



**Glasgow Disability Alliance**  
Promoting Equality, Rights and Social Justice



# Manifesto for a Fairer Scotland for Disabled People

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# Glasgow Disability Alliance Manifesto 2026

Disabled people should have the same freedom and opportunity as non-disabled people. Freedom to lead their own lives and contribute to families, communities and wider society.

But currently disabled people feel dehumanised and under targeted attacks from decision-makers, and the statistics are stark.

It doesn't have to be this way. This manifesto sets out how to bake Scottish values of compassion and fairness into the next government.

## 1 Make ends meet for disabled people

Disabled people are twice as likely to experience poverty as non-disabled people. 79% of food bank users are disabled or have a disabled family member.<sup>1</sup> Because it costs more to be disabled, it's only right that disabled people are at the heart of efforts to address poverty.

### Including by:

- **Ensuring adequate benefits levels**, via Social Security Scotland, increasing levels of devolved non-means tested disability benefits and mitigating any shortfalls resulting from the UK Government's changes.
- **Improving welfare rights practice, information and advice**, respecting the role of third party representatives.
- **Establishing schemes to provide disabled people with affordable utilities**, including cash support for those using dialysis and other independent living equipment.
- **Maintaining momentum and investment in the Disability Equality Plan**, including establishing accountability and governance mechanisms co-designed with and involving Disabled People's Organisations.
- **Piloting a Minimum Income Guarantee** – a level beneath which no-one falls – that includes a robust disability premium.
- **Making our tax system fairer**, using the tax levers available within devolution including a radical reform of Council Tax and introduction of land and wealth taxes.

<sup>1</sup>[https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/hunger-in\\_scotland\\_190925.pdf](https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/hunger-in_scotland_190925.pdf), p.12.

## 2 Ensure all disabled people who want to work can do so

Disabled people face multiple barriers to the workplace and the Disability Employment Gap in Scotland stubbornly remains at **31.5%**.<sup>2</sup> We need change to make work possible and sustainable for all disabled people who want to work.

### To do this:

- **Scottish Government and public sector should lead by example.** This means recruiting, developing, retaining and promoting more disabled workers in the Scottish Government and ensuring the necessary support is in place. It means making Disability Equality Training mandatory and moving towards disability equality competence as the norm.
- **More employers need more support** to be open to, and inclusive of, disabled people, including at leadership levels.
- **We should provide accessible, tailored employability support** for disabled people.
- **We must maintain routes to Access to Work** including mitigating any changes proposed by the UK Government.
- **We must increase accessible childcare for disabled children and social care for disabled parents.**
- **We must boost investment in inclusive, accessible mainstream education and training** for disabled people of all ages.
- **We should ensure options for lifelong learning**, including peer support for disabled people who are further from the labour market.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.mygov.scot/helping-disabled-people-access-work>

### 3 Invest in public services which uphold disabled people's freedom and opportunities

All in Government value the concepts of prevention and early intervention. But the reality for many disabled people in Scotland is the opposite: public services that don't meet needs, long waiting lists for health services and a lack of access to appropriate, good quality support.

#### It's time to:

- **Make sure social care support for disabled people meets needs, enables choices and a life of meaning.** We must ensure consistency of delivery in Self-Directed Support.
- **Scrap social care charges** which have become a tax on disability and are trapping disabled people in poverty.
- **Expand access to the re-opened Independent Living Fund and enable DPOs to make direct referrals into the Fund.**
- **Increase investment in more accessible health services** to tackle lifelong health inequalities and improve life outcomes. Increase funding and expand provision of palliative care.
- **Boost responsive and accessible mental health and wellbeing services and supports** for disabled people, like GDA Wellbeing.
- **Ensure disabled people are able to access and benefit from public and preventative health policies, practice and campaigns** including screening.
- **Invest in building accessible, affordable social housing**, including setting targets for barrier-free, "houses for life" for disabled people. Provide accessible information to disabled people about housing rights and help available with adaptation grants.
- **Ensure disabled people's access to public services and spaces**, including buildings, transport, information and communication.

## 4 Make it possible for disabled people to participate, be visible and be represented in society

Participating in society, even just being able to socialise outside the home, is a core human need. It's something that most non-disabled people take for granted. Yet 75% of disabled people responding to our 2025 Member Survey<sup>3</sup> said they were rarely able to socialise outside the home. This is due to costs, inaccessible transport and venues, unwelcoming - sometimes even hostile - attitudes.

