

Scottish Elections 2011

Unpaid Carers – Manifesto commitments of the main political parties

... in alphabetical order

Scottish Conservatives

Helping carers and the vulnerable

We value the contribution made by carers across Scotland and we want to make progress in implementing the National Carers' Strategy to improve services for carers and will provide additional respite care. The integration of social care and NHS services will help identify those in need of extra assistance to care for their loved ones. We will work with the voluntary sector, local authorities and the NHS to improve services for carers

Scottish Green Party

A Healthy Society

We'll place an emphasis on primary and community care, provided as locally as possible. A well-organised local health service, based on smaller hospitals and services, also provides sustainable local jobs and training. This localised structure of health care would provide better support for paid and unpaid carers

Scottish Labour Party

Delivering Social Justice

For people who have grown-up in care or in financial hardship, for women struggling to manage the demands of family life, for disabled people and for unpaid and young carers there can be a many obstacles to accessing decent, secure jobs. To help support equity and inclusion during difficult economic times, Scottish Labour will take steps to ensure that the Scottish Future Jobs Fund and modern apprenticeship guarantee are accessible to the full range of Scotland's young people and consider the needs of those who face the most serious challenges in accessing the labour market. We want to ensure no one is left behind.

We are also committed to ensuring the needs of older carers of adult children with disabilities are properly identified and addressed.

Scottish Labour recognises the particular role of kinship carers in preventing vulnerable young people going into care and we will establish minimum standards for the assessment and support of children in kinship care. For too long, there has been a postcode lottery in crucial financial and other support for kinship carers. Scottish Labour is committed to sitting down with local authorities and the UK government to resolve this

frustrating and unacceptable situation.

We also know that effective support for carers can reduce the need for more expensive care services later on. We recognise the many challenges facing the range of carers in Scotland and want to continue funding pathways for carers' information, recognising the crucial role of carers' centres in providing information and support. We will work to ensure that information for carers continues to be as accessible as possible.

Scottish Liberal Democrat Party

A Caring Nation Action Plan

Scotland has a growing, ageing population and it is in everyone's interest to make sure that resources are used to the maximum and new ways are found to help people who need care. Three quarters of a million people in Scotland act as unpaid carers already, young and old alike.

Across the world, innovations have been developed to bridge the gap between hospital and community care, support self-management and peer support networks.

We will ensure that carers are given better access to information and support services and receive better assistance from local authorities and health boards.

Where appropriate we will change the law to improve support and give carers more control and choice

A Care for Carers Bill will:

- Give individuals and carers the right to access a range of self-directed care options and the information they need to make an informed decision.
- Strengthen the Carers' Assessment in order to ensure that the carers' life outside of caring is fully recognised.
- Ensure that an assessment for care in one part of the country is "portable" so people can move to be near family without having to go through a lengthy assessment process again.
- Work with local authorities and health boards to introduce a short break entitlement for those in greatest need. Carers with significant caring responsibilities will be entitled to a guaranteed minimum number of hours of
- respite care.
- Introduce a statutory minimum kinship care allowance and require all local authorities to provide this.
- Introduce a requirement on NHS boards to ensure that information, training and support is provided to all patients and their carers before discharge from hospital and on diagnosis of long term conditions so that carers have all the support they need at the very beginning of their caring role.

There are other non-legislative measures we can take to support carers. We will:

- Take forward the 'Caring Together' and 'Getting it Right for Young Carers' strategies.
- Build upon the existing emotional and psychological support for carers by developing innovative peer support and mentoring schemes in the community, working with

- carers' organisations and carers themselves.
- Work with schools to develop innovative support for young carers and strengthen their capacity to meet the demand for existing dedicated young carers' services.
- Pilot new ways to support carers to take advantage of our plans for super-fast broadband access, developing telecare's role in community care and carer assessments.
- Work more closely with the UK Government and local government to tackle benefits issues and ensure people are receiving what they're entitled to.

Digital Economy Action Plan

High speed technology gives new opportunities for teaching and learning, for cultural creativity. New peer support networks can be empowered to help people with long term medical conditions and carers.

Better Health Action Plan

Help individuals with long term conditions or their carers design the best healthcare for their individual needs. We will require local authorities to offer a range of self-directed support options to give people control over their care and provide them with the information they need to make informed choices. We will develop community initiatives which provide information and support for self-management.

Drug and Alcohol Action Plan

Encourage local areas to promote a whole family approach to the delivery of recovery services, and to consider the provision of support services for families and carers in their own right.

Liberalism Action Plan

Place a duty on local authorities to offer a range of self-directed support payment options to give individuals and their carers more control over the services they receive.

Scottish National Party

Caring for Carers

“We owe it to Scotland’s carers not only to get the laws and the guidance right, but also to make sure that words are translated into action on the ground.”

Scotland depends on the work of unpaid carers. Without their support the lives of tens of thousands of Scots would be so much more difficult and there would be significant additional pressures on our public services. We owe it to Scotland’s carers not only to get the laws and the guidance right, but also to make sure that words are translated into action on the ground.

Over these next five years we will work to make sure that unpaid carers are treated as partners in the health service and the particular circumstances of young carers is better recognised in our schools. Treatment for those cared for can and will be improved when the knowledge and experience of their carers is fully taken into account, and the SNP government will show leadership on this issue to ensure best practice becomes universal practice.

We want carers themselves to have a more direct voice in the decision making process and will bring forward proposals for an annual 'Carers Parliament' which will allow carers themselves to raise the issues that impact most on their lives with MSPs and Scottish Government ministers.

Because we recognise the pressures on unpaid carers, this year's budget includes funding to maintain our commitment to an extra 10,000 weeks' respite provision per year. We will protect this investment over the next five years. We will provide an additional £2 million on top of the £1 million already committed for each of the next four years to provide short breaks for families who have severely disabled children, making our commitment £6 million in total. We will take forward our new Carers and Young Carers Strategy and will continue with our

£5 million investment each year in the Carer Information Strategies delivered through the NHS. This provides much-needed support to local carer centres and training for carers. And, because we recognise the pressures on family budgets as a result of higher fuel costs, we will also extend our Energy Assistance Package to people on Carers' Allowance. We will also continue our activity to assist Kinship carers.

We all have a role to play in supporting carers. That's why the SNP will encourage Scotland's business community to play its part too. We will create a new Caring for Carers Employers' Kite-mark. This will recognise those employers who offer the best support to carers, allowing them the flexibility they often need to deliver care at home.

Integrating Health and Social Care

The process of improvement is already underway and will be facilitated by £70 million of investment announced earlier this year in a new Change Fund. This fund will support better-integrated older people's services delivered by health boards, councils, and the third and independent sectors. We want to see the third sector and carers play a key role as partners in the process given their important role in the lives of those cared for. To that end we will ensure that from 2012-13 onwards at least 20% of the Change Fund spend is dedicated to supporting carers to continue to care.

Our Purpose

And for our social partnership to really work, we will look to engage more directly with communities and individuals. Policy must not be top down: many of the best ideas and most effective solutions will come from those, like carers, with the most direct experience of the problems or opportunities that exist. Government can, too often, offer a one-size fits all approach, when what is needed can instead be more local and more personal solutions. So we will work to ensure that a bigger share of funding goes straight to communities themselves, building on initiatives like the Climate Challenge Fund. We don't want money that could make a real difference to people's lives lost within the system.

Minimising the Barriers to Education

We will keep the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). We will also work to ensure the EMA takes account of the needs of young carers, with more flexibility to recognise the particular pressures that some youngsters face balancing school and caring responsibilities.