

NEW VISION



Being

involvement



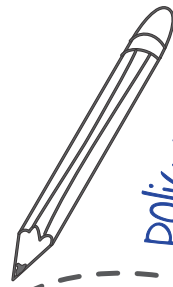
IDEAS

Heard

Helping to create the next generation of civic leaders in Scotland



leadership



policy making



NEW PERSPECTIVE

Responsibility



engaging



A study on young people engagement in Scotland
by John Ross Scott and Kristopher Leask

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Listening to the voice of young people

Maree Todd MSP
Minister for Children
and Young People



“One of the most powerful legacies we have of the Year of Young People is seeing young people involved in decision making in a meaningful way. Not just in a tokenistic way but giving them the power to be heard. When young people are involved in a meaningful way, we see the benefits through their energy, creativity and new ideas and, of course, we want that to continue. This should not only be a fruitful experience for the young people involved, but the nation will benefit.”



Suki Wan
Chair of the Scottish
Youth Parliament

“Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that young people have the right to have their views heard and for those views to be taken seriously. At the Scottish Youth Parliament, we can see for ourselves, every day, just how much young people thrive when they are given a channel to have their voice heard. It is great to read in this report how much progress has been made to ensure young people are listened to in local authorities across Scotland, and I hope that its publication will catalyse even greater progress across Scotland on this vital issue.”

**Councillor
Stephen McCabe**
Convention of Scottish
Local Authorities Children
and Young People Spokesperson



“With the Year of Young People drawing to a close, it is vital that we continue to work with our partners to ensure that young people are meaningfully involved in every level of governance in Scotland. This is, arguably, most important at local government level where decisions are taken that affect the day-to-day lives of young people, their families and communities. Decisions that affect our communities should be made by those who understand the issues they face, and to achieve this we must all work towards improving diversity within local democracy.”



Esme Leitch
Highland
Youth Convenor

“I don’t like it when people say that they are keen to give young people a voice. Young people already have a voice. I don’t see this as being about adults giving young people a voice it is more about adults listening more actively to the voices that are already there.”



Bruce Adamson
Children and Young
People's Commissioner
Scotland

"We don't ask children and young people for their views just because it's a nice thing to do or because we are told we have to. There's a reason that the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child identifies Article 12, 'the right to be heard' as one of the four general principles of the UN Convention. Participation matters; it helps inform better decisions and can transform services and communities. Embedding children's rights in the planning and delivery of services will not only improve the way our public services are run, it will lead to more engaged children and young people who are part of cohesive, more equal and respectful communities. The best way to guarantee this happens is by full incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law. Incorporation would demonstrate that Scotland truly is a rights-respecting society that values the views and experiences children and young people."



Huw Sherrard
The United Kingdom's Youth Delegate
to the Congress of Local and Regional
Authorities of the Council of Europe

"Scotland is almost unparalleled internationally for our progress in engaging young people in decision-making, which we owe to the tireless work of the Scottish Youth Parliament and others. However, as this report highlights, young people still face a postcode lottery for their engagement in decisions made by their local authority. With budgets tightening, and decisions made by councils becoming more and more important, it's vital that innovative approaches to local youth participation – like those described in this report – are championed across Scotland."



Young people have been at the forefront of changes throughout the Twentieth Century.

In 2014 the Scottish Independence Referendum reawakened their interest in politics in a new world linked by social media, then the Year Of Young People 2018 helped inspire and heighten that enthusiasm, opening doors to a different kind of engagement between politicians, at all levels, with young people. This has giving the voice of youth full credence and allowing it to influence decision makers.

This Independent Report – one of the most extensive undertaken in Scotland – has been written to act as a legacy for the Year of Young People. In it we hope to highlight ways in which good practice in youth engagement across Scotland can be shared, to the benefit of all, and – as a result bolster Scotland's lead in this field and help create a new breed of Scottish civic leaders to orchestrate change in the future.

**John Ross Scott and
Kristopher Leask**

Purpose of this study: Creating a legacy

Research on the level of youth engagement being carried out by councils across Scotland has not been undertaken on this scale.

This report aims to fill the void of unawareness that has led to young people in certain areas being left behind in local policy making. In places there is an inequality in opportunities for young people to engage with local politics and reap the multitude of benefits this entails. Local authorities also – as things stand – risk losing out on the contribution of young people to local policy making that international studies show is beneficial to all involved.¹

The Year of Young People initiative has provided a focus for all local authorities in Scotland to build on current work being done to involve children and young people – aged 12-25 – in local decision making. Improving youth engagement in Scotland is a much-needed legacy for the Year of Young People and if carried through should help create the next generation of Scottish civic leaders.

Key questions addressed by the study:

- 1) What are the initiatives and structures currently in place in Scottish local authorities that allow young people to get better involved in local governance?
- 2) What are the concerns associated with these initiatives and structures and what is regarded as best practice when it comes to the ways young people are currently engaged in policy-making?
- 3) Looking to the future, how could what we have be improved to secure effective and sustainable engagement with young people in years to come?
- 4) What can we learn from elsewhere to grow our youth participation in decision making?

This independent research is intended to compliment and build on the study 'The impact of Children and Young People's Participation on Policy Making'² which was commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2017. This 'Being Heard' report, however, highlights the current position of youth engagement in all 32 Scottish Councils whereas the earlier study looked at how young people are engaged within six selected organisations.

Limitations of this Study

This study is broad as it covers all 32 local authorities of Scotland. It attempts to log the variation of initiatives and structures used in all councils. Its limitation lies in its breadth compromising its focus. Any further study could aim to increase localised detail.

Furthermore, this study is limited in its reference to quantitative data. As a result, it relies solely on secondary qualitative data from interviews with those involved in initiatives or structures but, even so, it goes a step ahead of past studies which have focused more on selective areas where young people engagement works well.

It was not within the scope of this study to generate data on the impact of initiatives and structures. On this, further research would be required.

Limited resources restricted our ability to research and experience first-hand how these initiatives and structures function, but contacting more than one person in each local authority ensured a broad view.

Creating civic leaders

Youth engagement should not be seen as something trivial to be conceded to young people. It offers serious benefits not only for young people but the whole community.

Engagement at a local level nurtures an interest in local government. Findings from this study reflect this as many of the young people interviewed are or will be moving on to pursue studies in related areas such as Law, Politics, History or International Relations.

