



# Manifesto for Holyrood 2026

Priorities and evidence-based recommendations  
for the next Scottish Parliament



Care. Compassion. Community.

Scottish Charity SC003147

# The Eric Liddell Community

is a care and specialist dementia charity providing services in Edinburgh.



## Our Vision

is to live in a community where no one feels lonely or isolated.

## Our Mission

is to bring people together in their local communities to enhance health and well-being and have a positive impact on their lives.

## We do this by providing:

- Services and support for people living with dementia
- A programme of activities and support for unpaid carers
- A community hub to support the needs of our local community

We continue to develop and celebrate the legacy of Eric Liddell to inspire future generations.

## Our Values



Compassionate



Respectful



Inclusive



People-centred



Sustainable



Led by integrity

An  
estimated  
90,000  
people in  
Scotland  
are  
living  
with  
dementia.

# Introduction from Our Chair

The Eric Liddell Community has been bringing people together to enhance their health and wellbeing and have a positive impact on their lives for 45 years. Charities like ours are the backbone of the local community, reducing loneliness and isolation by providing a welcoming place for all. Through our specialist services we also assist people living with dementia and unpaid carers by providing care, compassion and community support to people facing significant challenges in their lives.

It is clear that the voluntary sector is key to addressing the societal challenges faced by government. However, the sector is experiencing difficult conditions with rising costs, reduced funding and increasing demand for services.

As we approach the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections, we invite political parties, candidates and policy makers to include voluntary organisations as key partners in their thinking, planning and actions. We ask to be recognised, not as a 'nice to have', but as a provider of essential services and a lifeline for many.

Our Manifesto sets out five key priorities for our organisation, issues of importance to our service users, volunteers and staff, and lists our key asks for the next Scottish Government. I urge those standing for election and newly elected representatives, to support our calls for action and deliver on these important issues for our community.

**Irene Adams OBE**

Chair, The Eric Liddell Community

## Our Priorities for the next Scottish Government:

- 1) Make policy a reality for people living with dementia and their carers
- 2) Take urgent action to address the third sector funding crisis
- 3) Increase support for unpaid carers, including delivering on their legal right to breaks
- 4) Ensure that social care reform delivers an improvement to services and the experiences of people on the ground.
- 5) Value the contribution of volunteers and reduce barriers to volunteering.

# 1) Make policy a reality for people living with dementia and their carers

As a charity providing services to people living with dementia and their carers, we have a keen interest in the Scottish Government's policy and action on dementia. We support the ambition of "Everyone's Story" the National Dementia Strategy for Scotland published in 2023 and we are pleased that Scotland is recognised as being at the forefront of dementia policy. However, for many of the people that we work with, the vision and commitments made in policy are very different from their day-to-day experiences of living with dementia.

## **Examples of the gap between policy and reality include:**

- Everyone in Scotland diagnosed with dementia is entitled to at least one year of Post-Diagnostic Support from a Link Worker. However, less than half of those entitled to this support, actually receive it<sup>1</sup>
- Many people fear a diagnosis of dementia and experience stigma due to a lack of understanding about the condition
- Not everyone can access support and services in their community as availability is limited due to a lack of funding.

The Eric Liddell Community provides a range of services and support which contribute to the aims of the national strategy, including:

- A Dementia Day Care Service graded as 'excellent' and 'sector leading' in its most recent inspection by the Care Inspectorate, delivering person-centred care and activities and providing 3,500 places per year
- Our Liddell Lions group offers warm and friendly support and activities for people with mild to moderate dementia and their carers. Based on the Meeting Centre model<sup>2</sup>, the service is shaped by the input, feedback and interests of the group
- We offer a regular programme of 'dementia friendly' activities and events that are open to people living with dementia and the wider community.

1. dementia-scotland-everyones-story.pdf

2. an evidence-based model of dementia support first developed in the Netherlands

The level of statutory funding available from national government, local authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP) to support our dementia work is extremely limited.

Funding for day care (HSCP) has reduced by 10% per year for the last two years, while the costs of running a specialised dementia day care service have increased significantly.

National funding for Meeting Centres and wider dementia activities and support is extremely limited and tends to focus on remote and rural communities.

We are grateful to external funders and wider fundraising efforts which support our provision of these activities.

## Recommendations for change

We ask the Scottish Government:

- To develop a costed plan to support the delivery of the National Dementia Strategy.
- To create mechanisms to ensure funding is available for, and reaches, local services that are essential for people living with dementia and their carers to remain connected to their communities.



'Liddell Lions is my happy place, it's everyone's happy place. It's so good!'  
(Person living with dementia)



'Walking in here is like being wrapped in a comfort blanket'  
(Day care service user)

## 2) Take urgent action to address the third sector funding crisis

Like many other charities, The Eric Liddell Community has faced rising costs, including energy, food and staffing costs due to the increase in the National Living Wage and National Insurance contributions. Demand for services continues to grow due to an ageing population and the need to fill the gaps caused by a lack of investment in public services and local government.

The rising costs and increasing demands faced by third sector organisations have been well publicised. In August 2025, an open letter from over 200 third sector leaders in Scotland was sent to the First Minister calling for immediate action to address the funding crisis facing the sector<sup>3</sup>.

In September 2025, a joint statement<sup>4</sup> was issued by a partnership of third sector and community groups setting out the urgent action required to deliver on the commitment to prevention which is included in key policies and frameworks.

