

Manifesto 2026



Scotland: for girls, by girls



Introduction

About Girlguiding Scotland.

By girls, for girls, powered by volunteers.

We're Scotland's largest youth organisation dedicated completely to girls. Girls can do anything, we help them know that, whether they're 4 or 18 or in between. All girls have a home at Girlguiding Scotland – whoever they are, and wherever they are.

We have nearly 40,000 girls, supported by 9000 volunteers and 20 staff. We're in every local authority in Scotland, from Shetland to the borders and everywhere in between.

We want to see an equal world, where all girls feel happy, safe and can enjoy fulfilling lives. Girls have told us that they don't feel safe, and that they're changing their behaviour in their everyday lives to feel safer. They believe that the adults in their lives, including politicians and schools, must do more to tackle misogyny and sexism.



Manifesto sources:

- Girls' Attitude Survey, Girlguiding UK 2025
- Impact and Experience report Girlguiding UK 2023
- Period Poverty consultations responses, Girlguiding Scotland



About Speak Out

Speak Out is our youth voice panel. Launched as part of the Year of Young People in 2018, Speak Out empowers girls to use their voices, make their views heard, and seek change at the highest level. They have successfully campaigned on the issues that girls care about. From playing a crucial role in passing the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021, to campaigning for safe play spaces for girls, resulting in specific action in the Equally Safe Delivery plan, our Speak Out Champions have had an impact on girls' lives.

This year, 21 Speak Out champions aged 14-22 came together from across Scotland to create this manifesto. Passionate about creating change, they each bring their own viewpoints, ideas and life experience.

This is their vision for the future of girls in Scotland.

Contents

Girls deserve a safe Scotland	6
Girls deserve equal access to healthcare	7
Girls deserve access to learning safely	8
Girls deserve to be safe online	9
Girls deserve sport and youth work designed for them	10

