

# Scottish Autism's Manifesto for Change 2026 - Scottish Election



This is Scottish Autism's Easy Read version of '**Seizing The Moment**' our Manifesto for Change for the Scottish Election 2026.



'**Seizing The Moment**' is a document which explains how politicians can make changes to improve the lives of autistic people

## About Scottish Autism

# SCOTTISH AUTISM

Embracing difference,  
leading change

Scottish Autism is a charity for autistic people living in Scotland. It was started in 1968 because there was not enough support for autistic people.



Over the years Scottish Autism has grown and changed, but our aim to support autistic people to live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives is the same.



At Scottish Autism we want to make society better for all autistic people.



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Our Chief Executive Dorry McLaughlin says that the 2021-2026 Scottish Parliament have not been successful in making life better for autistic people living in Scotland.



Dorry says that Scottish Autism believe that the next Scottish Government need to do more for autistic people, their families and the people who support them.

## SCOTTISH AUTISM



Our manifesto has 5 main areas that we think will make autistic people's lives better if Scotland's political parties commit to supporting them.

## Our Manifesto Asks



Scottish Autism wants the next Scottish Government to do more to help autistic people and their families.

We have five main things they want to change:



1. Commit to delivering the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence (LDAN) Bill



2. Introduce a National Neurodevelopmental Pathway Guarantee

3



3. Improve support for autistic learners and an end to informal exclusions in education

4



4. Deliver a reformed social care sector where specialism is recognised, third sector providers are valued; and the workforce is appropriately rewarded

5



5. End the categorisation of autism as a mental disorder within the Mental Health (Scotland) Act



We believe that political parties who commit to these actions will help make society better for autistic people.

## 1. Commit to delivering the **Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence (LDAN) Bill**



The LDAN Bill is a law that the Scottish Government were trying to pass to make sure that the rights of people with learning disabilities and neurodivergent people are respected.



The LDAN Bill is important because the rights of autistic, neurodivergent and people with learning disabilities are often not respected or upheld.



The government promised a new law to help autistic people. They asked autistic people about their experiences and opinions to develop this.

This law was not delivered.



Scottish Autism wants the next government to **introduce and pass this law.**



The law would:

- make services more accountable
- require staff training for public services
- help protect autistic people's rights.



Scottish Autism wants the new government to introduce and pass the LDAN Bill early in the next parliament.

## 2. Introduce a National Neurodevelopmental Pathway Guarantee



Many people cannot get an autism or ADHD assessment.



Some assessment services have been closed.



People are being taken off waiting lists unless they also have one or more mental health conditions.



People report poor communication and almost no post-diagnostic support.



support

**SCOTTISH  
AUTISM**

Scottish Autism want:



- A consistent national diagnostic pathway across Scotland



- Acceptance of **self-referrals** – this means that people do not need to rely on doctors to be referred for a diagnostic assessment



- Flexibility on which professionals can diagnose



- Guaranteed post-diagnostic support for all ages



Scottish Autism believe that a National Neurodevelopmental Pathway guarantee will improve autistic experiences of diagnosis and support.

### **3. Improve support for autistic learners and an end to informal exclusions in education**



Teachers lack consistent training and support to deliver good autism practice.



Informal exclusions and part-time timetables remain widespread, often without legally required “alternative arrangements”.

# SCOTTISH AUTISM

Scottish Autism wants:



1. Mandatory autism training for education staff



2. Better professional development for teachers and people working in education



### 3. An end to informal exclusions



### 4. Proper alternative learning plans and proper environment when school is difficult.



We believe that improving support for autistic learners and ending informal exclusions is important to support autistic people to live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

#### **4. Deliver a reformed social care sector where specialism is recognised, third sector providers are valued; and the workforce is appropriately rewarded**



Social Care is a very important sector because it provides help to people who need it every day to live their lives.



Many autistic people and their families rely on Social Care every day to provide support.

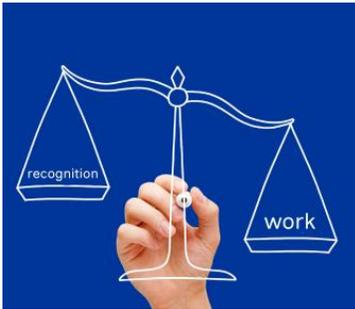


The collapse of the National Care Service Bill led to weakened reforms.



Social care staff face low pay and financial stress.

This can lead to very skilled people needing to leave care for better paying jobs.



Third-sector providers (like Scottish Autism) feel undervalued despite delivering much of Scotland's care.



We need the Scottish Government to understand how important Social Care is and to value our workforce.

# SCOTTISH AUTISM

Scottish Autism want:



- A rights-based system aligned with the Independent Review of Adult Social Care



- Proper recognition of **third sector** expertise.

The **Third sector** are organisations that exist to benefit society rather than make a profit, like a charity or voluntary group. Scottish Autism is a third sector organisation.



- Improved pay and conditions to retain skilled staff.



We believe that a Social Care sector that is valued and supported by the Scottish Government will provide better care.



We also believe that paying Social Care sector workers better will help improve care because we will lose less people to other roles due to pay.

## 5. End the categorisation of autism as a mental disorder within the Mental Health (Scotland) Act



Autism is currently treated as a “learning disability” within the **Mental Health (Scotland) Act**. This can cause a person's freedom to be restricted just because they are autistic.



The **Mental Health (Scotland) Act** is a law that applies to people who have a condition defined as a “mental disorder”.

## SCOTTISH AUTISM

Autism is a...

✓ Neurodevelopmental  
difference

✗ ~~Mental disorder~~

Scottish Autism argues that autism is a **neurodevelopmental difference**, not a mental disorder.



A **neurodevelopmental difference** is a way of describing differences in how a person thinks.

This can mean differences in how someone processes information, socialises with others or understands the world.

# SCOTTISH AUTISM

Scottish Autism want:



- The law to change so autism is not treated as a mental disorder because this is wrong and outdated.



- Autism to be treated as a neurodivergent difference and not a mental illness. This is because treating autism as a mental illness can lead to autistic people losing their rights.



- Scottish Autism wants this to change in the next review of mental health law.



- We want to see both the LDAN Bill and a proper neurodevelopmental pathway develop to help improve autistic people's access to their rights.

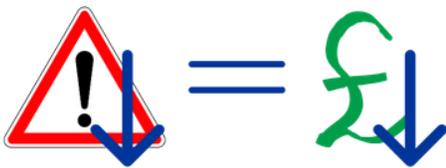


We believe that ending the categorising of autism as a mental disorder and focusing on autistic people's rights will improve quality of life.

## Conclusion



Scottish Autism believes these changes are achievable, affordable, and transformative for autistic people.



We believe these changes could save money by reducing crisis situations.



We urge all political parties to commit to these reforms and **seize the moment** to improve autistic people's lives.

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