



2026 - 2027

Partners in Policymaking Programme Descriptor



**In Control
Scotland**
Choice. Control. Community. **1**change.



What is the programme about?

'Partners in Policymaking' is an internationally recognised leadership development programme for parents of disabled children (up to the age of 18) and for disabled adults (18 years and over).

This programme is a chance for participants to gain the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to campaign and advocate for better treatment and social justice for disabled people within our society.



Who is Partners for?



Participants on the programme are a mix of disabled adults and parents of disabled children. The programme is designed for people who think that life for disabled children and adults could be better and want to improve the way things are now. Some people on the programme will already be members of groups and organisations who are working for change, while others may be new to this.

PLEASE NOTE: This programme is **not open to 'paid professional staff'**, unless they are applying in their capacity as a disabled person or a parent with a disabled child



Who can apply?

People living anywhere in Scotland are entitled to apply for a place. There are 30 places available in total.

We will be looking first and foremost for people who want to make improvements in the way services are provided for disabled people. For this reason, we will be asking you for as much information as possible, so please take your time when answering the questions in the application form. This will also help us to get a good mix of people from different areas of Scotland representing a wide range of experience and background.



What will you gain from attending?

Participants will build up their knowledge about what is happening in Scotland and beyond to promote the inclusion of disabled people in society. You will hear from some of the best teachers, thinkers and practitioners in the field of inclusion from Scotland, and further afield. You will also be provided with resource materials at each session.

Participants will practice advocating for change. This will involve speaking in front of people, working in groups and delivering presentations. You will listen and have the chance to chat to different professionals working in Scotland to make life better for disabled people and unpaid carers. Some ‘Partners in Policymaking’ graduates go on to influence policy making at a national level, while other graduates choose to work locally in their communities



Many ‘Partners in Policymaking’ graduates build up support networks on the programme, which they continue to use after the programme has finished. They may also make use of their international network to exchange ideas with graduates in the rest of the United Kingdom and throughout the world.





Who is running the programme?

The *Partners in Policymaking* programme is being organised by In Control Scotland. **Karen Procek**, herself a ‘*Partners in Policymaking*’ graduate, is the lead Associate coordinating and facilitating the delivery of the programme. Karen will be assisted by co-facilitators, Danielle Farrel and Debbie Forsyth, who are also both *Partners in Policymaking* graduates.

All the work we do is driven by a strong belief in social inclusion and the view that everyone is entitled to the supports they need to be part of and included in their own community.

How much does it cost?

The overall cost of running this programme is approximately **£2,500** per person, but due to funding we have received and other sources we are able to offer it free to participants. This includes all accommodation costs for staying at the venue. This is a national programme, which attracts participants from all around Scotland and we actively welcome the diversity and different experiences that participants bring to the programme. We recognise that attending the programme is a big commitment and we may also be able to support participants with some additional costs such as travel expenses to and from the venue. Each participant’s request for additional support will be considered and discussed based on an individual’s circumstances.



Content & Programme

The programme is made up of 8 sessions that take place over a weekend (Friday and Saturday) over an 8-month period at the **Stirling Court Hotel, Stirling** from **September 2026** through to **March 2027**. Times: **Friday - 11.00 am - 9.00 pm** (with overnight stay & all meals included) **Saturday - 9.00 am - 4.00 pm**.



What if I need extra help with my learning?

Some people may need some additional support like a an individual coach to go over course materials with them after each session. We will endeavour to meet the needs of individual participants for any additional support they request to the best of our ability. **Please let us know in your application if you will require additional support for learning.**





Dates and Sessions

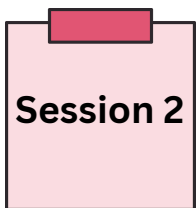
The programme is made up of 8 sessions running from September 2026 - March 2027. At each of the weekend sessions, we will cover a specific theme.



**Friday 18th and Saturday
19th September 2026**

Understanding why things are the way they are now

During these 2 days' we will look at the history of services for disabled people and how public and professional attitudes have caused people to be segregated and excluded from society. We will also look at the way change has happened in Scotland and in different parts of the world. Organisations of families and disabled people have played a major part in these changes and we will study the work of these groups.



**Friday, 9th and Saturday,
10th October 2026**

Relating to the system, person-centred planning & self-directed support

During these 2 days' we will spend time mapping out how the system works in different areas and share some stories. We will begin using person-centred planning techniques to explore ways of planning for a better life for ourselves and our families. We will also explore what self-directed support means and what everyone should expect when thinking about, planning and directing their own support.



Friday, 27th and Saturday,
28th November 2026

Inclusive Learning – before, during and after school

Many people who are trying to improve the place of disabled people in our society believe that we need to start by making schools inclusive. These 2 days will look at the issues raised by inclusive education for people of all ages. We will hear about the ways other communities and societies have made inclusive education a reality and spend time thinking about what we can do in Scotland to make our education system more inclusive.



