

# Gordon Macdonald MSP

February 2026 Newsletter



## Wester Hailes Launches First Walk-In GP Clinic



**The Scottish  
Government**  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

The Scottish Government has confirmed the location of the first of its new pilot walk-in GP clinics, following a £36 million investment in GP services announced in the Scottish Budget this month.

The first clinic will open at the Wester Hailes Healthy Living Centre covering GP practices from Tollcross to Wester Hailes in Edinburgh, with a nationwide rollout of 15 walk-in GP clinics designed to improve access to primary care across Scotland.

This walk-in clinic, which is anticipated to open by the end of February, will allow people to see a GP or nurse quickly without the need for an appointment, focusing on urgent, on-the-day primary care needs. They will be open 12pm–8pm, seven days a week, helping patients get the care they need while also easing pressure on GP practices and hospital A&E departments.

The walk-in GP clinics will strengthen Scotland's NHS by delivering over one million additional GP and nurse appointments.

Gordon said "I am proud that my constituency will be home to the first of the walk-in GP clinics. This announcement shows the Scottish Government is delivering real, practical improvements for patients and for our NHS.

"Thanks to the Scottish Government, Scotland's NHS is turning a corner, and these walk-in clinics will play a vital role in making it easier for people to access care quickly and close to home.

"These centres will deliver over one million additional GP and nurse appointments, reducing pressure on GP surgeries and hospitals alike. John Swinney has a plan for Scotland's NHS, and it's working."

## Funding For Wester Hailes Pilot



Wester Hailes has been selected to host a ground-breaking pilot program aimed at preventing homelessness. Supported by over £600,000 in Scottish Government funding, the SWAP 'Ask and Act' initiative is set to transform how to support those at risk.

This "System Wide Approach to Prevention" (SWAP) ensures that help is available earlier than ever. By integrating "Ask and Act" duties into everyday services, partners like NHS Lothian, Police Scotland, Prospect Community Housing, and the Scottish Prison Service will be equipped to identify individuals in need during routine interactions.

The goal is to provide practical, immediate support to help residents stay in their homes. Managed by Advice Direct Scotland, this local pilot is part of a larger £4 million national effort.

Gordon said "I am excited to see a project in Edinburgh Pentlands will lead the way in creating a more proactive, compassionate safety net for our neighbours. I welcome the funding from the Scottish Government as part of the ongoing prioritisation of tackling homelessness in Edinburgh and throughout Scotland."

## Mobile Phones In Schools



After Scottish Government guidance in August 2024 many schools introduced restrictions to mobile phone use during the school day. The detail of these restrictions can vary from school to school. Mobile phone use in primary schools is not permitted following a decision by the Education, Children and Families Committee in 2025.

The Education, Children and Families Committee is considering banning or restricting phone use in all schools. The council is also considering lockable pouches to support restrictions.

Edinburgh Council would like to know what you think with all the feedback you share helping the council reach a decision. The deadline is Monday 2nd March and the form is available at:

<https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/cf/mobilephones/>





## School Age Payment February Deadline



Parents and carers in Scotland have until midnight on 28 February 2026 to apply for over £300 of support for children when they are old enough to start primary school.

School Age Payment is worth £319.80 for each child to help with the cost of preparing for school.

The payment helps carers and families facing additional costs at a key stage in a child's development. The money can be spent on anything a child needs for school, including clothes, school trips and stationery.

Part of the Best Start Grant package, which is unique to Scotland, School Age Payment is available for children born between 1 March 2020 and 28 February 2021. Parents and carers can receive the payment for multiple children born during this time and there is no requirement to take up a place at school.

Since the launch of Best Start Grant in 2018, Social Security Scotland has delivered School Age Payment to more than 114,000 parents and carers. Visit:

[/www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods/how-to-apply](https://www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods/how-to-apply)

## Winter Heating Support

Over 837,000 payments have been made to people across the country to help with heating costs this winter – thanks to a unique package of support that provides more for people in Scotland than anywhere else in the UK.

More than 268,500 payments for Child Winter Heating Payment and Winter Heating Payment – support only available in Scotland – have been paid and are likely to have already landed in people's bank accounts.

Gordon said "Costs are rising and there will be many people struggling with household bills this winter. That's why I'm pleased the Scottish Government is taking action and will deliver the strongest package of winter support than anywhere else in the UK."



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## UEFA European Championship (Scotland) Bill Passed + World Cup Bank Holiday



The Scottish Parliament has approved government legislation which will help ensure EURO 2028 in Scotland is fair and affordable for supporters and businesses.

At the heart of the UEFA European Championship (Scotland) Bill is a commitment to putting fans first by helping to safeguard against touts and preventing EURO 2028 tickets being sold above face value or for profit in Scotland.

In other football-related news First Minister John Swinney will propose Monday 15 June 2026 is designated a national bank holiday to mark Scotland's participation in the World Cup for the first time since 1998.

This will allow individuals, businesses and other organisations in Scotland to celebrate after the men's team play their opening game against Haiti in Boston.

The First Minister said "I am taking steps to ensure the Monday after our opening game should be national bank holiday, so that - no matter the outcome of the match - we can all come together to share the occasion."

## Parliament Visit With ESOL Students

Gordon met with ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students from Edinburgh College for a tour of the parliament and to watch First Minister's Questions.



The ESOL Scotland programme is an educational framework designed to support non-native English speakers living in Scotland. Primarily funded by the Scottish Government and delivered through colleges, local authorities and community partners, the programme facilitates social and economic integration for "New Scots," including refugees, asylum seekers, and settled ethnic minority communities.

Gordon said "It was a pleasure to meet these dedicated students and to field their questions on the work of an MSP. I hope they enjoyed the day as much as I did and I wish them all the best with their studies".

## Contact Gordon Macdonald MSP

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Gordon holds open weekly surgeries for constituents every Friday at 10am.

The locations for these can be found at: <https://www.gordonmacdonaldmsp.info/surgery>

