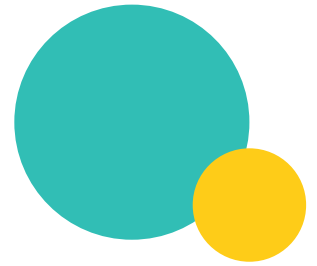


The National Entitlement Card Scheme **Strategy**



2023 – 2026



Foreword

It gives us great pleasure to introduce you to the **National Entitlement Card Scheme strategic plan** covering financial years 2023/2024 to 2025/2026.

We are excited to look to the future, create greater value from the card for National Entitlement Cardholders, whilst supporting local and national priorities. In looking forward, we also need to acknowledge that there are undoubtedly challenging times ahead for Scottish residents, communities, and Scottish Public Sector organisations.

Whilst Scotland emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, it now faces a cost-of-living crisis that affects not only the services provided by Public Sector organisations, but the lives of Scottish residents and their communities. With poverty and inequality increasing, negatively impacting individuals' and families' life chances and opportunities, demand for public services will undoubtedly increase.

Climate change remains a top priority, with increasing pressure to embed and accelerate actions to make meaningful contributions towards Scotland's 2030 climate change targets.

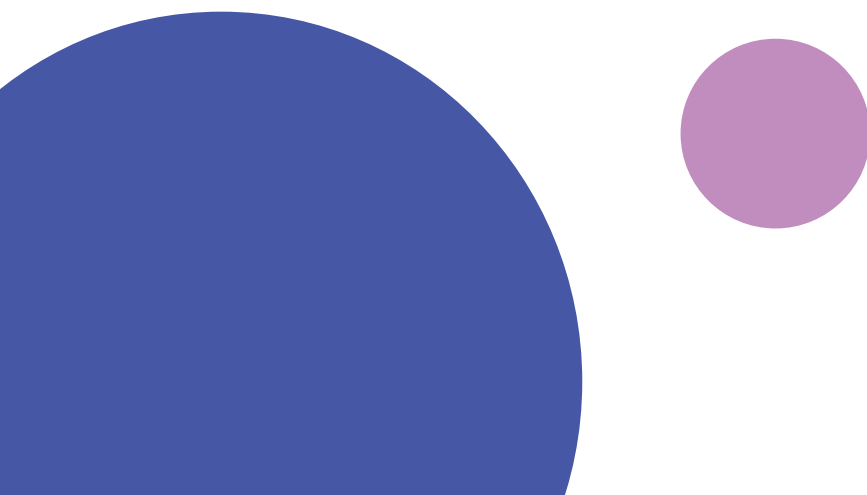
The pandemic contributed to the exponential growth of digital services, and the trend is likely to continue as we move forward, which creates new and exciting opportunities for how we deliver National Entitlement Card services to our cardholders.

In developing our future strategy, we have engaged and listened to colleagues across all 32 Local Authorities and partner organisations to understand their challenges and priorities to determine where the National Entitlement Card Scheme can make the biggest impact over the next three years to provide support, products, and services that our cardholders and partners need and want.

The National Entitlement Card Scheme is a partnership. Partnership is the key word and is at the core of how the scheme operates and works together with local and national organisations to improve and deliver services that provide positive and meaningful effects for the lives of its cardholders.

The National Entitlement Card Scheme understands the challenges faced by Scottish residents, communities, and public sector organisations, as well as the opportunities those challenges present to develop and improve services provided via the scheme. Our new strategy reflects that understanding and we welcome you to join us on our future journey as we support Scotland and its residents to prosper.

Andrew Campbell, National Entitlement Card Strategic Oversight Group Chair



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Our vision

We are here to provide access to vital and sustainable public services for Scottish residents – to help make their lives easier, improve outcomes and reduce inequalities.

The Scheme is Scotland's national multi-application smartcard, providing access to vital sustainable public services across Scotland. It is a partnership between the Scottish Government, Improvement Service, National Entitlement Card Programme Office (NECPO), Transport Scotland, Young Scot and all 32 Local Authorities.

We implement our vision by supporting and developing existing card functions and by expanding the scope and growing the usage of the National Entitlement Cards. This work increases the card's efficiency as a key national delivery asset – which people can use to access public services, entitlements, incentives, and support.

