

General Election

8 June 2017



Our Manifesto for Inclusion

Inclusion Scotland works to ensure that policy affecting the everyday lives of disabled people in Scotland is informed by and reflects their views. We work for the removal of barriers to the inclusion of disabled people into all aspects of civic, social and economic life.

Despite being one of the wealthiest countries in the world the United Kingdom is scarred by poverty, inequality, discrimination and exclusion. One of the groups worst affected is disabled people. We are still largely excluded from many areas of British economic, political and social life. At every stage of our lives we face barriers to inclusion. All of the evidence suggests that disabled people are becoming more excluded and pushed into deeper poverty by recent policy changes at a UK level.

Though many policy areas are devolved to Scotland, the money that the Scottish Government gets to deliver them reflects cuts made by the UK Government. Other areas crucial to the lives of disabled people continue to be reserved to the UK Parliament. These include Equalities and Human Rights Law; 85% of the Social Security budget; key benefits such as Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance; Benefit Sanctions; and Access to Work support.

Hard fought for rights are under threat. We need guarantees that important equality and access rights originating from the European Union will be protected and respected when we leave. And much needs to be done by the UK Government to respect and realise our human rights.

The "Asks" in this Manifesto for Inclusion are based on priorities that disabled people themselves have set. We call upon candidates to commit to protecting our human rights, to reversing damaging policies that have compounded our exclusion, and to supporting essential new policies to promote our inclusion.

There is no excuse not to act!



1

Ask 1: Disabled people's Human Rights must be protected and enforced.

The Problem:

- The UK Government is to be examined this Summer on its progress in implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People. But reports on disabled people's views show serious failures, particularly concerning rights to support for independent living,
- The United Nation Committee on the Rights of Disabled People (UN CRPD) concluded last year that austerity policies and the pursuit of welfare "reforms" are a systematic breach of disabled people's human rights.
- Disabled people and service providers often do not know about human rights and their benefits, or how to challenge failure to respect them.

Our Solutions:

- The UK Parliament should hold the Government to account on its record and action to take forward recommendations made by the UN Committee.
- Support should be provided to Disabled People's Organisation to monitor implementation of the UN Committee's recommendations.
- The Human Rights Act should be retained and amended to enable rights under international conventions such as the UNCRPD to be enforced in domestic courts.
- Accessible awareness-raising campaigns should be carried out and practical support made available to challenge failure to respect our human rights.

2

Ask 2: Benefit reforms should support disabled people's right to participate in society.

The Problem:

- Taking the costs of disability into account, disabled people and their families make up nearly half of all those living in poverty in the UK. Yet since 2010 over half of the cuts to benefits have fallen on disabled people and their families.
- Increased expenditure on disability benefits reflects the fact that increasing numbers of disabled people are more reliant on inadequate benefits.
- 50,000 Motability vehicles have been repossessed after disabled people were reassessed for Personal Independence Payments (PIP). They continue to be lost at the rate of 900 vehicles a week.
- Unfair sanctions on disabled people claiming Job Seekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance are leaving many destitute.
- There are proposals to force people in the support group for Employment Support Allowance to attend work focussed interviews.

Our Solutions:

- Disabled people should be provided with sufficient income to meet the additional costs associated with impairment. No more cuts to disabled people's benefits should be made and those that have should be reversed.
- The £30 a week reduction to the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) payable to those in the Work Related Activity Group should be reversed.
- The previous 50 metre walking test should be re-instated for claims to PIP.
- An end to the sanctions regime, and no extension of conditionality to the ESA Support Group.

3 Ask 3: Invest in overcoming the barriers to disabled people's employment

The Problem:

- The proportion of non-disabled Scots in employment is 82%, but only 42% of Scots disabled people are in employment.
- Employers' fear of the perceived costs of making adjustments to the workplace is a key barrier to the recruitment of more disabled people.
- The Access to Work budget and payments to individuals are both capped.
- Scotland receives just 6% of the Access to Work budget when it has 11% of DLA and PIP claimants.
- UK Government cuts to employability programmes has reduced the budget to be devolved from about £52m to just £7m. The new Health and Work scheme budget has not been devolved to Scotland.

Our Solutions:

- The current cap on Access to Work spending should be removed as this is an investment rather than a cost. For every pound spent on Access to Work support the Treasury receives an additional £1.60 in revenue.
- The Access to Work budget should be devolved to ensure that Scots disabled people can access the same level of support as is available throughout the rest of the UK.
- Cuts to employability programmes should be reversed, and the Health and Work scheme budget should be devolved.

4 Ask 4: Disabled people should have the same access to public life as anyone else.

The Problem:

- Disabled people are woefully under-represented in public life and particularly in politics.

- In the 2015-17 UK Parliament only half a dozen or so MPs out of 650 (1%) identified as disabled people, yet we make up 20% of working age people.
- The Scottish Government's Access to Elected Office Fund is not available to support candidates for election to the UK Parliament.

Our Solution:

- The UK Government should provide financial support to meet disability-related extra costs of disabled candidates standing for election to the UK Parliament, or allow the Scottish Access to Elected Office Fund to be used to support Scottish candidates for election to the UK Parliament.
- Disability related expenditure should be excluded from a candidate's campaign spending limits.
- The UK Parliament should run a Parliamentary Intern scheme specifically for disabled people.

5 Ask 5: The rights of disabled people are protected and promoted in Brexit negotiations.

The Problem

- A number of EU directives, policies and initiatives promote disability rights, including on employment, air travel, blue badges, accessible bus and train services, web accessibility, goods and services and the draft European Accessibility Act.
- 70,000 EU Nationals work in the social care sector, including as carers and personal assistants (PAs) for disabled people.

Our Solutions:

- All EU-based disability rights existing at the time Britain leaves the EU to be maintained, including those in relation to travel, web accessibility and accessible goods and services.
- Safeguard the rights of EU citizens in the UK, and UK citizens in the EU, including the right of disabled people to employ EU Citizens as PAs.



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