



HOLYROOD

ELECTION

TOOLKIT

How to talk to your MSP candidates about the needs of children and young people with cancer



YOUR ELECTION TOOLKIT

Hi! I'm Martin

My daughter Indy was diagnosed with cancer when she was two years old, and like many children and young people with cancer, and their families, we experienced challenges navigating the complex cancer care system.

After a cancer diagnosis, families like mine are thrown into an unknown world, soon finding out that the impacts of cancer are more than medical. From the extra financial costs, like travelling to hospital, to looking for support during and beyond treatment. Cancer becomes the first thing you think about when you wake up, and the last thing you think about before you go to sleep.

Our experience made me want to campaign with Young Lives vs Cancer to help make change for families like mine.

The Holyrood elections in May are a key time to make change happen for children and young people with cancer. And for that to happen, we need your help.

In this toolkit I'll share some ways you can use your voice to help make sure election candidates, and the next Scottish Government, understand the important issues for young cancer patients and how they can improve them.

I'm excited to see what changes we can make when we work together.

Thank you for supporting children and young people with cancer.

Martin

Me and Indy after I'd run 1000 miles in 2024 for Young Lives vs Cancer



A MANIFESTO FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH CANCER IN SCOTLAND

First up, here's a summary of the top five priorities that we want all political parties in Scotland to commit to. We've chosen them because children and young people with cancer, and their families, tell us they need to change.



Delivering the next Cancer Strategy for children and young people



Expand the Young Patients Family Fund to support all travel costs



Improved access to disability benefits



Improved experience of diagnosis



Comprehensive support during and beyond treatment

The full version of our manifesto is available on [our website](#). It's got more detail about our top five priorities and why they are important.

HOW CAN I HELP?

There's lots of ways you can help raise the voices of children and young people with cancer. Here's a few!

Share our manifesto far and wide

Share the posts from our Young Lives vs Cancer social media accounts to spread the word about our manifesto. We want everyone to know about the issues that are important to children and young people with cancer.



Speak to campaigners who knock on your door

Candidates and campaign teams often knock on doors during the election campaign period. This is a great opportunity to talk to them about our manifesto and the issues that are important to young cancer patients, so they understand them and can support them.

Go to hustings or local events

Attend events happening in your local area, like hustings or debates, where you can ask your local candidates questions about supporting our manifesto and the needs of children and young people with cancer.



Write to your local candidates

Your local candidates might publish details on how you can get in touch with them. You could get in touch to share our manifesto and why you think they should support it. After 2 April, you can find a [full list of your candidates here](#).

Ask

"If elected, will you support children and young people with cancer?"



A Q&A WITH MARTIN



Why does the next Scottish Government need to prioritise children and young people with cancer?

“Children and young people with cancer are one of the most vulnerable groups in the country and need as much support as they can be given. During treatment, they are at their lowest points and are often physically ill or have no energy to be able to do anything. Even getting to appointments is a struggle at times. Parents and carers, who are already juggling with everything in their lives, then have a seriously ill child to look after and it’s one of the most difficult experiences they’ll ever have to deal with.”

Which of Young Lives vs Cancer’s manifesto points do you connect with the most?

“One issue that parents in this situation should never have to think about is the additional costs involved with their child being ill. There’s help available with the Young Patients Family Fund, but this is generally aimed at in-patient care. The costs involved with weekly outpatient appointments adds up and expanding the Fund to cover these expense would be a great help.”

Why is it important to speak to election candidates about these issues?

“It can feel extremely lonely at times as a parent with a child who is ill, and knowing that people in positions that can help are on your side is a small comfort. Politicians and lawmakers have the power to assist parents and carers, and should do so where they can.”

Why do we need to campaign?

“Everyone’s story is different and difficult in many ways. Making the things that can be controlled easier is the best way to help, and funding for things like the Young Patients Family Fund are steps in the right direction. Children and young people and their families, along with Young Lives vs Cancer, need all the support they can get from candidates and political parties.”

YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Scottish Parliament Election is on 7 May. To vote, you need to be 16 or over, and have to register by 11:59pm on 20 April 2026.

You do not need to show ID to vote in this election.



AN IMPORTANT WORD ABOUT YOUNG LIVES VS CANCER

Young Lives vs Cancer campaigns on issues which are important to children and young people with cancer and their families. This is part of our charity's aims to improve experiences and outcomes for young cancer patients.

We campaign during the pre-election period to amplify the needs of children and young people with cancer to the people who will become our future MSPs and next Scottish Government.



It isn't about politicising our charity. It's about raising the voices and needs of young cancer patients to the highest levels of decision making across Scotland.

This means we'll contact political parties and candidates, but we are politically neutral - we don't support or favour any political parties or candidates. We want all political parties, and the next Scottish Government, to stand up for children and young people with cancer and support our manifesto calls.

Please keep this in mind when using this toolkit and talking about our manifesto.

FINALLY, A BIG THANK YOU!

From me, and everyone at Young Lives vs Cancer, thank you for helping us amplify the voices of children and young people with cancer, and their families in Scotland.

If you have any questions or need any more information about this toolkit or campaigning during the election, get in touch with the Young Lives vs Cancer Campaigns Team
campaigns@younglivesvscancer.org.uk.

Thank you,
Martin

Young Lives vs Cancer want to thank Martin and his family for sharing their experiences in this toolkit and using their voices to campaign for change for children and young people with cancer.

If you'd like to share your story, to raise awareness or be involved in our campaigns, please get in touch at campaigns@younglivesvscancer.org.uk.



YOUNG LIVES
vs CANCER