



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



Ambitious for Scotland Programme for Government 2026 – 2031

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First Minister's Foreword

In May, the people of Scotland once again entrusted my government with the privilege of serving them. That is a trust we will honour by **relentlessly delivering for people now and in the future.**



This is a Programme with the highest ambitions for Scotland. It is about delivering tangible improvements in the lives of our people and creating new opportunities for all to succeed.

Our Programme will focus on:

Eradicating child poverty, investing in young people and their families so they can reach their full potential – backed by the most generous cost-of-living package in the UK, including:

- Putting more money into people's pockets through a strong social safety net and reducing everyday costs.
- Helping more people get a warm, safe, affordable home and ending the use of unsafe and harmful temporary accommodation for children.
- Supporting people to learn new skills, find good, fair work and increase their earnings, backed by a brand-new childcare offering from 9 months to the end of primary school.

Making Scotland the best place to do business, including:

- Attracting more investment and better backing of home-grown businesses and markets with the greatest growth potential – removing barriers to progress, increasing business and investor confidence, and securing growth in priority sectors.
- Delivering economic growth that reflects the unique strengths, opportunities, and ambitions of each part of Scotland.

Tackling the climate and nature crises, ensuring more green jobs and lower costs, while protecting our beautiful and valuable landscapes and environment, and building resilience to the impacts of the climate emergency being felt now, including:

- Ensuring our economy, climate, and communities all benefit from the transition and become more resilient to the damaging impacts of climate change being felt now – realising the twin benefits of emissions reductions and economic opportunity.

Stronger public services, with lower NHS waiting times and easier access to GP services, including:

- Ending long waits in our hospitals and ensuring nobody waits more than 26 weeks for the treatment they need.
- Shifting more care out of hospitals and into communities – reducing unnecessary stays in hospitals and seeing more people cared for in their homes.
- Ending Scotland's unacceptably high rate of drug-related deaths, treating it as a public health emergency.
- Giving children a safe and positive future – supporting early childhood development and improving the ABCs in our schools, attendance, attainment, behaviour and curriculum.
- Strengthening public protection and helping people feel safe in their communities through earlier, joined-up action to prevent crime and reduce reoffending, while achieving a sustainable prison population.

These ambitions are important in their own right – but they also underpin a more fundamental purpose: ensuring that people see and feel their government that is on their side, working every day to improve their lives.

We are optimistic and hopeful for Scotland, inspired by the potential for our country to be ever more successful.

We recognise that – just like every country – Scotland faces many challenges. Our country has not been immune from the threats of populism promoted by opportunistic and bad faith actors who aim to stoke division, hatred, and harm - often directed squarely at the most marginalised groups and falsely claiming to protect women and girls.

This Programme is vital in creating the kind of Scotland we want to be and for improving how confident people feel about their place in it. We will never pit groups against one another. We will always act for the common good.

To stand up to the divisive behaviour of populists, we must address three key factors in Scotland today.

Firstly, we must have a relentless focus on tackling **the cost-of-living crisis**. We will put easing that crisis at the forefront of our efforts: eradicating child poverty by putting more money in people's pockets; an economic strategy focused on creating new jobs and increased prosperity; and climate action that helps people with everyday bills and makes our country more resilient.

Secondly, we must tackle **violence against women and girls**. Listening to survivors has strengthened my determination to offer clear and emphatic leadership to better prevent violence against women and girls and address the devastating effects of abuse, coercion, and violence. As First Minister, I have pledged my personal leadership to driving the change that is needed in the behaviour of men and in the prevalence of sexism and misogyny. We cannot eradicate violence against women and girls without addressing women's inequality, so our work to tackle poverty and the cost-of-living crisis, to increase economic opportunities, and to advance public service reform are all critical to tackling violence against women and girls.

Thirdly, we must work hard to promote **community cohesion**. Scotland's strength lies in the diversity of its people and communities, including those of different faiths, beliefs, cultures and backgrounds. By fostering belonging, participation and mutual understanding, and by challenging

prejudice in all its forms, including Antisemitism, Islamophobia and all forms of racism, we will ensure Scotland is a place where differences are valued, common ground is strengthened, and all communities can flourish.

This Programme is rooted in Scotland's values and strengths and will help build a Scotland that is truly fair, healthy, prosperous, secure, skilled, sustainable, and connected. But **delivering that change means changing how we deliver.**

A government that delivers differently

The Public Service Reform strategy sets out the steps Government will take to ensure that every pound of investment is focused on frontline delivery, that there are the right staff in the right roles to deliver real change, and equip us with the necessary tools to realise long-term improvements.

Putting prevention first

Scotland's specific circumstances – demographic changes, an ageing population and people living longer with more complex health conditions – risk rising demand and costs unless we radically shift course. While the most acute impacts may be felt in our healthcare system, when spending rises there, it impacts our ability to invest in other public services that keep people healthy in the first place.

Scotland has taken important steps toward a prevention-first approach, through our Health and Social Care Renewal Framework and Population Health Framework, both of which provide an evidence-based focus on improving health and reducing inequality. This Programme will build on that – strengthened by the actions we are taking to grow the economy and tackle child poverty, and shifting the focus we take within public services, so that from pre-birth to

the end of life, we give people every chance they need to lead a full and healthy life, including:

Proactive leadership and collaboration through a new Prevention Unit sitting at the heart of the Scottish Government and already working to focus spending on preventative actions.

- Investment of an initial £200,000 in Social Impact Partnerships to develop early intervention and prevention programmes. If these prove successful, we will build upon them to establish a £10 million fund over the Parliamentary term.
- Strengthened support for families from before conception, through pregnancy, and during a child's earliest years.
- Shifting more healthcare closer to home through a Community First approach, maximising the opportunities for people to get the care they need in their own home or local community.
- Prioritising upstream homelessness prevention measures, ensuring that people receive support before reaching crisis.
- Breaking down the barriers to work, particularly for those inactive through ill-health or disability, and ensuring that everyone has the support required to enter and sustain well paid employment.

Underpinning this work, will be a decisive shift towards early intervention across public services through the **development of a Scottish Prevention Investment Framework**. Building on Scotland's preventative budgeting work, this will provide a consistent approach to identifying, assessing and prioritising investment in prevention and early intervention, helping direct resources towards actions that improve outcomes for people and reduce future demand on public services.

National renewal through public service reform

Public services underpin this Government's priorities. They have a transformational impact on people's lives and are critical to delivering economic growth, eradicating child poverty, and tackling the climate crisis. But as precious as those services are, in a changing world with changing demographics, we must be clear eyed about where the status quo is no longer enough. Services designed in and for the 20th century must adapt to the realities of the 21st century.

Over the course of this Parliament, we will rewire the Scottish state to ensure services fit around people, rather than expecting them to fit around a static system, and deliver improved outcomes for them – including putting more power in the hands of people and communities – by:

- **Empowering regions and communities:** Engaging in an intensive dialogue over the next three months with partners in Local Government, and other parties across Parliament reach a clear shared direction about the future of local governance in Scotland. The Government believes there is a need for regional local government, alongside community empowerment, and will engage with partners to find common ground.
- **Reforming social care:** Using the next three months to reach agreement on reform of social care which makes best use of the funding in the system, delivers fairer and more efficient services and achieves economies of scale, while maintaining a focus on community need.

- **Empowering school leaders, raising standards and reducing variation:**

Working closely with local government, school communities and headteachers to maximise the opportunities that reform of governance and service delivery will bring.

- **Making early progress in healthcare:**

Simplifying the NHS by replacing the current 14 territorial Health Boards with two Strategic Health Boards and build on planned reforms to further reduce the number of special Health Boards.

Decluttering the public sector

At a time of tight public finances and in pursuit of maximising spend on people, a starting point for delivery must be how we maximise service efficiency and agility to make them work for people, businesses, and communities. Scotland currently has more than 130 public bodies, all doing important work but often with overlapping and duplicating functions, too often making them less efficient than they could be and more difficult to navigate for the people they serve.

Over this Parliament, we will embark on an ambitious programme of rationalisation of these bodies to ensure they deliver excellent services for people in the most efficient way possible.

We will also act, across all areas of Government to remove barriers to delivery, simplify the way Government works, and speed up decision-making, all with the purpose of ensuring we deliver tangible improvements in people's lives as swiftly as possible.

A Fresh Start with Independence

This Government believes that to fully deliver on our ambitions, independence is the fresh start Scotland needs. In May, voters again returned a pro-independence majority, the largest ever elected. That reflects a belief, held by many across our country, that decisions about Scotland's future are best taken in Scotland – making real change to reduce bills, eradicate child poverty, grow our economy and improve our public services. We have published a draft Referendum Bill and will continue to make the case for the right of the people of Scotland to decide their constitutional future through a lawful independence referendum.

The Government will take forward sustained actions to ensure the democratic right of the people of Scotland to determine their own future through Independence is honoured. The desire to have that choice about Scotland's future has been made clear again in the Scottish Parliament election in May and it cannot be ignored by the UK Government.

We will also co-operate with the leadership of Governments in Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure our respective peoples are able to exercise that democratic choice.

This Parliament holds a strong pro-European majority, reflecting the view that remaining outside the European Union is a significant obstacle to Scotland's ambitions. Independence will enable Scotland to pursue a return to European Union membership, which offers the best route to securing and improving Scotland's long-term interests.

As we work towards the fresh start of independence, we will utilise our full powers to deliver for people now, take every opportunity to expand our powers, be ambitious for the future, and make tomorrow's Scotland better than the Scotland of today.

A commitment on how we will work

As we deliver on our Programme, I give a guarantee that this Government will always look to find and create common ground in our pursuit of a better Scotland – based on unwavering values of fairness, compassion, and inclusion which underpin Scotland's identity.

I invite all parties represented in the Scottish Parliament, who support those values, to echo that guarantee and send a clear message that we will work together to protect and promote those values to ensure a better tomorrow. I pledge my Government to work collaboratively in that endeavour.

We will work to create common ground with the business community, Local Government and the Third Sector. We will work constructively with the UK Government in seeking more powers for Scotland to tackle the cost-of-living crisis, strengthen economic growth, and address issues that have eroded the devolution settlement over the last ten years.

I am profoundly grateful to the people of Scotland for placing their trust in my Government, and in giving my Government the opportunity to serve them. I pledge to use all my energy to bring our country together in common purpose, to improve the lives of the people and to deliver the best future for Scotland.

John Swinney MSP
First Minister

Eradicating Child Poverty

To deliver for Scotland we have:

Successfully introduced the Scottish Child Payment - forecast to keep **50,000 children out of relative poverty** in **2026-27**



Increased the value of our **5 family payments** which can be worth around **£26,000** by the time a child turns 16



Through our early school age childcare delivery projects **we're supporting over 7,000 children and their families** who are most at risk of living in poverty



Since 2007 we have delivered **146,034 affordable homes**, including **104,451 for social rent** – with affordable housing supply per 10,000 population **45% higher than in England** and **69% higher than in Wales**



Saved families who take up the offer of free school meals **£400 per child** a year



Supported around 34,500 parents through our devolved employability services between April 2020 and March 2026

1 Eradicating child poverty

Eradicating child poverty: Our defining mission

Eradicating child poverty is this Government's defining mission. Despite not having the full levers necessary, we are making good progress and a real difference to the lives of families. The proportion of children living in relative poverty is six percentage points lower here than the UK average.

Bringing Hope, Building Futures (BHBF), the Government's delivery plan to tackle child poverty, was published earlier this year, underpinned by the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into devolved law, helping ensure that children and young people are at the heart of decisions that affect them and that they have the confidence and skills they need. This sets out how we will go even further to help parents to increase their incomes and reduce the burden of everyday costs, with action in the plan estimated to help keep 100,000 children out of relative poverty this year.



Across this Parliament, we will build on that foundation and go further, faster, with a concerted cross-government effort to increase incomes and bring down costs. We will prioritise multi-year funding for actions demonstrating the highest impact on child poverty where possible. BHBF also explicitly recognised

that children's poverty is inextricably linked to women's poverty, with violence against women and girls often a driver of that, and we will continue to invest in the Financially Included Project, helping survivors regain financial independence.

Ambitious for Scotland: Putting more money in families' pockets



We are using our full powers to protect families from the cost-of-living crisis with the most generous package of support in the UK. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimate **some of the lowest income households with children are around £2,760 per year better off because of our progressive approach to income tax and benefits**, including our Scottish Child Payment.

We will work to tackle the cost-of-living crisis so that **by the end of this Parliament real household incomes are rising**, particularly for the lowest income groups by:

- **Reducing essential household costs:** through a radical expansion of childcare, lower public transport fares, consulting on legislation to establish legal price ceilings on some essential food items and continuing to provide support to eligible households with their fuel bills.
- **Getting and staying in work:** Helping more people to enter and stay in work and ensuring our child poverty and economic growth agendas have a mutually beneficial outcome of increased wages and fair work.
- **Strengthen support through social security:** including increasing the Scottish Child Payment to £40 per week for eligible babies under one – supporting around 12,000 children in their critical first year.
- **Maximise take-up of benefits:** through tackling stigma, improving awareness of entitlements, including of qualifying and relevant UK Government benefits, and identifying opportunities with partners, such as referrals and data sharing, to help ensure individuals access the full range of financial support they are entitled to.
- **Making money and debt advice more accessible:** investing in proven local advice services through our Advice in Accessible Settings Fund – supporting up to 7,500 people per year to access the financial support they are entitled to.

Ensuring people need only ‘ask once’

The problems people face in their everyday lives are often complex and don’t fit neatly into one area. They need support that fits around their lives and makes things simpler. That is at the heart of our vision for **whole-family support**, ensuring people get the right support, at the right time and in the right place, for as long as they need it.