To address this, we need to create the conditions, drawing on the leadership of disabled people and DPOs, in which disabled people can routinely participate in all aspects of life and society.

### We must:

- **Invest in inclusive, holistic supports which maintain wellbeing** such as community connectors/navigators; accessible community learning and development; cultural and leisure services; and facilities and connections to information, services and opportunities.
- **Declare loneliness in Scotland as a public health priority**, produce a cross sectoral plan to tackle Social Isolation and Loneliness ( SIAL) and increase investment in the SIAL Fund.
- **Create new accessibility and inclusion standards** in relation to climate policy, transport, the built environment and public realm in order to achieve a genuinely Just Transition.
- **Commit to centring disabled people and DPOs as equal partners in co-designing and co-producing** policies, strategies and services. Include accountability and oversight mechanisms.
- **Ensure disabled people can speak to human beings** about services, rather than providing digital, technical or AI solutions by default.
- **Eradicate digital exclusion** by introducing affordable broadband social tariffs. Resource projects that reduce digital exclusion, like GDA Connects.
- **Increase the Improving Access Fund** established in the Disability Equality Plan to allow DPOs to run programmes and services which reduce poverty and inequality and improve disabled people's lives.
- **Ensure funders understand the resources required** to enable the participation, visibility and representation of disabled people.

<sup>3</sup><https://gda.scot/resources/rights-now-disabled-peoples-experiences-of-poverty-inequality-and-call-to-action/>

## 5 Strengthen and uphold disabled people's rights

For disabled people in Scotland, equality and human rights are key concerns. **82%** of respondents to our survey said they felt they had been treated differently or unfairly because they were disabled. The Scottish Government shelving its proposed Human Rights Bill has intensified disabled people's sense of being deprioritised.

### We must:

- **Embed responsibility for disabled people's rights across the Scottish Cabinet**, instead of limiting it to one directorate.
- **Increase disability equality competence across all public bodies**, including by strengthening the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- **Revive the Scottish Human Rights Bill**, including incorporating the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People into domestic law. This process can apply learnings from the successful incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- **Invest in the existing infrastructure that law centres provide**, piloting Disability Law Centres which deliver inclusive, accessible legal and advice services.
- **Pilot a year-long study** into the impact of providing non-means tested legal aid for all discrimination cases.
- **Oppose the legislative progression** of the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill.
- **Commit to increase the Improving Access Fund**, as embedded in the Disability Equality Plan, to support the network of DPOs to inform disabled people about rights; build capacity to understand these rights; and support them to advocate for and claim rights.
- **Provide financial support to disabled election candidates** to meet extra costs of disability.

# The public supports this

These changes are not just the right thing to do, they represent a course of action that the public supports.

People in Scotland - and across the UK - are more compassionate than they are often given credit for. Surveys show that the UK government's proposed cuts were deeply unpopular with a majority of people. And we know that people in Scotland are far more likely than not to back social investment and redistribution, as evidenced by the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey,<sup>4</sup> which shows:

- **Almost half** (47%) of respondents thought the government should increase taxes and spend more on health, education, and social benefits. Only 12% want to reduce taxes and spend less on health, education and social benefits.
- **Half** of people (50%) agreed that Government should redistribute income from the better-off to those who are less well-off.

<sup>4</sup><https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-attitudes-survey-2023-attitudes-government-economy-health-service/documents/>

**Glasgow Disability Alliance** is a Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) controlled by over 6,000 disabled individuals and Glasgow DPO members. GDA is the largest groundswell of disabled members in Europe and a leading example of a grassroots community of identity, peer support and belonging. With roots and support programmes in Glasgow and surrounding areas, GDA also has national policy reach.

**GDA:**

- Builds individual capacity and improves lives of disabled people through our supports, programmes and services.
- Develops collective capacity by helping people to understand their rights, talking about what matters to disabled people and amplifying their voices.
- Collaborates to drive change with local and national government to inform and shape decisions and co-design policy, services and supports.

*"It is the way that society is constructed which prevents disabled people from participating – that's why we need GDA to provide capacity building, peer support, collective advocacy and access – so we understand our rights – and make sure that our voices are heard."* GDA Member



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Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

Suite 301 • The White Studios  
Building 4 • Templeton Business Centre  
Templeton Court • Glasgow G40 1DA  
Tel: 0141 556 7103  
Email: [info@gdaonline.co.uk](mailto:info@gdaonline.co.uk)



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