

Manifesto for the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections

Transforming kidney health in Scotland

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) affects an estimated 600,000 people in Scotland, about one in ten of the population. Yet awareness remains low and opportunities to prevent the disease, diagnose it early and treat it effectively are often missed. Kidney disease can progress silently, without symptoms – by the time symptoms appear, irreversible damage may have already occurred.

Across Scotland, childhoods are being lost to kidney disease with thousands of youngsters growing up battling rare forms of the condition and spending their young lives on hospital wards. As these are commonly caused by genetics, they are difficult to diagnose and require life-long treatment.

Over the next decade, as many as **10,000 people in Scotland** could see their condition progress to kidney failure, requiring dialysis or transplantation. This would place enormous strain on NHS resources and have a devastating impact on individuals, families, the economy and the environment.

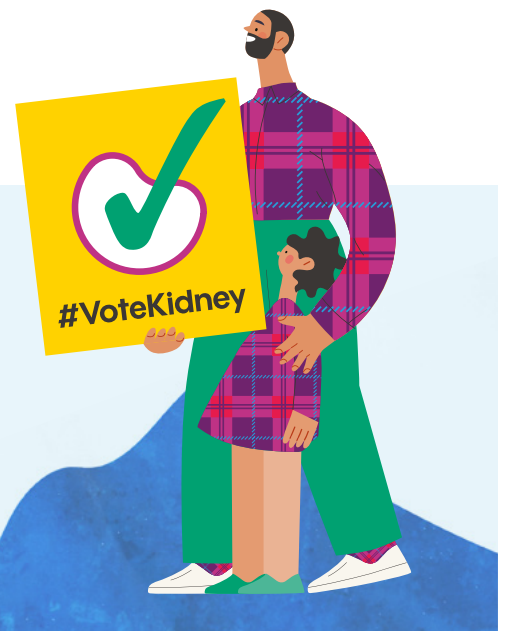
Kidney disease currently costs the Scottish economy more than **£0.5 billion a year**. Without significant government intervention this could rise to **more than £1 billion** by 2033.

Kidney Research UK is calling on all political parties to make kidney disease a health priority – to prevent it where possible, diagnose it early, and ensure every person affected can live well with the right support, treatment and guidance for their condition.

Our vision

We are calling for the next Scottish Government to publish an action plan for kidney disease that will:

- **Prevent** kidney disease where possible through better management of risk factors; diagnose it early and intervene to delay progression; and reduce inequalities
- **Improve** care for people living with rare and genetic kidney diseases
- **Invest** in research, data and clinical trials for kidney patients



Key asks for the next Scottish Government

1. Prevent kidney failure and reduce inequalities

- Make kidney disease a health priority, and publish a **Kidney Disease Action Plan**. Appoint a **National Clinical Lead for Kidney Health** to advise government and drive equitable progress across NHS boards.
- Implement a national health education programme for patients and healthcare professionals, with a focus on health inequalities and multiple conditions.
- Introduce a national early detection and intervention programme for CKD, with targeted checks for people at highest risk, including those living with heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity.
- Ensure equitable access across Scotland to prevention, early diagnosis, effective treatment, home-based therapies (including home dialysis), and transplantation, delivered through person-centred, evidence-based care with access to appropriate medicines and support.
- Adopt a whole-person approach to kidney care, integrating mental and physical health, with access to psychological support from diagnosis and continuing through all treatment stages, including pre-dialysis, initiation of dialysis, and the transplant process and provide mental health awareness training for all renal staff.

Why it matters

Kidney disease often develops without symptoms and is frequently diagnosed too late. It is closely linked to other long-term conditions and is a major contributor to early death. Preventing kidney failure through early detection and intervention, joined-up care and tackling inequalities will save lives, reduce pressure on the NHS, and help people live a better quality of life for longer.

2. Improve care for people living with rare and genetic kidney diseases

- Prevent avoidable and irreversible kidney damage by expanding access to genetic testing to ensure earlier and more accurate diagnosis of rare and genetic kidney diseases.
- Improve access to effective treatments across Scotland.
- Ensure an equitable approach to clinical trials for people living with rare and genetic kidney diseases by expanding opportunities to take part and ensuring access for children where safe and appropriate.
- Involve people living with rare and genetic kidney diseases in the design and evaluation of services, ensuring care reflects lived experience.

Why it matters

People with rare and genetic kidney diseases often face long delays in diagnosis and limited treatment options, leading to avoidable kidney damage and poorer outcomes. Speeding up diagnosis, improving access to treatment and investing in research will help people stay well for longer and give families hope for the future.

3. Invest in research, data and clinical trials

- Increase Scottish Government investment in **kidney research and clinical trials**, spanning prevention, early detection, dialysis innovation and transplantation.
- Strengthen partnerships between academia, NHS Scotland, industry and medical research charities to accelerate innovation and translate research into practice.
- Use digital tools, data and AI to identify people at risk of kidney disease and support proactive management across all NHS Health Boards.
- Improve access to high-quality, real-time health data to support research, better service planning and more personalised care.

Why it matters

Scotland has world-leading research expertise and strong data infrastructure. Investing in kidney research and clinical trials will unlock new treatments, improve outcomes, make care more cost-effective, and ensure policy and practice are informed by evidence and lived experience.

Together, we can transform kidney health

While some kidney diseases, including genetic conditions, cannot be prevented, early detection and effective treatment can significantly improve outcomes for people living with kidney disease but only if it receives the national focus it deserves.

We want to see a strengthened kidney voice in policy and practice by fully utilising the Scottish CKD Advisory Group and ensure people living with kidney disease, along with their carers and families, are actively involved in shaping research priorities, policy development, and healthcare decisions.

By making kidney disease a health priority for the next Scottish Government, we can deliver earlier diagnosis, reduce inequalities, and give thousands of people across Scotland the chance to live longer, healthier, more productive lives.

About Kidney Research UK

Kidney Research UK is the leading charity in the UK focused on funding research into the prevention, treatment and management of kidney disease.

Our vision is the day when everyone lives free from kidney disease and for more than 60 years the research we fund has been making an impact. But kidney disease is increasing, as are the factors contributing to it, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity, making our work more essential than ever.

Kidney Research UK works with clinicians and scientists across the UK. We collaborate with partners across the public, private and third sectors to prevent kidney disease and drive innovation to transform treatments for patients.

Over the last ten years we have invested more than £77 million into research. We lobby governments and decision-makers to change policy and practice to ensure the estimated 7.2 million people living with kidney disease in the UK have access to the most effective care and treatment, and to make kidney disease a priority.

Most importantly, the patient voice is at the centre of everything we at Kidney Research UK do. Patients, carers and families inspire and inform our mission and push it forward to make a difference and change the future of kidney disease.

Our commitment

Kidney Research UK will continue to support the Scottish Government, NHS Scotland, researchers, clinicians, and patient advocates to:

- Raise awareness of kidney disease as a major public health challenge.
- Advocate for prevention-focused policy and investment; and
- Drive progress through evidence, collaboration, and innovation.

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