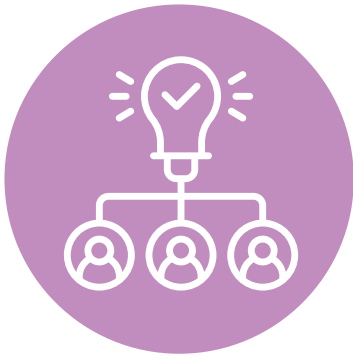
We work collaboratively with all partner organisations to deliver services that people want and are inclusive at the point of access.

Our three year strategy has been collaboratively authored and approved by the NEC Oversight Group, based on users' needs and partners' priorities.



We are driven by our values

Our values define the culture of how the National Entitlement Card Scheme operates and how partner organisations work together with cardholders to get things done.



We are Collaborative by Design

Designing our services with our customer at the heart of everything we do. Designing with multiple stakeholders to ideate, create, revise, and improve services to ensure they meet customer needs and expectations.



We are Accessible and Inclusive

Designing our services to ensure equal access and opportunities for all eligible cardholders.



We are Innovative and Agile

Responding and adapting to ever changing needs and priorities of our cardholders to deliver services via preferred routes which will provide the greatest benefit, whilst always considering the needs of those facing barriers.



We are Sustainable

Sustainability is a priority for all partner organisations. We strive to not just minimise our environmental impact but provide services which have a positive impact and influence change.

We understand the needs of cardholders

We commit to deeply understanding the needs that our cardholders have of the National Entitlement Card Scheme (NEC). The NEC Scheme supports access to a wide range of services for Scottish residents throughout their lives. Free nationwide bus travel with a companion, and local concessions if resident in certain local authority areas, is available to eligible disabled Scottish residents at any age. National free bus travel is available to all residents aged between the age of five and 22. Young Scot provides valuable benefits and rewards as well as support to young people aged 11 to 26. Those aged over 60 can access nationwide free bus travel too, as well as additional local concessionary travel benefits if resident in certain local authority areas. Additional scheme uses may include staff identity cards, educational uses such as access to school/college service, facilities and technology and access to leisure and lifestyle services.

With such a wide range of uses, we need to listen and ensure that the NEC meets the needs of everyone.

To do that, we commit to being:



Collaborative by:	Innovative & agile by:	Accessible & inclusive by:	Sustainable by:
<p>Working with our partners and stakeholders to co-design our services.</p> <p>Being transparent and accountable in everything we do.</p> <p>Fostering communication, critical thinking and creativity between partners, stakeholders, and cardholders.</p>	<p>Ensuring that our customers are at the heart of our work.</p> <p>Working with customers and partners to create and implement new solutions.</p> <p>Adapting and reshaping the NEC Scheme and its services on an ongoing basis to meet the needs of cardholders.</p>	<p>Demonstrating our ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.</p> <p>Challenging inequalities and ensuring that all eligible residents can benefit from our work.</p> <p>Ensuring services and approaches have cardholders embedded in the development process.</p>	<p>Ensuring a focus on climate adaptation and net positive ambitions.</p> <p>Identifying ways, the NEC can have a further positive impact on people and the planet.</p> <p>Ensuring responsible consumption and production of NEC cards.</p>
Impact driven by:			
<p>Building evidence and insight that guides our decision-making and improves the impact of our programmes on the lives of Scottish residents and their communities.</p> <p>Demonstrating how the Scheme contribute to a wide range of local, regional, and national goals and objectives.</p> <p>Communicating our impact using both data and insightful storytelling.</p>			

We will work together to achieve mutual goals for cardholders

A unique, shared national asset launched in 2006, the NEC Scheme currently has over 2.6 million cardholders in Scotland (47% of the Scottish population).

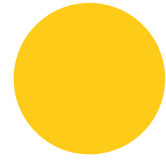
The NEC supports Transport Scotland's national concessionary travel schemes which provide free bus travel across the country to millions of eligible Scottish residents, including those aged over 60, eligible disabled people, and young people aged under 22.

The Young Scot National Entitlement Card (Young Scot NEC) is available free of charge to 11 to 25 year olds living in Scotland. The Young Scot NEC can be used for thousands of discounts at retailers and venues across Scotland, train and ferry discounts, proof of age, Young Scot Rewards, benefits across Europe with the European Youth Card Association, and lots more. Additional local benefits are available to young people who live in certain areas such as concessionary fares on the Edinburgh tram network, rail within Strathclyde, and the Glasgow Subway. Several Local Authorities use the NEC for cashless dining in schools, college matriculation, library and leisure club access and secure staff access.

