



Parenting Across Scotland Manifesto 2026





Introduction

Parenting Across Scotland is a membership organisation whose vision is a Scotland where all parents and carers are valued and supported to give children the best possible start in life. The Parenting Across Scotland Manifesto for the 2026 Scottish Parliamentary elections outlines six key policy calls that, if introduced, would make a positive impact on the lives of parents, carers and their families in Scotland.

We have identified these calls based on a number of factors:

- The views and experiences of parents, carers, our members and partners.
- Evidence from our own projects and current policy activity.

Wider research evidence, including our [2024 Parenting Evidence Review](#).

There are undoubtedly additional policy calls that could be made. But by making these calls, we hope to encourage all political parties in Scotland to think about some big and important questions:

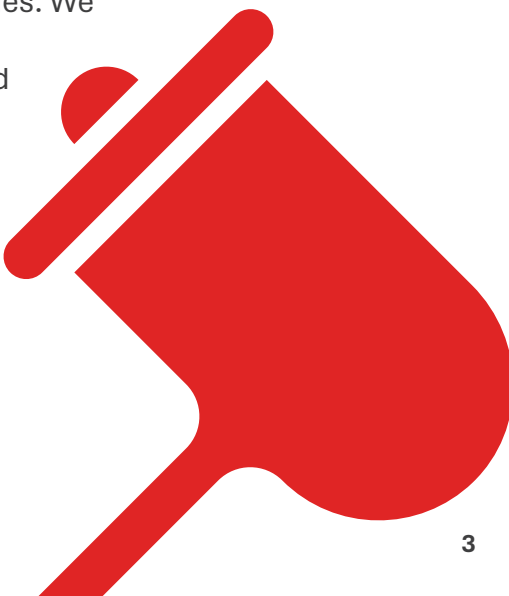
- How do we define a family in 2026 and ensure our definitions are flexible, inclusive and reflective of Scotland as it is today and in the future?
- How can we raise our expectations about what a good childhood looks like in Scotland?
- What does quality whole family support look like, and how can we make it a reality for all families who need it?
- How can parents and carers be part of the journey to ensuring that all children realise their rights?
- How do we achieve our ambitions for tackling child poverty?



Our calls represent a vital investment in families, and they cannot be realised without secure and sustained funding for both the third and public sectors. They place emphasis on preventative spend, ensuring that babies and children and young people get every chance to thrive and that parents and carers are supported before they reach crisis point.

Our calls are also ones that we believe are deliverable across the whole of Scotland, including rural, remote, island and urban communities. We have considered place-based approaches where we can and the needs of different communities, including families with protected characteristics and how these might intersect.

For each call, we outline changes that could be made now, with their projected impact by the time of the 2031 Scottish Parliamentary elections.





Child poverty



CALL 1:

Increase the Scottish Child Payment to £55 to reduce **child poverty**



People are being forced to choose between feeding their children or paying the rent.”

Parent in our 2024 Parenting Evidence Review

It is shameful that child poverty persists in Scotland. But it doesn't need to be a reality.

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets out ambitious targets for reducing child poverty by 2030. Time is running out to take action to achieve these targets, but it is not too late. Policy decisions can change the statistics and the lives of families across the country.

As members of the [End Child Poverty Coalition](#), PAS recognises that to make a significant difference to child poverty levels, specific and sustained action is required across multiple areas:

- Increasing earned incomes by supporting and providing opportunities for parents and carers to work. This includes through employability support and the provision of essential infrastructure such as childcare and transport.
- Reducing the costs of living and maximising incomes from social security to allow families to meet their basic needs. This includes through social security, affordable homes, and advice services.
- Delivering holistic and whole family support to improve outcomes and wellbeing.
- Supporting children and young people to reach their full potential and to break the cycle of poverty in the longer term. This includes through early years support, education, and post-school transitions.

Of all these actions, [available evidence](#) points to the Scottish Child Payment as providing the most effective route to meeting the 2030 targets. **We therefore call on all parties to recommit to reducing child poverty through immediately increasing the Scottish child payment to at least £40 per week, rising to £55 by the end of the next parliament.**



How this could be achieved:

- Scottish Child Payment is increased to £40 per child per week in 2026, with further increases to £55 made over the next parliamentary term.
- Complementary action is taken to address child poverty, such as improving access to childcare, well paid work and high quality affordable housing.



By 2031:

- Child poverty levels reduce and 2030 child poverty targets are achieved.



