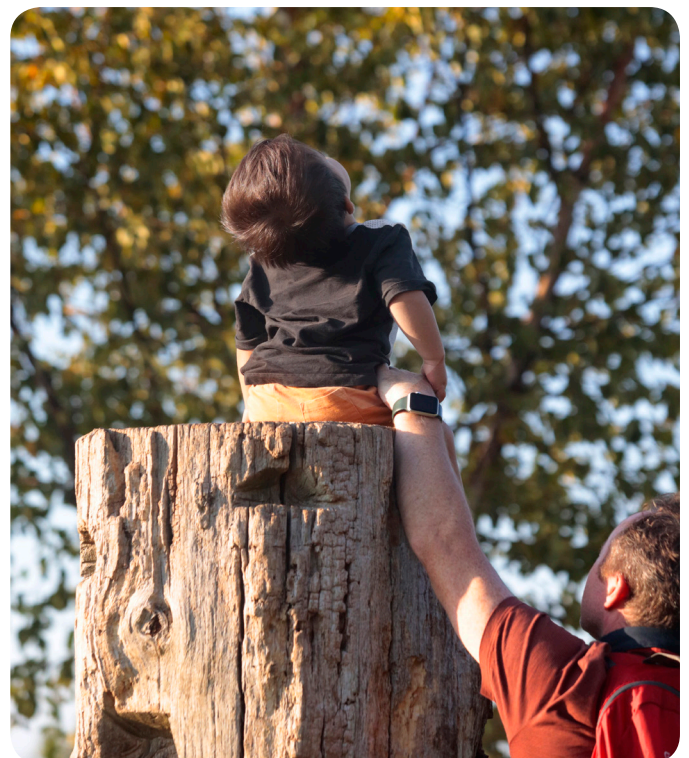
Make sure that all families with children aged 0-2 receive the help they need as early as possible, so children can have the best possible start in life. A big part of this is making sure there are good, trusting relationships between parents and the workers who support them

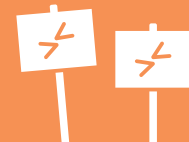


Make sure that work to improve early learning and childcare for children aged 2-4 years happens by August 2021. Families must be able to easily access good quality early learning and childcare



Make sure that young children with additional support needs receive the help they need to do well and feel included.





Aim *All children and young people in Scotland will be able to do their best in all areas of learning*

Learning happens in all areas of life, not just at school. Playing a new sport, a musical instrument or learning how to do anything new is also learning!

When we feel comfortable, safe and happy, this can sometimes be called “wellbeing”. We believe wellbeing is important to be able to do any kind of learning and that the next government should focus on children’s wellbeing.

We know that children want one-to-one support and relationships should be at the heart of learning. Every child is unique and should receive support in a way that works best for them.

We believe that play could be a bigger part of learning for all children. We think money and support for playing, art, sport and hobbies would help children’s wellbeing.

The money and staff available for learning for children with additional support needs must be increased, so all children are able to learn. All children should be treated equally in school and get the support they need regardless of their background or if they have a **disability**.*

Moving from nursery to primary school and then to secondary education can be scary and difficult for children and young people. We want them to be given the help they need to make these changes easier for them.



“If teachers are prepared to stick by you, believe in you, it makes a huge difference. You can turn your whole life around”

Quote from a Member of the Children’s Parliament, What Kind of Scotland? (Scottish Borders, 2017)
Source: **Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank**

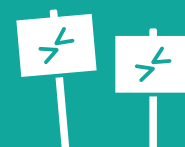
What we want to happen



We want the next Scottish Government to:

- ! Focus on wellbeing in Scottish education and fully include wellbeing, relationships and play in the plans for how education will develop. Look at how this can be done and carry this out before 2026
- ! Make sure there is enough money and support for the needs of all children to be met, especially when children have additional support needs
- ! Look at how education happens in other countries to see what is working well for children and try to do the same in Scotland. Provide children and young people with access to a hobby or activity they choose during or around the school day, at no cost to the child or their family.





