

Programme for Government 2021-2022

On Wednesday, the Scottish Government (SG) announced its [programme for government](#) (PfG). It published 123 pages and six chapters for [A Fairer, Greener Scotland](#). The prospectus outlines spending priorities, commitments and legislative plans for the year ahead. The ambition speaks to a range of issues that will affect everyone in Scotland, now and in future.

Through the lens of community safety, SCSN has reviewed and highlighted work that we think will be helpful to our members and partners. Owing to the spectrum and complexity of issues, our analysis is only provisional - with some comment - and we hope it points partners to areas of interest.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

- **DRUGS**

The SG pledge to *“tackle the drugs death emergency by investing £250 million over this Parliament, focused on community-based interventions, quick access to treatment and expansion of residential rehabilitation”*. An additional £50 million per year is a welcome increase but as the [BBC reported in July 2021](#), Scotland has far more drugs deaths per capita than any European country. Three people die every day in our communities as a consequence. The PfG highlights a desire to establish a national mission to address the issue, primarily through rehabilitation, treatment and aftercare. But – given the seriousness and scale of the problem – we would invite SG to give equal priority to intervention and prevention, and not only focus on reactive support, vital though it is.

- **ALCOHOL**

Misuse and abuse is a pressing issue in Scotland. As the [National Records of Scotland reported in August 2021](#), alcohol specific deaths are trending upwards. They increased by 17% last year. Three Scots die every day because of this. And per the [Alcohol Health Alliance’s article of July 2021](#), the link between alcohol and crime is concerning. The issue wasn’t highlighted in the SG’s Executive Summary. Within the PfG, there is relatively little focus on alcohol, given the seriousness and effects it has on communities and lives across Scotland. Establishing the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (£500 million for additional support, including alcohol addiction) and the Alcohol Framework (20 actions to reduce alcohol-related harm) will help but more detail – and greater emphasis on prevention, ongoing support, links to poverty, job opportunities and social isolation as significant contributing factors – would be welcome.

- **MENTAL HEALTH**

The SG is committed to *“increase direct mental health investment by at least 25% over this Parliament, ensuring that at least 10% of frontline NHS spend goes towards mental health and 1% goes on child and adolescent services.”*

Investment in these three areas; drugs, alcohol, mental health is positive but – as our members and partners know – these issues are interlinked, overlap and can’t be tackled in isolation.

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE / PROMOTING A FAIRER SOCIETY

- **A BAIRNS’ HOOSE**

SG state, *“we have started work this year to ensure access to a “Bairns’ Hoose” by 2025: a child-friendly environment providing trauma informed recovery, improving children’s experience of the criminal justice system, and preventing them from being re-traumatised”*. This rights-based, trauma-informed approach is positive and welcome, and we look forward to more detail from the summary report, to be published in September 2021.

- **MINIMUM INCOME GUARANTEE**

The prospectus highlights, *“we are committed to delivering a Minimum Income Guarantee, following the recommendation of the Social Renewal Advisory Board. This could be revolutionary in our fight against poverty; an assurance that no one will fall below a set income level which allows them to live a dignified life, delivered through targeted payments and other types of support or services provided or subsidised by the state.”* This is a welcome, progressive step towards eliminating poverty in Scotland. Poverty is a political choice. Minimum income for all, to live with dignity and opportunity, will be transformative if realised.

Both initiatives; a bairns’ hoose, minimum income guarantee are reformist and encouraging but are at the earliest stages of development. We are hopeful and enthusiastic to see how each project progresses, with meaningful cross-sector collaboration and public engagement.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- **JUST TRANSITION COMMISSION**

The SG wants to, *“build a net zero economy that is fair for all, and create opportunities for new, good and green jobs, introducing Just Transition plans for all sectors and regions”*. The prospectus states that, *“the Scottish Government established the independent Just Transition Commission (JTC) in 2019, to provide advice on how to apply just transition principles in Scotland”* and the SG *“...welcomes the Climate Emergency Response Group (CERG)’s recent report on immediate actions to tackle the climate emergency.”* The SG will provide *“a preliminary package of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture will be developed by COP26.”* It’s clear this work will affect all local authorities in Scotland, touch every business, public and private in due course. The detail will be interesting and should tell us how employment, transport – affordability – and other aspects of living might change in our communities, urban and rural.

- **HOMES & BUILDINGS**

The SG promises to, *“Invest at least £1.8 billion over this Parliament in decarbonising homes and buildings – with the aim of converting at least 1 million homes and the equivalent of 50,000 non-domestic buildings to low or zero-emission heating by 2030.”* This is a significant investment, aspiring to upgrade high volumes of homes. It’s welcome but we might ask if converting homes for improved heating is also an opportunity to prepare for climate change; more frequent, hotter weather and requirement for improved ventilation - something unfamiliar to the design and use of Scottish homes - particularly for elderly and at risk citizens.

JUSTICE

- **SERVICES**

“Transform the way in which justice services are delivered – ensuring children’s rights are protected and upheld, putting the voices of victims and a trauma-informed approach at the heart of Scottish justice, and moving away from the use of custody for those who don’t pose a risk of serious harm, while protecting the police resource budget in real terms for the entirety of the Parliament.” A move away from custody (and imprisonment) is welcome, for young offenders and short-sentences in particular. A trauma-informed, whole-systems approach is positive and welcome.

- **NOT-PROVEN VERDICTS**

“During this year, we will launch a public consultation on the three verdict system and whether the not-proven verdict should be abolished.” We support the abolition of the not-proven verdict. It is archaic and ambiguous, and suggests guilt where proof cannot be established.

- **CORROBORATION**

“We will also consider reform of the corroboration rule, engaging with justice partners, opposition parties and people with direct experience of the criminal justice system to develop a shared understanding of the evolving legal position, and the implications and potential unintended consequences of corroboration reform, including in relation to sexual crimes.” We will actively participate in this public consultation and refer to partners with expertise and professional insight, regarding proposed reform. We are extremely wary of any changes to corroboration and the implications for fairness and the burden of proof. But the standard for sexual offence cases – often involving only a survivor and perpetrator – must be reassessed.

ECONOMY

- **YOUNG PERSON’S GUARANTEE**

“We will continue to invest in our Young Person’s Guarantee – providing a job, a place in education or training, or a formal volunteering opportunity – which, with investment of £60 million last year and up to £70 million this year, will provide at least 24,000 new and enhanced jobs, skills and training opportunities for young people.”

- **4-DAY WORKING**

“We have seen the possibilities and positives of adopting alternative working practices and getting a better balance between work and personal lives.” And *“[We will] pilot a 4-day working week, supported by a £10 million fund for participating companies, to better understand the likely impacts on workers, businesses and the economy.”*

COMMUNITIES

- **PLACE BASED INVESTMENT**

“From this year, we are delivering our Place Based Investment programme, backed with £325 million over the next five years. This will provide financial support and a focus for government, local authority and other sectors to facilitate, coordinate and deliver place based collaboration and action. Through repurposing of land and buildings, the investment will revitalise town centres, provide new space for local businesses and jobs, and support the resilience and wellbeing of communities across Scotland.”

- **HOMELESSNESS**

“We will [invest an additional £50 million to] ensure that everyone has a safe, warm place to call home – taking forward an ambitious programme of affordable housebuilding, eradicating homelessness and rough sleeping, and strengthening rights for people in the rented sector...taking forward our Ending Homelessness Together action plan – including specific work to scale up Housing First more rapidly; end the use of communal night shelters; advance legislative protections for people experiencing domestic abuse; and explore alternative ways to reduce migrant homelessness.”