



SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

Policy 2:

The NHS should be protected from privatisation* and remain free at the point of need.

**Privatisation would be when private companies “own” the NHS, and individuals would be responsible for paying for their own health care.*

Endorsed by:



What's this all about?

Young people told us that free health care must be modern, respected, invested in, and reliable. Young people trust the National Health Service (NHS) and believe it should be protected and remain free both now and in the future. They said we should be prioritising the NHS, and having suitable investment should be a key priority for the Scottish and UK Governments.

“Many people can not afford health care. 100s of young people and adults live in so much poverty. They should not be excluded from health care just because they are not rich. Young people are forced to rely on their parents and caregivers to afford their health care, and that means thousands of young people will not get the care they NEED. Adults should not be in a position where they are in poverty and cannot get their child or themselves health care. They would probably love to and want to get themselves and their young person health care, but if they can't afford it, they can't afford it, and they should not be punished just because of that.”

– Young woman aged 18-21, Orkney

“The NHS being protected from privatisation is key to the happiness and safety of the country. As the privatisation of healthcare would only push the people struggling in Scotland deeper into poverty and potentially limit or deter people from having access to the help they need.”

– Young man aged 14-17, Inverclyde

What are young people in Scotland calling for?

- **Decision makers must ensure that young people can access an equal standard of health care, regardless of where they live in Scotland.**

“Private healthcare is a luxury yet most cannot afford, it would be going back in time to take away free healthcare as it would cause devastating effects especially for those suffering with chronic illnesses which prevent them from working to gain money they would need to afford private healthcare.”

– Young woman aged 14-17, Inverclyde

- **Decision makers must ensure there is specific investment to enable the NHS to explore and develop the use of new technologies and practices.**

“At the point of need I believe it should be free.”

– Young people aged 14-17, Dumfries and Galloway

- **Young people want to be taken seriously. They want more power to advocate for themselves and their healthcare needs, and to use their voice to challenge stigma and break down barriers to equal access.**
 - **Young people feel there should be a child-friendly complaints system which is accessible to everyone who wants to use it.**
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Evidence and Support

- [Young Women's Movement research](#) found that 40% of young women rated their experience of accessing healthcare as “okay”. 17% rated their experiences as “mostly bad”, and a further 8% as “mostly awful”.
 - Many children and young people in [Together Scotland's State of Children's Rights Report 2024](#) celebrated that healthcare is free in Scotland, but say that accessing timely healthcare is not always straightforward.
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What has SYP done?

Previous [SYP Consultations](#) include SYP's consultation workshop on the [Scottish Government's Community Mental Health Supports and Services Framework \(2024\)](#) and [SYP's response to the British Council's call for evidence on how the cost of living crisis has impacted young people's health and wellbeing \(2023\)](#). The [SYP Policy Log](#) includes policies on keeping the NHS free at the point of need; recognition of the risk of centralisation to our healthcare system; youth-friendly information from public

bodies; measures to improve drug services and mental health services; introduction of a national campaign on cancer education and screenings for young people.