The principles of investing in prevention are well established in Scottish Government policy, including the Christie Commission Report (2011), the Public Sector Reform Strategy (2025) and the Population Health Framework (2025). Whilst recognition of the importance of third sector organisations in delivering this change is welcomed, with 81% of voluntary sector organisations facing financial pressures that threaten essential services<sup>5</sup>, immediate and urgent action is required to support the survival of this essential sector.

3. 'Action needed now to avert health and social care crisis in Scotland', sector leaders urge First Minister in open letter | Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland

4. Joint statement calls for urgent action on prevention

5. Essential services at risk as vast majority of Scottish charities face financial insecurity - TFN

## Recommendations for change

We support for the actions called for in the joint letter from third sector leaders:

- An immediate and substantial cash injection into third sector providers of health and social care (national and local) to address the current crisis. This must include full cost recovery for increases in employers' National Insurance contributions.
- A medium-term fully-funded recovery plan for our sector, to address decades of underinvestment and ensure people can get the services they need into the future.
- A commitment to finally deliver multi-year funding, with uplifts that reflect inflation, to ensure stability for organisations, employees and the people they support.
- A firm commitment to fully include the sector in making decisions about how services are planned and delivered.

We also ask that the Principles of Fairer Funding<sup>6</sup> set out by the Scottish Government are delivered, and for these principles to extend across the public sector.

### 3) Increase support for unpaid carers, including delivering on their legal right to breaks

Over a third (37%) of the Scottish adult population – 1.7 million people - have provided unpaid care at some point in their lives, whilst 716,250 people are currently providing unpaid care in Scotland. The value of this support totals £15.9 billion every year.<sup>7</sup>

Carers face many additional challenges including the negative impact their caring role has on their employment, mental and physical health and disproportionate financial hardship.

The Eric Liddell Community supports over 500 unpaid carers through:

- a Carers' Programme of free health and wellbeing classes, events, talks and day trips. Support is also offered to individuals in person, by telephone, email and post to support them in their journey as carers
- our Befriending Service which delivers over 2,500 hours of companionship through 30 volunteer matches. A new 'Transition Talks' service supports carers facing bereavement or changes in their caring role
- Eric's Escapes provides unpaid carers in Edinburgh the opportunity to access a break from their caring role on a relaxing day or overnight break (with or without their cared for loved one). This year we supported 55 carers and 8 cared for individuals to enjoy a much-needed break.

We know the difference that a break from caring makes and we welcome the recent passing of the Care Reform Bill<sup>8</sup> which gave unpaid carers in Scotland a legal right to breaks from caring. However, funding and ongoing action is required to implement this commitment.

7. final-cw-scotland-briefing.pdf

8. Care Reform (Scotland) Bill passed - gov.scot

## Recommendations for change

- The legal right to a break for unpaid carers is delivered – with the funding and action that is required to make the right a reality, ensuring tailored breaks are available for carers, and they can access the replacement care and support their loved ones may need to allow them a break.
- Increase investment in local, community-based, carer services to protect the health and wellbeing of unpaid carers.



"I am extremely grateful for this opportunity. It was a break away from caring responsibilities."

*(Carer)*

"I look forward to these classes. Definite improvement in my health and wellbeing"

*(Carer)*



## 4) Ensure that social care reform delivers an improvement to services and the experiences of people on the ground

Like many third sector organisations, The Eric Liddell Community supported the principles of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care<sup>9</sup> (led by Derek Feely in 2021) and National Care Service proposals. Four years on and disappointingly little progress is visible from the perspective of members of our community. A lack of consensus led to significant amendments being made to the Care Reform Bill which was eventually passed in June 2025.

Through our work, we are in daily contact with people who use or require social care and support. Many are not interested in legislative, structural reform or governance arrangements, what they want to see is change on the ground – in terms of how they can access information, support and care, that is good quality, essential to meeting their needs and rights, and has a positive impact on their lives.

### Recommendations for change

- That the Scottish Government move with urgency and action to deliver the whole system care reforms that have been debated for too long.
- Reform remains focussed on delivering improved outcomes for people using social care services and that people with experience of social care services are involved at all stages of the process.

## 5) Value the contribution of volunteers and reduce barriers to volunteering

Like many other voluntary organisations, we rely on the support of volunteers to deliver our services. Around 140 volunteers provide over 800 hours of support per month in our dementia day care and befriending services, serving members of the community in Café Connect, supporting our carers' programme and dementia friendly activities, and as part of our fundraising and Community Hub teams.

We know from our volunteers that they also benefit from the opportunity to volunteer - it is a fantastic way to build skills, meet new people and have fun, all while making a real difference to our community.

We are aware that evidence at a national level shows that participation in volunteering has declined from 26% in 2019 to 18% in 2023<sup>10</sup>. We ask the Scottish Government to support the sector in ensuring that barriers to volunteering, that are well documented by Volunteer Scotland and other representative groups, are addressed.

### Recommendations for change

- We support Volunteer Scotland's call for action<sup>11</sup>, and identified policy priorities, to reverse the decline in volunteer participation and ensure that everyone can access meaningful, supported volunteering opportunities.
- These include Fair Funding, retention of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme fee waiver, and investment in the implementation of the Volunteering Action Plan.



Volunteers are the heartbeat of our community and we couldn't do what we do without them!

10. Scottish Household survey 2023

11. Volunteer Scotland MP Briefing 2024

# Your Support Matters

Find out more about our work  
and the people we support



Scan the QR code  
to visit our website

For more information, please contact us or visit our website:

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The Eric Liddell Community



[ericliddellcommunity](https://www.instagram.com/ericliddellcommunity)



The Eric Liddell Community

We get more out of life  
**when we get together**