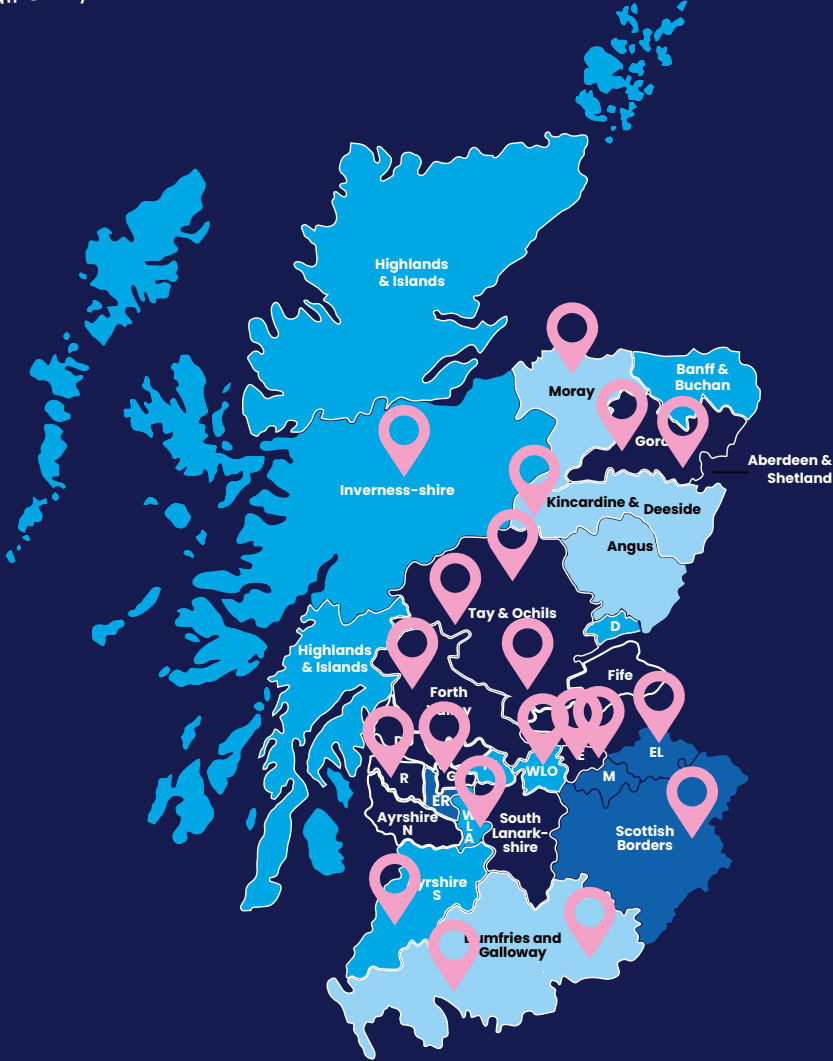


Where we are from



Aberdeen & Shetland

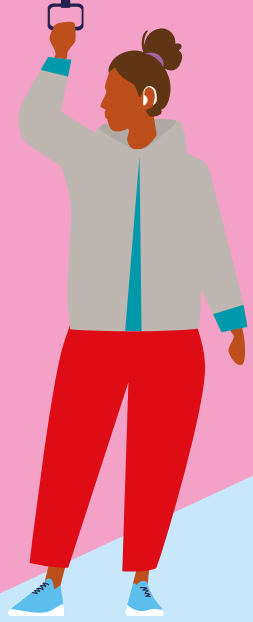
Our Speak Out champions come from all over Scotland, representing the voices of all our young members.



Problem

Girls deserve a safe Scotland

Girls deserve to feel safe in their communities, they should be safe to socialise and travel how they want to. Girls have told us that they don't feel safe. 44% of Scottish girls don't feel safe outside by themselves, a quarter of Scottish girls change where they socialise to avoid sexual harassment, and 54% of Scottish girls don't feel safe on public transport. We know that girls of colour feel less safe than white girls. 45% of white girls in the UK avoid going out at night, this rises to 56% of girls of colour.



Solution

We are calling on the Scottish Government to:

- Commit to building a Scotland free from gender-based violence.
- Commit to introducing the Misogyny Bill this Parliamentary term to ensure that the girls and women have legal protections from misogyny.
- Work with local authorities to ensure that public transport is safe, reliable and frequent to help keep girls safe.
- Maintain and expand the 'Young Persons' (Under 22s) Free Bus Travel Scheme' up until young people turn 26 and across all forms of public transport.
- Ensure that the implementation of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 takes a gendered approach so that girls rights do not fall behind those of boys.

Problem

Girls deserve equal access to healthcare

Girls deserve to access healthcare equally and without stigma, girls deserve for periods to be normalised and destigmatised. Girls have told us that they still don't feel comfortable talking about their periods. 68% of Scottish girls wouldn't feel comfortable talking to staff in schools or colleges about their periods. Girls deserve better access to mental health support. Girls have told us that their mental health is suffering. 1 in 3 Scottish girls report that they feel sad most days. 79% of Scottish girls experience anxiety, 64% self-harm, and 61% experience depression. Girls' body image is also suffering, nearly 2 in 3 girls Scotland struggle with their body image. Girls from marginalised groups are more likely to feel sad. 8% of all girls in the UK feel sad every day, this rises to 19% of neurodivergent girls, 21% of LGBTQ+ girls, and 22% of disabled girls.

Solution

We are calling on the Scottish Government to:

- Commit to implementing the Women's Health Plan, prioritising training for medical professionals.
- Introduce mandatory lessons on menstrual wellbeing in Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education (RSHP) in order to normalise and destigmatise menstruation.
- Fund research and technologies which improve women's health.
- Ensure NHS mental health professionals are accessible in local communities, including in rural areas.
- Guarantee mental health patients a treatment plan sooner than the 18-week target. This can be achieved by ensuring mental health services are fit for purpose and well-funded.