There is limited study into the benefits of youth engagement at a local level in the UK and internationally.³ Research which has been conducted, however, in the USA shows that increased youth civic involvement leads to greater adult community and political involvement which is crucial for any kind of volunteering. Furthermore, research shows that when young people get involved in their communities at an early age, they develop bonds and social networks within the community.

This in turn creates a sense of civic identity and morality resulting in adults who feel a strong sense of civic responsibility and pride in their local community. Finally, getting young people involved in local politics produces the local leaders of tomorrow. Improved political youth engagement leads to responsible, informed and valuable members of the workforce and civic leadership.⁴

"Now that 16 and 17-year olds can vote in all Scottish elections it is important to ensure that they have an equal role in democracy."

A more informed electorate composed of various interests also produces a better local democracy. Local politicians should be held to account by the entire community they represent. Now that 16 and 17-year olds can vote in all Scottish elections it is important to ensure that they have an equal role in democracy.

To deny all members of an electorate the ability to hold their elected representatives to account while in office is unjust as stated in the European Commission White Paper 2001, "one of the most compelling reasons for engaging with young people is that they themselves tell us that they want more and better opportunities to participate in decision making. Consequently, it is up to the public authorities to bridge the gap between young people's eagerness to express their opinions and the methods and structures which society offers"



Current statutory requirements

Taking account of children's views in decisions that affect them is now a statutory requirement for Ministers when delivering their duties under Part 1 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

But – as highlighted in the State of Children's Rights in Scotland report (2016) – this type of engagement remains 'ad hoc' with younger children and those with additional support needs perhaps missing out. Furthermore, legislated requirements for local authorities to consult with children and young people are even more limited. For example, Part 3 of the 2014 Act requires consultation with organisations that represent children and young people through children's services planning processes, but not directly with children and young people themselves.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) recognises that young people in Scotland have rights. Article 12 is aimed at ensuring that young people have the right to have their views heard on matters that affect them and for those to be taken seriously. In "General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard" section A – the Legal Analysis – stipulates that Article 12 "imposes a clear legal obligation on States parties to recognize this right and ensure its implementation by listening to the views of the child and according them due weight"⁵. The Legal Analysis importantly goes on to designate young people as holders of rights distinct from having their rights "derived from her or his vulnerability (protection) or dependency on adults (provision)."⁶

Furthermore, the General comment directly instructs states to work on the presumption that children have the capacity to form their own view and thus that it is not up to the child to "first prove her or his capacity"⁷ and that decision makers must ensure young people have "sufficient understanding to be capable of appropriately forming her or his own views on the matter"⁸ as "[the] right to information is essential, because it is the precondition of the child's clarified decisions."⁹

The General Comment also tackles tokenistic approaches to youth engagement. Point 28 re-enforces Article 12's stipulation that "simply listening to the child is insufficient; the views of the child have to be seriously considered when the child is capable of forming her or his own views."¹⁰ In section D the UNCRC's general comment further argues against a tokenistic approach very clearly; "The Committee urges States parties to avoid tokenistic approaches, which limit children's expression of views, or which allow children to be heard, but fail to give their views due weight."¹¹

On the meaningfulness of youth engagement, the General Comment also guides decision makers. Point 133 outlines that if "participation is to be effective and meaningful, it needs to be understood as a process, not as an individual one-off event"¹² Point 134 details nine criteria areas which determine how meaningful youth engagement is which are; respectful, relevant, child-friendly, inclusive, supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable. A full description of each is available on page 30 of the General Comment.¹³

In the General Comment's conclusion concisely lays out the changes necessary to achieve meaningful implementation of Article 12 as a "dismantling [of] the legal, political, economic, social and cultural barriers that currently impede children's opportunity to be heard and their access to participation in all matters affecting them. It requires a preparedness to challenge assumptions about children's capacities, and to encourage the development of environments in which children can build and demonstrate capacities. It also requires a commitment to resources and training."¹⁴ The dismantling of barriers and challenging of assumptions is, as the General comment says, a "clear and immediate legal obligation of States parties under the Convention. It is the right of every child without any discrimination."¹⁵

The proposals we list in this report go to the heart of that principle or beyond it and we believe that the more local authorities that put measures or structures in place of the kind referred to will go a long way to improving not just the rights of the child but also encourage young people to take more interest in politics and democracy.

Two important policies passed and now embedded into the workings of the Scottish Youth Parliament are:

- Scottish Councils should have a legal responsibility to facilitate and fund a youth-led representative body for all 12-25-year olds (inclusive) in the local authority as a minimum standard, and
- All young people should be involved in the services that affect them and should have the opportunity to get involved in local decision-making opportunities.

Added to this – in June 2018 – the following policy was passed by the Youth Parliament:

- All local authorities should have in place a formal structure to consult young people on decisions that will affect them, which includes a youth representative on key committees such as Education and Planning.

The Inclusion Charter also states that all children have the right to be included in every aspect of society and that Disabled Children should not have to ask or fight to be included in things other children do. Inclusion is a right in UK law (The Disability Discrimination Act) and that every child has the right to communicate.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 allows the Children and Young People's Commissioner to investigate cases affecting individual children and young people. So, children, young people, their parents and other adults who support them can ask the Commissioner to decide whether an individual's rights have not been respected, and he will then be able to make recommendations about what should be done to make things better.

Community Learning and Development sections in each council should 'empower people, individually and collectively to make positive changes in their lives and their communities through learning.

The principles that underpin practice are:

- **empowerment** – increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence matters affecting them and their communities;
- **participation** – supporting people to take part in decision-making;
- **inclusion, equality of opportunity and anti-discrimination** – recognising some people need additional support to overcome the barriers they face;
- **self-determination** – supporting the right of people to make their own choices; and
- **partnership** – ensuring resources, varied skills and capabilities are used effectively.

In addition, the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 places education authorities under a duty to secure that the education provided is directed towards the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the children and young people to their fullest potential. In order to achieve these aspirations, it is critical to engage children and young people.



How does Scotland compare?

There are many examples of civic youth engagement occurring right now across the world and across the border, in England. The English examples are naturally easier to assess and as a result comprise the majority of examples given.

