

# Scottish Government Programme 2018-19

## Introduction

The Scottish Government has published its programme for 2018-19. This sets out a revised legislative programme and other administrative actions. This briefing highlights the issues with greatest impact on UNISON members. Most of last year's legislative programme has not yet been enacted, so current bills are largely as set out in last year's Briefing No.89.

## Economy

The programme places a focus on the economy with plans to increase infrastructure investment. As conventional borrowing is at the current borrowing limits it remains to be seen what 'innovative' financial measures are used? The Scottish National Investment Bank is welcome, more PPP schemes are not.

Investment in green public transport and more charging points for electric vehicles demonstrates a commitment to a green industrial strategy. However, the current Transport Bill will allow private firms to cherry pick routes, leaving councils to pick up the rest. The energy policy has few new initiatives and no sign of early action on the public energy company. Similarly for water with drainage being a priority.

Work on retraining in partnership with trade unions is positive, as is the commitment to use procurement powers to promote Fair Work and the living wage in government grants. We have argued more could be done to drive the Fair Work Agenda using procurement, but this is a step in the right direction. The economy will not grow without a working age population and devolving migration powers is an objective we share with the government.

## Health

Scotland remains an unhealthy nation with health inequalities a core problem. NHS performance data has also been a problem for the government. Health is therefore their second priority with mental health getting an additional £250m investment – much of it in sensible preventative spending.

ScotGov believes progress is being made in social care, but it remains to be seen if that is on the scale required to tackle the issue UNISON and others have highlighted. The programme is very light on this issue.

## Education

The expansion of early years provision is work in progress and much needs to be done to turn this into a reality, given the government's use of demand side models. Staffing and premises are particular concerns and there is little new in the programme on these issues.

The Headteachers Charter is still championed in the programme, although it will be implemented through guidelines, not legislation. There is a vague commitment to build capacity in support for learning.



UNISON  
Scotland

## POLICY BRIEFING

### KEY POINTS:

- **This new ScotGov programme sets out legislation and plans for the coming year.**
- **Budget decisions are still to be made.**
- **The focus is on the economy, mental health and Brexit.**
- **12 new Bills are largely uncontroversial.**



bargaining &  
campaigns  
team

Contact UNISON's Bargaining & Campaigns team:

Dave Watson  
[d.watson@unison.co.uk](mailto:d.watson@unison.co.uk)

0141 342 2819  
08000 857857

## Communities

The programme highlights work in progress on child poverty and the devolved aspects of social security. The Carers Allowance Supplement will make its first payments and the Best Start grants will be in place by Xmas. The Living Wage targets recognise the importance of tackling in-work poverty after years of pay cuts.

The fairly modest social housing targets remain unchanged. The Local Governance Review has been extended to find new ways to engage communities in local decision making.

The presumption against short prison sentences remains and is supported by positive data today on reconviction rates. There is a commitment to maintain spending on Criminal Justice Social Work.

There will be a consultation on extending FoI provisions to companies who deliver public services, a long standing UNISON campaign ask. The culture section confirms £450k support for the public library improvement fund and the single library card pilot.

## Brexit

One of the reasons so little progress has been made on last year's legislative programme has been the focus on Brexit. The programme repeats the government's line on the single market, customs union and its preparations for a 'no deal' scenario. It will not support Legislative Consent Motions on the UK Withdrawal Act.

## Legislation

There are 12 new bills planned on top of those that are still progressing through parliament. Most are technical and non-controversial. The Consumer Protection Bill will be of interest to members in trading standards, although proper funding would be even more welcome. The reform of Non-Domestic Rates will implement the government's response to the Barclay Review.

The Electoral Franchise Bill will spark a debate on prisoner voting. The modernisation of disclosure provisions will impact on UNISON members in a range of services. One disappointing omission is the promised Good Food Nation Bill, which appears to have been kicked into the long grass again.

The Budget Bill will as usual be the focus of UNISON's interest. Much of the ambition in this programme will depend on funding and this depends on the UK Budget and the ScotGov use of its revenue raising powers. This will become clearer in the draft Spending Plans, to be published later this year. That document will include a revised pay policy.

## Conclusion

Most of the substance in the programme continues current plans and there are few radical policy shifts that should concern UNISON members. The legislative programme is modest and largely uncontroversial.

The challenge as ever will be finding the resources to fund the programme and address Scotland's deep rooted challenges - including inequality, health, demographic change and public service delivery.

The pressure on services is highlighted in the latest Scottish household survey, which revealed public confidence in key services had fallen last year to the lowest level since the survey series began in 2007.

### Further info

#### The full programme (122 pages)

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/delivering-today-investing-tomorrow-governments-programme-scotland-2018-19/>

#### Briefing 89 on last year's plan as most is yet to be enacted

<http://www.unison-scotland.org/2017/09/06/scottish-government-programme-2017-18/>



Contact UNISON's  
Bargaining & Campaigns  
team:

Dave Watson  
[d.watson@unison.co.uk](mailto:d.watson@unison.co.uk)

0141 342 2811  
0800 0 857 857