

The SNP sent a message to Keir Starmer yesterday. They ...

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The SNP delivered a message to Keir Starmer on how to govern yesterday. In the Scottish budget announcement, SNP finance minister Shona Robinson announced an end to the two child benefit cap in Scotland and, as [the FT put it](#):

In a Budget that she said “delivers progress”, Robison set out a record £21bn for health and social care, including an extra £2bn for frontline NHS services. She also announced £768mn to fund affordable housing, an £800mn boost in social security benefits, universal winter fuel payments for pensioners and an expansion of free school meals.

I have my doubts at present as to how Robinson will deliver all this given the constraints on Scottish government finances that exist at present, and it is also uncertain whether the SNP will gain sufficient support in the Holyrood Parliament to pass all the budget measures, but the very obvious point that needs to be emphasised is that within these proposals there is a very clear message. That is that the SNP government cares.

It cares about children in poverty.

It cares about the redistribution of income.

It cares about pensioners.

It cares about healthcare.

It cares about those struggling to find a home.

And it cares about green issues.

How much it cares is constrained by Westminster.

What it can achieve will be constrained by deal making in Holyrood.

But, it has a story to tell. Not everyone will like it. The Tories will hate it. Labour's

puppet leader in Scotland, Anas Sarwar, will squirm when trying to reconcile his position (and opposition) to this with the need to appeal to the electorate in Scotland and simultaneously appease London.

But the audience for the SNP with this budget is people in Scotland, and the message being delivered is one that is the opposite of the far-right agenda of callous, deliberate indifference. The opposite to that far-right agenda is a caring agenda. The SNP has delivered that.

Keir Starmer should take note. He will talk about his 'missions' today and no-one will care because no one (Starmer included) seems to know what those missions are, and no one will care if GDP is 0.3 per cent higher or lower. What they want is a government that cares, and on the issues that the SNP has highlighted, Labour very obviously does not care.

I am not saying the SNP had got everything right. But its messaging is both clever, and believable. John Swinney is not the most inspiring of politicians. But he said children and the relief of poverty were his goals and he is walking his talk. That is what a competent politician does.

Starmer is nowhere near competent.

If the SNP can deliver this agenda Labour's brief return to favour in Scotland will not last for long.