Aim *All children and young people and Scotland have the best health and wellbeing possible*

Things need to change so that children and young people in Scotland have better health. Adults who do research have found that children and young people in Scotland are more likely to have bad health than in other European countries.

Physical health is important, but so are our feelings, thoughts, how we cope when we feel stressed and how close we feel to those around us. This is what is called “mental health”. Children in Scotland have more pressure than ever and research has shown that their mental health is getting worse. We want more support for them to help improve this.

Many things can affect our mental health, such as concerns about money, bullying and feeling lonely and we think these need to be tackled too.

We want more adults to be taught how to work well with children to help their mental health so they understand these issues well.

Children and young people have also told us themselves that they would like to learn more about mental health and wellbeing so they can make their own positive choices.



“Get to know us. We need adults that are kind, sensitive and who listen to us, take us seriously, then do something to make our situation better. Don’t be bystanders”

Quote from Mental Health in Scotland (Children in Scotland consultation, 2016)

Source: Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank

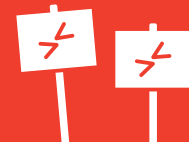
What we want to happen



We want the next Scottish Government to:

- ! Provide more money and support for mental health assistance for children and young people
- ! Make sure that children and young people can receive support as soon as possible and before problems get bigger
- ! Make sure that PSE* classes provide honest, judgement-free opportunities for young people to talk about health and wellbeing and that classes are designed with input from children and young people themselves.





Aim *All children and young people living in Scotland grow up in places and communities that are safe and built with their needs in mind*

We know that where children live can have a big impact on their lives. Some parts of Scotland have less access to important things like green spaces, clean air, safe places to play and areas where people in the **community*** can gather.

Not all families have enough money to pay for a home in a safe area. We believe that the government needs to make housing more affordable.

In one research project, children and young people living in two **deprived areas*** explored the communities they live in and how it affected their health and wellbeing. They found that there were lots of fast-food places but fewer healthier options. They told us this could affect their diet. They also told us how crime, drugs and public spaces (such as parks) not being well looked after could affect people living in the community.

Those in charge of planning new buildings or how land will be used now must engage with children, young people and families so they can share their views about new things happening in their local area.

We have seen really good examples of children and young people being able to share their views and ideas and we would like these to happen more often. This would mean that communities will be designed with the needs of children, young people and families in mind.

What we want to happen



We want the next Scottish Government to:

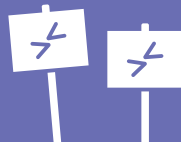
- ! Build communities around the things children and families need. Make sure that local authorities* have the information, support and money needed to make this happen
- ! Make sure that families can access high quality housing they can afford by improving the number and quality of houses available in Scotland
- ! Make sure there will be more control over the numbers of off-licenses and betting shops near schools, playgrounds and other places where children gather.



“[I worry] That I didn’t get a choice about it but it’s happening. Why didn’t you take kids’ opinions before deciding to build [the road]?”

Quote from Children’s Parliament consultation on Dunkeld and Birnam Community Planning (2017-18)

Source: **Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank**



Aim

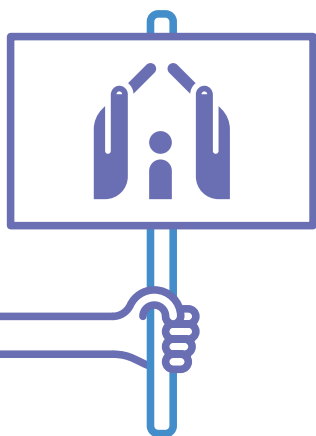
All children and young people living in Scotland are as healthy and happy as possible

It is really important that children are happy, healthy and safe. Growing up in poverty, not being safe from harm, or not having the clothes or shelter a child needs, can have a big impact on a child's life. We have seen a big change in how children who have experienced these things are treated.