Across this Parliament, we will work with local partnerships to ensure support that is person-centred and accessible, delivered in an environment people feel comfortable in, on a ‘No Wrong Door’ basis, so they are not deterred from seeking it out. We will support partners to take a preventative approach, scaling successful approaches so that more families get support that is co-ordinated across services and wraps around their individual needs before things escalate into crisis. Recognising the critical role of the third sector, we will co-design a Partnership Agreement that formalises the relationship between the Scottish Government and the third sector, founded on trust, collaboration and mutual respect, strengthening and embedding the sector’s contribution to delivering key priorities.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Support the expansion of Children First’s National Support line, offering a one-step gateway to support up to 7,500 families across Scotland, backed by £2 million.
- Deliver our £20 million Whole Family Support Third Sector Delivery Fund, increasing capacity to deliver relational, community-based support in areas of greatest need, with this funding continuing over the Parliament.
- Work with partners to build on existing best practice to progress an integrated Whole Family Support programme. From April 2027, this will provide multi-year change funding to better enable partners to meet the needs of communities and tailor support to individual families.
- Work with local and national partners to maximise the opportunity lawful data sharing offers to deliver for families.

Helping with the cost of living

Across this Parliament, we will go further to protect and expand our cost-of-living package. Putting more money into pockets – through maximising the support they are entitled to or cutting everyday costs – is one of the most direct ways we can tackle poverty, protect people from the cost crisis and ensure they have the resources they need to thrive. That aim is built on a solid foundation, with Scotland having the most generous cost-of-living package anywhere in the UK – reducing council tax costs for over 100,000 households with children, funding free bus travel for over 2.4 million people, helping households save an estimated £450 a year on energy bills, and much more.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Deliver a £2 bus fare cap across the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) area, building on our pilot in the Highlands and Islands and implementing a national rollout of £2 bus fares across Scotland by the end of this Parliament.
- Consult on legislation to establish legal price ceilings on some essential food items, improving affordability of food for households facing cost of living pressures.
- Help write off School Meal debt for families impacted by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis by making up to £2.8 million available to Local Authorities.
- Further expand Free School Meals in primary school.
- Continue to invest in the Financially Included Project which helps survivors of abuse and coercive control regain financial independence.
- Conclude the review of joint and several liability rules for council tax debt and how they impact victim-survivors and consider any changes required to make council tax debt recovery processes fairer.
- Invest £205 million to continue delivering winter heating payments to pensioners, families with disabled children and the households struggling the most.
- Develop the systems and legislation needed to increase our Scottish Child Payment to £40 per week for children under the age of 1 during 2027-28 – with around 12,000 children a year expected to receive support.



Ambitious for Scotland: Ensuring more people get an affordable home



We are **supporting housing investment across all tenures** – building and bringing more homes into use. Since 2007 this Scottish Government has delivered 146,034 affordable homes, including 104,451 for social rent – with affordable housing supply proportionately 45% higher than in England and 69% higher than in Wales, per 10,000 population.

Across this Parliament, we will work to ensure everyone can secure and keep a home, rather than cycling through insecurity, homelessness or long periods in temporary accommodation. We will **deliver 110,000 affordable homes by 2032** – of which at least 70% will be available for social rent and 10% will be in our rural and island communities. This will be underpinned by investment of up to £4.9 billion, including a record £4.1 billion of public sector funding, to support delivery of 36,000 affordable homes and our wider all-tenure ambition over this Parliament. To deliver this, we will:

- **Work with local and regional partners to ensure the right mix of housing in the right places:** aligned to housing need and our broader ambitions on regional growth and with housing provision supporting areas of new jobs and investment.
- **Reform the planning system:** to speed up developments and make it easier to get projects to completion and families into homes.
- **Phase in the establishment of a new Scottish housing agency, More Homes Scotland, from 1 April 2027:** bringing together funding, expertise and delivery tools under one roof. It will remove barriers and accelerate housing delivery, improving the use of public investment, unlocking private finance and supporting more homes, faster.
- **Develop a strategic partnership between More Homes Scotland and the Scottish National Investment Bank (SNIB):** leveraging further private commercial capital and investment into housing - supporting new entrants, growth and delivery of more high-quality housing across all tenures, including Build to Rent and affordable and social housing.

Ensuring the right housing mix for Scotland

While affordable housing underpins our efforts to give families and children a safe and secure future and tackle poverty, it also sits at the heart of growing the economy – ensuring the right profile of housing in areas of job creation and improving public services, so that people have a good quality home in their local community and live better and healthier.

Across this parliament, we will boost home ownership, increase affordable housing, strengthen tenants' rights, and help young people to build homes within their communities through our Youth Built initiative. Planning and regulatory reforms will streamline housing delivery, speed up decision making and remove barriers to building new houses across the country. Through More Homes Scotland, we will provide a stronger national focus to support the delivery of the right homes, in the right places, across all tenures, so every area can benefit from good quality housing.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Build on the support we have already provided first-time buyers through our new 'First Homes Fund', part funding their mortgage deposit with a joint equity contribution of up to £10,000. This will run every year of this parliament, backed by up to £100 million, open to everyone buying homes up to £300,000 who have not previously owned their own home.
- Engage with stakeholders on our proposal to enable private rental tenants to purchase the property they rent if the owner chooses to put it up for sale.
- Work at pace to provide financial support to owners of buildings affected by dangerous cladding – so that as quickly as practicable appropriate action has been taken in relation to every high-risk residential building over 18 metres, and that those over 11 metres are on a pathway to resolution.



Ending homelessness for good

No one deserves to live in unsafe housing or risk being trapped in homelessness or with an abusive partner. Our approach to homelessness will shift from crisis management to prevention and rapid rehousing so that everyone has a safe, secure and affordable home in which they can thrive.

We will do all we can over this Parliament to help people off the streets and end the use of unsafe and harmful temporary accommodation for children. Support for care-experienced young people to access secure long-term housing will be strengthened and, under new standards, we will ensure homes are designed and adapted to meet people's needs, reducing physical barriers and enabling disabled people to participate more fully in daily life.

We will transform how public services work together and embed housing stability as a shared responsibility, ensuring people receive the right support at the right time and increase the supply of affordable homes in the places they are needed to end homelessness for everyone.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Roll out our 'Homelessness Prevention Fund' of £50 million over 10 years. Introduced in our first 100 days, this has immediately provided £1 million to the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and Homeless Network Scotland to strengthen tenancy sustainment activity by registered social landlords in Glasgow.
- Support up to an estimated 15,000 families impacted by the UK Government's freeze to Local Housing Allowance rates, reducing housing-related poverty and helping prevent homelessness.
- Make our £2 million 'fund to leave' scheme permanent, offering support for women and children to leave an abusive partner. Increased investment will allow the fund to reach even more women and children, helping them take the first steps towards a secure and independent future, free from abuse.
- Support local authorities to deliver 1,500 Housing First tenancies over five years.
- Continue growing the Independent Living Fund, giving more disabled people access to life-changing support to live independently, with investment of £88.6 million.
- Support Social Bite with £2 million for the expansion of their efforts to address homelessness

Ambitious for Scotland: Getting more people in good, secure work



Helping people into good, secure, and well-paid work can provide an enduring route out of poverty. Fair work also underpins sustainable economic growth. Scotland has the highest proportion of employees in the UK paid the real Living Wage or more, with almost 90% of workers aged 18 and over receiving it.

We will work to boost the number of people securing and progressing in work, particularly those who face barriers to work through long-term illness and disability so that **economic inactivity rates fall and employment rates increase**, with a coordinated programme of work to:

- **Support people who are inactive or at risk of being so:** working across health and employability to help people to enter and sustain employment.
- **Encourage and support good jobs that best serve people and local communities:** improving employer practices, workplace conditions and job availability in places and priority sectors, contributing to business productivity and higher real incomes.
- **Develop the skills needed for Scotland's economy to thrive:** addressing skills and workforce challenges and supporting employers to develop and fully utilise their workforce's skills.
- **Support young people to engage in the labour market:** with improved pathways from education into training and employment through strengthened partnerships, expanded work-based learning opportunities, improved transition support, and effective employability services.

Equipping people with skills and opportunities

A high-skilled workforce underpins this Government's ambitions – helping reduce poverty through good work; contributing to economic growth in all areas and regions; and being at the forefront of the green industrial transition. Scotland's employment rate is significantly higher than 15 years ago, but we are determined to go further by growing the working population, supporting people into work, and ensuring those leaving education or seeking new careers have the skills to be ready and able to take up those opportunities.

Across this Parliament, we will provide national coordination of a skills and employability programme that delivers for workforces and employers across Scotland. We will expand apprenticeships, funding at least 150,000, grow the opportunities provided by Graduate Apprenticeships, and develop a new Apprenticeship Accelerator Grant focused on supporting businesses, particularly SMEs. We will build on the record levels of young people already going into positive destinations when they leave school by investing in apprenticeships for disabled young people and uprating bursaries for paramedics, midwifery and nursing students. And we will focus on improving the digital and vocational skills of our working-age population and create new schemes to support disabled people into work.



Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Produce a single national skills plan for Scotland by Spring 2027, aligning skills investment with economic need and opportunities, supporting the green and digital transitions, boosting productivity and creating clearer pathways into well paid and sustainable jobs.
- Publish a Careers Ambitions Framework and work with users of all ages, the Scottish Careers Collaborative, employers and key partners to improve digital careers information, expand work-based learning, and strengthen pathways from education into employment.
- Commence new powers for the Scottish Funding Council in April 2027 to consolidate responsibility for securing and funding the delivery of national training programmes, apprenticeships, and work-based learning with the rest of tertiary education.
- Fund and progress the pre-commercialisation stage of CivTech Challenge 11.4, the development of a digital solution to better support economically inactive people with musculoskeletal challenges to remain in and return to work.
- Increase awareness and uptake of Working Health Services Scotland, supporting more people with health challenges to remain in and return to work.
- Work with the UK Government, alongside Public Health Scotland, to increase Scotland's influence on the Keep Britain Working programme, supporting Scottish employers to address workplace health, help people return to work after illness, and increase disabled people's employment.
- Support Regional Economic Partnerships to deliver regional interventions that respond to employers' skills needs and support people into training and job opportunities.
- Invest in a programme to develop engineering and maritime skills in Glasgow City Region, regionally focused skills programmes supported by the Growth Deals, and 10-year regional skills programmes in Scotland's two investment zones to address critical skills shortages key sectors.
- Invest £22 million to help parents access the skills and training they need through the new Colleges RISE, Training Access Fund and Flexible Workforce Development Fund.
- Protect free tuition and work to ensure our tertiary education sector meets the needs of the people of Scotland and our economy, including by delivering and responding to two reviews we have commissioned for the future of the sector.
- Continue our commitment to multiyear funding for No One Left Behind and finalise a review of Employability Support to focus on breaking down the barriers to work, with key recommendations delivered in the next Scottish Budget.
- Explore options to recognise employers who provide fair, flexible and healthy work, through access to funded training via the new Flexible Workforce Development Fund, and use the evaluation of Fair Work First, alongside Trade Union led efforts, to future-proof workplaces.
- Call on Westminster to fully devolve Employment Law to Scotland whilst continuing to support the interests of Scottish workers and businesses in the implementation of the Employment Rights Act (2025).

Helping children to flourish and parents to work

Good quality, affordable and accessible childcare is essential to meeting our ambitions of growing the economy, through increased work opportunities, and tackling poverty, by boosting incomes and reducing costs. Our universal funded early learning and childcare offer is the most generous in the UK; but we are going to go further.

By the end of this Parliament, we will transform the childcare offer for families, providing support 52 weeks a year for children from 9 months old to the end of primary school. This will be a more flexible system that changes from a focus on 3 and 4-year-olds, to provide childcare support earlier in life and extended to primary school children, making it easier for parents to get to work and get the support they need during holiday periods. Delivery will be phased across the Parliamentary term, with families able to access breakfast clubs for all primary schools from August 2027, and a new after school and holiday childcare offer for primary school children available from August 2029.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Publish and consult on a blueprint for a new childcare offer which is focused on what matters most to families.
- Deliver a national breakfast club offer, with provision for all primary schools from August 2027, backed by £44 million each year.
- Fund a range of targeted childcare support for low-income families, including our Extra Time programme with the Scottish Football Association, and our childcare Early Adopter Communities.
- Support high quality, sustainable early learning and childcare (ELC), investing a further £13.4 million to enable childcare professionals delivering funded ELC in the private and third sectors to continue to be paid at least the real Living Wage, benefitting up to 13,000 childcare professionals.

Growing the Economy

To deliver for Scotland we have:



Supported nearly **1,000 homes**, over **3,000 jobs** in the last year, and over **£400m** in Scottish supply chain spend through the work of the Scottish National Investment Bank

Maintained and strengthened Scotland's position as the **most attractive place in the UK** for inward investment outside London and the South East



We have and will always invest in our farming and crofting communities – having already delivered a generous package, **investing over £660 million** in support to agriculture

Since 2007, **GDP per person has grown by 10.2%** compared to 7.8% in the UK



A **long-term funding settlement** for the arts of an additional **£100 million annually for culture** by 2028-29



There were **91 million passenger journeys** on ScotRail services in 2025-26. **Peak rail fares were removed** from the Scotrail network on 1 September 2025



Scottish Enterprise-supported projects over the five years to March 2025 are projected to create or **safeguard around 90,000 jobs** and bring nearly **£4.6 billion of capital investment** to Scotland

2 Growing the Economy

Scotland's economy is resilient despite challenging global circumstances and the structural weakness of the Westminster economic system. Since 2007, under this Scottish Government, GDP per person has grown faster than the UK as a whole and productivity growth has been more than double the UK average. That is a genuine achievement, but it is only a starting point.

Our vision is bolder: to make Scotland one of the most successful economies in the world for nations of our size – increasing economic growth by ensuring that Scotland is open for business and building on our historic and contemporary strengths in innovation, clean energy, entrepreneurship, research, food, drink and tourism, and global connectivity.

We want Scotland to be recognised not only for the quality of its people, institutions, ideas and assets, but also for our ability to turn them into investment, opportunity and prosperity felt in every part of the country. A Scotland where growth is not just measured in statistics, but in wages, opportunities, and confidence. Growth is not an end in itself. It means more good jobs and successful businesses and stronger communities. It generates funding to deliver public services and underpins our broader social aims, such as tackling women's inequality, eradicating child poverty, and addressing the climate emergency.

