

GLASGOW CENTRE FOR  
INCLUSIVE LIVING  
(GCIL)

LOTHIAN CENTRE FOR  
INCLUSIVE LIVING  
(LCIL)

AYRSHIRE  
INDEPENDANT LIVING  
NETWORK (AILN)

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# OUR LIVES. OUR RIGHTS. OUR FUTURES.

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A JOINT MANIFESTO

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTION – MAY 2026





## INTRODUCTION

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Disabled people make up nearly a quarter of Scotland's population. Yet too many continue to face systemic barriers, poverty, exclusion, damaging policies and chronic underinvestment that deny our human rights and restrict our life chances. These are not inevitable outcomes; they are the result of political choices. This manifesto is a call to action to all political parties and the next Scottish Government.

It sets out clear, practical and deliverable commitments that the next Scottish Government must adopt if it is serious about equality, human rights, and social justice.

LCIL, GCIL and AILN are Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), led by disabled people and rooted in the Independent Living movement. Our work is grounded in lived experience, peer support, and the social model of

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Disability. We know, from our own lives, what works - and what fails.

We, disabled people are experts in our own lives. Policy made with us works better, lasts longer, and delivers real change. Policy made without us fails. The next Parliament must choose inclusion, partnership, and justice.

The next Parliament has a choice: continue with systems that exclude, or work in partnership with disabled people to build a fair, inclusive Scotland where we have choice, control, dignity, and equality.

Nothing about us, without us.

## **OUR SHARED VISION: INDEPENDENT LIVING FOR ALL**

Independent Living means disabled people have the same freedom, choice, dignity, and control as everyone else. It is not about doing everything alone; it is about having the right support, at the right time, in the right way.

We want a Scotland where:

- Disabled people are valued as equal citizens.
- Our human rights are protected in law and practice.
- Support systems enable participation, not dependency.
- Lived experience shapes education, policy, and public services.
- Inclusion is designed in from the start, not added as an afterthought.

Independent Living is the foundation of equality, participation, and a fair society.

## OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

Our manifesto is guided by the following principles:

### **Fundamentals of Independent Living**

Choice, control, dignity, freedom and equality are non-negotiable, and must underpin all policy and practice affecting disabled people.

### **Human Rights First**

Human rights must guide all policy, law and decision-making, with the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCRPD) at its core.

### **Nothing About Us, Without Us**

Disabled people and DPOs must be equal partners in decision-making.

### **Lived Experience as Expertise**

Our knowledge is essential to education, planning and reform.

### **Accessibility by Default**

Information, services and environments must be accessible to all.

### **Fair Funding and No Cuts**

DPOs must receive fair, sustainable funding, and there must be no cuts to disabled people's personal budgets or support.

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# OUR CALLS TO ACTION – OUR PRIORITIES

## 1. Rights and Democratic Inclusion

Disabled people's rights must be real, enforceable, and embedded across all of Scotland's governance. Too often, rights depend on political will rather than legal duty, and decisions are made without disabled people, leading to poorer outcomes and avoidable harm.

Disabled people must not only be consulted but must be brought into the centres of decision making and power. Decisions about our lives must be made with us, not for us.

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We call on the next Scottish Government to:

- Fully incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) into Scots law.
- Ensure rights are justiciable, with clear and accessible routes to redress.
- Embed compliance with disabled people's rights across all public bodies, budgets and decision-making.
- Establish clear Ministerial and Cabinet-level accountability for delivery.
- Secure meaningful, resourced roles for disabled people and DPOs in national and local decision-making structures, including full voting rights.
- Replace tokenistic consultation with early, continuous co-production.
- Design inclusive and accessible participation processes around disabled people's needs.
- Introduce robust mechanisms for ongoing accountability, scrutiny and direct engagement with decision-makers.

Accountability must be ongoing, transparent, and shaped by lived experience. Disabled people must be able to directly influence, challenge, and scrutinise decisions that affect our lives.

## 2. Independent Living for All

Independent Living is a fundamental human right. It means choice, control, dignity, freedom, and equality. This requires systems of support that enable independence - not ration care or create dependency.

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We call on the next Scottish Government to:

- Secure the right to Independent Living in law and practice.
- Abolish all non-residential social care charges.
- Protect, expand, and secure the long-term future of the Independent Living Fund (ILF), including widening eligibility.
- Remove restrictive eligibility criteria and base support on meeting need.
- Develop and implement strategies, policies, and practices that ensure personal budgets and support packages are fully protected from any reductions and cuts.
- Ensure Self-Directed Support (SDS) is independent, properly funded, and delivers real choice and control.
- Design funding systems that offer and prioritise flexibility, choice, and control, moving away from approaches focused on rationing and crisis management. End inappropriate institutionalisation and enable people to live in their own homes and communities.
- Deliver seamless, consistent, and continuous, person-centred transitions from children to adult services.

Transitions to adult services must be planned, person-centred, and rights-based, so young disabled people do not lose support, independence, or opportunities at a critical stage.