It's really important that adults realise how very difficult experiences for children can affect how they act or the decisions they make. They need to understand children better, treat them with more kindness and support them better.

More people have realised that these children need to be protected, not punished.

We know all families try to do the best for their children. But it is really important that everyone has support that works best for them to tackle issues before they get worse.



"A home should be a place of safety, hope, and no worries"

Quote from participatory youth research project Beyond4Walls (Children in Scotland, 2015)

Source: *Children and Young People's Evidence Bank*

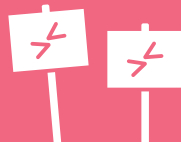
What we want to happen



We want the next Scottish Government to:

- ! Make sure there is enough money and guidance for all families to have support that is based upon good relationships for as long as they need
- ! Make sure that the changes that have been asked for by those who have left the care system are made fully by 2030
- ! Provide support for children and young people who have experienced violence or have seen this happen to others. Make sure this support has enough money to happen and is provided all over the country.





Aim *That no child or young person in Scotland is treated badly because of their colour, sex or religion, if they speak another language, have a disability, or are rich or poor*

Sometimes people are treated badly because of their colour, race, gender, who they love, religion, the language they speak, if they have a **disability*** or if they are poor. This can happen anywhere, in school, in a job, in all parts of life.

This is wrong and can make people feel less included and unwilling to participate in society.

Many children and young people who are seen as “different” still experience bullying.

People who are seen as different in more than one way can be treated even worse, for example a person from a different country who also has a disability. This is known as “intersectional inequality” and it can have a big impact on those it affects. We think this needs to be more known by decision-makers.

Some people are transgender, which means their gender (e.g. boy, girl) is different from the one they were told they had since birth. Some people don't feel completely either boy or girl, and this is called non-binary. Transgender people can make steps to change their official identities (e.g. birth certificate, passport) and have treatments to make physical changes to their bodies. The new government should make sure transgender people can make changes as easily as they need to, and that non-binary people are legally recognised.

We want people with lots of different experiences and characteristics to work directly with children and young people. This means that they would understand all the different experiences of the children they are helping.

What we want to happen



We want the next Scottish Government to:

- ! Make sure that equality* and human rights are considered in all decision-making
- ! Make sure that people with all different experiences and characteristics are working in the children's sector. Create the plan for how this will happen in 2021
- ! Make sure that transgender people can enjoy their rights.

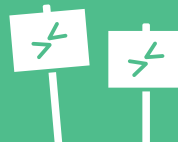


“I tried to go to a counsellor... there was no counsellor for disabled people”

“As a young and disabled woman of colour I am not represented at all in politics in Scotland”

Quotes from ‘Status of Young Women in Scotland 2018

Source: *Children and Young People's Evidence Bank*



Aim *We avoid the climate crisis and create a Scotland that has a lasting and safe environment*

The **climate crisis*** may be the most important issue affecting our world today. Governments all over the world have set themselves targets for decreasing the amount of carbon they create (which is harmful to the environment). But the impact of this has been far too slow.

For example, we know that poor air quality is really common in spaces used by children and this can be very harmful to children's health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone, and we want the support given to people as we come out of the pandemic to be done in a way that is best for the environment.

Concerns about the environment have become even more important for young people and many young people all over the world have protested and told their governments what they want to change.

We stand with children and young people, including the Youth Climate Strikers, in asking the Scottish Government to do more to act on the climate crisis.

We want information about the environment to be taught in schools, so everyone learns about it and why it is important.



“Our obsession with wealth is killing our planet”

Coll McCail, member of our children and young people's advisory group Changing our World.

Quote from Children in Scotland Magazine, April 2020

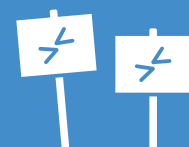
What we want to happen



We want the next Scottish Government to:

- ! Include the environment across school lessons (the curriculum) so all children and young people in Scotland can learn about it and be part of discussions on climate change* and other issues
- ! Make useful and effective changes to their plans to tackle combat climate change
- ! Improve air quality in places where children live, learn and play. Introduce a scheme that monitors air quality around schools and educates children and families about the issue.