Kenosha County – Wisconsin – USA: Youth in Governance

A 2006 study in Kenosha county found that only 23% of youth perceived that their community valued youth and only 27% believed that youth were given useful roles in the community. These results prompted the creation of the Youth in Governance Programme in 2007. “The purpose of the Youth In Governance programme is to create a model of youth empowerment within Kenosha County, through direct participation in local government. The overall goal is to bring the youth voice to community issues and concerns while fostering the development of confident, independent, and motivated youth leaders.”¹⁶

Young people in Kenosha county who wish to participate on this programme must meet several criteria based on their academic marks, location and availability/commitment. A recommendation from an adult who has knowledge of the youth’s abilities (*typically a school staff member*) which, along with the young person’s application, is reviewed by the Planning, Development and Extension Education Committee who then interview applicants and recommend youth members for appointment by the Kenosha County Board Chairman to serve on selected committees.¹⁷

Kenosha County Board produce an annual report¹⁸ of the programme which assesses the geographic distribution of the programmes participants, and basic data from surveys with the programme participants on the impact of the programme. The report is brief at only four pages long including both qualitative data from surveys and qualitative data in the form of answers to direct questions which the programme participants have provided.

NOTE: The Youth in Governance is a state wide programme active in several counties within Wisconsin including Racine County.¹⁹

A Councillor’s Workbook on engaging with young people – produced by the Local Government Association – England, June 2018²⁰

The English Local Government Association produced a guide for councillors specifically in how to engage young people in local politics. It states its intended purpose in the extract from the introduction below:

“This Local Government Association (LGA) workbook has been designed as a learning aid for councillors who want to consider ways of engaging effectively with young people and the organisations representing them within their ward. The workbook provides some signposting and ideas around the engagement of young people rather than it being a step by step guide as such.”²¹

The guide itself is a useful example of what could be produced in Scotland. It – not unlike the National League of cities guide mentioned above – provides information on why councillors should engage with young people; challenges they face; case studies; and resources for engaging young people in their own wards.

The Guidebook gives useful examples of effective youth engagement structures and programmes in England which would be easily transferable to a Scottish setting. The examples below are directly from the guidebook.

West Lancashire Borough Council

“Local school children enjoyed taking part in mock meetings of the council to learn more about how West Lancashire Borough Council operates. The Mayor of West Lancashire, Councillor Neil Furey, welcomed groups of young people to the council chamber for a day which included debates and mock voting exercises.

Each school appointed a 'chief officer' to help run the meeting alongside the mayor. The remaining children acted as councillors. In the morning the pupils took part in a lively session of discussion and interactive activities around the theme of 'Refuse and Recycling services in West Lancashire'. In the afternoon the high school pupils considered the question: 'Is Green Belt release justified in order to deliver housing and business space?' Following the debates, the pupils cast their votes at a 'polling station' specially set up for them. The idea was to give the children a taste of debating and decision-making processes."²²

Several Scottish Councils already undertaking mock meeting sessions which are aimed at making the learning process both educational and inspiring for those participating.

St Albans City and District Councils

One initiative from St Albans is a 'Youth Question Time'. "Open to sixth form and college student that study in the district, it provided the opportunity to put questions to a live panel of local councillors, empowering them to raise and debate a range of issues, furthering the understanding of local democracy."²³

Essex County Council

Supported by the Essex youth service, the 75 district representatives "decide on the priorities for young people and campaign to make a positive difference."²⁴ The initiative is very similar to the Highland Youth Parliament, based on a county rather than national scale. The YEA (Young Essex Assembly) focus and campaign on issues important to young people yet do not seem to have any substantial influence on local policy as an integrated part of local government. Rather, they are consulted by the Essex County Council as an external body instead of being an integrated part of the policy making process.

Essex also run a Youth Voice Champion within the body of the Young Essex Assembly (YEA). A role with less commitment, Youth Voice Champions (YVC's) are a link for the YEA in local areas and promote the YEA's work.

Lewisham

Lewisham County Council has a Young Mayor programme (initiated in 2004) which "provides a focus and a channel for young people's views to be heard by decision-makers"²⁵ The Young Mayor is elected by their peers in council run elections in schools and colleges and supported during their tenure by "young advisers and the young citizens' panel [and] have access to the full range of young people's forums, networks and school councils."²⁶

Similar in part to the Highland Youth Convener role, which we will discuss later, the position lasts one year and is mostly an advisory role with responsibility for voicing the concerns and views of the borough's young people. The Lewisham county council website details the responsibilities of the Young Mayor as:

- "supports, and is a spokesperson for, the borough's young people
- informs and advises the mayor on issues relating to young people
- works with the young advisers and young citizens' panel to inform the work of the mayor, Council and other decision-making bodies
- oversees a budget of at least £25,000"²⁷

Flemish Youth Council

The Youth Council of the French-Speaking Community is the official advisory body and voice of the French-speaking young people in Belgium. Its role is to have young people (16-30 years old) participating in the democratic process, especially by collecting their opinion about a variety of themes, that directly or indirectly affect them, to then relay it to the politicians. The Youth Council defends young people's interests and represents them at national and international level.

The Youth Council, however, has no decisional power and has a lobbying role instead. However, success has been had with concrete achievements resulting from Youth Council Lobbying such as: the withdrawal of security measures targeting young people; the limitation of discriminatory measures against young people regarding employment and unemployment; the introduction of lessons about affective and sexual life in school programmes and the integration of programmes of education to the media on the waves of RTBF (Belgian television and radio).

Electoral learning from Norway

In Scotland, while much comment is made of poor gender-balance on councils, little is said about age-balance.

When it comes to gender-balance many political parties have changed candidate selection processes in an attempt to improve the situation but in most areas this has had minimal affect with the current all-male Western Isles Council, for example, now searching for ways to make changes to its makeup with co-option of women to its committees as an option.

Little has been done at national or local government level, however, to tweak election processes to encourage more young people to stand for council – particularly in rural areas – and, as a result, the council chambers in towns and cities appear to have become accepted as being places still dominated by retired or semi-retired people, mostly men.

Across the EU we could find no country that has any statutory legislation which guarantees young people are elected to the national parliament with no quotas in place for young people.²⁸

In Norway, however, many political parties have taken it upon themselves to introduce a quota for young people on the ballot list. This is not a statutory requirement but an agreed rule. Candidates put forward on the ballot lists must include, at the top, two women, two men and a person under the age of either 31 or 33, depending on which party they are a member.