The work of the Scheme, in delivering the NEC, Young Scot NEC and associated infrastructure and services, contributes to a wide range of local and national priorities including:

- Scotland's National Performance Framework and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, locally and nationally.
- Reducing inequalities and advancing equality of opportunity and outcome.
- Sustainable and inclusive economic recovery and growth.
- Realisation of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.
- Local government and other public sector organisations' delivery of holistic, person-centred, place-based, and sustainable public services.

We make a difference



The National Entitlement Card is used by a wide range of Scottish residents from birth.

As a result, the Scheme can positively support Scottish residents across a broad range of areas, such as:

Concessionary Travel

Scotland has the most generous concessionary travel scheme in the UK, with the Scottish Government investing circa £300 million annually to provide free bus travel for over 2 million people. More than a third of the population, over 2.3 million people, including everyone under 22 and over 60, and disabled people and companions, can benefit from free bus travel.

Free bus travel is provided with the aim to support multiple objectives, including:

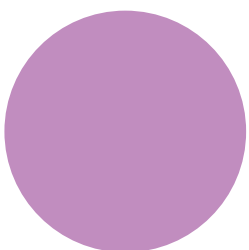
- Increasing opportunities and reducing inequalities.
- Improving access to education, employment, training, and recreation, including in rural and remote communities.
- Removing cost barriers for travel.
- Supporting safe and independent travel.
- Supporting health and wellbeing.

Young Scot National Entitlement Card (Young Scot NEC)

The Young Scot NEC gives young people aged 11–25 entitlements, opportunities, incentives, and services in a non-stigmatising way, supporting digital public service strategies.

With over 750,000 Young Scot NEC cardholders in Scotland, the card connects young people to services and opportunities offered by Local Authorities (cashless catering, smart access to buildings and library services), the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland (concessionary and free travel) and Young Scot (Young Scot Rewards, discounts, legal Proof of Age and e-voting). The Young Scot NEC is also the European Youth Card, which provides tens of thousands of discounts across Europe.

Most young people receive their Young Scot NEC when they are 11 or 12 years old as they transition into secondary school. This is an inclusive rite of passage available to every young person in Scotland.

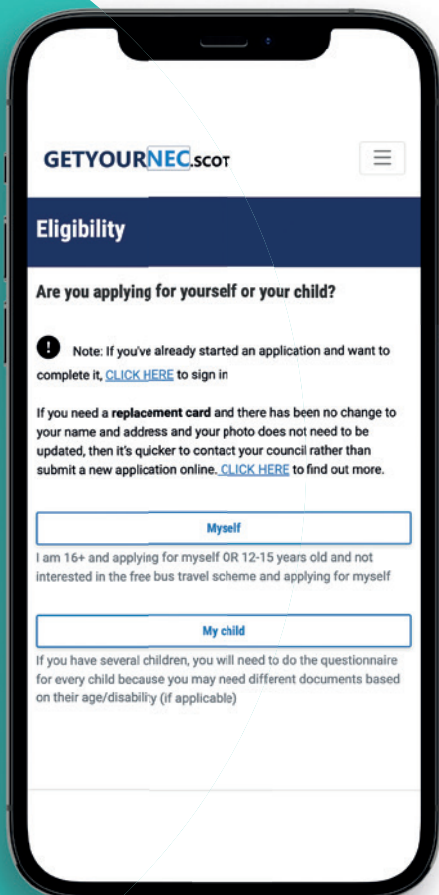


Online Applications

Getyournec.scot was launched in July 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic when Local Authority offices were closed and nationwide restrictions were in place, preventing residents to apply for a National Entitlement Card in person.

getyournec.scot was developed to provide eligible residents with a secure online application process to apply for, renew or update a card anywhere, anytime at their own convenience. Not only does getyournec.scot enable residents to apply for a card quickly, but the online service significantly reduced the number of manual applications, reducing workloads for Local Authorities.

Since July 2020, over 725,000 applications have been made for an NEC on getyournec.scot, with over 590,000 applications being made in 2022.



Additional National Entitlement Card Applications

The NEC is an open standard allowing organisations to enable cardholders to use a single secure token to access their facilities and services.

Depending on where you live, work, study, or travel these might include:

- Schools and Higher & Further education establishments can use the NEC to provide secure access to library services including self-service borrowing, physical access to buildings and secure facilities, and to printers and copiers.
- Several leisure facilities allow you to register NECs to use as a membership card, to give selected leisure discounts, and to permit unattended access to leisure facilities such as gyms outside normal hours.
- Many schools provide seamless access to cashless catering in canteens and vending machines, and some Local Authorities use the NEC in financial inclusion initiatives such as Credit Unions and Pupil Financial Education and Savings schemes in schools.
- Some Local Authorities use the NEC for building access, attendance, flexitime management, and to access printers and copiers.