Friday, 11th and Saturday,
12th December 2026

Getting the right support at home, before and after leaving home

This session will concentrate on home matters, ‘*independent living*’ and having a good life, including:

- What sort of help people need at home
- How family support and getting a break should be organised
- How we support disabled people to leave the family home and live in a place of their choice with support that works for them

We will be sharing up-to-date information about ways of supporting people and how people can really be enabled to be involved in directing their own support.



Friday, 22nd and Saturday,
23rd January 2027

Employment, Training and Housing

Many disabled people in Scotland survive on unpaid work, low paid work or no work at all. For example, recent Scottish statistics indicate that an overwhelming majority of the working age adult population of people with learning disabilities, do not have a job or are in education or training.

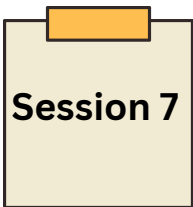
During these 2 days' we will be hearing about ways of supporting people to find and sustain meaningful employment, including self-employment and receive the training and support they need to do this. We will also be finding out how people's welfare benefits can be affected by earnings.



Friday, 19th and Saturday,
20th February 2027

Rights and Self Advocacy

Discrimination on the grounds of disability is not a medical, social work or educational issue; it is a human rights issue. During these 2 days' we will be learning from powerful self-advocates about the growth of the advocacy movement nationally and internationally and the changes they want society to make. We will also be spending time improving our own presentation and lobbying skills and techniques.



Friday, 5th and Saturday,
6th March 2027

Making change happen locally

This session is about how to influence things locally in people's own community or in the way that services work. Everyone on the programme will have different things they want to change.

For example, some people might be trying to make their local playgroup accessible or getting the right support for their child to attend the local secondary school. Some people might be trying to change the way their local housing provider deals with requests for tenancies from people with learning difficulties or ensuring that their local authority produces accessible information about self-directed support.



Friday, 26th and Saturday,
27th March 2027

Building a movement and making changes at a national level

During this last session, we will be hearing about how to influence the Scottish Government and get policies adopted to improve things nationally now and in the future. We will be talking to politicians and civil servants involved in the Government and learning about the different organisations involved in lobbying and campaigning at national level. This is also the Graduation session and we will be hearing from the new '*Partners in Policymaking*' graduates about what they are going to do next.

Throughout the programme we will be gathering information about the latest 'enabling' technology for disabled adults and children. We will also be looking at practical skills for helping people to participate and communicate. In between sessions there will be a range of coursework to choose from and some participants will be working on their own projects.

Where will the programme take place?



Each session of the *Partners in Policymaking* programme will take place at the **Stirling Court Hotel**, University of Stirling, Airthrey Road, Stirling FK9 4LA.



Partners in Policymaking Graduates

2015 - 2016



2016 - 2017



2017 - 2018



2018 - 2019



2019 - 2020





Rebecca's Story

2017 - 2018 Graduate

They say it's all about being in the right place and the right time. For my family and I, Partners in Policymaking came along at the right time, but I felt I was in the wrong place. We had spent 5 years in fight mode, expending precious energy on fighting battles in the wrong way. The previous 12 months had been particularly difficult including poor health for everyone, homelessness and DLA tribunals not forgetting fighting social work, the education system and public transport while raising 3 children under 5. I thought I knew lots about disability and inclusion but boy was I wrong. I applied for Partners thinking it would teach me how to get a Self-Directed Support budget and I would get 8 nights away in a hotel for some respite. What it gave me was so much more that's it's hard to quantify in words.

Partners challenged my beliefs and preconceptions surrounding inclusion. I thought I was inclusive, but I had so much to learn. When I began Partners I was depressed, stressed, exhausted mentally and physically, overweight and I felt completely broken and beaten down. I had no vision for the future for myself or my daughter and honestly, I felt lost. Everyone told me that the course would be life changing but I just couldn't see it.



For the first time in my life I can see our future and it's so, so bright - for every member of our family. Partners has given me more than I had ever thought possible. It's put me back together again, challenged and changed my beliefs, put fire in my belly and a spark in my soul. I can advocate better, conserving that precious energy and I've realised that the only limitations set on Hannah's future are the ones society puts on her, limitations that

I will challenge and push the boundaries of ableism and inclusion so that every child in Scotland has the same opportunities regardless of ability.

The people I met on Partners have become friends for life and a whole new army of allies and inspiration to keep me going in those times when it's hard to see the light. I graduated feeling stronger than I have ever felt in my life and I still have so far to go, but it's no longer an uphill battle because I have a partner's team now to walk along side and make the load lighter. I'm now part of a community of Partners graduates and professionals with a shared vision. I've learned how to work together with professionals and also how to celebrate our differences and abilities rather than focus on what's wrong. We're going forward celebrating everything that's great and everything we can do. We've ditched the negativity and the jargon.

We're no longer stuck, just surviving, we're full steam ahead forging new connections, embracing the future and enjoying every single day. I could write for days about everything that partners has given and inspired in me as it's so much more than the course description. It's life changing and life improving in the most unexpected of ways, and if you let it, it makes you grow and flourish in ways you thought were inconceivable.





