

# Scottish Government Programme for 2012-13

### Introduction

The Scottish Government has published its programme for the coming year. The document primarily sets out the legislation it plans to deliver. This briefing outlines the legislation of interest to UNISON.

### Referendum Bill

The Bill will make provision for an independence referendum to be held in autumn 2014. The Bill will include provisions for the franchise and the procedures to be followed. It will provide for oversight arrangements including the involvement of the Electoral Commission. UNISON has set out its view on these procedural issues and as this is a reserved issue, agreement is needed with the UK government to avoid legal challenge. UNISON is also consulting on our approach to the substantive issues and working with the STUC through the Just Scotland initiative.

### Budget Bill

The annual Budget Bill provides Parliamentary approval for the Scottish Government's spending plans. The draft plans should be published later this month.

### Procurement Reform Bill

The Bill will establish a national legislative framework for sustainable public procurement that supports Scotland's economic growth by delivering community benefits, supporting innovation, considering environmental requirements and promoting public procurement processes and systems which are transparent, streamlined, standardised, proportionate, fair and business-friendly.

UNISON believes that public procurement can play a stronger role in promoting social and economic objectives. We are responding to the current consultation with proposals to address tax evasion and support the Scottish Living Wage.

### Better Regulation Bill

It is claimed that businesses benefit from regulation which is transparent, consistent, accountable, proportionate, and targeted only at cases where action is needed. The Bill will therefore take steps to change the way regulations are applied in practice across Scotland, providing national regulation systems and standards. The Bill will also include specific measures to further reform planning and environmental regulation and enforcement.

UNISON is not convinced that the attack on 'red tape' is a meaningful contribution to economic growth. There is little evidence that businesses think it is either. These proposals also involve further centralisation and control over local government functions, undermining local democracy.

### KEY POINTS:

- The programme sets out the Government's legislative plans for 2012-13.
- The Government's main focus is on the independence referendum.
- Reform of procurement and regulation will be important to UNISON members.
- Care integration legislation will impact on NHS and social care members.
- Bills on Children and post-16 provision.
- Welcome legislation for equal marriage.



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### **Land and Buildings Transaction Tax Bill**

The Bill will set out how the proposed replacement tax for Stamp Duty Land Tax will operate under a distinctly Scottish based approach. UNISON supported the devolution of this tax and there is an opportunity to establish a more progressive tax.

### **Landfill Tax Bill**

The Bill will put in place a replacement for Landfill Tax in Scotland, establishing the administration, charges and rules governing a uniquely Scottish Landfill Tax. Again this is a welcome devolution of powers.

### **Adult Health & Social Care Integration Bill**

The Bill will reform planning and provision of adult health and social care services, establishing integration between partners that seeks to deliver nationally agreed outcomes for services. It will establish joint accountability by Health Boards and Councils for delivery of outcomes, integration of budgets, and improved commissioning and planning of services.

UNISON has major concerns over several aspects of these plans as set out in our policy statement.

### **Children and Young People Bill**

The Bill seeks to improve the outcomes for all children and young people in Scotland, in particular the most vulnerable, by putting in place a coherent statutory framework for planning and delivery of services provided to children and young people and a new approach to the practical realisation of children's rights. It will make provision for a minimum of 600 hours free early learning and childcare provision.

UNISON welcomes greater public service child care provision delivered by qualified early year's staff.

### **Post-16 Education Reform Bill**

The Bill will provide a legal basis for some aspects of the Scottish Government's programme of post-16 learning reform. It will address key issues such as college and university structure and provision, college regionalisation and access.

UNISON has highlighted the impact of cuts in FE provision and careers staff that are undermining post-16 provision. We are also sceptical about regionalisation and the impact on college access.

### **Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill**

The Bill will allow same sex couples to marry, and will also allow civil partnerships to be registered through a religious ceremony. It will ensure that no religious bodies and celebrants have to take part in same-sex ceremonies, unless they wish to do so.

UNISON strongly supports equal marriage and welcomes this Bill.

### **Other Bills**

Other legislation in the programme includes measures on criminal justice, tribunals, victims and witnesses, Forth estuary and bankruptcy. Other Bills of interest to UNISON members will proceed this session as they were announced in the last programme (See Policy Briefing 12)

### **Action for Branches**

Branches should consider the legislation that impacts on their members and feedback any views. Major Bills will of course be the subject of separate briefings and responses.

#### **Further info**

##### **Working for Scotland Govt Programme**

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0040/00401237.pdf>

##### **UNISON For a Fairer Scotland**

<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/scotlandsfuture/index.html>

##### **Care integration**

[http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/socialwork/CareIntegrationStatement\\_July2012.pdf](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/socialwork/CareIntegrationStatement_July2012.pdf)

##### **College mergers**

<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/response/Response%20to%20college%20regionalisation%20proposal%20december%202011%85.pdf>



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