

SNP Manifesto 2021

What we're doing for workers

We want Scotland to be the best place to live and work and do business. We believe that fair work is the foundation for this. Covid has highlighted that too many people are still stuck on exploitative contracts, often zero-hours, that leave them with little security.

Without the powers of independence, we are limited in what steps we can take, but where we can act to improve employment security and enhance the quality of work, we will.

Re-elect the SNP to:

Promote fair work

Our Fair Work First programme makes adoption of fair work practices part of the criteria for winning public contracts and receiving grants. It uses the financial power of government to make fair work the norm. We will now build flexible and family friendly working into the programme, learning lessons from working practices during the pandemic to make it easier for women, particularly single parents, to return to work and also encourage a more equal share of childcare responsibilities.

The principles of Living Hours – ensuring workers get the hours they need to make ends meet – are reflected in Fair Work First good practice and promoted through Fair Work First where this applies to grants or procurement. If re-elected, we will go further and support a specific accreditation programme for Living Hours in the same way we have supported Living Wage accreditation.

The SNP shares the ambition of the Fair Work Convention for Scotland to be a Fair Work Nation by 2025.

Freeze Income Tax

Scotland has the most progressive income tax system in the UK, with more than half of taxpayers paying less than they would if they lived in England, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Having only introduced this new system in 2018, and with a need now to focus on recovery, we will aim for stability over the next Parliament. While it is important for any government to have flexibility to respond to a change in circumstances, our aim is to maintain current Income Tax rates for the duration of the parliament and increase thresholds by a maximum of inflation.

Support new ways of working

Covid-19 changed the way we work almost overnight. As we recover from the pandemic, we want to do more to support people achieve a healthy work-life balance. We also want to keep the total number of people in employment high. As part of this, we will establish a £10 million fund to allow companies to pilot and explore the benefits of a four day working week.

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We will use the learning from this to consider a more general shift to a four day working week as and when Scotland gains full control of employment rights.

We will also identify additional employment opportunities and assess the economic impact of moving to a four day week.

More widely, we will support a review – in partnership with trade unions and businesses – of how working practices could and should be adapted to meet the needs of the future economy.

Invest in green skills and jobs for the future

We will invest an additional £500 million over the next parliament to support new jobs and reskill people for the jobs of the future.

Our National Transition Training Fund will support workers whose jobs are at risk and provide retraining opportunities in high tech, high skilled jobs and the provision of green skills to support Scotland's transition to net zero. As part of this, we will take action to tackle inequality, supporting those who have been disproportionately impacted by Covid such as women, people from minority ethnic communities and disabled people.

We will establish a new Green Jobs Workforce Academy to help people secure work in the low carbon economy.

Over the next five years we will invest £100 million in our Green Jobs fund, investing alongside businesses and organisations to support new and increased opportunities for green job creation across Scotland.

We will also invest £60 million to decarbonise our industrial and manufacturing sectors – helping them grow and diversify, helping deliver net zero by 2045, and creating more new jobs.

Create opportunities for all

We will continue our Young Person's Guarantee to ensure that every young person aged between 16 and 24 in Scotland has the opportunity, based on their own personal circumstances and ambitions, to go to university or college, get a place on an apprenticeship, training or work experience programme, secure a job or participate in a formal volunteering programme.

We were on track to meet our target of 30,000 Modern Apprenticeships starts by 2020 – however, Covid affected new apprenticeship starts as employers had to review, delay and pause recruitment plans. As part of the recovery, we will build back up to 30,000 starts and assess demand to see how much further we can go.

Equality at work

We will expand the specific duties that require a listed public authority to publish gender pay gap information to disability and ethnicity reporting and ensure these are included within Equal Pay Statements.

We will develop an ethnicity pay gap strategy to go alongside our existing strategies on disability and gender pay gap.

Demand more powers

We will continue to call for the devolution of employment law so that the Scottish Parliament can protect workers' rights, increase the living wage and end the age discrimination of the statutory living wage.

We have been pressing the UK government to act on companies using fire and rehire tactics to undermine wages and conditions, but it has so far refused to take the necessary steps to ban these exploitative practices.

We will continue to call for powers to allow us to act, but in the meantime we will do all we can with our limited powers to protect employees from these practices in Scotland. We will review our Fair Work First criteria for contracts and government support grants to include specific reference to fire and rehire tactics.