

SCORSS

Scottish Campaign on Rights to Social Security



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**SCOTTISH CAMPAIGN FOR RIGHTS TO
SOCIAL SECURITY (SCORSS)**

HOLYROOD MANIFESTO 2021

CONTENTS

PRINCIPLES FOR CHANGE	4
INCREASING THE ADEQUACY OF SCOTTISH SOCIAL SECURITY	5
EMBEDDING AND REALISING HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY	7
A LONG TERM VISION FOR DISABILITY ASSISTANCE	8
ACCESS TO INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY AND INDEPENDENT ADVICE	10
MAKING SOCIAL SECURITY WORK FOR SCOTLAND	11
WHO WE ARE	13

The logo for SCORSS is a white circle containing the text "SCORSS" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The background of the page features a halftone dot pattern that fades from the bottom left towards the top right.

SCORSS

THE SCOTTISH CAMPAIGN ON RIGHTS TO SOCIAL SECURITY (FORMERLY SCOTTISH CAMPAIGN ON WELFARE REFORM) WAS FORMED IN 2006 TO HIGHLIGHT THE CONCERNS OF A DIVERSE COALITION OF ORGANISATIONS IN SCOTLAND ABOUT THE THEN UK GOVERNMENT'S WELFARE REFORM PROPOSALS. SINCE THEN, THE COALITION HAS INFORMED DEBATES ON CHANGES TO BOTH UK AND SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT POLICY AND DIRECTLY INFLUENCED THE CREATION OF SCOTLAND'S FIRST SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM.

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PRINCIPLES FOR CHANGE

We believe it is time for a social security system that prevents poverty, treats people with dignity and respect and supports everyone to flourish.

However, access to and experience of social security are greatly affected by deeply ingrained inequalities that ensure that groups including women, disabled people, Black and minority ethnic people and others are even more affected by poverty, insecurity and exclusion.

The members of the Scottish Campaign on Rights to Social Security (SCoRSS) believe five fundamental principles underpin the real change required to achieve this vision.

We must work together to:

- Increase social security payment rates to a level where no one is left in poverty and all have sufficient income to lead a dignified life;
- Make respect for human rights and dignity the cornerstone of UK and Scottish social security;
- Radically simplify social security to ensure it is easy to access and that barriers to entitlement are removed;
- Invest in the support needed to enable everyone to participate fully in society; and
- Make social security work for Scotland.

Our principles for change are central to creating the social security system that we all deserve. We welcome that the principles enshrined with the unanimous support of the Scottish Parliament in the 2018 Social Security (Scotland) Act closely reflect SCoRSS's five principles.

It's essential that all parties work together in the next Scottish Parliament to help realise these principles in a meaningful way for everyone living in Scotland.

Our manifesto for 2021 sets out the actions required in the next Parliament to help achieve the principles for change. It focuses on key areas where changes should be made including: the adequacy of Scottish social security; the embedding of a human rights approach in the delivery of social security; the development of disability assistance; support for independent advocacy and advice and making social security work better for Scotland.

The next Scottish Parliament (2021-26) will oversee a crucial time in the development of social security in Scotland. We urge all parties to come together and fully realise the recommendations for positive change we set out in our manifesto within the next Parliament.

INCREASE SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENT RATES TO A LEVEL WHERE NO ONE IS LEFT IN POVERTY AND ALL HAVE SUFFICIENT INCOME TO LEAD A DIGNIFIED LIFE.

ADEQUACY

SCoRSS's vision is for social security to provide a reliable and adequate safety net for everyone living in Scotland that ensures individual needs are met.

This requires payment rates to be set at a level that leaves no one in poverty and that everyone has a sufficient income to lead a dignified life. Meeting this aspiration requires action from both the UK and Scottish Governments.

The commitment to ensure no one in Scotland is affected by the bedroom tax, as well as the forthcoming introduction of the Scottish Child Payment for children under 6, are examples of policies that go some way toward meeting these principles. Our members commend these achievements, but more needs to be done.

Over the next Scottish Parliament, we need to do more to ensure that social security is adequate and that it meets ambitions to tackle child poverty, to ensure adequate support for disabled people and carers, and to meet increasing housing costs.

USING THE SCOTTISH CHILD PAYMENT TO PREVENT CHILD POVERTY

All families should have an adequate standard of living and should not be pushed into poverty.

SCoRSS' call for change:

- Build on the Scottish Child Payment as a tool to protect low-income families and children from poverty by at least doubling its value and accelerating its roll out to six-to-16-year olds.
- A review of the impact of the Scottish Child Payment which ensures take-up is maximised and that the payment is reaching primary caregivers and priority families identified in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

BOOSTING DISABILITY ASSISTANCE TO ENSURE PEOPLE LIVING WITH A DISABILITY OR HEALTH CONDITION RECEIVE ADEQUATE FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Those who are ill, living with a long-term condition or disabled get sufficient additional help to cover the associated extra costs.