In Sweden too, some trials have been initiated by the government in recent years, in order to facilitate the conditions for young elected representatives at the local level.

So, is it time for the Scottish political parties to act in the same way as they have on gender equality and promote age equality? Or could the Scottish Government trial such an initiative?

In the Hordaland county of Norway – which governs 46 secondary schools with 17,000 pupils and takes in the City of Bergen – we spoke

to four local politicians and asked them how important this 'unwritten' party rule was for local democracy.

Beate Husa, Hordaland's Head of Culture, Sport and Regional Development, said: "Norwegian political parties try to nominate people under 33 at a high place on the election lists. In the Christian Democratic Party our intention is to put a person under 33 among the four names on top. Today the youngest person in the Norwegian parliament, Tore Storehaug, represents the Christian Democratic Party. He is 26 years old. There is little difference between men and women when it comes to the list. We nominate two women and two men among the four names on top.

"This has nothing to do with the council, it is the directions given out by the different parties. Our age stipulation is a person under 33 but others are difference."

In the case of the Centre Party (Senterpartiet) – which is also part of the coalition – the ruling is for candidates under 31.

Alexander Fosse Anderson, Vice Chair of Education and Health, who was originally elected as a youth representative for the Centre Party, said: "I think it is important that young people run for office because the council is responsible for services that are important for young people: education and public transportation. Young people know what the services should be like, and when they take part in council work I think the education system and public transportation system get better. When political parties use an Under 31 category they provide the council with talented young politicians that make the public services better for young people in Hordaland because of their knowledge and experiences.



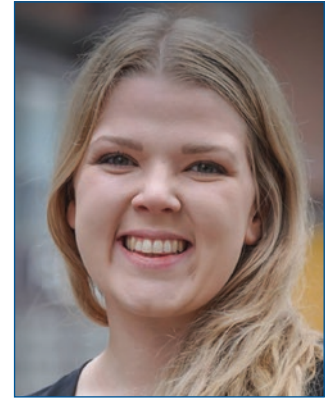
Beate Husa



Alexander Fosse Andersen



Aud Karin Oen



Sara Hamre Sekkingstad

Now aged 35, he added: "I am able to work as a teacher and as a council member due to an arrangement for the politicians of the council which makes it possible for us to attend political meetings without an economic loss. My employer is also helpful and encouraging when it comes to my political work."

Not all of the nine political parties within the 57-strong county council (Fylkesting) adopt the young person rule, but as Aud Karin Oen, group leader of the Socialist Left Party said: "We try to encourage people under 31 to stand but we can do that and get them elected without having rules about it. Often our youth party, which is called the Sosialistisk Ungdom, have their own candidates, and the mother party has to nominate one of them if they want their support."

The youngest member of the Hordaland Fylkesting is 25-year-old Sara Hamre Sekkingstad who was elected to the municipality council at the age of 18 and to the county council in Hordaland at the age of 22.

She said: "It's important to have young people in elected positions so that we are represented in the decision making process. This way our perspective is represented, listened to, and we are able to influence the direction our society is going. Many of the decisions that are made will directly affect young people, therefore it's important that young people also have a say on the council.

Sara also manages to continue studying for a degree in Aquaculture and Seafood (Civil Engineering) at Bergen University as well as undertaking her council work.

"It is quite a balancing act," she said. "As a student I have a flexible schedule, and most of the time it fits well together with council work. I do my best to study hard when I have more relaxed periods. Sometimes studies and politics are busy at the same time. When this happens I do my best to balance it, I focus on my studies and the most important cases in politics. As one of a party group I will always have someone to back me up at the busiest times."

This approach, while not a law, happens across Norway. Usually youth parties nominate the youth candidate who is presented as 'The Youth Candidate' in the election campaign. For County Councils like Hordaland, which is soon to merge with a neighbouring county to become Vestland, each party puts forward a list of at least seven names and decides how to set up its list taking into consideration internal rules on gender, geography and age. This seems a much fairer and better balances approach than we have within council ward elections in Scotland.

Sara added: "The parties all strive to have at least one or two young people among the top ten people on the list. It's important to have one or two young people in the top ten if you want young people to vote for your party. I will try to stand again for election for Vestland, but because of geography, age and gender I am likely to be further down the list."

All four Hordaland Councillors say the system does not make much difference to the gender balance of the council – which is not too bad anyway – but it makes the council much more representative of those it serves.



Jens Hestnes Andersen

“The heart and mind of youth was not made for containment and silence, but rather created for exploration and a listening ear”.

There is a saying in Norway: “Ungdom er fremtiden, la oss ta del i å forme den” – which translated means “Youths are the future, let us take part in shaping it.” Politics in Norway are in many ways influenced by the Norwegian youth on both micro, middle and macro level. At the schools as well as in national politics, the youths always get to speak their mind when something that affects them is being decided.

Like in Scotland, the schools have their own ‘pupil councils’, which are required by Norwegian law. Most municipalities and counties also have ‘youth councils’, and there are ‘youth parties’ within every large political party as well as unbiased one-cause youth organisations on a macro-level.

As for the principle of participation, in Norway all the work concerning youths must take youths’ voice into consideration. If a new school is built, there is always a planning group at which young people get their say in how it should look and work. If a new bill is proposed, youth organisations must always have their say before any bill can be passed. Norway is built upon a principle of participation and the principle is based on the thought that everyone should get their say even if they are not yet able to vote.

Seventeen-year-old Jens Hestnes Andersen, a member of the youth county counsel of Hordaland and Mayor of Askøy youth municipality counsel, told us: “This principle is what makes the youth stand up for what they believe is right and try to change the world for the better for the generation that comes after. Perhaps the most visible way the Norwegian young people participates in democracy is through the youth parties which are all tied to their mother political party through ideology and shared representatives. The youth and mother parties have a strong connection and often the youth influence the mother party on issues and that ends up being to the youths’ advantage.

“The youth parties work as youth counterparts to the mother party and they’re always challenging the mother parties to see the world from another perspective. They are often more innovative and radical than their mother parties and are also very often the ones that push for bills to be passed and for the mother parties to go back to their core values if they are sliding away from them.”

Was continuity in the youth parties a problem?

“Not at all. Since the youth parties have a high exchange of their members they always have new input and ideas on how to solve the problems we face in modern society. The creativity makes the youth parties into gold mines for older politicians who might lack the innovative mind that they need to take their country forwards into the future.”

