

SCORSS

**PRINCIPLES
FOR CHANGE**

PRINCIPLES FOR CHANGE

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

To create real change and ensure the UK and Scottish social security systems take a human rights based approach, prevent and reduce poverty, treat people with respect and support everyone to flourish, the members of the Scottish Campaign on Rights to Social Security (formerly Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform) believe 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
- Make social security work for Scotland

These principles are central to creating the social security system that we all deserve.

The logo for SCORSS (Scottish Campaign on Rights to Social Security) is displayed in a white circle. The text "SCORSS" is written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

SCORSS

What do the SCORSS principles mean in practice?

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

- Those who are ill, living with a long term condition or disabled should get additional help to cover the associated extra costs.
- Help with housing must reflect the real costs of housing for the individual.
- Better financial and other associated support for unpaid carers should be provided.
- In the longer term, our social security system should secure everyone's wellbeing. It should do so by contributing to everyone's income meeting at least the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) as calculated by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation,¹ and adequately enhanced for those with additional needs.

Make respect for human rights and dignity the cornerstone of UK and Scottish social security

- A rights based approach should be the cornerstone of social security systems. This means that people's rights are put at the centre of policy and practice – with this consistently and effectively communicated. It empowers people to know their rights, helps governments, public bodies and other organisations to understand and fulfil their obligations, and creates avenues for accountability when rights are violated.²
- Put people's rights - rather than the profits of private companies - first, with the aim of ensuring that all people who come into contact with the system are treated with dignity and receive an excellent service.
- Ensure that the design and delivery of social security take into account the need to incorporate measures which tackle the inequality, discrimination, social exclusion and higher risk of poverty experienced by many communities.
- Redesign ill-health and disability entitlements to put the individual's rights at the heart of the process, with capability for work and disability assessments the responsibility of those best placed to have a full understanding of the person's health and disability.
- Ensure an adequate standard of living which does not push families into poverty or undermine autonomy over the number and spacing of children. Policies which punish women and their children for reproductive choices or require the disclosure of trauma at a time and in circumstances not of their choosing are incompatible with respect for human rights and dignity.

¹<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/minimum-income-standard-uk-2019>

²<http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/rights-in-practice/human-rights-based-approach/>



Radically simplify social security to ensure it is easy to access and that barriers to entitlement are removed

- Ensure that entitlement to social security is based on equality of access and entitlement. Non-means tested support is simpler, easier to administer and does not suffer the stigma often attached to means-tested support.
- Increase the proportion of non-means tested financial support by:
 - reinstating and restoring the value of Child Benefit to at least it's 2010 value;
 - ensuring that a state pension is sufficient to enable all pensioners to live in dignity;
 - ending age discrimination by extending entitlement to adequate disability entitlements to older people.
- Ensure that entitlement to social security has straightforward conditions which are based on people's individual circumstances and rights. End the punitive application of conditionality and sanctions, which is ineffective, complex, costly and stigmatising.

Invest in the support needed to enable everyone to participate fully in society

- Ensure access to an independent income which meets individual needs and entrenches equality within households.
- Make employment in social security and job-seeking support services more fulfilling and better rewarded.

- Give guaranteed access to a well-resourced wide range of not-for-profit employment services which prioritise sustainable outcomes for service users.
- Ensure that those who are too ill to work or have caring responsibilities get the support they have a right to in order to engage in society fully (including, if appropriate, taking steps towards moving into paid employment) and are not required to engage in inappropriate work related activities, nor pushed into poverty.
- Invest in free or affordable, accessible, high quality childcare which is focused on the wellbeing of the child, as a right for all parents and carers enabling them to engage fully in society.
- Make childcare available to those in paid work, further education and training as well as carers and volunteers in recognition of the importance of education and unpaid caring work in society.

Make social security work for Scotland

- In Scotland, ensure that those areas of the social security system which are devolved to Scotland are developed in line with the principles above.
- At a UK level, ensure that all 'welfare reform' takes account of the different legislative framework in Scotland so that it is integrated with Scottish housing, childcare, education, social care, training and other areas of devolved responsibility.
- In the longer term, ensure that these principles underpin a new approach to social security - wherever powers lie.

WHY IS CHANGE NEEDED?

Poverty and inequality can be solved, yet millions of people and communities across the UK live in poverty struggling to feed and clothe themselves and their families properly, to pay their bills or to heat their homes. This is unacceptable and unnecessary.