SCoRSS' call for change:

- Adopt a human rights budgeting approach to calculate an adequate rate for disability assistance.

IMPROVING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CARERS

Unpaid carers should have the financial and other support they need to prevent poverty.

SCoRSS' call for change:

- The depth of support available to the unpaid carers of those with support needs is enhanced through the introduction of the new Scottish Carers Assistance. This new entitlement should be a tool that contributes to protecting unpaid carers from poverty, with the current level of entitlement and the eligibility criteria reviewed in order to support more carers, and takes into account the gendered provision of unpaid care.

MAKE RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIGNITY THE CORNERSTONE OF UK AND SCOTTISH SOCIAL SECURITY.

REALISE HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY IN DELIVERING SOCIAL SECURITY

We welcome the Scottish Parliament's cross-party commitment to ensure human rights is central to the social security system. The principles of human rights and equality need to be embedded in Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland processes. Embedding equality into the social security means understanding and responding to the barriers and discrimination that affects different groups.

HUMAN RIGHTS BUDGETING

Taking a human rights based approach to budgeting means putting people's rights and the obligation to fulfil these rights at the core of budgetary processes.

SCoRSS' call for change:

- The next Scottish Government must fully adopt a Human Rights Budgeting approach and embed Gender Budgeting to ensure that resources are used to realise people's rights.

EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHT IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Equalities Impact Assessments (EQIAs) and Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIA) are ways to help ensure that the reality of implementation at a national and local level matches the rhetoric and commitments to a human rights-based approach.

SCoRSS' calls for change:

- The preparation of EQIAs and HRIAs must involve stakeholders at an early stage - this allows for the testing of policies and proposals and for the Scottish Government to work iteratively with stakeholders as EQIAs, HRIAs and policies are developed.
- Stakeholders must be provided with sufficient resources to enable their meaningful and active participation in this process.
- Both EQIAs and HRIAs must be evidence based, therefore it is necessary that Social Security Scotland collects, analyses and publishes data that can then be used to inform future policy developments.

RADICALLY SIMPLIFY SOCIAL SECURITY TO ENSURE IT IS EASY TO ACCESS AND THAT BARRIERS TO ENTITLEMENT ARE REMOVED.

DISABILITY ASSISTANCE

Creating a world-leading human rights based system of disability support.

Disability Assistance represents the largest transfer of social security powers from the UK Government to the Scottish Government to date, and it creates a unique opportunity to realise the SCoRSS principles.

SCoRSS support the prioritisation of a safe and secure transition of existing entitlements to Social Security Scotland, but only as a first step to the creation of a world-class, rights-based system of disability assistance for Scotland.

Scotland must seize the opportunity to create a transformative world-leading human rights based system of disability assistance over the next Parliament.

SCoRSS' calls for change:

The next Scottish Government must establish a fundamental review of disability assistance to ensure the system:

- Has a clear purpose. Disability Assistance should compensate people for the extra costs of having an impairment or health condition, enabling them to realise their rights to participate equally in society and to independent living.
- Is human rights based. The current medical and need-based models must be replaced with a social model of disability that focuses on removing the barriers to people's rights to equal participation in society and independent living, enabling the full realisation of the right to social security for disabled people.
- Supports equal participation in society and the right to independent living. The eligibility criteria and assessment processes should be fully reviewed to better reflect the social and human rights models of disability.
- Is paid at an adequate rate. One of the fundamental tenets of designing a rights based social security system is that the support provided should be adequate. The current rate of disability payments does not adequately reflect the extra costs disabled people experience. Payments should be calculated using a human rights budgeting approach that respects, protects and fulfils the human rights of disabled people.
- Provides whole-of-life support. In the longer term, how to address the problems that having separate age payments (child, adult and older people) creates for disabled people and how best to resolve these issues to make the system fairer and easier to access for disabled people should be considered.

- Interacts well with future social security developments and is well connected to other services. This includes 'future-proofing' against any changes to wider income-replacement social security entitlements, as well as ensuring that disability assistance is well-connect to other services.

Changes to Scottish Disability Assistance could affect the way that the DWP currently uses disability social security to calculate additional amounts of reserved social security. This could raise a number of policy challenges that will need to be addressed.

This is not to say that radical improvements to the system should not be made. The Scottish and UK Governments must ensure that creating a world leading human rights based disability assistance system in Scotland does not negatively impact upon other support received through reserved entitlement.

Our report, [Beyond a safe and secure transition – A long term vision for Disability Assistance in Scotland](#), sets out in more detail our recommendations for the future direction of disability assistance and offers options for future changes to the system.

INVEST IN THE SUPPORT NEEDED TO ENABLE EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN SOCIETY.

INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY, INDEPENDENT ADVICE AND MAXIMISING TAKE UP

Invest in independent advocacy and advice to help secure people's right to social security

SCoRSS members believe it's vital to ensure that those accessing social security have access to independent advocacy and advice.