All countries have one-cause groups that fight for what they believe in and, in Norway, some of these are “youth only” organisations, with two examples being ‘Natur og Ungdom²⁹’, a youth organisation working for the environment, and ‘Elevorganisasjonen³⁰’, the Norwegian student union. They focus on one topic and influence the politics as a result. The government recognises their input as the voice of youth. Often compromises have to be reached if the youth organisations disagrees with the governing politicians.

Jens Hestnes Andersen said: “This is a good way of involving youth in political decisions taken nationally. It assures the government that it has the youth perspective and that ‘the young side’

gets their say. These one-cause groups are also sometimes rebellious and have big protests against the state. This is something not very common, but it may occur occasionally if there's something the youths find really upsetting."

In schools, the pupils' council speak for the pupils. The effectiveness of these varies between different local regional councils but, provided there are adults to assist the pupils councils they are often a great success.

While the Norwegian Government has its own state-independent organisations that help make sure that the youth is heard, the municipalities and counties of Norway have created their own way of giving their young ones a voice through middle-level institutions like the 'youth municipality counsel'³¹ and 'youth county counsel'³² which appear to be a growing phenomenon in Norway and a trend that gives the youth in Norway a stronger voice and a way to participate in local politics.

Many of the politicians in Norway sees the youth wing as a resource to get more voters and a broader perspective on what they're fighting for. The view they have is that youth is a resource that

should be used to build a strong and creative political force.

In conclusion Jens Hestnes Andersen said: "This force is what drives the very soul of youth participation and what makes new youths get engaged in causes in their local milieu and later in national politics. There are a lot of ways in which the Norwegian youths can participate but what is most important is that the young people are in charge themselves and that the adults view and what is 'realistic' doesn't get in the way of the young innovative thoughts that's presented. The youth of Norway have a lot of good ways of getting their voice heard, and this also reflects back on the democracy we live in.

"When the youth perspective is taken into consideration, young people will utter their way of thinking and a new perspective on politics will be taken into the debate, and therefore Norway becomes a richer democracy. When young people are allowed to speak their minds freely, more innovative ideas come to light and we see more solutions to modern problems. The heart and mind of youth was not made for containment and silence, but rather created for exploration and a listening ear."






What Scotland's Councils do now?

Between December 2017 and June, 2018 we contacted all 32 councils in Scotland and asked them a straightforward question 'How Do You allow young people to engage with the work of your councils.' In July we sent out the findings to all councils and asked if any amendments were required.

This highlights the position as of October 30th, 2018. We have excluded Year of Young People events in this summary – including the 'Entrepreneurial Projects' initiative undertaken in some areas – and we have also taken it as read that most areas have a Youth Participation and Engagement Plan.

Alongside each council are icons highlighting whether or not three of the key initiatives being examined later in this report are being undertaken by the council. They are:

-  young people on service committees,
-  a Councillor as a Young Person's Champion, and
-  an established Champions Board.

Aberdeen City

At present, 75% of all local authority schools (primary, secondary and special settings) across Aberdeen City are working towards the Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA), this involves whole school communities embracing, promoting and embedding the rights of the child in all of their work and across the wider school community. The Council has both the first primary and first secondary school in Scotland to achieve the highest accolade in this area – the Rights Respecting Schools 'Gold' Award. An important part of achieving the Rights Respecting Schools award at any level is an emphasis on providing children and young people with a voice which affects decision-making at both a school and community level. Schools are actively encouraged to provide

children and young people with support to affect decisions that directly affect them. This may include school improvement planning and school policy review, but also wider decisions at a local, national or international level.

In 2017 the council was accepted onto the UNICEF 'Child Friendly Cities and Communities' programme, one of only five local authorities in the UK and the only one in Scotland to do so. Working to become a child friendly city is a natural next step for the Council. The programme will see the authority work with its children and young people to develop effective mechanisms to ensure that their voices directly influence and inform strategic decision making across the partnership. One of the steps as part of the initial 'Discovery' phase requires the council to map pre-existing participation structures for children and young people across the city and to create a governance structure which enables children and young people with opportunities to shape and affect decisions related to the programme. This will ensure that the council designs services to suit, not only the current generation but also, the next generation.

It challenges the council to ensure that it establishes a city-wide culture which respects and promotes the rights of the child and that it communicates with children and young people in a manner that is suitable and accessible and provide them with a meaningful voice in decision making. The culmination of this work will identify Aberdeen as the first and only UNICEF-accredited 'Child Friendly City'. It has received universal support from across the community partnership to this aim and has identified a number of key strategic and operational personnel who will support this work including

the appointment of three 'Champions' for children and young people. To date, Champions, Angela Scott (CEO Aberdeen City Council) and Councillor John Wheeler have been identified as Champions and the council is in the process of identifying a third.

The Aberdeen Pupil Voice decision making group meets approximately every six weeks to discuss and influence a range of strategic decisions both within education and beyond. The group comprises two to four secondary aged pupils from each of its secondary schools and the group is chaired and led by these pupils. In the past, the group has collaborated with professionals from the NHS (to help support the development of anti-tobacco resources and approaches for young people and as part of the 'Better Eating Better Learning initiative), Aberdeen City Council staff (to support the development of its Inclusion work and related policies), Police Scotland (as part of work related to the 'Prevent' strategy), elected members of the council (as part of consultation work related to the City Centre Master Plan) and they have also attended national conferences for children and young people. Furthermore, representatives from the group have attended and presented seminars at the Aberdeen Learning Festival on the topic of meaningful participation with children and young people.

The Council has employed five care experienced young people as Children's Rights Development Assistants, which brings the voice of care experienced young people into how the council develops and improves its services.

The Children's Parliament is Scotland's centre of excellence for children's participation and engagement. Their interest is in working with children, the adults who love and care for them, and the wider communities in which they live, to support our country to meet its obligations to our youngest citizens. There are few examples in Scotland of engagement with children under the age of 14 in terms of the good strategic planning. Aberdeen City Council has led the way with its support for the Imagineer programme to date. The value and success of direct engagement with children aged 9 to 13 years old lies in developing approaches that are age/stage appropriate and connecting the insight provided by children to the right people and structures.

