

Building a fairer Scotland and tackling inequality.

The past year has shown there is a real demand for a new Scotland, where more of us can contribute fully. Our approach in government, with its focus on early intervention, is putting in place the firm foundations for future success by giving more young Scots the best possible start in life.

We are determined to invest as much as we can in a brighter future for our young people. That includes our current commitment to 600 hours of childcare for over 120,000 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds. In the coming years, we will build on this **to almost double the number of free hours to 30 hours a week of free childcare by the end of the next Scottish Parliament** for all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds.

In government, we are providing **£104 million** in 2015-16 to **protect as many people as possible from the damaging impact of the welfare reforms being imposed by Westminster**. That includes mitigation of the Bedroom Tax and the Council Tax reduction scheme, which has protected 500,000 of Scotland's lowest income households from increased Council Tax.

The Council Tax freeze has also helped hard-pressed households – by 2016 the freeze will have saved households an average of £1,200, with those on low incomes seeing the biggest savings as a proportion of their household income. We are committed to maintaining the Council Tax freeze, as set out in our 2011 election manifesto, and will work with others to review options for future replacement for the unfair council tax system.

We are creating a statutory basis for a permanent local welfare safety net and will, through a Carers Bill, provide

further support for carers and young carers. Of course, there is so much more we could achieve with more extensive powers over welfare.

The Scotland we all seek is one where our most important public services are protected. In the face of new UK cuts, we remain absolutely committed to the Scottish health service. In this manifesto we propose big increases in spending on health across the UK, which would deliver an additional £2 billion for Scotland's NHS.

As Scotland's government, we will continue to pass on any new Barnett consequential from health spending in England. Our support for the NHS has been shown this year by the £383 million increase in health resource spending, bringing it to record levels. As a result, each and every one of Scotland's health boards will receive above inflation spending increases next year.

We have taken steps to reduce consumption of alcohol and tobacco and to promote a more active lifestyle through sport. We have also worked hard to remove financial barriers to treatment and care. Free prescriptions and the commitment to continue free personal care for the elderly are an important part of delivering a healthier Scotland, and the SNP will maintain these vital policies.

We will also continue with an ambitious programme of **health and social care integration**, ensuring that health and social care provision across Scotland is joined-up and provides a seamless service, especially for people with long-term conditions and disabilities. This includes £300 million over the next three years for the Integrated Care Fund and £30 million for telehealth.

This is additional investment that will support integration, meaning better local primary, community