Our Manifesto for Inclusion

Inclusion Scotland is a ‘Disabled People’s Organisation’ (DPO) – led by disabled people ourselves. Inclusion Scotland works to achieve positive changes to policy and practice, so that we disabled people are fully included throughout all Scottish society as equal citizens.

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 most 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; over 70% of the Social Security budget; key benefits such as Universal Credit and Old Age Pensions; Benefit Sanctions; and Access to Work support.

Hard fought for rights are under threat. We need guarantees that our important equality and access rights will be protected and respected. And much more 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!
Ask 1: Disabled people’s Human Rights must be protected and enforced.

The Problem:

➢ The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCRPD) has again condemned the UK Government for its inaction in addressing serious breaches of disabled people’s human rights.
➢ The same Committee concluded previously that UK Government austerity policies and the pursuit of welfare “reforms” were a systematic breach of disabled people’s human rights.
➢ The UN Committee believes that the Covid pandemic and “cost-of-living” crisis have compounded the UK Government’s previous failures.

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.

Ask 2: Disabled people should receive more help with fuel costs and those costs must be reduced.

The Problem

➢ Research by disability charity Scope shows that households containing a disabled person tend to have considerably higher fuel bills.
➢ In 2023 research by Consumer Scotland indicated that over half (52%) of Scots disabled people were unable to adequately heat their homes.
➢ It also showed that over 2 out of 3 (68%) Scots disabled people said that the cost of fuel was having an impact on their physical health.
➢ Those on PIP/DLA and ADP received only £150 to meet the costs of fuel bills that had virtually doubled.

Our Solutions:

• No disabled person’s health should be endangered because they cannot afford to heat their home.
• Disabled people on key disability benefits should receive additional help with their fuel costs based on what they actually spend.
The UK Government and Ofgem must force the fuel companies to create a “social tariff” that lowers fuel costs for all disabled people on benefits. The costs that disabled people incur through running medical and social care equipment at home should be met by the NHS.

3 Ask 3: Benefit reforms should support disabled people’s right to participate in society not impoverish them.

The Problem:

➢ There are currently proposals to restrict entitlement to both Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and the health-related component of Universal Credit that will have knock-on consequences for disabled people in Scotland.
➢ The growth in claims to disability benefits due to poor mental health has been created by poverty-creating and anxiety inducing austerity policies.

Our Solutions:

• The current proposals to restrict entitlement to PIP and Universal Credit must be abandoned.
• Disabled people should be provided with enough income to meet their basic needs and the additional costs associated with impairment.
• The previous 50 metre walking test should be re-instated for claims to PIP.
• The proposed extension of conditionality to disabled people currently in the Substantial Risk group must be abandoned.

4 Ask 4: Invest in overcoming the barriers to disabled people’s employment

The Problem:

➢ The proportion of non-disabled Scots in employment is 82%, but only 52% 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.
➢ Proportionately less Access to Work support comes to Scotland than to disabled people living in more affluent areas of the UK.
➢ Th UK Government has reduced the employability budget devolved to Scotland.
Our Solutions:

- Increase spending on Access to Work. For every pound spent on it the Treasury receives an additional £1.60 in tax 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.
- Access to Work support should be made available to disabled people involved in volunteering.
- The Work and Health Programme Budget, and whatever may replace it, should be devolved to Scotland.

Our Solutions:

- The UK Government should provide financial support to meet disability-related extra costs of disabled candidates standing for election to the UK Parliament in Scotland, or fund the Access to Elected Office Fund Scotland for use by candidates standing 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.

The Problem:

- Disabled people are woefully under-represented in public life and particularly in politics.
- In the 2019-2024 UK Parliament only 8 MPs out of 650 (1.23%) identified as disabled people, yet we make up well over 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.

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