The Imagineers are children aged 9 to 13 years old who are supported by Children's Parliament and partner schools (currently four primary and four secondary schools). They were selected after work with 300 children in the City's four Attainment Challenge primary schools. Initial work by the 300 children fed in to Locality Plans and since mid-2016 the 25 Imagineers have been exploring what children need to be healthy, happy and safe – at home, at school and in the community. The children have influenced how Children's Services and Education are planned, and in 2018 have had a bigger impact on the City by designing and delivering a workshop attended by over 100 professionals working across sectors (Emergency Services, Culture, Play, Sports, Leisure, Housing and Health) so that they too can see the City through the eyes of children, and with children's insight consider their role in supporting the City to become a place where children live a good life.

The Council also works with young people and their schools in more individual ways – young people can submit petitions to the Council's committees and these only require the support of five names; a recent example was a request that the Council establish cycle lanes along a busy road leading to the pupil's primary school. The pupils then attended the committee meeting and presented their petition. Schools can also visit the Council Chamber and hold mock debates on a matter of interest to them.

The City Council also has a Champions Board which is inclusive of and supported by elected members as well as officers from the local authority and its key partners. All those concerned are committed to a mandate to seek opportunities to change and improve their areas or responsibility to meet the needs of care-experienced young people. Linked to this is the development of a Corporate Parenting participation strategy that identifies outcomes and activities and which will be the focus of the Life Changers Trust support funding. When it comes to the gathering of views of care-experienced young people, these are expressed to the Champions Board by them, supported by a Participation Development Worker funded by the Life Changers Trust and employed on behalf of the council by Who Cares.

Aberdeenshire

Youth participation in Aberdeenshire is all about putting children and young people in the centre of policy and practice and – to that end – Youth Voice is one of the key areas of Community Learning and Development’s work with young people service in Aberdeenshire, as it works to create and support ways in which young people can get involved in decision making at individual, community, local authority and national level.

Aberdeenshire’s Youth Participation Structure includes many different groups including Young Carers, pupil councils, Pupil Participation Forums, Aberdeenshire Youth Council, Community Youth Platforms (set up in 17 learning communities in the three different areas North, South and Central), Special Interest Groups (LGBT, Syrians New Scots, Scottish Travellers) and the region’s seven MYSPs.

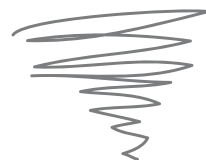
An Aberdeenshire Council Youth Shadow Management Team has also been established where young people meet with the Council’s Strategic Leadership Team, including the Chief Executive and all Directors, three to four times per year as a sounding board to inform and influence decisions.

A Champions Board for those with care-experience was launched in Aberdeenshire as far back as 2014, which has young people, senior officers, local elected members, and representatives from the NHS, Police and Voluntary Sector all serving on it as equal members to discuss and make decisions on agendas set by young people. The council also has two Councillors appointed as Children’s Champions for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. There is also a Young Persons Organising and Campaigning Group made up of young people aged 14 and over who are, or have been, looked after away from home. The group gives young people the opportunity to share their views and experiences of being looked after so that the services can learn from them. A campaign in the past has been ‘We are The Bairns’ aimed at improving the experience of looked after children in school. Linked to it is a Guide for teaching and support staff in schools called ‘Don’t Judge – We’re no Different From You’, and a DVD for use in staff training and with 1st-3rd year secondary school pupils in PSE.

The Aberdeenshire Youth Bank is also a new innovative grant making and empowerment initiative run by young people for young people. The council has also an Aberdeenshire Charter



transport



rural issues



For Children and Young People, developed by young people, which includes a clauses that young people be included in any decisions made about their lives, that their voices are heard and that they be respected and that their worries are taken seriously.

Accreditation through the Saltire Award and the Youth Achievement Award scheme is used to recognise and assist in helping young people widen their skills and development. All aspects of the work undertaken by Aberdeenshire Council in engaging with its young people is highlighted in its Community Learning and Development Services 'Work with young people: Challenging Lives, Strengthening Communities. 'Every 3 months an Aberdeenshire Youth Voice Matters Newsletter is published online³³ to provide an update on youth engagement, action and representation in Aberdeenshire. Updates are provided by youth practitioners and our members of the Scottish Youth Parliament, Year of Young People (YoYP18) Ambassadors, Aberdeenshire Youth Forum, Community Youth Platforms and Specific Youth Issue/Interest Groups.

Angus

Angus Council is currently working with its young people to co-design new mechanisms that will allow it to effectively engage and involve young people in the improvement of communities in the county. This may involve the establishment of approaches such as a Youth Council and the development of strategies for some of the area's most vulnerable citizens, including looked after children and young carers.

The Council is currently working with its young people to explore which mechanisms are most suitable for engagement. It does not currently have young people appointed to any of its committees but is in discussions about alternative approaches. A process is in place that allows individuals to provide deputations to committees and young people have taken this opportunity on specific occasions.

Within its Angus Local Outcomes Plan 2017 there are links to a number of key documents which have a particular focus on young people, most notably the collaboration between Angus/ Perth & Kinross and City of Dundee Councils, the 'Tayside Plan for Children, Young People

and Families', praised as a highly ambitious joint production where partners and staff share a commitment to integrated, partnership working.

Angus Council has a named Councillor who is the spokesperson for young people and has also recently undertaken a participatory budgeting process with young people. It is currently involved in a range of conversations about the future of its school estate and the voices of its children and young people are at the centre of this process.

The authority has a Champions Board where care-experienced young people have had very positive engagement with elected members. The council takes all the opportunities it can to consult, involve and engage its young people. A recent example was a review of its secondary school week which was informed through comprehensive focus groups with young people.

Argyll and Bute

Argyll and Bute Council does not currently have any young people appointed to committees. The reason given for this is that meetings are held during the day which would mean pupils being taken out of school to attend.

The council does, however, engage with young people through its Youth Forum and Corporate Parenting Board and the Council Leader/Provost keeps in touch informally with the areas MSYPs – this is something the council hopes to build upon. The Council's Scheme for Community Councils in the area has a requirement that they seek to engage with young people.

In addition to this there is an extensive engagement programme incorporated into its Integrated Children's Services Plan which extends beyond the council to the Community Planning Partnership and features a series of events and opportunities for young people to participate in.