Our future priorities

Over the next three years, the Scheme aims to expand and grow the usage of the NEC, whilst also recognising the greater demand for a digital offering.

Working towards our vision, our three strategic goals for 2023–2026 are:

- We will ensure eligible residents across Scotland can easily access an NEC and Young Scot NEC to access a variety of associated services.
- We will increase the number of people who are using their NEC to access services, entitlements, and opportunities.
- We will innovate and deliver digital developments to make it easier for people to use their NEC and access new and existing services.



How we will make this happen

Whilst the partners who make up the National Entitlement Card (NEC) Scheme each have their own strategies and work plans to develop, enhance and promote the card, working with stakeholders and users, we have developed some key deliverables to support the implementation of the three strategic goals over the next three years.

We will ensure eligible residents across Scotland can easily access a NEC and Young Scot NEC to access a variety of associated services	We will increase the number of people who are using their NEC to access services, entitlements, and opportunities	We will innovate and deliver digital developments to make it easier for people to use their National Entitlement Card and access new and existing services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review customer engagement channels to ensure initial application and ongoing management is as easy as possible for cardholders. • Develop electronic and digital channels for schools by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of systems integration. • Expand bulk application submission to encompass a wider applicant group. • Streamline renewal and replacement card procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and nurture strong strategic partnerships (locally and nationally) to maximise the current and potential capability of the NEC and Young Scot NEC. • Promote the scheme and the full benefits. • Promote the NEC and Young Scot NEC across the Scottish public sector to improve awareness, and for the NEC to be considered as a vehicle for new public sector services. • Ensure the NEC and Young Scot NEC are used across Scotland to access services, entitlements, and opportunities. • Explore the potential of delivering bespoke Young Scot services for 5 – 11 year olds. • Explore adding PASS Scheme to cards 26+ to enable cards to be used to access a broad range of services (including public services) where PASS is accepted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a digital NEC and Young Scot NEC are co-designed and developed with users. • Expand integration with other systems to make verification / eligibility checks more efficient. • Explore how NEC validation procedures could support digital identity (and vice versa), making it easier for residents to access other public sector services.

Measuring our Impact

The scheme's three strategic goals and associated deliverables outlined above will be explored and/or delivered by partners over the next three years, aligned to their own delivery plans.

We are acutely aware of the importance of understanding and being able to evidence that our work adds value and creates lasting impact.

We will seek feedback from our customers and partners on the impact the Scheme has on their lives and organisational priorities in a variety of ways to build evidence and insight that guides our decision-making and improves the impact of our programmes on the lives of Scottish residents and their communities. Each partner has its own Evaluation Framework (including e.g. impact assessments) to demonstrate impact and appropriate tools to ensure meaningful ongoing engagement and learning with users. Partners will provide regular feedback to the NEC Oversight Group on the impact of the scheme. As well as utilising existing frameworks, the scheme commits to ensuring that throughout the delivery of this strategy, we will provide opportunities for reflection, data driven adaptation if and when required and ongoing improvement.

80%

of those who already have a Young Scot NEC said that free bus travel was the most common service they used.



81.3%

said food shops would be the most useful discount with Young Scot NEC Card.

Demonstrating our impact

The impact the NEC has is wide-ranging and covers a multitude of areas.

Over 60s and Disabled Concessionary Travel Schemes

As of 28 February 2023, there were over 1.5 million cardholders in the scheme, and pre-covid this scheme averaged over 140 million journeys per financial year. In 2022/2023 over 95 million journeys are expected by year end.

Attainment Challenge National Strategic Partnership: #YSAttain

In 2018, Young Scot launched the 'Attainment Challenge: National Strategic Partnership' (#YSAttain) alongside the Scottish Government and the NEC Scheme, to help close the poverty-related attainment gap and to tackle food and rural poverty.

#YSAttain aims to use the smart tech of the Young Scot NEC in innovative ways to improve the health and wellbeing of young people facing barriers to attainment and other inequalities. Over the past few years, Young Scot has supported Local Authorities to use the Young Scot NEC to provide practical, local entitlements to young people. The entitlements included local information, travel tickets, out-of-school food provision, access to leisure and extra-curricular activities, and help to reduce the cost of the school day. This work has demonstrated that offering extra entitlements, which are accessed using the card, is a discreet and non-stigmatising way of supporting young people.