Independent Living must be fully funded, legally protected, and delivered in line with the UNCRPD.

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### 3. Value Lived Experience and Inclusive participation

Lived experience is essential expertise. When disabled people are meaningfully involved, policy is stronger, services are more effective, and outcomes improve. Participation must be fully accessible, properly resourced, and grounded in shared power - otherwise, it is neither meaningful nor representative.

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We call on the next Scottish Government to:

- Recognise lived experience as core expertise across all policy areas.
- Create paid roles for disabled people in education, research, and policy design.
- Embed lived experience in Health and Social care workforce training, service design and professional development.
- Ensure policies are shaped by disabled people from the outset.
- Provide information in accessible formats, including Easy Read, BSL, and plain language and commit to digital inclusion by ensuring websites, apps, and systems are digitally accessible and co-designed with disabled people.
- Eliminate jargon and inaccessible or exclusionary technical language across all literature and communications.
- Build in time, flexibility, and appropriate support for meaningful engagement.
- Fully fund access and participation costs as standard.

Disabled people are not stakeholders to consult after decisions; we are experts whose knowledge should shape policy from the start. Embedding lived experience across government improves services, reduces inequality, and ensures lasting impact.

Lived experience must be respected, paid, and influential — not ignored.

## 4. Ending Disability Poverty

Disabled people are not poor by accident. Poverty is the result of policy failure.

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We call on the next Scottish Government to:

- Increase disability benefits to reflect the real cost of living, so no disabled person is forced to live in poverty.
- Introduce a Minimum Income Guarantee that ensures an independent and adequate standard of living.
- Reduce disability-related poverty through fairer and more responsive social security.
- Protect disabled people from austerity-driven cuts to services and support.

An adequate standard of living is a human right - not a privilege. No one should be forced to choose between basic needs and independence.

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## 5. Accessible and Climate-Resilient Communities

Accessible, sustainable and inclusive communities benefit everyone. Disabled people cannot participate fully without accessible environments. Accessibility is not an add-on — it is the foundation of democracy.

Climate change intersects with disability justice. Disabled people are disproportionately affected by climate impacts, yet are too often excluded from climate policy and planning.

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We call on the next Scottish Government to:

- Set national targets for accessible and adaptable housing across all tenures.
- Prioritise disabled people in housing allocation.
- Deliver a renewed Accessible Transport Framework, co-designed with disabled people.
- Apply inclusive design standards to all infrastructure and regeneration. Ensure disabled people's leadership in climate policy, adaptation, and emergency planning.
- Deliver a Just Transition that actively prioritises disabled people.
- Legally recognise the right to a healthy environment as a fundamental human right, aligned with Scotland's National Performance Framework and the proposed Human Rights Bill.
- Assess all climate policies for their impact on inequality, poverty, and access to support.

Inclusion must be designed from the start - not retrofitted at greater human and financial cost.

Environmental rights are fundamental human rights. Climate policies must be co-designed with disabled people. No one should be left behind in Scotland's response to the climate crisis.

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## 6. Fair Work and Economic Participation

Disabled people are not excluded from work because of a lack of ability, but by inaccessible systems and broken pathways. They encounter barriers at key transition points that limit their potential - most critically in the shift from children's services to adult services, and as they move from school into further or higher education, employment, and beyond.

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We call on the next Scottish Government to:

- Promote the delivery of inclusive transition planning from school onwards, co-produced with young disabled people, families, and support services.
- Create clear pathways into secure, flexible, and fairly paid work.
- Remove barriers in recruitment, retention, and progression.
- Co-design employment support with disabled people and DPOs.
- Deliver inclusive, person-centred transition planning from education to employment.
- Guarantee access to paid work experience and internships.
- Provide specialist careers advice for disabled learners, delivered by trained staff who understand disability rights and workplace adjustments.
- Strengthen partnerships between education providers, employers, and DPOs.
- Drive urgent reform of Access to Work to ensure timeliness, transparency, and fairness.
- Ensure support reflects modern working patterns, including hybrid work and self-employment.
- Safeguard that disabled people are not forced to cover costs upfront or left financially exposed through workplace adjustment expenditure.

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## 7. Investing in Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs)

Disabled People's Organisations are essential to delivering rights, inclusion, and independent living. Without sustainable funding, progress cannot be achieved. Fair funding is not optional. It is essential to delivering independent living, protecting human rights, and ensuring disabled people can shape the policies that affect our lives.

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We call on the next Scottish Government to:

- Provide multi-year, core funding for DPOs that reflects their leadership role.
- End short-term, competitive funding cycles.
- Fully fund the real costs of accessibility, inclusion, and participation.
- Protect investment in preventative services and personal support.
- Simplify and co-design monitoring and reporting processes with DPOs.
- Recognise funding as essential to delivering rights and enabling co-production.

**INDEPENDENT LIVING. HUMAN RIGHTS.  
EQUALITY.**

**These are not optional extras. They are the foundations of a  
fair and inclusive Scotland. The next Scottish Parliament  
must act.**