In any time of change, the potential for confusion will increase and measures should be taken to mitigate this risk. Ensuring the right to be accompanied to assessments or meetings about conditionality requirements is part of this picture – there must also be a well-resourced independent advice sector to ensure support is accessible to everyone. Investment in independent advocacy and independent advice services will help ensure the take-up of benefits – both devolved and reserved – is increased.

SCoRSS members have welcomed the obligation to promote uptake and the right for certain individuals to have access to an advocate, and the right to independent advice as set out in the 2018 Social Security (Scotland) Act.

SCoRSS' calls for change:

- The right to independent advocacy, independent advice and the obligation to promote take up are realised in the processes put in place by Social Security Scotland with sufficient funding to realise these obligations.
- The implementation of these rights and obligations are regularly reviewed to ensure they meet the aspirations of the Act, with any further action necessary swiftly implemented.

MAKE SOCIAL SECURITY WORK FOR SCOTLAND.

THE SCOTTISH WELFARE FUND

Improving the Scottish Welfare Fund to ensure accessible, timely and adequate support.

The experience of SCoRSS organisations is that the Scottish Welfare Fund does not always function as it should. People facing acute income crises should have access to adequate and speedy financial support.

SCoRSS' calls for change:

- The delivery of a full independent review of the Scottish Welfare Fund, which examines the delivery and administration of the Fund including local authority administration costs; the standard and consistency of the service provided; and access to and promotion of the fund.
- The Scottish Welfare Fund should be enhanced to ensure all those facing income crisis, including those experiencing food insecurity, have access to timely and adequate emergency financial support.
- Boost awareness of the Fund and ensure those accessing it are proactively linked with income maximisation and debt minimisation support.

DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS

Help with housing should reflect the real costs of housing for the individual.

SCoRSS' call for change:

- A review of Discretionary Housing Payments and how they plug the gap of renters trying to meet their housing costs and prevent families affected by the benefit cap being made homeless.

SCOTTISH CHOICES AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT

The current agreement between the DWP and Scottish Government is to offer people on Universal Credit the choice of more frequent payments and direct payments to landlords after the first assessment period and payment has passed.

The introduction, earlier this year, of a new payment system that aligns payments to landlords with payments to individuals, together with two week run-ons of Housing Benefit and JSA, ESA or Income Support offers a far better opportunity to ease the transition from legacy benefit to Universal Credits, if the choices are taken up at the start of the UC claim.

SCoRSS welcomed the Scottish Government's commitment to abolish the bedroom tax—the reduction in Housing Benefit imposed at UK level for those in council or social housing who have a spare room - in Scotland. The use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) has helped many families avoid falling into debt or being unable to afford the rent. However, the use of DHPs to mitigate the bedroom tax is an inadequate mechanism for people receiving Universal Credit.

The plan to reach an agreement between the DWP and the Scottish Government to mitigate the bedroom tax at source, originally planned for 2019, has stalled.

SCoRSS' calls for change:

- Scottish Choices to be offered at the point of initial claim.
- The Scottish Government and Department for Work and Pensions work together to create an effective and long-term solution to abolishing the bedroom tax at source.

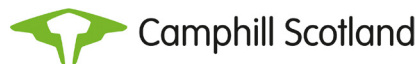
FINANCIAL SECURITY FOR WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCE DOMESTIC ABUSE

The design of the UK 'welfare system', including the five-week wait for a payment of Universal Credit and the two-child limit, pushes women into debt and affects their ability to leave an abusive partner.

SCoRSS' call for change:

- Explore options for a dedicated support fund or entitlements with clear guidance which is capable of delivering short-term recurring payments to support women leaving an abusive partner. This should include essential crisis costs to enable a woman to leave and to bridge the gap between leaving and the first payment of a UC payment.

THIS MANIFESTO IS SUPPORTED BY:



SCORSS members include:

- Advocard
- Camphill Scotland
- Carers Trust Scotland
- Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland
- Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS)
- Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS)
- Dalkeith Citizens Advice Bureau
- Energy Action Scotland (EAS)
- Engender
- Epilepsy Connections
- Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector (GCVS)
- Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)
- Hazel Kennedy
- Inclusion Scotland
- MS Society Scotland
- NAWRA (National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers)
- One Parent Families Scotland
- Oxfam Scotland
- Prof Adrian Sinfield
- Save the Children in Scotland
- Scottish Association of Mental Health (SAMH)
- Scottish Drugs Forum
- Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
- Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA)
- Scottish Refugee Council
- Scottish Women's Aid
- Scottish Women's Convention
- Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)
- Shelter Scotland
- The Action Group
- The Poverty Alliance
- Turning Point Scotland.

MORE INFORMATION

To join us, find out more or read our latest briefings visit:
cpag.org.uk/scotland/policy-campaigns/SCORSS

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