Guided by the National Council for Economic Growth, established in our first 100 days, we will make Scotland the best place to invest and do business and take bold, sustained action to back the businesses and markets with the greatest potential to grow. Our plans build on the progress made under the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) updated and evolved to reflect the very different global and economic context Scotland now faces.

We will combine the proven drivers of growth across the economy with targeted support for Scotland's four innovation priorities: Energy Transition, Health and Life Sciences, Advanced Manufacturing, and Data and Digital Technologies. **We will work closely and collaboratively with key partners, including the National Council for Economic Growth, to deliver on six priorities for growth:**

- Making Scotland a better place to invest and do business.
- Helping more businesses to start, scale, and innovate.
- Connecting people to better work.
- Building the right infrastructure.
- Enhancing Scotland's global offer.
- Backing growth in every region.

We will accelerate action across these areas, creating the necessary conditions for growth and investment and targeting the areas where Scotland can be a genuine world-leader – attracting investment, increasing exports, creating good jobs, and raising productivity.

Ambitious for Scotland: Promoting and Securing home grown growth and international investment



Scotland is among the most attractive places in the UK to invest, create jobs and build a more sustainable future. For the eleventh consecutive year, Scotland has been the UK's leading destination for foreign direct investment (FDI) projects outside London and Scotland's financial services sector remains the largest financial hub to London.

Across this Parliament, we will build on that foundation and **deliver the investment needed to achieve Scotland's economic growth ambitions across the country**, built on investor confidence and opportunity in home-grown innovation: attracting private capital, supporting businesses to export, reducing barriers to trade, and building partnerships with investors, including:

- Advancing the £1.5 billion Scottish Government Bond Programme to help attract new investment into Scotland, diversify capital funding sources and support long-term infrastructure investment.
- Increasing private capital investment by accelerating and coordinating strategic projects, engaging with investors, including pension funds, championing Scotland's strengths on the global stage and fostering a fair, transparent financial system that delivers sustainable economic prosperity for Scotland.
- Promoting strategic alignment across public and private institutions and investment behind a shared mission to support innovation, high-growth businesses, scale-up activity and strategic infrastructure investment.
- Building on strong relationships with key investors and Scotland's global reputation to secure more private investment in strategic sectors including housing and energy.
- Further developing the national project pipeline and the Invest Scotland portal to present opportunities clearly and tangibly.
- Delivering a more joined up offer for trading and exporting businesses aligned with business needs, addressing trade barriers and strengthening export support for priority growth sectors and targetting export support through overseas and Global Scots networks.

An attractive, competitive place to do business

Scientific and technological advances are changing the way we live, with new markets and industries emerging. Across this Parliament we will build on and accelerate that opportunity, ensuring that Scotland has a clear reputation as a reliable trading partner and competitive place to do business. We will

reform the planning and regulatory landscape to make it easier to do business, nurturing domestic growth, and attracting international investment. International trade and investment will be strengthened through the expansion of the Scotland House network, targeted support for high-growth sectors, encouraging graduates to stay and work in Scotland, and boosting planning system capacity across the country.



Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Begin operating a new Major Projects Office, to accelerate progress on nationally and strategically significant investment and private capital projects, unblocking barriers to project delivery and unlocking private investment across strategic sectors including housing and energy.
- Strengthen Scotland's inward investment capability to secure land and grow mobile investment, supporting strategic projects, reinvestment and job creation across Scotland.
- Receive and consider the recommendations of an independent review on the valuation methodology applied to non-domestic property in the hospitality sector, commissioned in our first 100 days.
- Begin consultation on various reforms to simplify our planning and consenting systems to speed up processes, giving greater confidence to those looking to invest while providing local people with confidence and understanding, with implementation from 2027-28.
- Develop legislation to reform and modernise Scotland's compulsory purchase system, to support more effective delivery of development, regeneration and infrastructure projects.
- Reduce business bureaucracy and ensure regulation is designed in accordance with our Better Regulation principles – where we regulate last, regulate simply, and regulate flexibly.
- Promote Scotland as a great place to invest, developing our Invest Scotland portal and working with partners to deliver a programme of investor events and summits, including Scotland's 2027 Scale-Up Summit.
- Implement the recommendations of the five-year review of the Scottish National Investment Bank (SNIB) and align public finance institutions in Scotland behind a shared mission to support innovation, high-growth businesses, scale-up activity and strategic infrastructure investment.
- Take forward actions to grow trade in relation to priority sectors, markets and businesses, building towards securing over £12 billion of planned export sales over the lifetime of this Parliament.

Supporting businesses to start, scale, and innovate

Scotland has a proud and enviable history of invention. As the global economy accelerates towards a net zero future and navigates the complex opportunities and risks of artificial intelligence, Scotland must chart a distinct course based on what we have, what we are good at, and what we want our future to be. Our natural capital, environment, university research and entrepreneurial spirit provide the basis of competitive advantage within distinct areas of ever-changing global markets; from renewables to creative industries, space to the life sciences.

Since the publication of the Logan Review in 2020, we have prioritised the creation of a world-class entrepreneurial economy and the evidence suggests that is working – with growth in Scotland’s tech ecosystem in the five years since outpacing the UK and equivalent EU nations. Across this Parliament we will increase the number of new businesses starting and scaling and build entrepreneurial mindsets across the economy. We will help Universities to commercialise their research more successfully, providing access to spin-out funding and wrap around support. We will promote Scotland’s entrepreneurial culture with action to ensure that everybody, whatever their gender, background or region has an equal opportunity to start a business. We will use the power of public sector procurement and its drive for innovation to provide new business opportunities for Scottish companies. And we will work with businesses that have the greatest potential to ensure that they have access to the capital, skills and infrastructure required to enable them to grow, without being tempted to seek success elsewhere in the world.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Develop AI Scotland as a flagship international programme that builds public trust and confidence in AI and provides a distinct national voice on the economic and societal questions that AI raises.
- Establish Scotland’s High Growth Unit, working with senior industry leaders from the outset to accelerate support for high-potential businesses to scale, anchor and grow in Scotland.
- Publish a strategic approach to attracting and securing responsible green data centre investment in Scotland, with clear expectations around environmental sustainability, resource use, community benefit and the economic and strategic value these developments should deliver.
- Work with the Scottish National Investment Bank to launch a Scottish Innovation Fund with a focus on university spinouts, collaborating with leading universities to leverage private capital and working across the public sector to ensure strong wrap-around support.

- Support young entrepreneurs engaged in the First Minister's Start-Up Challenge and extend our Pathways programme to enable more female founders to develop their businesses.
- Lay the foundations for new 'regulatory sandboxes' where new innovations and technology in healthcare and life sciences can be introduced, tested and implemented at pace.
- Work with universities to deliver new Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), connecting businesses with academic institutions to drive innovation and growth across the country.
- Establish a responsible defence industrial growth programme to maximise the economic benefits to Scotland from increased UK and allied defence spending.
- Drive innovation in health and care through a partnership between industry, NHS Scotland and other care providers through innovative procurement and support for an industry led Life Sciences cluster and our £35 million Life Sciences Accommodation programme. Over the course of this Parliament, we will grow Scotland's clinical trials capacity to attract more clinical research and investment for the benefit of all.
- Harness the power of the Cluster Development Programme to grow and strengthen Scotland's advanced technology clusters, ensuring future leadership in critical technologies such as space, robotics, quantum and photonics, Life Sciences, Offshore Wind, FinTech and Built Environment.



Empowering Scottish culture and identity

Scotland is internationally recognised for the outstanding quality of its creative offer and cultural heritage. It is a core part of our society and underpins our economy, helping bring people and communities together, speaks to the very soul of our nation, and positions Scotland as a leading place to visit, invest in, and attract global talent. Over the course of the last Parliament, we bolstered our culture and creative sector with 262 cultural organisations now benefitting from the stability of multi-year funding. Thanks to Scottish Government investment we also expanded support for 55 arts festivals across Scotland to develop ambitious collaborations and commissions, launched our flagship programme of innovation to support our non-national museums, and increased support for our Youth Music Initiative Sistema and for our Performing Companies.

Building on that record, across this Parliament, we will protect and enhance our internationally recognised culture sector for the benefit

of residents and visitors alike. This will be underpinned by a long-term funding settlement of an additional £100 million annually for culture by 2028-29.

By end of this Parliament, we will add a further £50 million, whilst expanding opportunities for cultural participation, introducing a Youth Culture Pass, and creative career paths. We are working with the sector to design and deliver a National Performing Company for Traditional Music, ensuring traditional music has the same status as our other, highly respected, performing companies. We will also pilot a Scottish Artists Minimum Income alongside delivering all our other commitments to the sector. And we will ensure Scotland has a stronger offer to, and is recognised as a leading destination by, investors, exporters, visitors, workers, and global partners, backed by £110 million in a pipeline of events up to 2030 which will position Scotland as a world-leading events and tourism destination.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Build on Scotland's Migration Service to encourage more people to move to Scotland from elsewhere in the UK, initially focused on key target business growth sectors.
- Capitalise on the economic benefits that came with Scotland having recently hosted a successful Commonwealth Games and those that will come through our major events programme in 2027 and beyond. That includes celebrating the 80th anniversary of the Edinburgh Festivals, Edinburgh hosting the Tour De France Grand Depart, the Open returning to St Andrews, Scotland hosting further world class editions of the Genesis Scottish Open and ISPS Handa Women's Scottish Open, welcoming the World Rally Championships to the North East, supporting viable bids for major events, progressing our bid to co-host the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2035 and continuing to bring work to bring the Ryder Cup to Scotland in 2035.
- Establish Screen Scotland as a distinct organisation, directly funded by the Scottish Government – giving it increased funding to support homegrown talent and to attract more and bigger projects.
- Support the refurbishment and reopening of the People's Palace and Winter Gardens.
- Build on the successful pilot of the Expanded Festivals Fund to make this fund permanent, further supporting the ambitions of outstanding arts festivals across Scotland.
- Review the Gaelic college in Skye, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, considering its status and ensuring its future development is supported and its wide contribution to Gaelic learning is protected.
- Support local authorities in designating Gaelic areas of linguistic significance which includes a focus on areas of low population and build on our ongoing support for centres such as Cnoc Soillier in South Uist and the work of community officers and groups.
- Continue to actively engage with the BBC Charter renewal process, pressing for fair nations and regions commissioning, supporting Scotland's domestic television production sector, and bolstering the case for equity in relation to UK minority language broadcasting, and working towards an improved outcome for Gaelic and Scots broadcasting.
- Work closely with the Glasgow School of Art and other partners to explore every opportunity for a faithful reinstatement of its iconic Mackintosh Building.
- Continue to support international air connectivity through Visit Scotland to encourage international cultural visits, support international trade and ensure access of diaspora.

Ambitious for Scotland: Capitalising on the Strengths of Local Areas



Scotland can only realise its full potential if we back growth in every region – capitalising on the unique strengths local areas bring and ensuring shared prosperity. Backed by Scottish Government investment totalling more than £1.9 billion, every region of Scotland is now benefitting from a Scottish City and Regional Growth Deal, with those expected to create **billions of pounds in additional investment to the Scottish economy**.

Our ambition is that people see more opportunities within reach of where they live, businesses operating in local economies with the capacity and confidence to grow, and communities experiencing growth through thriving town centres, stronger local assets, and better prospects. Across this Parliament, we will take forward a coordinated programme of work to ensure we see **increased job creation and economic output in all our regions**, underpinned by:

- **Empowered Regional Economic Partnerships:** enabling them to drive action that matches their ambitions for future growth.
- **Community wealth building:** harnessing the power of public sector procurement and collective budgets to strengthen local supply chains and create jobs in local communities.
- **Regeneration:** supporting opportunities and growth where it's needed most.
- **Improved digital and physical connectivity:** to ensure communities are connected.
- **More Homes Scotland:** which will coordinate housing delivery and investment, strengthen regional collaboration, and unlock growth in line with economic development priorities.
- **A new Social Economy Strategy:** enabling the future development of social enterprises and other forms of socially oriented business models.

Backing increased growth in every region

National success cannot leave any community behind. Every part of Scotland has unique strengths, opportunities and ambitions. We want local communities and businesses to have a greater stake in, access to and benefit from the wealth our economy generates.

Across this Parliament, we will invest in digital connectivity, transport and local regeneration – including improvements to mobile and broadband coverage; supporting progress on the Clyde Metro proposals; addressing the issue of potholes; and improvements of key road links in rural areas, including work to progress proposals for medium and long-term solutions at the A83 Rest and Be Thankful. We will strengthen economic development within communities through support for more social enterprises and the wider social economy, cooperatives and employee-owned businesses; tourism initiatives; and enhancements to local bus and public services. And, ensure that our railways support economic growth and contribute to tackling the climate emergency, including by keeping costs down for customers with the permanent removal of peak fares. Regional Economic Partnerships will be empowered and enabled to drive action that matches their ambitions for future growth, and we will work intensively with partners to identify the most effective governance and structures as part of our dialogue with partners on public service reform over the next three months.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Continue to take a strategic approach to regeneration, revitalising town centres and encouraging town centre living, addressing the blight of vacant and derelict land and supporting community ownership.
- Continue to explore how to use a range of levers, including Non-Domestic Rates, to stimulate regeneration of high streets across Scotland.
- Develop a Glasgow-Edinburgh Arc and an East Coast Arc between Aberdeen, Dundee and St Andrews – and consult on other opportunities to boost productivity and innovation by linking research, universities and businesses.
- Maintain our commitment to dualling the A9 and A96, concluding a new A9 Framework Agreement to deliver the remaining approximately 58 miles yet to commence procurement, award the contract to dual the section between Pitlochry and Killiecrankie and commence the delivery of advanced works on Inshes to Smithton link road and Nairn bypass section of the A96.
- Take forward the actions outlined in the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Act 2026.

- Support the future of Ferguson Marine to protect commercial shipbuilding and provide vital skilled job opportunities on the Clyde through the direct award of Government funded contracts subject to necessary legal, commercial and subsidy control requirements.
- Consult on a Procurement Bill to address further opportunities to modernise procurement, maximise economic and social impact and protect Scotland's interests, including how to drive innovation in health and care and amplify support for community wealth building through procurement.
- Work with partners to maximise the benefits of Scotland's Green Freeports and Investment Zones, supporting them to attract private investment and deliver their investment programmes.
- Engage on our plans to deliver Better Buses legislation within this parliament – to provide communities across Scotland with better bus services for commuting, shopping, socialising and accessing public services.