Cara's Story

2017 - 2018 Graduate

I believe that what's for you won't pass you by and after hearing about Partners by chance through a new friend, who was a Partners graduate, I knew it was something I had to apply for. I had only met this friend once, but she changed my life when she talked about graduating from Partners on her Facebook page. A year earlier I had returned home to Scotland after a decade in Australia. When I left the UK I was young, free and single and when I returned it was with a husband and two kids, one of whom has a brain disorder. We came back to be closer to our families, but we really had no idea about what supports the Scottish system had in place for disabled people and their families or how to access them. I was navigating the system as best I could, figuring it all out as I went along.



Before Partners in Policy Making I had never heard of Self Directed Support, I had to google it before the first weekend and even then, I was still in the dark! The first few weekends were tough going for me. There was a lot of information, a lot to take on board about the history of disability and how we got to where we are today. I spent

the weeks in between piecing it all together and making sense of it all. It was emotional, engaging and addictive, the next weekend couldn't come quick enough. The speakers were engaging and the openness and willingness to share within the group was inspiring. All of us were there ultimately for the same reason. We wanted a better life for ourselves and **14** for our children.

The education weekend was a defining weekend in particular, my daughter, Lyla was thriving in her second year at mainstream nursery when I started Partners and the time to start making decisions about primary school was edging closer. I wanted what would be best for Lyla's education as a bright and social 5-year old, but I wasn't totally clear on what that looked like. Partners very quickly showed me that going to mainstream primary school was the right decision for Lyla and I felt like I had the tools to work with the school to prepare for it to be a good experience for both Lyla and the wider school community. I knew it wouldn't be easy, but I know it was the best thing for Lyla.

About half way through the course I had built enough courage to arrange for Lyla to join our local Rainbows group and to start going to our local dance class with some of her nursery friends.

I was so afraid of her being rejected by the mainstream groups and had previously sent her to special needs dance classes, but it had never felt quite right. With the confidence and knowledge gained from Partners I got Lyla started in the same activities as her friends. The activities look a little different for Lyla given that she is in a wheelchair and is non-verbal, but she is fully included and accepted without any fuss at all. Without Partners I would still be looking at 'special' for Lyla rather than normal and included.



One of the most valuable things that Partners has given me, aside from a wealth of knowledge, information, resources, ideas and contacts, is a tribe. A tribe of people who feel the same way about disability as me and who are passionate about the importance of inclusion and of living a normal life. I didn't realise that I would come away from Partners with life-long friendships.

The power of shared experience, knowledge and passion has made an indescribable difference in my life and that of my daughter and our family. I am no longer muddling through on my own, I have a tribe behind me who I know are always there to build me up when I'm struggling, point me in the right direction when I'm lost and who will hold my hand when I don't want to go it alone.

Before Partners I struggled to understand what my role in life had become. My previous professional career was long gone, and I felt like I didn't really matter as much or that what I was doing wasn't important. Partners showed me that my role as Lyla's mum and a campaigner for inclusion and disability rights is more worthwhile than anything I have done before and that while I can make massive changes in our community and change attitudes just by sharing our story. Through sharing our story publicly, I recently discovered that Lyla and I have influenced the Changing Places campaign within ScotRail and the University of Strathclyde, which has resulted in accessible toilet facilities with benches and hoists becoming part of the agenda for both these organisations. Lyla is a trailblazer and she's only 5! I can't wait to see what the next few years brings for our family and for the rest of my fellow Partners graduates.

Oh....and you'll be happy to know that I now know exactly what Self-Directed Support is!





Alan's Story

2016 - 2017 Graduate

Hi, my name is Alan and I live in Renfrew. I had been getting support for the last 5 years. Before Partners in Policymaking, I was getting 40 hours a week support. It became obvious that I no longer needed all that support but did not know how to tailor it to suit me. I was lacking in confidence before the course, but as the course went on I believe my confidence grew and I felt part of the group.

I learnt so much on the course, and information around the social care act. I also found it a very humbling experience hearing other people's stories and realised I'm not alone.

I felt so comfortable with the group that I attended one week on my own. That might not sound like much, but for me it was an achievement and a milestone in my life.

During the course I was awarded my indicative budget and started to use my Individual Service Fund.

My support package now looks very different than it was before being on the Partners programme. I now get between 5-10 hours a week support and that is to suit my life and what I need. I am using my budget so much more productively and creatively. I have a much more independent life.



I went on a 10-day trip of a lifetime to Israel with a group of people from my church. This was funded through my budget. The Partners in Policymaking programme has given me the tools to navigate which I once saw as a labyrinth of rules and legislations. I would recommend the course to anyone who in receipt of support or has a family member who gets support. I have a real hope for the future and want to live my life to the full.



What do I do if I am interested in the programme?

If you would be interested in finding out more about 'Partners in Policymaking' or would like to request an application pack contact us at:

info@in-controlscotland.org.uk



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2015 - 2016

2016 - 2017

2017 - 2018



2018 - 2019

2019 - 2020



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