A Big Conversation event was scheduled take place on November 7th, 2018 with young people from across Argyll and Bute taking part in a Question and Answer session with the council leader. Other elected members and local MSYPs were also included on the panel. Similar events have been held in recent years.

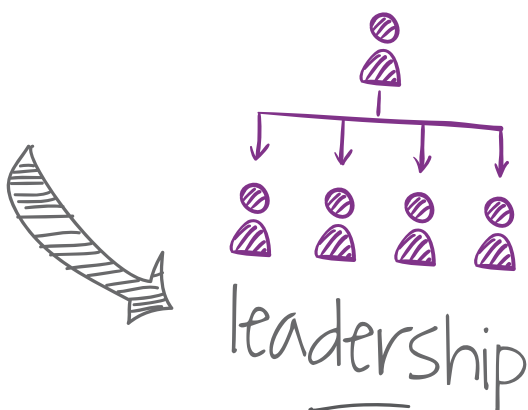
Clackmannanshire

Members of the Clackmannanshire Youth Council meet with the Education Management team on a regular basis. Pupil Parliaments/Councils have been established in all secondary schools, where a wide range of young people influence decisions that directly relate to them at school and authority level.

Members of the Youth Council meet with individual elected members and service managers when issues are raised. Moves are also afoot to ensure that the council engages with young people in a meaningful way when it comes to proposed annual budgets.

The Youth Council has also been involved in the self-evaluation of the Education Service Business Plan and plays a key role in carrying out a Youth Consultation every three years, results from which are fed back to the Community Planning Partnership, providing local evidence on interests and perceived needs and issues. In all 34 young people have been involved in the planning and implementation of the most recent consultation, with assessments gained through crowd surveys and focus groups with a 48% response rate. The council aims to accredit the work members have undertaken through the Participative Democracy Certificate.

As part of their assessment, young people in Clackmannanshire are looking to develop a standard for 'Youth Engagement and Participation' with Community Planning Partners and aim to implement the Clacks Youth 100, these young people will engage with and develop pledges with key stakeholders, services within each educational establishment, community planning partners and elected members, on how they will address the recommendations and how progress is tracked.



The Clackmannanshire Youth Council will be using results to develop their manifesto while the pupil parliaments will be taking on key recommendations to be carried out within the schools by young people.

Dumfries and Galloway

In March 2018, Dumfries and Galloway Council launched its Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy which mapped out a new way in which the authority intended to engage with young people. The strategy was developed by staff from all council directorates alongside a group of young people including local MYSPs – a good example of a council co-producing a strategy with people that it affects.

While the council does not have young people on committees, this is being reviewed, and – like most other councils across the country it has a Youth Council and the Council's Young People's Champion, Councillor Adam Wilson, is a member of the Youth Council. His role as Young People's Champion only came about at the last local government election in 2017 and is still considered to be a relatively new role, but so far there have been real tangible benefits to having an elected member with a clear commitment to promoting and advancing the rights, opportunities and participation of young people across our region. (See Later)

One of the main challenges within Dumfries and Galloway is related to the size and rurality of the region. Bringing young people together is challenging due to expensive public transport with limited evening and weekend provisions. Additionally, for regional gatherings this can result in up-to 2+ hours travel for young people living in the far corners of Dumfries and Galloway.

Dumfries and Galloway has a Champions Board that sits alongside its Youth Work Services and is specifically for young people who has experienced care. The council have a four-tiered approach to participation; one-to-ones are delivered with young people who are not yet comfortable to engage in a group setting; targeted youth work provisions that bring young people together in their local community for an activity such as cooking, art, sport or living skills on a weekly or fortnightly basis; Listen2Us for young people who want to take the lead

and be vocal about the challenges facing young people in care from across our region and finally; the Champions Board meetings that bring together young people from Listen2Us and senior managers and decision makers who have a responsibility for ensuring they fulfil their corporate parenting role.

Within these meetings, young people set the agenda and work alongside their corporate parents to identify solutions that will result in young people being parented better by the Local Authority and other Public Bodies with a duty to do so.

The council also runs needs assessments with young people every two years that identify issues being experienced by young people, themes and topics they would like to have more information about, what type of services they believe there is a need for as well as when and where these should take place. This information is then used to inform and ensure that the services delivered are in keeping with the needs and experiences of young people living, working and studying within the region.

Needs assessments are multi-agency consultations and the results from which can be accessed by a range of partners to better inform the collective design of services for young people. This year, however, the council is running '10,000 voices' throughout the duration of 2018. This project utilises the Scottish Government Place Standards and is gathering in information related to how young people experience and perceive their communities on a range of themes from identity and belonging to safety, sense of control to quality of facilities. The results of this will then be used to inform a five year strategic plan for young people's services as well as provide the new Regional Youth Council with a mandate to engage with decision makers and service managers on issues relevant to young people in the area.

Dundee

Dundee City Council has one young person, nominated by the city-wide Pupil Council, serving as a non-voting member on its Children and Families Services Committee (See Young People Serving On Committees later in the report).

The city's Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament and members of Dundee Youth Council meet with councillors to discuss issues

of concern – these included a meeting between the Council Leader and Convener of the Children and Families Committee and Youth Council members to discuss the young people's campaign to tackle period poverty, and another between Youth Council members and the Convener of the Community Safety Committee to discuss police and community relations with young people.

Dundee City Council has also created a new role within the council – Children and Young Persons Spokesperson – to ensure that there is a cross-service focus on young people's issues. Many of the issues that are raised by young people relate to a range of services and the Council agreed to appoint an elected member with an overarching remit to cut across all services.

In addition, the Council has established a Dundee Youth Fund which can award grants totalling £25,000 to projects and activities that are run for or by young people. All applications are assessed by a panel of young people aged between 10 and 26. (See Youth Funds)

A full study of children and young people in the area is shown in the Tayside Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2017-2020 – a joint production and a first in Scotland – which takes in the City of Dundee, Angus and Perth and Kinross. Dundee, itself, has 592 Looked After Children (2.2% of all children in the city). The Tayside Partnership intends to involve children and young people in decision-making and planning processes that affect them.

Dundee City Council's corporate parenting strategy included the establishment of a Champions Board to establish the needs of looked after and previously looked after children. It will provide a platform for looked after children to engage with their 'corporate parent' and make their needs known. The Champions Board brings together Chief Officers, Elected Members, young people and their supporters to discuss and make decisions on an agenda set by the young people themselves through a Young People's Participation Group. The process is intense and dynamic and has led to a significant improvement in self-esteem and confidence for many of the individual young people involved as well as a better understanding by all of the issues affecting children and young people.