Rural Scotland at the heart of economic growth

Scotland's rural and island communities are productive engines of economic growth – with agriculture contributing over £3 billion in output every year, the marine economy worth over £4.9 billion, and the production of our world-class food and drink. We have strongly invested in farming and crofting communities – having delivered the most generous package in the UK, with over £660 million in support to agriculture. Our support for these vital communities will continue, alongside driving excellence in Scotland's food and drink and reinvigorating the ambition that made it our fastest growing sector for many years through a commitment to collaboration, innovation, and brand recognition in both our domestic and export supply chains.

In March, we published the Rural Support Plan to 2031, providing clarity and certainty, and delivering direct support for the next five years to give the industry reassurance and boost confidence in long-term investment. Across this Parliament, we will champion thriving and sustainable rural and island communities, to maximise their contribution to Scotland's economic success and net zero objectives, and extend our support for local areas to attract and retain people. We have started work on the Rural Renewal Bill which will enable economic growth in rural areas, and we will implement the National Islands Plan to support population retention and sustainable growth, ensuring islander voices are heard and understood across Government. We will continue to engage with island communities to develop and deliver the £10 million Islands Resilience Fund. And we will continue the investment in vessels and ports to support the Clyde & Hebrides (CHFS) and Northern Isles (NIFS) Ferry Services as set out in the Islands Connectivity Plan.



Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Continue development of a Rural Renewal Bill with stakeholders and rural communities.
- Establish a new ‘Last Provider Fund’ to support the sustainability of the last-remaining shops and pubs in rural and island communities.
- Support our fishing sector, associated supply chain companies and processing sector which are the lifeblood of coastal communities across the nation – delivering a range of measures this year including the Marine Fund Scotland and maintaining an effective quota management and licensing system to support investment and stability.
- Provide ongoing financial support to rural organisations which tackle poor mental health and youth loneliness, such as RSABI and Farmstrong. This will ensure our rural communities are attractive places for younger generations to live and work.
- Invest further in the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund to improve the daily life of communities in rural parts of Scotland, addressing visitor management issues that may be impacting on the environment and access to local services that will in turn contribute to a greater visitor experience for tourists.
- Initiate a feasibility study to identify and evaluate potential options for a new subsea cable between Shetland and mainland Scotland, with the aim of increasing network resilience and reducing vulnerability to service disruption.
- Support wild salmon and the businesses which depend upon them, continuing to implement measures identified through our Wild Salmon Strategy for 2023-28 – reporting on our progress annually and working with businesses and key stakeholders.
- Develop new career pathways in rural and island communities, including new rural midwifery apprenticeships and continue our work to refine delivery of NHS dental services within island communities, as committed to in our National Islands Plan.
- Maintain support for small producers including £1.5 million of capital investment delivered with business support and advice and continuing work on delivering small scale production opportunities which will add local food resilience, biodiversity and economic gains.

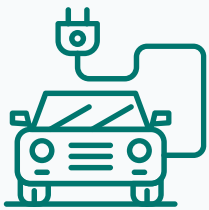
Tackling the Climate Emergency

To deliver for Scotland we have:

In 2024, for the fourth year running, **Scotland had the highest proportion of green job adverts** of any part of the UK, increasing on the previous year.

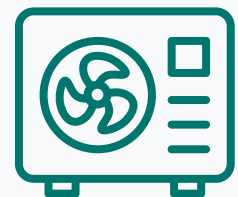


Held the **world's largest** floating offshore wind leasing round



The number of **ultra-low emission vehicles** registered in Scotland for the first time in 2025 (42,063) **increased by 35% compared to 2024** (31,140). At the end of 2025 there were 166,702 ULEVs registered in Scotland.

Continued to offer some of the **most generous grants and loans in the UK** to support clean heating and energy efficiency, including up to **£15,000 grants** through our Home Energy Scotland Grant and Loan Scheme



Invested over £90m through the Nature Restoration Fund Programme since 2021.



Increased investment for Sustainable and Active Travel from **£115m in 2021-22** to over **£226m in 2026-27**. Investment in 2026-27 will continue to transform communities, enabling more people to walk and cycle, helping to improve their health and wellbeing.



3 Tackling the Climate Emergency

Meeting the challenge of a changing climate

Scotland has a huge contribution to make in the global battle against climate change. With our vast renewable resources, expertise and ingenuity, we can lower our own climate impact and help others move to net zero, while ensuring Scotland becomes more climate resilient and prosperous, creating jobs, warmer homes and lowering costs for households.

Tackling the climate emergency is a critical moral obligation. The devastating wildfire witnessed in the Cairngorms, as well as those which ravaged parts of Europe – alongside flooding events in coastal communities and water scarcity in some parts of the country – shows that the impacts of climate change are real and being felt by communities across Scotland now.

Across this Parliament, we will work to ensure a **credible pathway to net zero by 2045** through ongoing delivery of our Climate Change Plan which will create jobs, lower costs, and restore nature as part of a just transition. We will also respond and adapt to immediate risks and opportunities by rapidly increasing our climate resilience through ongoing delivery of Scotland's National Adaptation Plan, investing now in the conditions that will pave the way for long term certainty, stability and quality of life which will help this and future generations.

Ambitious for Scotland: Ensuring our economy, climate, and communities all benefit from the green industrial transition and are resilient to the impacts of climate change



With our immense natural resources, **Scotland is uniquely placed to grasp the twin benefits of reducing emissions and growing our economy.** Between 1990 and 2024, Scotland's economy grew by 68.5% in real terms, at the same time as we cut our greenhouse gas emissions in half - showing how tackling climate change and growing a thriving, green economy go hand in hand.

Across this Parliament, we will continue realising those twin benefits – **with reduced emissions and increased employment in green industries** across Scotland. We will implement Scotland's first carbon budget, delivering on the Climate Change Plan, which contains 150 actions that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions over the next 15 years and bring potential for over £42.3 billion financial benefits and savings, underpinned by a range of key delivery indicators, including:

- Decarbonising heat in buildings by 2045.
- Increasing woodland creation so that, by 2029-30, 18,000 hectares are planted every year, of which at least 40% will be native, so that we reach 21% woodland cover in Scotland by 2032.
- Restoring more than 400,000 hectares of degraded peatland by 2040.

Driving Scotland's just transition to a net zero, nature positive, and climate resilient future cannot rest alone with Government; it requires a range of partners across the public, private and third sectors, and the buy-in and support of people and communities. To deliver on our ambitions, we will work collaboratively with partners by:

- Improving the **sustainability of key industries** to reduce emissions, pollution and waste, and ensure they do not take from nature faster than it can regenerate itself.
- Helping business to understand and **manage nature-related impacts and risks**, and to embrace net zero, circular economy business models, harnessing the benefits this transition will create for innovation, resilience, competitiveness and inward investment.
- Embedding sustainability throughout **supply chains**.
- Using a range of policy levers across government to **support a just transition**, investing in public and private finance, innovation, infrastructure and green skills.



Supporting communities in a changing climate

Climate change is already underway; how well Scotland adapts to these changes will be central to our future prosperity. We are committed to ensuring that disruption to daily life is minimised in the face of increasing extreme weather events. Increasing our resilience to climate impacts will mean less disruption to travel and more secure supply chains - keeping supermarkets stocked, homes that are not repeatedly flooded, our beautiful and valuable landscapes not destroyed, and industries able to grow with confidence.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Invest in a transport network that is more resilient, and work with other infrastructure owners to make sure investment focuses on the areas most at risk.
- Strengthen coordination across critical infrastructure, supporting the Climate Ready Infrastructure Scotland Forum's interdependencies project, while supporting locally owned adaptation projects across all regions of Scotland through the Climate Ready Regions initiative.

- Allocate an additional £15 million in flood mitigation and prevention, with resources targeted in areas most impacted by flooding.
- Invest an additional £14 million in a Coastal Change Adaption fund by the end of the Parliament to support local authorities to adapt our coasts to better respond to the rise in sea levels, publish their coastal change adaptation plans and reduce the risks associated with coastal erosion.
- Review and successfully deliver the Wildfire Strategic Action Plan to prevent, prepare and respond to the new reality of increased wildfire risk.
- Establish a Scottish Marine Recovery Fund and develop strategic environmental compensation, securing investment in Scotland's marine environment, helping to expedite offshore wind deployment and unlocking investment, job creation and accelerate progress towards net zero.

Decarbonising where it matters

Emissions reduction is central to how we respond to the climate emergency – working now to create a climate-positive future will ensure that our communities are supported to become more resilient, and address the issues of poverty and energy security. As we look to 2045, we are making positive progress – **Scotland is now more than halfway to net-zero and continues to be ahead of the UK in delivering long-term emissions reductions.**

During this Parliament we will deliver the actions covering the first five years of our Climate Change Plan, and we will move towards a circular economy, where materials and goods are valued and kept in use for as long as possible, setting national circular economy targets to drive progress. We will establish a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers, alongside systems in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and deliver more consistent and higher quality local services through a new statutory code of practice for household waste recycling.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Engage with stakeholders to identify changes that could be made through our planning reform programme to make it easier to install public EV chargers - supporting the ongoing move to electric vehicles, better connecting communities and stimulating economic growth.
- Work with stakeholders to encourage private sector investment in the decarbonisation of heavy-duty vehicles.
- Invest £28 million to restore 10,000 hectares of peatland, as well as publishing a new Peatland ACTION Skills Plan and Peatland Standard to support consistent, high-quality restoration.
- Introduce a Heat in Buildings Bill, while also supporting clean heating and energy efficiency measures for around 100,000 properties in Scotland, enabling the scale up of heat networks.

- Respond to Environmental Standards Scotland's Improvement Report which recommends an increase to fines for vehicle idling and, subject to Parliamentary approval, consult on this change.
- Set the rates for our Private Jet Tax through the 2027-28 Scottish Budget development to ensure that those who choose to travel by private jet, which produce significantly more emissions per head than commercial aircraft, make a fair contribution to public finances.

Protecting and restoring nature

Scotland, as globally, faces a twin climate and nature crisis; neither can be tackled in isolation. Scotland's land and nature is essential for sustaining the ecosystems that provide food, fuel, health, opportunities to enhance wellbeing, and wealth, and underpins our resilience to global shocks and the impacts of climate change already being felt. This summer's wildfires show the impacts of climate change risk devastating Scotland's natural assets.

Scotland's natural capital – our biodiversity, forests, fisheries, clean and healthy air, water, and soils – is also immensely valuable, estimated at £230 billion. Across this Parliament, we will deliver on our Biodiversity Strategy and implement the Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2026, including its statutory targets. We will enhance climate resilience and biodiversity through coastal adaptation measures and increasing tree canopy cover across our towns and cities. And we will protect important green spaces and explore how to better use the urban waterways within communities.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Continue and increase our Climate Justice Fund, up from £36 million, over the course of this Parliament and, following an independent evaluation, deliver new programmes that support communities in the Global South to build resilience and address loss and damage.
- Give our farmers and crofters the tools and support they need to help us deliver on our climate and biodiversity objectives through our four-tier targeted support system.
- Consult on fisheries management measures for inshore marine protected areas and priority marine features.
- Commission feasibility studies on the viability and cost of bringing urban waterways like the Govan Graving Docks in Glasgow, and Wardie Bay and sections of the Water of Leith in Edinburgh, into safe usage.
- Bring together private, public and third sector organisations to maximise the opportunities for nature restoration associated with the unprecedented investment in infrastructure development.



Boosting green growth across Scotland

The transition to net zero is one of the single greatest economic opportunities for Scotland if we get the timing right. We have competitive advantages in multiple sectors at the forefront of the transition and associated supply chains – generating growth and economic activity across the country while increasing climate resilience and supporting emissions reduction.

Powering a renewables revolution

Scotland is a global powerhouse in renewable energy. Our offshore energy sector, with a highly skilled workforce, is vital to both our economy and the energy transition. A record 39.0 TWh of renewable electricity was generated in Scotland in 2025 – equivalent to powering 16.5 million homes a year. We will work across this Parliament to ensure that billpayers, communities, the economy, and nature all benefit from a future of clean, affordable, and secure power. We will act to accelerate delivery of offshore, solar and pumped storage renewables technologies, particularly where they can sit off grid, strengthening our energy resilience. We will invest in workforce skills and community energy projects, so that communities can benefit from their natural resources. We will also establish a ScotWind Wealth Fund by the end of this Parliament, ensuring investment that brings a fair return to the public purse and that all of Scotland receives the benefits our renewable energy resources can offer.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Make the case for the transfer of energy powers to Holyrood – using those to end the practice of gas setting the price for an energy system dominated by renewable energy, to lower bills.
- Publish a refreshed Energy Strategy which will look beyond this Parliament to provide long-term certainty.
- Help more people benefit from the energy transition to net zero emissions through increased funding of £15 million for the Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) – supporting up to 70 community energy projects, up to 110 community buildings to decarbonise, and providing significant support to several community shared ownership projects.
- Continue to explore options to expand solar panels in underused spaces such as rooftops and car parks, while supporting the uptake of plug-in solar panels for domestic use where suitable.
- Build on the action we have taken to prioritise the community use of public land through mechanisms like Community Asset Transfer. This will include updating Community Asset Transfer guidance in early 2027, so that relevant authorities are supported and encouraged to grant community requests for renewable leases and ownership.
- Work closely with the offshore wind sector to target our investment and policy support, with a focus on floating offshore wind, ports and supply chain projects, to grow well paid, sustainable jobs, bring the benefits of renewables to communities, and improve our energy security.
- Make sure that communities who host renewable energy developments benefit from those developments, including through increased investment, fairer distribution of funding, and stronger community involvement in decision-making, by refreshing the Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments.
- Explore ways we can grow demand for renewable electricity to maximise the local use of Scotland's renewable energy resources.
- Continue to modernise and strengthen the planning, consenting and regulatory framework for offshore wind in Scottish waters, using robust evidence to support timely decision-making, sustainable deployment, and increased certainty for investors and developers.

