



A NEURODIVERSITY MANIFESTO

Grasp the neurodiversity nettle – our call to all political parties to put neurodiversity at the heart of every manifesto

What it is and why it matters

You will hear the term neurodiversity more and more, but what does it mean? Why should all forward-thinking political parties embrace the concept of neurodiversity?

The answer is both simple and complex at once. Here's how we explain it:

Neurodiversity means there is a wide variation in brain processes.

Neurodiversity causes differences in individuals' experiences and behaviours. Sometimes this creates a big enough difference to correspond with a label such as autism or ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder).

A group of people may be neurodiverse if they differ in their neurotype; one person cannot be neurodiverse.

If you experience a barrier to learning, you may be neurodivergent.

Someone with autism, dyslexia, ADHD, developmental coordination disorder (DCD) or Tourette syndrome could be described as neurodivergent.

So, neurodiversity means **everyone** – it is inclusive, and it is non-stigmatising. For that reason alone, it is worthy of inclusion in your manifesto.

Our asks

If your party supports the principles of inclusivity and equality of opportunity for all, then we have 3 key asks of you:

- 1. Support for children and young people who are neurodivergent to learn, and to make a fully planned transition from school to adult life**
- 2. Support for young people who are neurodivergent to have their mental health and wellbeing prioritised**
- 3. Support for the families of neurodivergent children and young people when they need it**

Words into action

You can answer our first ask - Support for children and young people who are neurodivergent to learn, and to make a fully planned transition from school to adult life - by pledging to:

- Fully implement the findings of the Morgan review of additional support for learning: Support for Learning: *All our Children and All their Potential*¹
- Support the passage into law of the Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill² and ensure the training and local authority funding necessary to implement it
- Prioritise the funding of advocacy services for neurodivergent children and young people so that their voice is heard in all decisions about their learning that affect them – in full compliance with Article 12 of the UNCRC³

You can answer our second ask - Support for young people who are neurodivergent to have their mental health and wellbeing prioritised – by pledging to:

- Improve mental health services for all children and young people
- Make and fulfil a promise that mental health will have parity with physical health

You can answer our third ask - Support for the families of neurodivergent children and young people when they need it – by pledging to:

- Map the availability of specialist family support services throughout Scotland, identify the gaps and make planned provision to meet the needs of families who are currently left behind
- Commit to sustainable, long-term, funding of the Third Sector, where much of the trusted support to families, children and young people is provided

The evidence you need

With so many competing demands for your attention, here is the evidence as to why your party manifesto must include neurodiversity at its heart –

Support to learn and make successful transitions

Latest Scottish Government statistics show that 32.3% of pupils in state schools have additional support needs ASN: nearly one third of all pupils need extra support to learn.⁴ Of those, the 2019 school pupil census statistics, showed that more than 80% of the pupils recorded as having ASN had a learning difficulty such as autism, dyslexia, ADHD etc.⁵ In other words, most children with ASN are neurodivergent.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/review-additional-support-learning-implementation-executive-summary/>

² <https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/116502.aspx>

³ <https://bit.ly/3o9lWZy> Article 12 -

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-schools-scotland-2020/>

⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-census-supplementary-statistics/>

The rate of exclusion for pupils with ASN is 5 times that of pupils with no ASN.⁶

Only one in three (32%) of young people with an ASN leaves school with one or more SCQFs at Level 6 compared to two-thirds (65%) of those with no ASN.⁷

Disabled 16 -24-year olds: have the second lowest employment rate (43.2%) of any age group and the highest unemployment rate (20.8%); and are more than twice as likely to be unemployed than non-disabled 16-24 year olds.⁸

The Scottish Parliament is currently scrutinising the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill. However, the Children and Young People's Commissioners of the 4 UK nations note in their most recent report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child:

'In Scotland, there is inadequate support for disabled children, particularly in mainstream education. Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder and other neurodiverse conditions are disproportionately affected. Despite increasing numbers of children being identified with ASN, the number of children with Co-ordinated Support Plans (CSP) continues to fall. Social care support for disabled children, including respite care, continues to be difficult to access.'⁹

Mental health

Children and young people who are neurodivergent very often also have mental health needs. In September 2020, a *Young Minds* survey of over 2,000 young people found that 58% of respondents described their mental health as poor prior to schools returning; after schools returned, this rose to 69%.¹⁰

35% of children wait more than 18 weeks (4.5 months) to be seen by CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services).¹¹

Support to families and for the third sector which provides this

Whereas marginalised groups (including people having a disability or long-term health condition, which includes many of those who are neurodivergent) found that as a result of Covid-19 'Services were stopped, slowed, or contracted, despite need expanding and intensifying,' nevertheless 'Third sector organisations generally

⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-schools-scotland-no-10-2019-edition/pages/1/>

⁷ https://www.parliament.scot/S5MembersBills/Transitions_Bill_Consultation_FINAL.pdf

⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-disabled-people-employment-action-plan/>

⁹ <https://cypcs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/crc-report-2020.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://youngminds.org.uk/media/4119/youngminds-survey-with-young-people-returning-to-school-coronavirus-report-autumn-report.pdf>

¹¹ <https://beta.isdscotland.org/find-publications-and-data/conditions-and-diseases/mental-health/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-services-camhs-waiting-times/>

mobilised quickly and with agility to plug gaps left by the slowing down and contraction of statutory services.’¹²

95% of charities have taken action to counter the impact of Covid-19 on their services.¹³

“Without the voluntary sector our experience of lockdown would have been far worse...The pandemic has exacerbated long-standing inequalities, leading to a dramatic growth in demand for voluntary services. However

- Half of charities report they may run out of cash within six months.
- 20% of charities fear they will be unable to do the work they were set up to do at some point in the next 12 months.
- Between 15% and 30% of the sector’s 108,000 staff were furloughed. Many organisations have made staff redundant.” **SCVO September 2020.**¹⁴

Thus, support to the third sector is crucial to maintaining support services to neurodivergent children, young people and their families.

ALL TOGETHER, A COMPELLING PICTURE FOR PUTTING NEURODIVERSITY AT THE CENTRE OF EVERY PARTY MANIFESTO

Who we are

In 2021 Salvesen Mindroom Centre celebrates 21 years as a Scottish charity that supports, informs and empowers children and young people living with learning difficulties. Our vision is to become an internationally recognised centre of excellence in neurodiversity to help create a world in which no mind is left behind.

We have extensive experience in supporting families, providing support and advocacy direct to children and young people, working directly with senior pupils to access supported work placements and in support to transition from school.

To find out more about our work, and to discuss how we can support you to include neurodiversity in your party manifesto, contact:

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Our website – www.mindroom.org

Salvesen Mindroom Centre is a registered Scottish charity SC030472 and a company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland SC209656.

¹² https://storage.googleapis.com/scvo-documents-evidence/0693z00000DdBpAAF-scotlock_project_report_executive-summary_dec2020-2.pdf

¹³ <https://storage.googleapis.com/scvo-cms/scvo-cms/media/3925/oscr-covid-19-research-summary-report-020620-002.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://scvo.scot/policy/campaigns/never-more-needed/what-weve-learned-so-far>