Participatory Budgeting & E-Voting

Young Scot supports young people to engage with local participatory and rights-based budgeting activities using their e-voting platform that's linked to the Young Scot NEC. In 2022-23, 6,115 young people took part in 18 participatory budgeting and e-voting activities, casting nearly 16,000 votes – deciding how local budgets are allocated and spent.

Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme

Since the scheme launched on 31 January 2022, over 84 million journeys free at the point of access had been made; 71.8% of the estimated eligible population of children and young people had joined the scheme, with 667,000 cardholders across Scotland (as of 31 August 2023). On 1 September 2023, more than a quarter of a million free journeys were made by children and young people using their card.



Meet the partnership

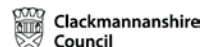
The Scheme is delivered through a partnership comprising of several local, regional, and national organisations.

Our delivery partners:



Scottish Local Authorities

All 32 Local Authorities in Scotland are responsible for the administration of cards for their residents, and are listed below:



Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) also administers some cards on behalf of authorities in its area.



The Improvement Service

The accountable body for the Scheme, the Improvement Service is the national improvement organisation for Local Government in Scotland. A company limited by guarantee, with 34 members: COSLA, Solace and Scotland's 32 Local Authorities. Its role is to deliver improvement support that helps Councils to provide effective community leadership, strong local governance and deliver high-quality, efficient local services.

The Improvement Service:

- provides leadership to Local Government and the wider system on transformation and improvement.
- develops capability and capacity for improvement within Local Government.
- supports Local Authorities to collaborate and work together to tackle shared challenges and drive improvement and innovation.
- supports Local Authorities to share knowledge, practice, learning and skills.
- delivers national improvement programmes for Local Government and partners, supporting Local Authorities to improve at a local level.
- provides research, data, and intelligence to inform Local Government's policy-making and decision-making and to drive improvement.
- delivers national shared service applications and technology platforms.
- brokers additional resources from out with the sector to support our improvement work.



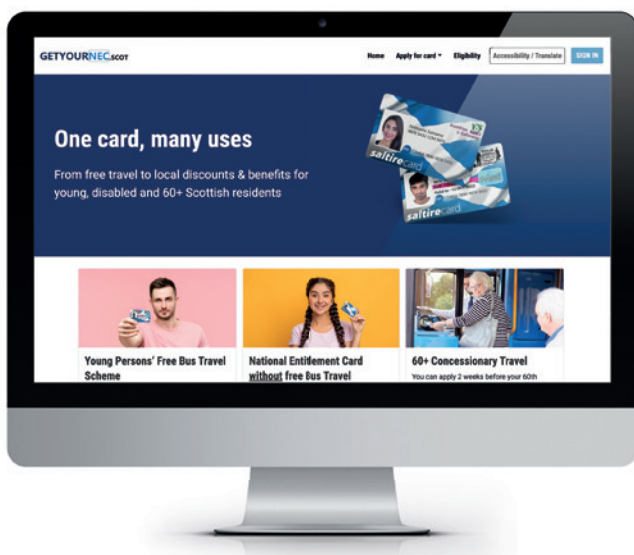


National Entitlement Card Programme Office

Hosted by Dundee City Council since its inception, The National Entitlement Card Programme Office (NECPO) was set up to deliver a managed service that support the 32 local councils and provides guidance and assistance with other potential developments and partners.

NECPO provides the following services:

- Delivery and management of the scheme including procurement the core NEC components (smartcards, their production, and a national system to manage them).
- Support, guidance and standard protocols for all Local Authorities and their authorised agents for data validation, verification, and authentication processes.
- Assistance with potential developments for the use of the NEC.
- Development and roll out of multi-application entitlements to services for all Scottish residents, ensuring all services are available to participating parties.

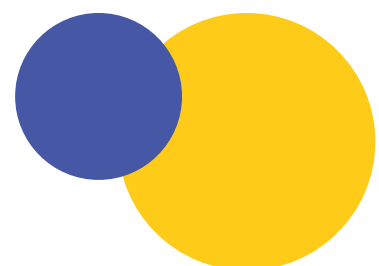


Transport Scotland

Transport Scotland is the national transport agency for Scotland, delivering the Scottish Government's vision for transport.