Children's rights



CALL 2:

Ensure that parents and carers are confident champions of their **children's rights** by increasing their understanding of the UNCRC



It's great having all these rights, but what weight do they really have."

Parent in Together's 2025 [Tiny Rights Detectives Report](#)

In 2024 we finally saw the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) being incorporated into Scots Law, through the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. Having achieved this landmark, it is important that we maintain momentum in the implementation phase to ensure that all babies, children and young people in Scotland realise their rights as outlined in the UNCRC.

Parents have a crucial role to play in this. Most, though not all, children grow up with their parents, and [Article 18 of the UNCRC](#) emphasises that parents and carers should always consider what is best for each child.

Incorporation of the UNCRC is very good news for families. [But not all parents know about the UNCRC](#) or what it means. Parents need to understand children's rights, recognise when their children's rights have not been met and know how they can go about making positive change happen. **We therefore call for all political parties to do more to ensure that parents and carers understand children's rights and how the UNCRC can support them in their parenting role.**



How this could be achieved:

- Awareness raising campaigns, the provision of information at key times (for new parents, on starting nursery, school and other transitions), short accessible videos and training courses could all help make this a reality. Emphasis should be placed on reaching out to parents and carers who are less likely to access traditional information sources like Parent Club.



By 2031:

- Most parents and carers in Scotland will know about the UNCRC, what it means for their families and how to seek remedy and redress if their children's rights are infringed.
- Services that support children and families will be more aware of the key rights issues that children experience and take action to address them.



Parents' and carers' views and experiences



CALL 3:

Put parents' and carers' views and experiences at the heart of policy development and implementation

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I feel like I don't have a voice, so it's great to be able to come to someone and be my voice, and hopefully, try and make a difference. Not just for myself and my little girl but make a difference for other people that are suffering worse than what I am at the moment. It's nice to give people a voice and try and help change things.”

Parent in our 2024 Parenting Evidence Review

Political parties have a role to play in ensuring that they are listening to the experiences of parents and carers to make sure that they understand the constraints that families experience and what might help them.

In 2024, we published our [Parenting Evidence Review](#), bringing together the views of over 4000 parents and carers across at least 26 local authority areas in Scotland. Parents and carers highlighted a range of challenges they experienced including with income, education, mental health and childcare. However, we recognise that experience of family life in 2026 will be different from only a few years prior.

Experiences will also be different across communities and demographics. It is vital that the views of families experiencing inequalities are included in policy development and implementation, whether those inequalities arise because of poverty, geography, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, age, care experience, or other factors. **We therefore call for all political parties to commit to listening to and acting on the views and experiences of parents and carers across Scotland to respond in a meaningful way to their needs.**



How this could be achieved:

- Continued investment in robust long-term research provides specific evidence about Scottish families.
- Decision makers make better use of the evidence available about parents and carers lives to inform relevant policy making and continue to build positive relationships with organisations supporting families in all their diversity.
- Policy and strategies affecting families are co-produced with them.



By 2031:

- There will be evidence of parents' and carers' views and experiences informing and influencing policy and strategy relevant to their lives.



Whole family support



CALL 4:

Deliver universal and intensive **whole family support** to all that need it, incorporating Open Kindergartens as an effective means of universal provision



It has a positive impact on my mental health as I find it helpful to get out the house and socialise with other families and Open Kindergarten is a positive space for me to go."

Parent in our Phase 3 Open Kindergarten project

Parenting is undoubtedly one of the most important roles any adult can take on, but too many feel they parent without **adequate help or support**. The Promise's **Plan 2024-30** emphasises the importance of providing access to both universal and intensive family support. It tells us that in order to #KeepthePromise by 2030 all communities will need to have 'supportive, universally accessible places out of the home where parents and carers can build relationships, share their parenting experiences and be supported to stay and play with their children'.

Parenting Across Scotland's members provide a wide range of universal and intensive family support services, including support in the early years and with families experiencing poverty, addictions, imprisonment and disabilities. And within Parenting Across Scotland, we have built up considerable knowledge and expertise about Open Kindergartens, a Nordic model of early years whole family support.¹ Collectively we know what works for families.

But we are a long way off from holistic non-stigmatising support being offered to all families that need it. **We therefore call for all political parties provide further sustainable investment in universal and intensive family support, such as that offered by Open Kindergartens and our members, to achieve widespread availability across Scotland.**



How this could be achieved:

- Provide long term sustainable funding to roll out universal and intensive family support across Scotland.
- Invest in training, development and evaluation activities to build capacity and gather evidence of impact over time.