Securing green jobs and investment

Scotland is well placed to be at the forefront of industrial transition, building on the skills, excellence and innovation of our renewables and oil and gas sectors and in turn supporting the creation of new jobs and businesses. That is, new, green jobs in every corner of Scotland to help ensure climate action goes hand in hand with our commitment to grow the economy, develop all regions, and ensure the right infrastructure in the right places so local communities can capitalise on those opportunities.

Across this parliament we will continue to support a just transition through our significant investment in the skilled workforces of Mossmorran, Grangemouth and the North East, and the world class industrial sites in those communities. We will establish a new Just Transition Commission to build on its predecessor's work and support delivery, including a fresh focus on climate resilience. And, working with key partners like the Wood Foundation, we will leverage public and private funding to support sustainable employment opportunities and the long-term prosperity of regions that have delivered, and continue to deliver, so much for the Scottish economy.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

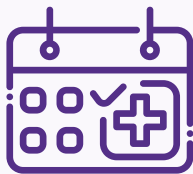
- Call on the UK Government to take an evidence-led and case-by-case approach to decisions on North Sea projects, with climate compatibility and energy security as primary considerations.
- Advocate for the Energy Profits Levy to be replaced with a fairer system that taxes excess profits and protects the jobs, energy security and investment in our energy sector.
- Work with the UK Government and industry partners to advance the Acorn project in the North East, while supporting the broader deployment of Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) technologies where they can deliver decarbonisation and industrial growth.
- Support workers and businesses in the North East and Moray, through the £500 million Just Transition Fund – which is already supporting hundreds of jobs and will create and support at least 500 jobs, with the potential for a further 200 jobs, from the newly announced round of projects.
- Deliver 15 new Just Transition Fund community projects, to ensure that the benefits and opportunities of the Just Transition are felt across every community in the region.

- Start the process of match funding £40 million from the Wood Foundation to support opportunities and transition in the North East, with delivery over this parliament, seeking other partners who would also engage in match funding initiatives to secure a just transition.
- Support our highly skilled oil and gas workforce with careers advice and funding for training through the Oil and Gas Transition Training Fund, backed by £3 million. This will ensure the emerging opportunities across a number of sectors, including the net zero economy, are accessible to our existing workforce.
- Invest £9 million over the next three years in and around Mossmorran to support the workforce, local communities, and to secure a long-term future for the site, including working closely with Fife College to provide skills training for displaced workers.
- Continue to invest in supporting employment opportunities in Grangemouth, including through the Grangemouth Investment Taskforce and Grangemouth Future Industry Board.

Ensuring High Quality and Sustainable Public Services

To deliver for Scotland we have:

Delivered more than
168,000 additional NHS appointments and procedures in 2025/26, more than the **150,000** originally pledged



Increased residential rehabilitation

bed capacity by **16% to 574** in 2025



Met the national performance standard for CAMHS waiting times for the first time, with over 90% of children and young people seen within 18 weeks of referral



A record number of pupils (647,773) currently taught in schools that are in 'good' or 'satisfactory' condition



Seen the proportion of A-C grades at Higher being obtained by candidates with **Additional Support Needs** increase, compared to 2019, to **71.9%** in 2026



Record levels of literacy and numeracy attainment for both primary and secondary pupils while over 95% of school leavers are reaching a positive destination.



Invested over £19m through CashBack for Communities to **support 70,000 young people** at risk of entering the criminal justice system



4 Delivering a stronger NHS and Public Services

National renewal through public sector reform

No problem in Scotland is solved by one public body, or one policy choice. We will make most progress when we work together – and that starts with reform of public services. We are taking our next steps in our plans to simplify the public sector landscape to best deliver for the people of Scotland, with more effective delivery by removing unnecessary duplication and overlap, providing clearer lines of decision-making and accountability, and getting resources more directly to the frontline services people rely on, rather than being confined by current structural or bureaucratic barriers.

Change is necessary and it cannot wait: if we are to deliver the modern, responsive, person-centred public services that people in Scotland expect we need to agree the vision and turn our collective capacities to implementation. This will require support from others in parliament, leadership from within local government, and commitment from delivery partners, looking beyond individual, institutional and sectoral interests to focus on the collective outcomes we seek to achieve for Scotland. Through our Public Service Reform Strategy, we committed to setting out a shared vision of great public service leadership through a Public Service Leadership Statement. The Statement, and its implementation, will be critical in shaping the leadership behaviours and organisational cultures needed to deliver the transformational change Scotland requires. We will invite leaders across local government, public bodies, trades unions, and delivery partners to join us now in shaping a clear vision for our future governance and planning for its realisation through a programme of reform:

● Empowering regions and communities

Rewiring the state requires decision-making and service delivery to sit at the level best placed to understand and improve people's lives. Over the next three months **we will convene a dialogue with partners across Parliament, local government, and beyond about the future of local governance in Scotland**. This will include how resources may be pooled at a regional level while also strengthening community level governance, empowering people to influence local decision making. By the end of the year, we will seek a shared direction for reform – enabling the focus to move from debate to delivery and ensuring early decisions and progress can be made through the first Budget of this Parliament.

We will learn and build from the leadership already evident through the work led by Councils across Scotland, including work on integrated service delivery being led by Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Stirling Councils and the three Ayrshire Councils, as well as drawing from the progress led by our city-regions in Regional Economic Partnerships. Through reform we remain committed to enabling bespoke solutions for our island communities recognising their unique characteristics, including exploration of the Single Authority Model.

Community empowerment and community wealth building will remain at the heart of a new model of governance. This will include implementing our Democracy Matters work to give communities the means to articulate their priorities, and the tools they need to build community assets and services. Because strong communities are an essential part of delivering the Scotland we seek.

● Delivering reform of social care

Scotland faces increasing demographic challenges, placing growing financial pressures on health and social care and affecting people's experience of services. Right now, the arrangements we have in place to manage and deliver social care in Scotland are too often inconsistent in their delivery.

With improvement of outcomes for people and financial sustainability at the core of this programme, reform of both the National Health Service and local government must also include examining all options for the future governance and delivery of social care. **We will use these next three months to engage with local authorities, trades unions, and healthcare and service providers to reach agreement on reform of social care** which makes best use of the funding in the system, delivers fairer and more efficient services and achieves economies of scale, while enhancing the focus on community need.

● Empowering school leaders, raising standards and reducing variation

Scotland's children and young people flourish when education enables them to realise their potential and pursue their ambitions. Decision making should be as close to the classroom as possible. Empowering our school leaders and ensuring they have the tools and support as the professional leaders of learning will be critical. Schools are focal points of our communities and engagement with parent councils will ensure the aspirations of local communities can be achieved.

As part of our reforms, **we will work closely with local government, school communities and headteachers to maximise the opportunities that reform of governance and service delivery will bring** – to raise attainment, close the poverty-related attainment gap, reduce variation in outcomes, strengthen data and system-wide improvement, and support the journey through early childhood development and early learning into school.

● Making early progress in healthcare

The pressures facing our public services are acute, and all options must be on the table for serious discussion, including new forms of collaboration, changes to structures, and more strategic regional models of local government with the powers, permission, and flexibility to drive economic growth and support wellbeing – but we cannot sit back in the face of the significant pressures facing some of our most precious services, particularly healthcare right now.

We will **simplify the NHS by replacing the current 14 territorial Health Boards with two Strategic Health Boards** and build on planned reforms to further reduce the number of special Health Boards. Alongside other measures to improve patient experience, including the National Flow Plan, this will deliver more efficient use of resources across Scotland, freeing up more time and capacity for treatment, and improve patient access through more joined up care. It will also support efforts to improve further the integration of health and social care services.

● Simplifying and decluttering delivery

We will substantially reduce the number of public bodies to create a system that is integrated by design and that improves service delivery. We will undertake this work to deliver the following changes to public bodies and consider further opportunities during this Parliamentary term as they arise, we expect these proposals to bring in other relevant bodies as they develop:

- Bring the national environment public bodies (SEPA, NatureScot, Zero Waste Scotland and potentially Scottish Forestry) into a single overarching environment body to remove unnecessary barriers and make our environmental interventions more impactful.
- Integrate the Scottish Food Commission and the Scottish Pubs Code Adjudicator into Food Standards Scotland, while maintaining their independent scrutiny functions.
- Embed Architecture & Design Scotland within More Homes Scotland.
- Bring Transport Scotland back into the Scottish Government.
- Consult on transferring the Mobility and Access Committee into the Scottish Government.
- Review the functions of the National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board to ascertain if they should transfer to the Scottish Government, or elsewhere in the public sector.
- Undertake reform activity with the National Records of Scotland and Registers of Scotland.
- Work with Parliament to build on the previous Committee reviews into the Parliamentary Commissioner landscape with a view to consolidating their number while protecting their functions.
- Explore options to improve efficiency in public sector payment systems, call handling systems and shared services including considering simplifying the number of bodies engaged in this work.
- Explore opportunities for Revenue Scotland to take on a broader set of revenue functions which build on the progress made as Scotland's devolved tax authority.
- Simplify the health and care assurance landscape to support integrated services, focusing on citizens' experiences.
- Review remaining transport bodies to identify opportunities for mergers.
- In line with the PSR Strategy, work with Audit Scotland to review the audit and scrutiny landscape and identify opportunities for simplifying and integrating processes and bodies whilst maintaining a robust assurance system.
- Remove the First Tier Tribunal and Upper Tribunal from public bodies directory as these are judicial bodies supported by the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service. We will collaborate with SCTS and other justice partners to explore opportunities to ensure a whole system approach to redesign of the criminal justice process.
- Explore the establishment of a single ferries body for the Clyde and Western Isles ferry routes and consider further reform options that best benefit communities.

- Rationalisation of the number of public bodies which perform inspectorate functions.
- Assess the potential to simplify the management of our national cultural assets.
- Investigate consolidation of all public bodies involved in the management of public land assets.
- Review all remaining public bodies for efficiency, and exploring the opportunities for joint working or merger.

We will take forward underpinning improvements to support public bodies and improve service delivery for people, including:

- Digital services designed with a ‘tell us once’ approach, including development of digital/ data platforms and shared data definitions and data sets
- Consolidation of functions, such as estates and procurement, to establish a whole system approach

We will build on a range of improvement activity being undertaken across public services, including:

- Launch the Scottish Government ScotGov App in Autumn which is intended to be a common platform which enables citizens to engage with multiple services without having to use multiple logins and websites.
- Increasing the pace of the roll-out of the ePass common licensing programme - an existing model of taking a function, such as payments or casework, and standardising to reduce cost to deliver and improve speed of delivery, quality and user experience.

- Building on existing work to reduce costs and delivery timescales by using the ePass approach or similar as a template for common approaches to outbound payments and to casework.
- Increase the availability of self service and automated solutions through innovative approaches via the ‘Support Service Challenge’ in CivTech 12.
- Accelerating work on Data Exchange which is designed to make data held by one organisation available to other organisations while protecting both privacy and security; in order to improve service delivery.

We have the opportunity across this Parliament to make lasting reform which empowers areas, fully utilises our collective strengths, and improves outcomes for people. As we deliver these changes people in Scotland will notice clear improvements in their lives and in their experience of public services. We will have more modern public services, with new technologies and ways of working which make them more accessible and more responsive. National priorities will be delivered right across the country, and communities can be empowered to bring new life into the places they love.

But Government also does not have a monopoly on good ideas. We will ensure, through these reforms and beyond, that we work with and listen to communities, the third sector, the workforce and trade unions about their vision for change to help us design a system that delivers for everyone.

Ambitious for Scotland: Shorter waiting times for the treatment you need



We have made significant progress to increase activity and bring down long waits for operations and procedures. Despite increasing pressure, **last year hospitals carried out an average of 768 operations every day.**

Across this Parliament, we will build on that and ensure that, **by the end of 2031, no one waits more than 26 weeks for treatment.** Through the Health and Care Improving Flow Plan published in our first 100 days, we will create one connected system with one simple route to care, ensuring people receive the most appropriate response as quickly as possible – improving throughput and patient experience from admission to discharge.

For elective care, **NHS Boards will be required to work collectively to take a more coordinated approach to managing waiting lists**, ensuring those most in need are seen the quickest, regardless of where they live, starting with a new National Orthopaedics Plan. We do not intend to stop there - we will learn from this approach and extend this to all specialisms to ensure we have an elective care system that is in balance and that people most in need are seen the quickest.

We will **make it easier to access support, deliver more care closer to home, strengthen continuity of care, improve the flow of patients through hospital and tackle delayed discharge, focusing**

immediately on overcrowding and corridor care, so people spend less time waiting and more time receiving care, including:

- A new Community First approach will strengthen local multidisciplinary services and shift more care into communities, supporting you earlier and reducing the risk of ill health.
- New Integrated Navigation Centres ensuring NHS 24, the Scottish Ambulance Service and wider system partners provide coordinated triage and advice. These will provide 24/7 access to a senior clinician and a smoother patient journey that helps you access the right care, in the right place, first time, and avoid A&E attendance where possible.
- Delivering frailty services, which now exist in every Emergency Department, to help more vulnerable patients receive care in the right place.
- Increasing units designed to deliver the same day care without admission to hospital and ensuring where admission is required that discharge is within 3 days for most people.
- Discharge planning beginning on day one of a hospital stay, through the Discharge Without Delay approach, to ensure people are supported to get home quickly and safely.

A world class health system built on world class resources

Our health system can only be as strong as the investment we make in its facilities and workforce – both of which are central to people receiving the best care, in the best settings, from the best professionals. There are now more staff working in our NHS than when this Government first took office, we have avoided the industrial action seen in England through pay settlements that recognise and reward our cherished workforce, and we are investing in improved capacity across Scotland.

Over this Parliament, healthcare settings will be modernised through the MyCare app which will be the most comprehensive health and social care app in the UK once fully rolled out. It will enable the online management of prescriptions, booking of appointments and receiving letters about care. It will be complemented by a new Digital Health and Care Record for every person in Scotland. We will accelerate the adoption of proven innovations and bring transformational technologies into everyday use, for example using digital technology to support people in preventing type 2 diabetes. We will maximise the use of Virtual Wards, so people can receive high-quality care from the comfort of their own home. And we will ensure our health and care workforce is central in shaping our future NHS, as well as working with partners to explore how a new jobs guarantee could meet the needs of NHS Scotland over the course of this Parliament.



Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Continue to pass on every penny of health resource consequential to health and care services.
- Progress investment of at least £10 billion capital spending over the next 10 years – funding new and renewed facilities, including building new Community Health and Care hubs across Scotland, with the first tranche focused in Lochgelly, East Calder and East Livingston, and Port Glasgow.
- Tackle long waiting times by investing at least £200 million each year to grow elective capacity, meaning more operations can take place.
- Improve and expand entry to the nursing profession, particularly for those looking to enter the profession later in their career. Over the course of this Parliament, we will also improve pathways to progression from band 5 to band 6 for nurses.
- Invest more than £530 million in a deal with GPs, with a focus on recruiting more family doctors.
- Develop an affordable and deliverable design for a new University Hospital Monklands at Wester Moffat, with proposals expected by mid-2027 and an ambition to commence construction in 2028.
- Develop an AI Hub to accelerate safe adoption of AI across the health and care system and continue rollout of services on MyCare.scot.
- Provide an extra £175 million to enable adult social care workers providing direct care in commissioned services to earn at least the Real Living Wage alongside £13.9 million for those who provide direct care to vulnerable children and young people.
- Introduce sectoral pay bargaining into social care and empower employers and trade unions to build good relations and drive sector-specific progress.

Shifting more care closer to home

Fundamental to improving hospital throughput is people having access to the care they need closer to home. That can reduce pressures in A&E by giving people easier access to urgent, same-day care, and unnecessary stays in hospital by putting more care in homes and communities. We have already taken decisive action – such as introducing new GP walk-in services which have seen over 10,500 cases in the first months of their operation and expanding the number of people cared for at home and in their community. We will work across this Parliament to scale that up further, improving primary and community care centres to support modern, integrated models of care in the community.



Bolstering primary care

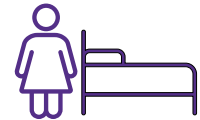
Primary care is the bedrock of our health system. Most people who urgently require to be seen can see a nurse or doctor at their GP practice within 2 working days, but we know for some that access can still feel distant or challenging. We will continue bringing more services into communities so that care is provided in the right place, at the right time. Local services, such as diagnostic testing, are also an important first port of call in assessing and diagnosing a range of issues and then transferring patients to the most appropriate place, meaning we cut down on unnecessary trips to hospital and free up resources for critical care.

Across this parliament, we will improve access to community-based healthcare by expanding diagnostics, hearing and vision services and dental and mobile services in rural areas while using digital innovation and new care models to reduce pressure on hospitals and improve outcomes.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Develop a delivery plan that sets out how thrombectomy services will be expanded to achieve our commitment to provide a 24/7 thrombectomy service with national coverage, building on the valuable work done by stakeholders and campaigners, including the family of Anthony Bundy, and ensuring thrombectomies for those who suffer a stroke are available regardless of geography.
- Establish a national network of new walk-in GP services, open 7 days a week – with a further 5 having opened in our first 100 days and setting out plans for the locations of at least 24 more. We will expand this programme over the next 3 years, delivering services in more areas.
- Support workforce planning in rural and island communities, including reviewing the ‘Golden Hellos’ initiatives to attract more GPs, consultants and dentists to those communities.
- Invest up to £20 million via Scotland’s Independent Living Fund to help people with learning disabilities and complex support needs to live well in their communities and helping to reduce delayed discharge and free up hospital beds for those who need acute care.
- Increase the volume of people receiving hospital-level care at home through Hospital at Home services from 7,500 to more than 10,000 people over this winter, including for paediatric care.
- Invest £144 million this year in community eyecare, as well as additional investment to support design and development work for a community low vision service.
- Work with the NHS, Third Sector and other stakeholders to deliver an audiology improvement plan, focused on the creation and implementation of more community-based models of care.
- Improve cancer care by increasing the number of radiographers, working with Healthcare Improvement Scotland to consider how to best expand Rapid Cancer Diagnostic Services, and rolling out phase 1 of national lung screening in 2027/28.
- Develop our national infrastructure for genomics, including early development of a registry for people at increased genetic risk of cancer.

Ambitious for Scotland: Getting people discharged without delay



As we shift more care into the community through increased investment and capacity, we will help prevent some hospital admissions, support more people to receive care closer to home and reduce long waits. While 97% of discharges already happen without delay, we recognise that too many people have been waiting to be discharged from hospital. **Our new hospital flow plan will ensure more people can get discharged on time and back into a setting that works best for them.**

Across this Parliament, **we will ensure sustained reductions in delayed discharge**, with action across health providers, local government and social care services, and housing associations which ensures people can get home or cared for in a setting that best meets their needs. Underpinned by the Health and Care Improving Flow Plan, we will:

- **Create one connected system with one simple route to care**, ensuring every person receives the most appropriate response as quickly as possible.
- **Make it easier to access support through one conversation**, strengthening continuity of care, improving hospital flow and discharge, and tackling overcrowding and corridor care, so people spend less time waiting and more time receiving care.
- **Transform the way unscheduled care is delivered**, simplifying things for patients and protecting A&E for those in need of the most urgent and life-threatening care.
- **Deliver digital innovation alongside structural reform**, improving access and delivering care as close to home as possible – transferring activity out of hospitals and into communities.

Early intervention and prevention throughout life

Since 2007, the number of avoidable deaths per head of the population have fallen by over a fifth with decreases across all deprivation quintiles – meaning more ill-health is being treated and prevented. But Scotland still has

persistent inequalities which can too often impact on health and life chances. We will ensure more ill-health is caught and reduced early, before it becomes a health emergency, justice issue or long-term social problem, and that people can live healthier and longer lives.



Ambitious for Scotland: Treating drug and alcohol misuse as a public health emergency



Every life lost to alcohol and drugs is a tragedy, and one that could have been prevented. We have bolstered support in recent years through our national mission, recognising that substance misuse is often just one of several, complex challenges a person might be facing: investing an additional £250 million through our national mission on drugs, taking a public health and human rights-based approach, increasing residential rehabilitation beds, introducing rigorous treatment standards, building on the MAT approach, and supporting the UK's first safer drug consumption facility.

That has put foundations in place but there is more to do. **We will work to reduce drug and alcohol related deaths over the course of this Parliament** – ending Scotland's record of having some of the highest rates of drug-related deaths in Europe and significant levels of alcohol-related harm – taking an approach that:

- **Prevents harm:** targeting support towards communities most at risk and addressing wider factors such as poverty, trauma and inequality – alongside support for children, young people and families through education, early intervention and whole-family services – and building on our public health approach to alcohol harm, improving prevention and early intervention.
- **Promotes recovery:** expanding access to high-quality treatment, increased residential rehabilitation placements, trialling new Alcohol Care Teams in hospitals and supporting recovery services within communities so that they are joined up with housing, employment, health and justice services to help people sustain long-term recovery.
- **Saves Lives:** working with partners including Police Scotland to respond directly to changing drug trends, by expanding harm reduction measures like naloxone distribution, identifying people at highest risk of drug-related harm and supporting rapid assertive outreach alongside improved crisis care for particularly high-risk groups including those experiencing homelessness and in prisons.
- **Responds to emerging threats:** strengthening our RADAR early warning system, establishing new drug checking facilities to help people make safer decisions and provide vital information on emerging substances, and using data, evidence and innovation to ensure services can adapt quickly to new threats and protect people and communities.

Catching and minimising ill-health early

Primary prevention – investing in the building blocks of health to stop problems arising in the first instance – will always be a core focus of our approach, ensuring better outcomes for future generations and yielding long-term benefits. But for many people, that will come too late. Secondary and tertiary prevention – detecting problems early and minimising health harms – must be equal partners. We will work to ensure they are so people live longer, healthier lives.

Across the next five years we will expand access to blood borne virus and HIV testing in A&Es, strengthen support for children with long-term conditions and improve patient safety by rolling out Martha's Rule across Scotland, ensuring patients, families and staff have a dedicated 24/7 number to call if they feel concerns about a worsening health condition are not being listened to. We will also consider all recommendations made by the Scottish Hospitals Inquiry and the Eljamel Inquiry. We will introduce new measures including progressing proposals for a Vape Display Ban and a new Diet and Healthy Weight Management Plan, to ensure every child and young person grows up in a country that promotes healthy, active lifestyles, free from the harms of tobacco, vaping and addiction. In this Parliament we will also target support to communities at greatest need, delivering up to 1,250 more defibrillators by 2029 to improve community capacity to respond to cardiac arrests.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Build on the success of cardiovascular disease prevention programme in primary care and invest in 'health MOTs' with third sector partners, including Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland. These will begin in Tayside, Grampian and Glasgow.
- Deliver 'Isla's Principles' – supporting healthcare professionals to reassess persistent or unexpected symptoms and provide clear next steps for young patients with potential cancer and their families so they know what to expect and when.
- Work to understand the causes and find solutions to younger people being increasingly affected by bowel cancer, having called on the UK National Screening Committee to review the lower age range for bowel screening. If they decide not to do so, we will gather our own evidence.
- Deliver action to eradicate cervical cancer by 2040, launching a national campaign to increase uptake of HPV vaccination and cervical screening, and expanding the use of self-sampling kits.
- Implement Scotland's "OK Question" screening tool to support healthier pregnancies.
- Develop Christina's Card, to be sent to every woman resident in Scotland shortly after their 50th birthday, which will share vital information about checking for lumps and bumps, accessing menopause support and their eligibility for various screening and testing programmes.

- Allocate £4.5 million annually to support NHS Boards to develop new specialist support for people with Long COVID and Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME/CFS).
- Implement the second phase of our Women's Health Plan and the National Plan for Gynaecology, backed by £13 million of investment to reduce waits, and invest in research in women's health, funding new research into menstrual health and recognising endometriosis as a chronic condition.
- Deliver an independent review of maternity services in Scotland, which will report in Summer 2027. This will include a specific focus on care for women living in remote communities like Caithness, Elgin and Wigtownshire, as well as women at risk of poorer outcomes, including Black and Asian women, Gypsy/Traveller Community and women with multiple disadvantages.

Dignity towards the end of life

We are determined that everyone receives compassionate and high-quality care – and that should be no different at the end of life. Across this parliament we will explore with key stakeholders how we will best deliver financial support for people with electricity costs relating to life-saving equipment in their homes and further support the energy costs of those with a terminal illness.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Deliver a new Paediatric Palliative Care Suite - 'Molly's Suite' - building on Molly Cuddihy's legacy to offer a more private space for children and their families in the Royal Hospital for Children in Glasgow.
- Support NHS pay parity for hospice staff with an increase of funding to £9.4 million in 2026/2027 and help ensure that pay parity is maintained throughout this Parliament.
- Develop new Palliative Care Guidelines to support clinical teams across Scotland.
- Provide free palliative care education resources for Scotland's health and social care workforce.

Improving mental health

Good mental health underpins not just good health outcomes but also this Government's wider priorities – it can make the difference in being able to access and keep a job, the ability to focus and do well at school, and shape positive relationships. We have consistently met our CAMHS standard for more than a year and we now have record numbers of mental health staff, providing more varied support and services to a larger number of people than ever before. We have significantly expanded grassroots projects working to improve mental health and wellbeing in local communities, and we will continue to prioritise mental wellbeing within our broader approach to good health across this parliament.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Support the expansion of walk-in mental health hubs across Scotland, including the five 'Nooks' planned by SAMH.
- Expand 24/7 mental health support by rolling out Mental Health Triage Cars which are currently operating in Glasgow, Inverness and Dundee to every region in Scotland.
- Expand Scotland's NHS 24 Mental Health Hub to include Psychological Therapies and invest an additional £3.5 million to make it easier for people to get the help they need – reducing pressure on A&E and other emergency services – including developing emergency mental health responses through our new Crisis Framework for Children and Young People, and Crisis Intervention Fund.
- Continue to invest in community-based third sector support services through the Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund for Adults.
- Work in partnership through the Suicide Prevention Scotland collective to ensure any child, young person or adult who has thoughts of taking their own life, or are affected by suicide, receive safe compassionate support that is free of stigma, expanding funding to £3 million.
- Adopt the Royal College of Psychiatrists' 4-tiered national pathway for neurodevelopmental conditions for adults and continue to implement the Children & Young People's National Neurodevelopmental Specification, to ensure anyone with or without a formal neurodevelopmental diagnosis can access the support they need when and where they need it.
- Publish our new Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan, setting out the further actions we will take to improve access to support and services over the next 3 years.



Investing in Scotland's sporting potential

Ensuring people can access and enjoy sporting activities plays a huge role in boosting physical and mental health. Across this Parliament, we will build on Scotland's successful summer of sport by continuing to provide free and low-cost sporting opportunities for children and young people, removing barriers to participation so they can get active, stay active, and enjoy the benefits that physical activity brings.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Roll out the phased introduction of free school swimming lessons in partnership with sportscotland, Scottish Swimming and COSLA.
- Work with stakeholders on the development of a new Sports Taster Fund, to tackle barriers to participation and encourage more children and young people to try new sports and activities.
- Expand the football Fan Bank to 2031 to support more communities to acquire a share or control of their local sports club.
- Invest £500,000 to support the development of the Club Academy Scotland (boys) and Next Gen (girls) elite youth programmes to improve pathways for our potential international football players of the future.

Ambitious for Scotland: Creating positive futures for children and young people



We are committed to making Scotland the best place in the world to grow up and ensuring all children and young people can succeed in life and are ready for a positive future. The Getting It Right for Every Child approach is how Scotland as a nation supports every child to thrive now and throughout their lives. This starts in the critical pre-birth to age three period where the foundations for success in life are laid down.

We have seen **record levels of literacy and numeracy attainment for primary and secondary pupils and over 95% of school leavers are reaching a positive initial destination** – a reduction of two-thirds in the poverty related attainment gap for initial positive destinations. But there is more to do.