As more people find themselves unable to work or struggling on below poverty wages, social security entitlements are more important than ever to ensure the right to an adequate standard of living is fulfilled. This will benefit everyone - not just those on low incomes - as research clearly demonstrates that a more equal society is one where everyone is happier and healthier and communities flourish.³

In 2018, the Social Security (Scotland) Act (the Act)⁴ established the legislative framework for the delivery of the entitlements devolved by the Scotland Act 2016 and introduced new forms of assistance. The Scottish Government has established Social Security Scotland, and committed to 'create a Scottish social security system based on dignity, fairness and respect, which will help to support those who need it, when they need it'.⁵ Regulations under the Act which set out the crucial detail of new entitlements are currently being developed. The Scottish Campaign on Rights to Social Security will work to ensure that these regulations, as well as the wider operations of Social Security Scotland, protect the right to social security both in principle and in practice.

At the same time, UK Government social security cuts continue to plunge people and communities into poverty and reinforce inequality.⁶ Radical restructuring is creating a system which leaves increasing numbers of people without access to any support at all, while those who may qualify for entitlements must engage with a system which lacks compassion, creates unbearable stress and treats them with little dignity.

We believe the UK Government's approach to simplifying the system is undermined by increasing conditionality,⁷ means-testing, and the erosion of a rights based approach to entitlement. Many lone parents (the majority of whom are women), for example, are required to engage in stressful work related requirements despite inadequate childcare provision,⁸ while little is done to combat discrimination or aid accessibility for disabled people seeking work. The sanctions system is also managed unfairly and unpredictably, pushing people into poverty, debt, and destitution.⁹

Meanwhile, the real barriers to employment such as the lack of decent work, access to affordable and suitable childcare, cuts in social care, unaffordable or inaccessible transport, discrimination, and our low wage economy, are not tackled effectively. The contribution of the immense amount of unpaid work to society - such as caring for children, for ill and disabled friends and relatives (most often done by women) - too often goes unrecognised and unvalued.

³Research from the OECD and the IMF has found that economies with a more equal distribution of wealth and narrower income inequalities have stronger and more sustained economic growth than those with greater inequality. For a review of literature which supports this, see: Ostry, J. D., Berg, A., & Tsangarides, C. (2014) <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2014/sdn1402.pdf>

⁴<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2018/9/contents/enacted>

⁵<https://www.gov.scot/policies/social-security/>

⁶See for example <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/31454/1/00533637.pdf>

⁷<https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/Welfare-conditionality-UK-Summary.pdf>

⁸<http://www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/39273-Lone-parents-web.pdf>

⁹http://www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/40475_Welfare-Conditionality_Report_complete-v3.pdf

SCOTTISH CAMPAIGN ON RIGHTS TO SOCIAL SECURITY: KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The Scottish Campaign on Rights to Social Security (formerly Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform) was set up in 2006 to highlight the concerns of a diverse coalition of organisations in Scotland about the UK Government's welfare reform proposals. Since then, the coalition has informed debates on changes to both UK and Scottish Government policy and influenced the creation of Scotland's first social security system.

Our key achievements include:

- We briefed Ministers and MSPs extensively both as social security powers were devolved to Scotland and during the process of the Social Security (Scotland) Bill (2018). Our members welcomed the Scottish Government's aspirations to take a rights based approach to Social Security in Scotland built on the principles of dignity, fairness and respect. These principles closely reflect the five principles set out in the previous SCoWR Manifesto for Change.¹⁰
- We supported and secured a number of high profile amendments as the Social Security (Scotland) Bill (2018) progressed through the Scottish Parliament including on uprating of benefit levels, redetermination of entitlement and appeals, the right to entitlements in cash, and the recovery of overpayments. These changes will make a real difference to people in Scotland claiming and receiving their entitlements.
- We called for increased financial support for unpaid carers in our 2016 Holyrood Manifesto. This is to be delivered in Scotland through the Carer's Allowance Supplement and the Young Carer's Grant, in addition to extra payments to carers of more than one disabled child.

- We called for a redesign of delivery of services to make them accountable at a local level. Social Security Scotland aims to have a presence in local communities across Scotland.
- We called for putting people's needs first, with the aim of ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and receives an excellent service. Social Security Scotland's purpose is directly linked to a set of requirements in their principles and Charter – these outline that they must ensure that the people they serve are supported and enjoy a positive experience.

The social security landscape has changed significantly since we began campaigning, and continues to do so. Whilst much has been achieved, there is still much more to be done. Our social security system should be an investment in the people of Scotland yet hundreds of thousands of people remain trapped in poverty. Poverty and inequality can be solved. Together we can realise a rights based social security system in both Scotland and the UK that prevents and reduces poverty, treats people with dignity and respect and supports everyone to flourish.

¹⁰https://cpag.org.uk/file/806/download?token=fb84sU_I

WHO WE ARE

SCORSS is a diverse coalition of organisations working across Scotland with collective expertise across a range of different aspects of the social security system. Whilst coming from different areas of expertise, all members of SCORSS are united in our belief in a social security system that prevents poverty and supports those in need whilst also protecting their dignity.

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.



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