Problem

Girls deserve to access learning safely

Girls deserve to feel safe in school and in what they are learning, over 1 in 10 girls in Scotland don't feel safe in school. 83% of Scottish girls agree that there needs to be more discussion in schools with boys about the impact of sexism and misogyny. Girls in some marginalised groups are more likely to have received comments that make them feel scared for their safety. 24% of all girls in the UK report that they have felt scared for their safety, this rises to 35% of disabled girls, 42% of neurodivergent girls, and 43% of LGBTQ+ girls. Girls also feel like their futures are limited because they are a girl. 45% of girls in Scotland feel like STEM subjects are 'more for boys', and 54% of Scottish girls think it will be hard to progress in a male dominated field.

Solution

We are calling on the Scottish Government to:

- Make high quality RSHP statutory and available to all young people across all years of secondary education.
- Train teachers on key RSHP topics such as gender stereotypes, misogyny, healthy body image, and the impact of social media's influence on boys and young men.
- Work with local authorities to implement appropriate consequences for the perpetrators of misogynistic behaviour in schools.
- Work towards equality for women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) throughout education and into the workplace.
- Guarantee girls' unrestricted access to school toilets throughout the day, including during class time — especially to manage periods and other health needs with dignity.

Problem

Girls deserve to be safe online

Girls deserve to access social media safely, without abuse and harassment. Girls change their behaviour to feel safer online, over half of Scottish girls limit who can see their posts and a quarter of Scottish girls avoid using certain platforms, apps or social media. More girls of colour are changing their behaviour compared to white girls. 28% of white girls in the UK avoid sharing photos of their face online, rising to 45% of girls of colour. Only 1 in 3 Scottish girls feel like their parents/carers understand the pressures of social media. 78% of Scottish girls think that children can access too much harmful content online that shouldn't be available online at all.

Solution

We are calling on the Scottish Government to:

- Work with the UK Government to ensure that social media platforms implement stricter policies and consequences for abuse and harassment online.
- Work with the UK Government to tackle the abuse of AI to create explicit media. Platforms must report explicit AI images to police and strictly enforce laws.
- Work with the UK government to regulate social media to ensure that platforms highlight the use of filters and editing software.
- Run a public information campaign to educate both young people and parents/carers about the dangers of social media and how to protect themselves or their children online.



Problem

Girls deserve sport and youth work designed for them

Girls feel positive about their experiences of youth work – and more of them deserve to access it. 74% of girls in Girlguiding Scotland access opportunities they wouldn't typically have the chance to. However, girls have told us that they face inequalities in accessing these opportunities. 1 in 5 Scottish girls feel like adventures are more for boys and feel like they are held back from opportunities boys are taking part in. Girls also recognise the value of volunteering, Girlguiding Scotland girls are 29% more likely to have given time to a charity compared to Scottish young people. 86% of Girlguiding Scotland volunteers said their role helps them to learn new skills that can be used outside of their voluntary role.

Solution

We are calling on the Scottish Government to:

- Work with local authorities to provide affordable sport and universal youth work in girls' communities through increasing funding and resourcing community spaces.
- Work with local authorities to provide equal opportunity for girls to access adventurous activities and take risks in a safe space.
- Provide more youth programmes for those aged 18-25 so young people have safe spaces to socialise.
- Work with the UK Government to ensure that employees have the right to volunteering leave.

1 in 10 girls in Scotland are concerned about the wider world. We want the Scottish Government to work with international bodies to ensure that the rights of every girl are upheld.

Key statistics

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Girls' body image is also suffering, nearly 2 in 3 girls Scotland struggle with their bodyimage.

28% of white girls in the UK avoid sharing photos of their face online, rising to 45% of girls of colour.

24% of all girls in the UK report that they have felt scared for their safety, this rises to 35% of disabled girls, 42% of neurodivergent girls, and 43% of LGBTQ+ girls.



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