# Scotland’s Programme for Government criticised for lacking concrete plans on poverty and public services



In a highly anticipated announcement, Scotland’s Finance Secretary John Swinney today unveils the Scottish Government's Programme for Government for the final year of the parliamentary session. However, initial reports indicate that the content may lack the depth and actionable plans necessary to tackle the pressing issues facing the nation, merely reiterating familiar commitments that have yet to be realized.

Among the key initiatives highlighted is the pledge to eradicate child poverty. Despite this commitment, recent data suggests that the number of children living in relative poverty after housing costs could range from 180,000 to 300,000. Furthermore, the flagship Scottish Child Payment, projected to cost £471 million in 2025-26, has faced scrutiny in a recent study, which revealed little evidence of its effectiveness in alleviating poverty. This begs the question: where is the tangible action to support vulnerable families?

Another major focus for the SNP, reiterated in the Programme, is economic growth, as the political landscape gears up for the May 2026 election. Critics have pointed out a glaring lack of credible plans to support this goal, especially in light of the disparities in income tax rates that see Scotland ranked as the most heavily taxed area in the UK. Under the SNP's fiscal framework, individuals earning over £30,318 are subjected to higher rates compared to their counterparts elsewhere, placing undue pressure on those who could drive business growth in Scotland.

Moreover, the recent lifting of a salary freeze for ministers, granting an increase of £19,126 to the ten Cabinet members and 13 junior ministers, has drawn significant criticism. Observers argue that while government ministers enjoy pay increases, numerous challenges in public services remain unaddressed. It's clear that the governing party is prioritizing its own financial gain over the pressing needs of the constituents.

In the education sector, concerns around classroom discipline have escalated. Education Secretary Jenny Gilruth has acknowledged indiscipline as a serious issue, claiming that recent policy changes may have exacerbated the situation. Teachers have increasingly called for self-defence training amid rising violence in classrooms, a predicament some critics believe has worsened due to overly restrictive policies on discipline. This indicates a clear failure to prioritize the safety and well-being of both educators and students.

Healthcare calls for serious attention to perceived fiscal mismanagement within the NHS. Reports indicate excessive spending on administrative roles, alongside a staggering £21 million allocated for prescriptions of paracetamol under the current 'free' prescription policy. Critics argue that this funding should be rechanneled toward frontline healthcare services, underscoring a fundamental misdirection of resources.

Moreover, there is discontent regarding higher education policy, with claims that SNP measures to maintain zero tuition fees for Scots have unintentionally led to funding crises at universities, hindering their ability to attract international students and maintain financial stability. This oversight is detrimental to the future of Scotland's educational landscape.

Controversial public health initiatives, such as the establishment of supervised drug consumption facilities, have faced backlash for their associated costs and adverse impacts on local communities. Critics strongly contend that funds would be better spent on rehabilitation services rather than perpetuating support for such programmes that contribute to societal challenges.

As John Swinney prepares to present his Programme for Government, the overarching theme appears to be an urgent need for a more decisive and thorough approach to governance that actually addresses these critical issues, rather than offering mere rhetorical flourishes. Observers remain skeptical about whether the anticipated announcement will genuinely reflect a commitment to tackling systemic challenges head-on or serve as another hollow showcase of political rhetoric devoid of substantial action.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-poverty-cumulative-impact-assessment-update/pages/4/> - This Scottish Government report projects that their policies could keep around 100,000 children out of relative poverty by 2023-24, indicating a significant number of children living in relative poverty after housing costs.
2. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-social-policy/article/impact-of-using-an-income-supplement-to-meet-child-poverty-targets-evidence-from-scotland/3C852ABEB70226F58DE898CA25F38BA5> - This study discusses the Scottish Child Payment's effectiveness, noting that while ambitious child poverty targets can technically be met using the payment, the necessary amount would be £165 per week, totaling £3 billion per year, highlighting concerns about its current impact.
3. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-poverty-cumulative-impact-assessment-update/pages/4/> - The report indicates that the Scottish Government's policies are projected to reduce the relative child poverty rate from 23% in 2021-22 to around 16% by 2023-24, suggesting a significant number of children living in relative poverty after housing costs.
4. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-social-policy/article/impact-of-using-an-income-supplement-to-meet-child-poverty-targets-evidence-from-scotland/3C852ABEB70226F58DE898CA25F38BA5> - The study highlights that while the Scottish Child Payment could technically meet child poverty targets, the required payment of £165 per week would cost £3 billion annually, raising questions about its current effectiveness.
5. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-poverty-cumulative-impact-assessment-update/pages/4/> - The report projects that the relative child poverty rate will fall from 23% in 2021-22 to around 16% by 2023-24, indicating a significant number of children living in relative poverty after housing costs.
6. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-social-policy/article/impact-of-using-an-income-supplement-to-meet-child-poverty-targets-evidence-from-scotland/3C852ABEB70226F58DE898CA25F38BA5> - The study discusses the Scottish Child Payment's effectiveness, noting that while ambitious child poverty targets can technically be met using the payment, the necessary amount would be £165 per week, totaling £3 billion per year, highlighting concerns about its current impact.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14680559/GRAHAM-GRANT-manifesto-parallel-universe-Heres-Swinney-announcing-probably-wont.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data