By 2031:

- Sustainable, accessible and non-stigmatising whole family support will be a reality for more families across Scotland, mirroring practice in Nordic countries.

¹ Since 2018, Parenting Across Scotland has been working with our partners, Children in Scotland, Midlothian Sure Start and the Open University to bring **Open Kindergartens** to Scotland.



Parenting with adults



CALL 5:

Give ‘**parenting with adults**’ its own emphasis within national policy, recognising that parenting doesn’t stop when children turn 18

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Although I feel I do have the ability to “fight” for my child’s well-being and right to adequate risk assessment and support, timewise it is like having a second job, and I have carried significant levels of extra stress over many years.”

Parent in our Parenting with adults briefing

Parenting doesn’t stop when children turn 18 and some adults need significant ongoing support from their parents throughout their adult lives, whether because of disabilities, addictions or changing circumstances. Providing support to their children with issues such as these can have a huge impact on parents and carers. Adults do not need to be living with their parents for this impact to be profound.

Over the last year, Parenting Across Scotland has been working with our members and partners to explore the topic of parenting with adults. In January 2025 we published our [Parenting with adults briefing](#). This briefing provides an overview of the current evidence and policy landscape relating to parenting adults, findings from a 2024 roundtable discussion and key recommendations for how the needs of this parent group could be better met at policy and practice levels.

The [National Carers Strategy](#) (2022) briefly acknowledges the needs of parents of adults (those over 18 years old). However, there is currently no strategy or policy in Scotland that specifically addresses the needs of this group. This gap must be addressed to ensure that parents of adult children receive the support they require.

We call on all parties to recognise that parenting does not stop when children turn 18 by giving ‘Parenting with adults’ its own emphasis within national policy.



How this could be achieved:

- Parties commit to funding research to better understand the experiences, circumstances and needs of parents with adult aged children.
- New ‘parenting with adults’ policy is developed to address unmet needs and ensure parents with adult children receive adequate support.



By 2031:

- Parenting with adults will have its own focus within Scottish policy outlining how parents in this category will be supported and have their needs met.



National hobby framework



CALL 6:

Invest in a **national hobby framework** so that every child and young person can take part in a hobby of their choice



Scouting has been a lifesaver, he never misses it. He has friends, has learned independence and practical skills, is a young leader and has been on many camps. It is likely when he leaves school his qualifications will not reflect his capabilities, but he will be able to demonstrate commitment, ability to work hard and have good references from Scouting.”

Parent responding to our 2025 hobby survey

Taking part in leisure, hobbies and activities has huge benefits for children and young people. However, too often hobbies come with a cost attached and with persisting poverty levels and the cost-of-living crisis, many families are unable to pay for their children to partake in hobbies and leisure activities. [Citizens Advice Scotland reported](#) that at the end of 2023, over 235,000 parents and carers had to cut back on spending for their children’s hobbies due to the cost-of-living crisis.

Article 31 of the UNCRC covers a child’s right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities. At present, there is no national policy in Scotland which gives children and young people access to free leisure and activities. This is not the case internationally and [there are examples that we can learn from](#), in particular from Nordic countries. Finland and Iceland both offer free access to hobbies for children and young people, following different models. **We call on all parties to commit to increasing and sustaining investment in children’s hobbies, working over time towards developing a national model, like those in Finland and Iceland.**



How this could be achieved:

- Map out existing funding for hobbies in Scotland and commit to using this funding strategically to investing in areas where hobby uptake is lower.
- Consult with children and young people about their hobby preferences and commission hobby provision according to these preferences.
- Work with local authorities and third sector partners to scope out approaches to hobby delivery, considering the pros and cons of school and community settings, the needs of different groups, geographies and delivery models.



By 2031:

- Children and young people’s participation in hobbies will have increased in Scotland, supporting their health and wellbeing.

For more information, please contact:

✉ info@parentingacrossscotland.org

🌐 Or visit parentingacrossscotland.org

Parenting Across Scotland is a membership organisation whose vision is a Scotland where all parents and carers are valued and supported to give children the best possible start in life. We aim to achieve change in the following ways:

- Advocate for legislation, **policy** and practice that better meets the needs of families in Scotland.
- Ensure **practitioners** working with families are better informed and skilled to deliver support to families.
- Embed **parents and carers'** views and experiences to help inform and influence policy and practice.

You can read more about our work by visiting [our website](http://parentingacrossscotland.org).

Our Members

We're grateful for the support and input from our members in producing this manifesto:



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