Across this Parliament, we will work with partners to ensure children and young people can participate fulsomely in learning to achieve academic and vocational excellence and reach their full potential regardless of background or need. We will do this by **reforming our school curriculum, ensuring post-covid development concerns for children are overcome, reducing the poverty-related attainment gap, and keeping The Promise**. Working with partners on the ABCs, we will:

- Maintain our commitment to closing the poverty related **attainment** gap through the Scottish Attainment Challenge with funding of up to £200

million in 2026-27, including Pupil Equity Funding allocated directly to schools to implement local approaches and meet specific needs.

- Reduce **absence** and improve **attendance**, though increased understanding of the underlying issues, improved data, professional learning and bespoke support.
- Ensure that every child with **additional support needs** has access to appropriate support including specialist support where required regardless of where they attend school in Scotland.
- Implement the joint action plan on relationships and **behaviour**, providing clarity on recording and monitoring of incidents and the use of exclusion, responding to the independent review of actions taken to tackle gender-based violence and furthering the evidence on the experience of pupil behaviour in schools through independent research.
- Implement the biggest update to Scotland's **curriculum** and qualifications in a decade building on the recommendations of the OECD and Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment – strengthening the place of knowledge, clarifying progression through curriculum levels and refreshing the offer of qualifications.

Ensuring young people get the best education

Our comprehensive education system is recognised internationally for the opportunities it provides for young people to thrive. To ensure we can adapt to modern challenges and opportunities, we must equip our young people with the qualifications, skills and resilience they need to succeed in a changing world. That success starts from birth, through our early learning settings, and follows into our classrooms.

We already spend more on education per head of population and have the lowest pupil-teacher ratio in the UK, but we will work across the course of this Parliament to give children and young people, their families,

teachers, and schools, the support and resources they need to succeed – including improvements to the curriculum, creating new employment opportunities for teachers by creating the conditions for a Teacher Jobs Guarantee and new accreditations and better job security for Pupil Support Assistants. We will build on the success of our Learning Estate Investment programme, ensuring all schools are in at least a good condition, if not excellent. We will also work with universities and others to explore the potential for developing programmes, such as IntoUniversity, to support more disadvantaged young people to access bespoke support to raise their grades and attainment.



Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Create a more stable teaching workforce and address teacher recruitment challenges by supporting more primary teachers to retrain into employment in secondary schools and addressing specific challenges in recruitment in rural and island communities.
- Consult on legislation to ensure that there are national restrictions on mobile phone use in Scotland's classrooms, with a Bill expected to be introduced to the Scottish Parliament as soon as possible thereafter.
- Begin implementing the routemap for a new National Staged Intervention Model for children with additional support needs and progress implementation of the wider McManus Review recommendations.
- Build on our investment in the Digital Discourse Initiative and work with local authorities to ensure the programme is rolled out to every school, so that all young people have the opportunity to learn about the risks of online harm, including violent, misogynistic and hateful content.
- Support further expansion of dedicated Gaelic Medium Schools and units, including GME teacher supply and support, alongside implementation of the Scottish Languages Act and GME out-of-school activity.
- Support professionals working in early years to improve children's early speech and language development.
- Expand our early literacy Bookbug programme to reach an additional 20,000 families and, in this new Parliament, partner with the Dollywood Foundation to deliver a nationwide Imagination Library programme, ensuring that every child can foster a love for reading.
- Begin a review of the provision of modern languages in schools and look to expand the opportunities for young people to learn a new language, including Gaelic and Scots.
- Continue the national approach to LGBTQI+ Inclusive Education across all primary and secondary schools, ensuring age-appropriate integration within the curriculum.
- Continue the work of the Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning and build on the range of work currently available in schools to tackle misogyny through the Gender Based Violence framework. This will include further investment in Equally Safe at School and Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme.
- Engage with the profession and schools on the provision of BSL training for teachers and specialist deafblind teachers to support those children who are blind, partially sighted, deaf or deafblind.
- Progress a new dyslexia passport that school leavers can use to access support in their post-school destination.
- Continue to support online learning provision through e-Sgoil to reduce barriers to learning.

Keeping children safe, supported, and loved

Childhood should be a time when children are surrounded by the support, safety and love that they need to thrive, play, learn, and grow. That means taking a strong preventative approach from the earliest years, identifying and addressing risk at the earliest opportunity, and strengthening and improving public protection systems and practice, so that children and young people at risk of harm are identified, supported and protected more consistently across Scotland.

Across this Parliament we will continue our work to keep The Promise by 2030. From 1 April 2026 care leavers have been eligible for the £2,000 Care Leaver Payment and we will build on the significant progress and change under way at a national and local level, strengthening our support to the care experienced community by implementing the Children's (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Act. This includes strengthening the involvement of families in decisions that affect them through Family Group Decision Making; increased support for all care experienced people through whole life advocacy; extension of support for young people leaving the children's care service; and addressing profit-making in the care of children in Scotland. We will embed a strengthened approach to child protection across Government and relevant funded bodies, legislate to make reporting of harm mandatory by adults tasked with safeguarding children and young people, and implement child-centred justice reforms including the redesign of the children's hearing system, the modernisation of laws to tackle child abuse, and within our devolved powers, improvement of online safety, including addressing harmful online content and technology-enabled exploitation.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

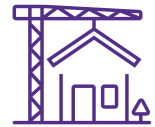
- Take a public health approach to online safety – supporting children, parents, and schools to be better equipped to deal with online safety challenges including through an online safety and wellbeing marketing campaign.
- Continue to push UK Ministers to take stronger action on online harm, including measures such as a Social Media Levy to be reinvested into programmes for young people and tougher punishments via Ofcom for social media platforms that fail to keep children safe.
- Continue reforming foster, kinship and adoption, helping ease placement pressures and providing increased support for carers.
- Publish an updated Implementation Strategy that demonstrates the progress made, and the key actions that the Scottish Government will lead, to keep The Promise by 2030.
- As part of our work on Whole Family Support, ensure that learning about the value of intensive family support is appropriately embedded as part of our ongoing work to keep The Promise.
- Support babies, children, and families in the foundational early years of their life, ensuring Whole Family Support includes sufficient focus on the pre-birth to 3 period, so families feel supported, prepared, and confident to provide the care their children need from before birth.

- Support the national roll out of Bairns' Hooses across Scotland through multiyear funding.
- Ensure the highest scrutiny into group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation in Scotland by launching a statutory inquiry with Professor Alexis Jay as the independent chair.
- Continue our work to strengthen public protection systems across Scotland, recognising violence against women and girls as a key public protection issue and ensuring coordinated responses to the multiple, interconnected risks, harms and adversities that can affect individuals, families and communities.
- Support effective information sharing and multi-agency decision-making where there are concerns about harm or risk.
- Enhance workforce learning and development to improve responses to harm, exploitation and coercion.

Ensuring safer communities

Scotland is a safer place since this government took office with recorded crime down 35% since 2006-07 – including a 58% fall in attempted murder and serious assault, and a 77% fall in housebreaking. But that does not lessen people's fears or the realities of those who are victims of crime. Across this Parliament, we will work to ensure people feel safe where they live and are protected from violence, exploitation, antisocial behaviour and avoidable harm. We will continue to work with justice partners to create a more efficient, accessible and user-centred justice system, including improving information sharing, reducing duplication, taking a trauma-informed approach and delivering seamless digital services that improve outcomes for victims, witnesses and court users.

Ambitious for Scotland: Strong on punishment; effective on prevention and rehabilitation



A rising prison population reflects action we have taken to strengthen the justice system, resulting in more convictions for serious and organised crime, as well as historical and recent sexual offences. But a high prison population does not automatically mean a safer society. Overcrowding in prisons undermines their ability to operate safely and to effectively rehabilitate prisoners.

Prison will always be necessary, particularly for those who pose a significant risk to public safety, and we are rapidly developing plans to expand the prison estate to ensure that they can operate safely and effectively. However, we also agree with the conclusions of the independent Sentencing and Penal Policy Commission which emphasised the need for a greater focus on the use of community-based interventions while robustly protecting victims and the wider public.

Over this Parliament, we will work to **achieve a sustainable prison population** – focusing on offering alternatives to custody and taking a preventative approach to crime, while continuing to prioritise the safety of women and the wider community, and the need for survivors' voices to be heard.

Our approach will seek to **combine an expansion of the prison estate with more robust community alternatives and reforms to how release and parole are managed**, including:

- Opening two new prisons – HMP Highland and HMP Glasgow – to expand and modernise the prison estate, as well as developing plans to further increase capacity and ensure those in custody can be safely and effectively rehabilitated.
- Investing in justice social work, third sector, and related services to deliver effective community sentences and early interventions, and expand the use of electronic monitoring, including GPS technology.
- Exploring a range of reforms to reduce the demand for prison places and prevent reoffending, with a focus on reducing the use of remand, ensuring community sentences are flexible and robust, and improving how long-term prisoner release operates. This will include considering responses to the consultation on penal reform, to inform decisions on what legislative changes are necessary.

Prevention and reducing reoffending are critical here. Our priority is to intervene early to prevent people entering or returning to the justice system. Working across government, local authorities, health services and the third sector, we will seek to address the underlying causes of offending, including substance dependency, poor health, poverty, homelessness, and unemployment.

Protecting local communities

Scotland has made good progress in making our communities safer and giving people greater peace of mind with most adults feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark. But we recognise that can also be dependent on place and context, and the perception of crime can be shaped by a wide range of factors. We will always take a strong approach to reducing crime. That includes maintaining a visible police presence, which is why we have invested in more officers per head of population, and better paid officers, than elsewhere in Britain. However, enforcement alone is not enough. We are also working to strengthen communities, give young people a greater sense of belonging and opportunity, and invest in preventative measures that steer people away from crime and towards positive futures.

Across this parliament we will continue to work closely with our key partners to protect our communities. This includes using social impact investment to reduce rates of reoffending; preventing young people from becoming involved in crime through our Cashback for Communities programme; investing in support for Police Scotland's crackdown on retail crime; supporting the roll out of bleed kits in community settings; creating a 'Safer Nights Design Champion' to help improve the safety of public spaces, particularly around transport hubs; and increasing police powers to confiscate and retain e-bikes and e-scooters that are being used anti-socially or criminally.



Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Take forward our commitment to increase police powers to confiscate and retain e-bikes and e-scooters that are being used anti-socially or criminally.
- Take forward legislation to ensure Football Banning Orders can be effectively used for a wider range of football related offences.
- Provide £10 million over the next three years to tackle retail crime through Police Scotland's Retail Crime Taskforce.
- Take forward the development of a new Violence Prevention Strategy to establish a clear approach and actions to tackle violence and reduce reoffending.
- Deliver the recently announced Justice Social Impact Partnership, provide a £200,000 fund this year to allow Social Impact Partners (SIPs) to bring forward ideas for preventative and early intervention programmes in justice. If successful, we will establish a £10 million Social Impact Investment Fund.
- Start Phase 7 of the Cashback for Communities Programme providing £26 million funding over the next three years.
- Respond to the 'future of secure care' consultation to ensure that Scotland's future plans, resourcing arrangements, and legislative landscape deliver full accessibility to secure care for those children who need those specialised services to keep them, or others, safe.

Of particular concern, Scotland has seen several high profile and distressing examples of youth violence, including deaths from knife crime, which have a profound impact on families and communities. Whilst of little comfort to victims, the number of homicide victims aged 13 to 19 fell by 63% between 2005 and 2025, and homicides in Scotland are at the lowest level since comparable records began in 1976 – but any level of violence is unacceptable and a tragic loss for families impacted. While sentencing in each case is for the independent courts to determine, **we will continue to work with partners to tackle and prevent youth violence and in particular knife crime**, including effective consequences for offences, through a three-pronged approach:

- **Education programmes** on the danger and the unacceptability of carrying a knife and taking part in violence: Supporting organisations and initiatives such as No Knives, Better Lives, the Youth Navigators project, and Mentors in Violence Prevention programme, supporting young people at risk of, or impacted by, violence and crime.
- **Effective punishment:** The young person's sentencing guidelines make it clear all sentencing options, including a custodial sentence, remain open to the court following a conviction. This is alongside higher maximum penalties for carrying a knife in a public place since 2016.
- **School and community engagement:** With efforts to develop responsible citizens in Scotland and address underlying issues such as glorification and broader societal discourse on crime and violence, to try to prevent a person picking up a knife in the first instance. We will also roll out bleed kits to community settings.

Supporting victims and survivors

While Scotland continues to be a safer country for most people, that can never undo the harm to victims of, or witnesses to, crime. Informed by the tireless efforts of victims and survivors, this Government brought forward, and Parliament passed, landmark legislation to place victims and witnesses at the heart of the justice system last year.

Over this Parliament, we will implement and build upon that, changing culture, process and practice to ensure victims are heard, supported, protected, and treated with compassion, including through the appointment of Scotland's first Victims and Witnesses Commissioner, as well as the establishment of a trauma-informed sexual offences court. We will also enhance protections for women by recognising pregnancy as an aggravating factor in domestic abuse cases and provide support for those leaving abusive partners. We will drive a more integrated public protection approach across Scotland, recognising that violence against women and girls often intersects with other public protection concerns, and supporting better coordination around the complex and cumulative harms experienced by individuals and families.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Extend the right to make a victim statement to all solemn cases and consider ways to give more victims the opportunity to have their voice heard by the court.
- Commence legislation which will improve how courts consider protective orders and ensure protective orders imposed elsewhere in the UK can be enforced in Scotland.
- Consult on changes to the Victim Notification Scheme including increasing the information provided to victims.
- Continue working with the Scottish Civil Justice Council on a proposal for court rules so that, when dealing with civil cases, courts have full information about domestic abuse and strengthen processes to deal with misuse of family court processes, particularly in contact cases, as a means of coercive control and ongoing abuse.
- Provide emergency funding to those organisations under significant pressure, e.g. the ASSIST domestic abuse court advocacy service, the National Advocacy Service, and rape crisis centres providing justice advocacy who have closed their waiting lists for that form of support.
- Ahead of a new fund being established, enhance arrangements under the Delivering Equally Safe Fund, ensuring clarity and stability for organisations over the remainder of the fund's lifetime.
- Work with the National Public Protection Leadership Group to promote stronger alignment between VAWG priorities and public protection approaches, enhancing understanding of gender-based violence within safeguarding and protection arrangements.
- In the NHS, provide support to people who have experienced rape, sexual assault or child sexual abuse, regardless of when the assault took place.

