

# Scottish Labour manifesto: Party pledges 'childcare revolution' <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

The promise is contained in the party's manifesto, to be launched in Edinburgh today with just over a week until voters go to the polls.

Leader Kezia Dugdale said the clubs would be part of "the move toward the flexible, wrap-around affordable childcare that families in Scotland need".

Under the proposals, primary schools will be given annual funding averaging £6,500 for breakfast clubs.

Those schools which already run clubs will be able to use the cash to expand them, while those without would be able to establish one.

Individual schools would decide how to use the money, for example deciding the hours the club will run, Labour said.

There are 2,056 primaries in Scotland according to Scottish Government figures from 2013, meaning an annual spend of more than £13 million on the policy.

Ms Dugdale said Labour's taxation policies mean it would be able to invest in education and the early years.

The party – which has focussed heavily on education in its election campaign – has also pledged to protect existing plans to increase pre-school entitlement to 30 hours of free childcare a week, launch a fair start fund to cut the attainment gap, protect the education budget, maintain free university tuition, and guarantee support for college students.

The SNP has committed to providing 30 hours of free childcare a week by the end of the next parliament in 2020, but opposition politicians have said some parents are already struggling to access their existing entitlement due to lack of flexibility.

Ms Dugdale said: "We want childcare that fits around the lives of parents, that is flexible, affordable and accessible.

"So we will start on a new revolution in childcare, beginning with funding for a breakfast club in every primary school.

"Breakfast clubs not only ensure children start the day with a healthy meal, but they provide the childcare that so many parents desperately need.

"To grow our economy and help women in particular thrive in their jobs parents need access to flexible childcare.

"Promises about the number of hours of free childcare are meaningless unless parents and children can make use of them. Labour will begin the move toward the flexible, wrap-around affordable childcare that families in Scotland need."

She added: "Our vision is of a Scotland where parents can drop their kids off to get a good breakfast and pick them up from an after-school sports club. That's good for working parents but it's also good for the health of the nation.

"The SNP's cuts to local services like schools and nurseries risk holding back the next generation. Cuts will mean fewer classroom assistants, nursery staff and opportunities for extracurricular activities.

"It doesn't have to be this way. We can reject Tory austerity by using the powers of the Scottish Parliament to make different choices."

SNP campaign manager John Swinney said: "After waiting over five weeks for Labour's manifesto it seems they have come up with little more than a copy of plans the SNP has already put in place.

"It is the SNP that has set out plans to transform childcare by doubling it to 30 hours a week including increasing staff and making childcare more flexible and extending free school meals to early years.

"Our plans will also see £750 million invested in tackling attainment, money which can be relied on rather than based on uncertain tax revenues that even Labour admit may not raise any money.

"We have already announced plans in Government for a Professional Baccalaureate bringing together academic, vocational and work

experience into a new qualification for our students, and our manifesto includes a review of funding for further and higher education, welcomed by the NUS, so that the money supports the student wherever they study and of course it is the SNP that reintroduced free education in Scotland after Labour introduced tuition fees.”

Leader of the Scottish Conservatives Ruth Davidson said: “I’ve spent this campaign talking to people who aren’t traditional Tory voters and who have never even considered voting for us before.

“What unites them is that they just want to see the SNP kept in check. I don’t see Labour doing that and the risk is that they will be too weak to stop the SNP continuing its drive for another referendum.

“So I’m saying to people that I can do that job for you in the Scottish Parliament. I can be the strong opposition our country needs.”

-reprinted from The Courier

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/05/scottish-labour-manifesto-party-pledges-%E2%80%98childcare-revolution%E2%80%99%E2%80%99>

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