

# Prioritising Support for Positive Relationships

A MANIFESTO FOR THE SCOTTISH ELECTION 2026

Positive couple, family and social relationships are vital for thriving communities, and economic and social prosperity.

## OUR ASKS

We call on the next Scottish Government and the new Scottish Parliament to:

**INVEST** in prevention, early intervention and recovery for mental health that focuses on cross-sectoral working and collaboration, making good mental health and wellbeing a shared national priority.

**EXPAND** future policies which impact on children and families to highlight the vital role relationships play in ensuring the best opportunities and outcomes in life.

**GUARANTEE** the availability of counselling, mediation, child contact centres and other family support services across the country through increased funding to ensure this support is available for all people in their local communities across Scotland.

**APPLY** the provisions in the Children (Scotland) Act 2020 to increase uptake of family mediation and other forms of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) as an alternative to court action in family cases.



# Why Invest in Relationships

- **Everyone** in Scotland will experience life transitions and these can place a significant strain on family relationships. People across Scotland need access to specialist support to help maintain the quality of their relationships, manage conflict, and **minimise the impact of relationship distress**, especially for children.
- Relationship breakdown is estimated to cost Scotland **£3.5bn per year**. Investing in early intervention and prevention provides significant value for the people of Scotland. A cost benefit analysis in 2025 indicated an **average saving of £13.77 for every £1 spent on delivering our services**.
- Evidence shows that **relationship breakdown and family instability can lead to poverty**, while disproportionately impacting those already experiencing deprivation. Financial pressures and housing insecurity can place additional strain on family relationships, increasing the risk of conflict and separation. **Our services must be accessible to all**, especially those experiencing socio-economic disadvantages, without stigma or financial barriers. Addressing relationship breakdown as a driver of poverty, and its role in deepening deprivation, **will support national efforts to reduce child poverty** and improve long-term outcomes for children and young people.
- The Scottish Government continues to recognise the **vital role of nurturing positive relationships** in supporting children and families, a principle embedded in policies such as Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), The Promise, and Best Start, Bright Futures. As Scotland moves forward with its commitment to **improving outcomes for all children**, we must ensure all policies affecting children, young people and families **highlight the vital role of positive and healthy relationships**.

## About Us

Relationships Scotland's unique network of 21 Member Services operates in communities all over Scotland, from the Borders to Shetland and the Western Isles, ensuring that we are able to meet the needs of families across the country.

We provide high quality, specialist support services, working with children, young people, couples, individuals and families to help reduce conflict, improve communication and ensure that people are supported to manage times of relationship crisis and breakdown.

Over 20,000 people benefit from the work of Relationships Scotland each year through relationship counselling, family mediation, child contact centres and other related forms of family relationship support. Around 600 people are actively involved in our work, including 200 volunteers.



Relationships Scotland, 18 York Place, Edinburgh EH1 3EP  
0845 119 2020

[enquiries@relationships-scotland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@relationships-scotland.org.uk)

[www.relationships-scotland.org.uk](http://www.relationships-scotland.org.uk)

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[Annual accounts are available.](#)