- Progress work to strengthen NHS leadership, governance, workforce capability and assurance in relation to violence against women and girls by embedding VAWG within the NHS Public Protection Accountability and Assurance Framework, aligning expectations with existing child protection and adult support and protection arrangements, and supporting a more consistent, evidence-informed response across Scotland.
- Ensure the NHS in Scotland focuses its efforts to provide pathways for those at risk and survivors of violence against women and girls, and promote a coherent, connected and mutually reinforcing approach to Health Boards' wider public protection and safeguarding responsibilities.

An equally safe Scotland

We are committed to ensuring a strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence, coercive control, abuse and exploitation, and the attitudes that help perpetuate such behaviours. New forms of violence against women are growing out of our increasingly digital world. But while the technology is new, the issue of violence against women and girls is old, and we will keep pace with the change that these new threats pose. We will sustain a whole-government approach to challenge the attitudes and societal inequalities which allow violence against women and girls to persist.

Across this Parliament, we will take forward the necessary action in line with our Equally Safe approach and the Istanbul Convention. We are committed to the development of a new multi-year funding model for specialist third sector services, responding to what organisations need to sustain vital services and ensure collective efforts across the public and voluntary sectors are appropriately resourced. Work is underway to create a blueprint for a Scottish Centre for Gender Equality in Social Attitudes to develop and test robust and evidence-led approaches to changing public attitudes towards women and girls and towards gender equality. And we will learn from lived experience, carrying out a review of measures put forward by survivors or families bereaved through domestic abuse to ensure that all options have been considered.

We will end the postcode lottery of service provision to ensure every woman and girl, regardless of where she lives, has access to safe and sustainable services. That includes developing a new multi-year fund for specialist third sector organisations, responding to what organisations need to sustain vital services and deliver critical preventative activities, allowing them to respond flexibly to local need and participate fully in local partnership arrangements. In addition, we will strengthen the role of multi-agency Violence Against Women Partnerships by investing in local infrastructure to drive forward improvements for victims and survivors, building on current work in development around the VAWG Needs Assessment Tool and Equally Safe Measurement Framework.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Implement and embed the Equally Safe primary prevention framework tackling VAWG as a public health issue.
- Develop a sustained multi-year public health campaign to address attitudes towards misogyny and VAWG.
- Commission an evaluation of current delivery of the Caledonian programme for men who have been convicted of domestic abuse, to inform future development, with a particular focus on island communities and suitability for delivery in prisons.
- Invest in targeted interventions to challenge and change problematic misogynistic attitudes and behaviour in boys and young men so they understand harmful influences and behaviour, before it escalates and women and girls are harmed.
- Ensure effective legal and justice responses that hold perpetrators to account and improve victims' experiences of the justice system, bringing forward a Misogyny Bill to ensure harassment and abuse based on misogyny is outlawed, consulting on implementing Domestic Abuse Protection Orders, and engaging with Police Scotland on training needs on domestic abuse.
- Continue to make improvements to the bail system: we have already made electronic monitoring available across bail, which can help to enforce curfews and exclusion zones, and we will build on that work to deliver a geographical pilot of GPS technology.
- Ensure our public health approach to online safety contains a clear focus on the different harms experienced by boys and girls, including a clear focus on misogyny.
- Develop an approach to technology-facilitated VAWG. This will include conducting research on survivors' experiences of tech-enabled abuse in daily life. We will also bolster investment in the technology-facilitated VAWG knowledge exchange network, and work with UK and international partners to seek the regulation of online platforms to prevent VAWG that happens online.
- Increase investment in the technology-facilitated VAWG knowledge exchange network, to ensure that we are learning from partners who are tackling this issue.
- Explore operational or legislative options that help ensure justice social work are provided with victims' details in order to inform risk assessment.

As we work to improve outcomes, boost life chances, and take new approaches to preventing harm and reducing poverty, the **social work workforce is at the forefront of our response and critical in achieving better outcomes**, helping to:

- Keep people safe from harm, being at the forefront of identification of risk and the protection of children and adults in our communities, including through delivery of The Promise.
- Reduce delayed discharge, undertaking assessments and co-ordinating social care provision to ensure people can get the necessary home or community care.

- Ease pressure on other public services by providing early help to reduce crisis responses, particularly for people with complex mental health needs.
- Achieve a sustainable prison population, working with partners to deliver a wide range of early interventions and alternatives to custody, taking a preventative approach to crime and addressing underlying causes through effective rehabilitation.
- Tackle substance misuse and drug related deaths, being a vital element of the multi-agency response to help people coping with a complex range of needs.

Recognising the unique role social workers play, the Scottish Government established the National Social Work Agency (NSWA) earlier this year, to coordinate national policy and drive improvements in professional education and practice across the profession. Now it is established and given the centrality of the profession to our ambitions, **we will work with NSWA and partners, including local government, to ensure a sustainable social work workforce and the best support for them to help deliver on our shared priorities.**

Cohesive communities built on rights and equality

This Government aspires to a Scotland that is proudly outward facing and welcoming – built on a shared Scottish identity and sense of belonging; one which respects and values everyone, underpinned by human rights and dignity for all. However, recent events have shown that can be a fragile ambition, undermined by pockets of hatred fuelled

by disinformation. Community cohesion is fundamental to building strong, inclusive and safe communities and is inseparable from the action we take to eradicate poverty, improve access to services, and ensure shared prosperity.

Across this Parliament we will not shy away from that challenge and ensure our action improves opportunities and outcomes for all while taking specific steps to protect those most at risk from harm – bolstering community cohesion, supporting those fleeing persecution or facing the devastation of conflicts in their own countries. Our aim will be to protect and enhance the rights of everyone, including by the development of a Human Rights Bill, aiming for introduction in Year 2 of the Parliament.

Building on the investment in community health infrastructure, the development of health and care hubs will start to bring together health and care providers to meet specific local needs, strengthening links with housing, education, welfare and other community services to provide more joined-up support which meets individuals' whole life needs. These approaches may be most helpful for disadvantaged communities, where people can benefit the most from joined-up support, with the potential to enable delivery of our wider social justice priorities such as whole family support. We will take forward action to address discrimination and inequality experienced by LGBTQI+ people through legislation, policy and partnership working. And we will invest £3.5m each year in our Disability Equality Plan.

Starting now and across 2026-27, we will:

- Establish a Ministerial Taskforce on Community Cohesion to strengthen preventative action.
- Increase investment in the Community Cohesion Fund to £500,000, supporting grassroots community initiatives across Scotland to address shared challenges such as social isolation, the cost-of-living crisis, inclusion, employment and housing support and community dialogue.
- Support the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit and partners to deliver projects that provide safe spaces and practical help for young people from Scotland's minority ethnic communities.
- Take action to address the root causes of hate crime, strengthening reporting and support for victims, and drawing on robust evidence and experience, as part of the refreshed Hate Crime Strategy Delivery Plan, to be published by the end of 2026.
- Continue to address interpersonal and institutional racism in education through the Anti-Racism in Education Programme.
- Through the Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning, the National Approach to LGBTQI+ Inclusive Education and the Digital Discourse Initiative, continue to build an education system that promotes belonging, mutual respect and understanding, in line with the rights and principles of the UNCRC.
- Publish a refreshed New Scots Delivery Plan to ensure the actions of the Scottish Government and its partners remain relevant to the challenges being faced by refugees and people seeking asylum.
- Continue our work to end conversion practices in Scotland in partnership with the Welsh and UK Governments, strengthening our collective efforts to end these harmful practices and protect LGBTQI+ people from the lasting harms they cause. Should the UK Government fail to deliver we will not hesitate to bring forward Scottish legislation.

A safe and resilient Scotland

Scotland faces an increasingly complex risk environment, including climate change, geopolitical instability, cyber threats, infrastructure dependencies and societal pressures. But resilience is not simply emergency response. It is the ability of Scotland's services, infrastructure, institutions, communities, and people to withstand disruption, recover effectively and adapt to change. We will also continue to invest in ensuring that our responder network is able to adapt to changing risks and demands and keep communities safe. This will include investing in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, as a leading responder to emergencies and by expanding the role of firefighter by the end of this parliament to ensure this service can address the nature of the incidents we are now seeing. Overall, we will strengthen Scotland's resilience by renewing and modernising the

systems, structures and capabilities that support preparedness, response and recovery across the country, to:

- Strengthen national preparedness for future emergencies.
- Improve coordination and crisis response arrangements across government and public services.
- Provide a modern framework for resilience planning and emergency management.
- Support communities, businesses, and critical infrastructure to become more resilient.
- Embed lessons identified from emergencies, exercises and public inquiries.
- Improve public understanding of risks and how people and communities can prepare for them.



Global engagement, local impact

Events overseas, such as the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and Russia's war with Ukraine have a direct impact at home, affecting economic resilience and communities across Scotland. Higher energy and food costs, supply chain disruption and wider inflationary pressures all impact household finances, businesses and public services. Strong international relations are vital to drive growth, attract investment, support our transition to net zero and enhance Scotland's resilience in this increasingly volatile world – and they underpin our moral obligations.

Ours is a government re-elected on a commitment to rejoining the European Union. With the world changing rapidly around us, for the sake of our prosperity and our security, Scotland returning as swiftly as possible to membership of the EU must be a national priority, and a shared national purpose. We will never give up on that opportunity and will work to ensure Scotland retains a strong presence on the world stage – standing up for countries facing aggression and hostility, utilising our domestic strengths to bolster our international standing, and being a good global neighbour, including:

- Continue to strengthen Scotland's relationship with the European Union by influencing UK EU negotiations – seeking closer relations in areas including energy security and electricity, agrifood trade, youth experience, and EU programmes including Erasmus+.
- Work with Universities of Sanctuary to explore how we can further support students from Gaza, including through the development of a postgraduate Scottish Gaza Scholarship Programme.
- Increase the International Development Fund by 25% and in doing so review our existing programmes while developing new modes of funding and partnership, including the development of an Aid Match scheme.
- To ensure the right coverage and relationships globally, to bolster our domestic and international ambitions, we will bring together Scottish Government and Scottish Development International offices into a more effective Scotland House network, expanding the number of Scotland Houses to more than 40 locations.
- Continue to provide support and sanctuary for Ukrainian people displaced by Russia's illegal war and aggression.
- Continue support for tackling global emergencies and conflicts through the Humanitarian Emergency Fund, including continued support for the people of Palestine and give particular focus on supporting the efforts related to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which recognises the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls.

Year One Legislative Programme



The Scottish Government's Year 1 legislative programme includes nine Bills. Those Bills will include key early priorities for the Scottish Government such as the Council Tax (Scotland) Bill, which will introduce new Council Tax bands for high-value residential properties by 1 April 2028, and the Public Service Renewal (Scotland) Bill, which will take the initial legislative steps to support the aims of the Government's wider Public Service Reform Strategy.

Legislation will also be brought forward to reduce emissions via the Buildings (Heating and Energy Performance) and Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill. Following high-profile events in recent months, the Scottish Government will bring forward a Bill to improve the Football Banning Order landscape to ensure topical issues such as the use of pyrotechnics and pitch incursions can be managed effectively.

The Scottish Government's Year 1 programme seeks to make early progress on the serious issue of violence against women and girls through a Misogyny Bill and will modernise our legal aid framework, ensuring there is flexibility for the future.

Bill summaries

Budget Bill

The annual Budget Bill provides parliamentary approval for the Scottish Government's spending plans, allocates resources to strategic objectives and supports progress towards the vision of a more successful country through increasing inclusive and sustainable economic growth and improving wellbeing.

Buildings (Heating and Energy Performance) and Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill

The primary purpose of the Bill is to reduce direct emissions from heating Scotland's buildings. Its proposed provisions are designed to bring this about in a timely way and contribute to the Climate Change Plan and the carbon budgets set out in the Change to Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

Council Tax (Scotland) Bill

This Bill will deliver the Scottish Government's commitment to introduce new council tax bands for high-value residential properties by 1 April 2028 and is a key component of Ministers' wider programme of council tax reform.

The Bill will address a longstanding concern that the highest-value properties can currently pay the same level of council tax despite substantial differences in market value. It therefore improves fairness and proportionality at the upper end of the tax base whilst affecting only a small proportion of properties. The legislation also provides an opportunity to modernise aspects of the council tax framework and increase local flexibility through discretionary powers for local authorities.

Damages (Scotland) Bill

This Bill delivers the December 2024 SLC report on Damages for Personal Injury. It will reform the law relating to damages for services, deductions from damages, limitation and asbestos-related disease and management of children's awards of damages. These changes would bring the law up-to-date with modern conditions and clarify and reform the law in important areas.

Food Prices (Scotland) Bill

This Bill will establish legal price ceilings on some essential food items, improving affordability of food for households facing cost of living pressures.

Football Banning Orders (Scotland) Bill

The Bill will amend and update current Football Banning Order legislation to improve effectiveness and response to football related disorder. The Bill will make targeted amendments on issues such as possession and misuse of pyrotechnics, pitch incursions and entering a stadium without a match ticket.

Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill

The Bill will establish a modernised legal aid framework that simplifies the current legal aid structure by enabling consolidation of aid types and greater consistency in means and merits testing, supporting a broader range of funding and commissioning mechanisms and increased flexibility in the administration of legal aid through enhanced decision-making powers for Scottish Legal Aid Board.

Misogyny (Criminal Law) (Scotland) Bill

The Bill will recognise misogyny as a distinct form of prejudice and abuse. Signalling that violence, harassment, and abuse rooted in hostility to women and girls is a serious societal problem.

Public Service Renewal (Scotland) Bill

The Bill will seek to give statutory backing, where required, to reform the public service delivery landscape in support of the aims of the Public Service Reform Strategy. The Bill will improve the fiscal sustainability of the public service delivery landscape through restructuring, including possible merging and abolitions of public bodies and the transfer of functions between core government and public bodies.



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