Transport Scotland is responsible for the Scottish Government's policy relating to bus, active travel, smart and integrated ticketing, and accessible travel, including:

- Enabling Local Authorities, operators, and delivery partners to improve sustainable, accessible local transport options and get the travelling public back on the buses.
- Promoting walking, cycling, and wheeling.
- Operating the concessionary bus travel scheme for disabled, older, and young people.
- Working with operators to ensure all journeys on Scotland's bus, rail, ferry, subway, and tram networks can be ticketed or paid for using smart technologies.
- Supporting the Mobility and Access Committee and the Active Nation Commissioner in their work to provide independent advice to Ministers.





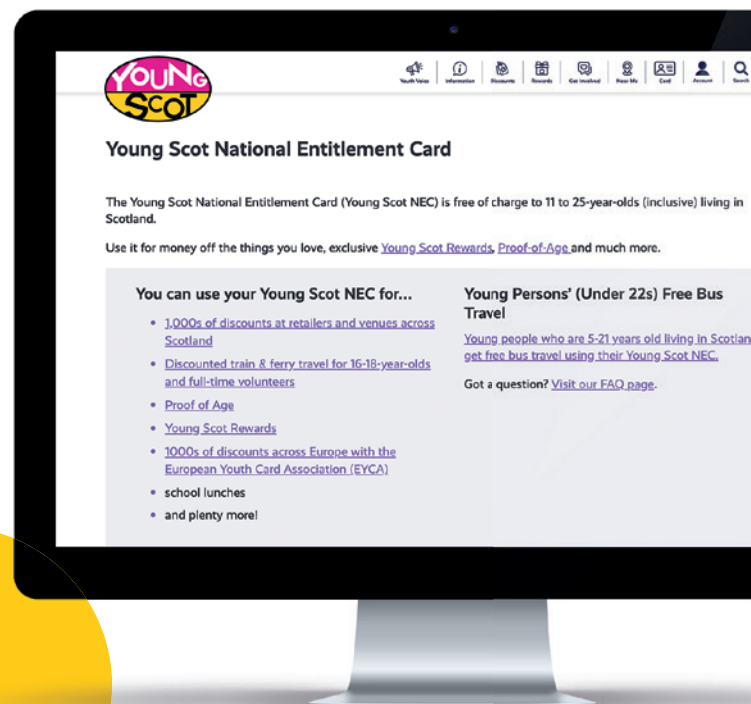
Young Scot

Young Scot is the national youth information and citizenship charity for 11 – 26-year-olds in Scotland. They support young people to thrive and make the most of their lives as they grow up. They do this by providing universal services for young people, combined with targeted and bespoke support to address stigma, inequalities, and inaccessibility.

Young Scot provides the following services on the Young Scot NEC:

- Young Scot branding on the NEC enables young people to access 'show and go' discounts on products, services, and activities from over 1300 outlets throughout Scotland.
- Through Young Scot's involvement with the European Youth Card Association, the Young Scot NEC also enables cardholders to access tens of thousands of discounts in 36 countries around Europe.
- Young Scot is the Proof of Age Standards Scheme (PASS) licence holder for Scotland and the PASS hologram is carried on the Young Scot NEC. This offers young people free legal proof of age and entitlement for age-restricted goods/services in Scotland and when travelling across the UK.
- The Young Scot NEC powers local community empowerment, participatory democracy activities and participatory budgeting exercises via a digital voting platform, with the Young Scot NEC as the unique identifier for participation.

- Young Scot Membership platform is powered by the mygovscot myaccount. Once young people sign up, they can take part in lots of different types of activities and earn Young Scot Rewards points, then exchange these for exciting rewards.
- The Young Scot NEC also provides targeted smart and enhanced entitlements for young people facing poverty and inequity and provides access to bespoke packages of entitlements for young people who face greater barriers in our communities – including the Young Carers Package – a special bundle of treats available to all young carers, aged 11 to 18 inclusive in Scotland. By June 2023, 2667 young carers are signed up to the package.





Scottish Government Digital Directorate

The Scottish Government Digital Directorate works to make Scotland a leading digital nation and provide leadership on all digital matters affecting the public sector.

Scottish Government Digital Directorate is responsible for:

- providing sponsorship of the Improvement Services Digital Public Services Portfolio which includes the National Entitlement Card Scheme.
- providing appropriate oversight to enable the National Entitlement Card to execute its objectives.
- providing links between Scottish Government policy and National Entitlement Card partners.