Aim *Those who work with children will have enough money, information and support and will be able to adapt to meet the needs of children, young people and their families*

The government will have a set amount of money available, which they will decide how to spend.

We need to focus on stopping problems facing children, young people and families from happening in the first place. But if they do, making sure that help and support are provided right away.

For example, money must be provided to ensure that all children and young people no longer live in poverty, and have enough money, clothes, food and shelter.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important it is for everyone to be able to access the internet and have the devices they need to do so. Using the internet has become important for school, university, working and staying in touch with each other.

Children, young people and families should be involved and asked what they want to happen when new rules, decisions and laws are being made.

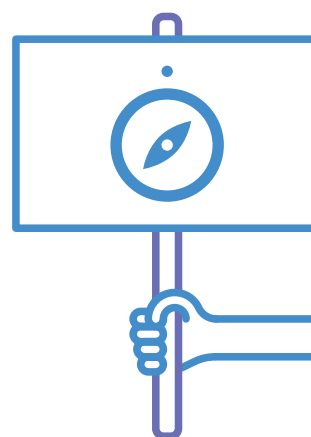


What we want to happen



We want the next Scottish Government to:

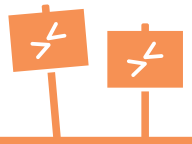
- ! Focus on the wellbeing of everyone in Scotland (including children, young people and families) when deciding how much money should be spent on different things
- ! Make sure that those who work with children have enough money to continue their efforts
- ! Make sure that children and young people are included genuinely and fully in all policymaking by 2022. Provide enough money and support to make this happen.



“The government doesn’t have the money to get it wrong so should invest in listening to children and young people to get it right”

Quote from a young person at Children in Scotland’s children’s rights discussion day (2019)

Source: Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank



Theme 1 – Rights, Democracy and Scotland's Place in the World

Democracy – This means that the people in a country have a say in how the country is run and who the Government is, usually by voting

UNCRC – This stands for the “United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child”. This is a list of rights that children have that many countries over the world have agreed to. All of the rights it has are connected to each other and are equally important, such as the right to be alive, the right to give your opinion and for adults to take it seriously, the right to find out things and share your thoughts with others, the right to a clean and safe environment and many more!

Government – A group of people who make laws of a country and have to make sure that all the people in the country are treated fairly

Theme 2 – Poverty and Inequality

Poverty – Experiencing poverty means that you don't have enough money for your basic needs, such as clothing, food or shelter. Being in poverty also means not being able to access things that help young people thrive such as activities and opportunities for play

Inequality – When people do not have the same rights, support or opportunities, these are unfair and avoidable differences

End Child Poverty Group – A group made up of different organisations in Scotland who want all children to have enough money for their basic needs and work towards this. They run campaigns, engage with those in power and do research

Theme 5 – Health and Wellbeing

PSE – This means Personal and Social Education, where children learn about health, relationships and issues that are not part of other school subjects

Theme 6 – Place, space and community

Deprived areas – Places where those living there do not have the things that people think are essential for living, such as enough money, good housing, safety, etc

Community – A group of people living in a particular area

Local authorities – Organisations that are responsible for all the public services and facilities in a particular area, such as parks, bus services and libraries

Theme 8 – Equalities

Equality – When people are treated fairly, given an equal chance and everyone has their individual needs met

Disability – A physical or mental issue that makes it difficult for a person to do something they do every day such as speaking, hearing or learning

Theme 9 – Environment

Climate crisis – The fact that nature is changing so rapidly that it will impact on all humans, animals and plants on Earth

Climate change – A term that describes a change in things in nature, such as how hot or cold it is or the amount of rainfall in a particular part of the world over a long time.