East Ayrshire

East Ayrshire Council does not have young people on any of its service committees, but it has various youth fora, including a Young People's Shadow Cabinet developed over the past year. Prior to this the council had a Children and Young People's (C&YP) Representatives Forum which met four times a year as a Committee and four times as an Executive Group.

The C&YP Forum and Executive Group had three elected members on board who regularly took views and suggestions on issues from the meetings and returned to subsequent meetings with answers or solutions, but the Young People's Shadow Cabinet is a lot more inclusive. Children & Young People's Cabinet Representatives have also co-delivered the elected members seminars.

It has also been established to allow young people the chance to shadow and work with the Leader and Chairs (portfolio holders) of standing committees and senior officers within the Main Cabinet.

Over the past year Councillor Leitch, the Depute Provost, has been appointed the East Ayrshire Children's Champion.

Young people in East Ayrshire also participate in the Community Planning Partnership and Youth Summit events with those participating in the former being nominated through the Young People's Cabinet. Ayrshire also has a Connected to Change group (similar to what others call a Champions Group) – a forum for care-experienced youngsters to give views on services provided.

Throughout the year focus groups are held and surveys/questionnaires completed by the young people of East Ayrshire to assist elected members as and when required. Almost 1,000 young people provided feedback in recent consultation regarding a Health and Wellbeing Survey (See Other Initiatives).

A member of the Young People, Sport and Diversion Youth Work Team currently attends the Licencing Forum representing young people. This officer acts as a conduit between the Licencing Forum and East Ayrshire's young people.

East Dunbartonshire

East Dunbartonshire Council are in the process of developing a new Youth Council and elections will take place at the same time as elections for the Scottish Youth Parliament in early 2019. Once elected, discussions will take place to agree which committees and bodies young people will be represented on.

The council is currently developing a new community engagement strategy and the Youth Council will provide a key means by which young people's voices is heard on a range of issues.

In the past East Dunbartonshire has had representatives on a number of council committees and at these young people had speaking rights. At the current time, however, due to other commitments, local MSYP's are unable to sit on any committee.

East Dunbartonshire Council and the Health and Social Care Partnership are currently in the process of setting up a Young Persons Champions Group, specifically to give a voice to care-experienced young people.

East Lothian

East Lothian Council does not have young people co-opted to any of its committees but does have young people on the East Lothian Youth Sub Group of the Area Partnership and any topics can be filtered through that group or the Youth Council or Pupils Councils to the council itself. There are also several young people delegated to the main area partnership groups but, as one official from the council said: 'These meetings are long and not very Young People friendly.'

The Council holds an annual Youth Summit, called 'Listen & Learn' in past years, at which up to 150 young people give their views on a range of topics. Added to that a comprehensive questionnaire, highlighting a wide range of topics, is undertaken by P7, S2 and S4 pupils each year with the outcomes used to inform services.

Young people in East Lothian also took part in a Participatory Budgeting event in 2018 when around £40,000 was granted to youth services in two areas of the county with the decision on who

should benefit from the cash decided upon by the young people themselves.

They also participate in the East Lothian Champions' Board, a forum which allows care-experienced young people a chance to air their views on the way their care is provided.

East Renfrewshire

While East Renfrewshire does not have young people appointed to its Education committee, the work of that committee, the wider council and schools is influenced by young people in different ways.

Each school has a Pupil Council, with pupils elected democratically to serve on it each year. They meet regularly to discuss pertinent issues and to advise on key decisions. In addition to this, each school has a range of other 'Pupil Voice' committees, groups and activities designed to maximise pupil engagement and participation with findings reflected in school priorities and plans.

There are also Director's Forums – 'Primary' and 'Head Boy and Girl' – in the former, representatives from each primary school council, and in the latter, two head pupils from each secondary school – meet regularly with the Director of Education to update her on pressing issues within their schools. At these meetings areas of the curriculum are regularly discussed.

Pupils views are captured annually in questionnaires designed to identify areas for improvements within schools. Questions mirror those used by Education Scotland and inform both school and Education Department planning. Pupils also complete questionnaires as part of the process of Thematic Reviews of schools, clusters of schools or themes. For example, a study of pupil participation across primary and secondary schools produced around 5700 responses.

Groups of pupils regularly take part in Focus Groups for a range of purposes, for example, Health and Wellbeing with 30 focus groups gathering views in nine school settings. Pupils are also consulted when the authority plans establishing a new school, moving an existing school or the change of a delineated catchment

area. They are then an integral part of the design process for new establishments and the naming of them.

The authority also, at the turn of the year 2018 formed a Champions Board which gives care experienced young people a chance to help improve young people's experiences of care within East Renfrewshire. They are held on a quarterly basis and are jointly chaired by a young person and the council's Chief Executive. Two young people also currently sit on the council's Corporate Parenting Group.

In addition to this there is Community Learning and Development-led engagement which allows youth forum members to engage with Councillors, organise young people hustings, 'Question and Answer' sessions for young people around core issues concerning young people including PSHE, Transport and Mental Health, and meetings between MSYPs and Councillors.

Edinburgh (City of)

In the City of Edinburgh, Young Edinburgh Action (YEA) is informed by the views of young people and professional, academic theory and the needs of the city council. It enables young people to set an agenda for action and supports groups of young people to undertake research and make recommendations on topics about which they feel strongly. The approach draws on academic research suggesting that a move away from formalised participation structures towards opening up spaces for inquiry, dialogue and action can enable young people's meaningful participation and active citizenship (Percy Smith, 2010).

The YEA model is made up of several interconnected core activities that respond to and feed into other youth services in Edinburgh and across Scotland, including Young Edinburgh Leaders For Change – a 40-hour training programme for young people across Edinburgh which helps to develop confident and able young people who can participate effectively and encourage others to get involved in the democratic process; Gatherings that take place annually and are planned and facilitated by young people; Action Research Groups – which enable a core group of six to 15 young people to

explore and present the views of a wider group of young people, with topics examined being those selected at the Gatherings; and Conversations for Action, which are convened at the end of the process where young people and adult decision-makers come together to develop action plans.

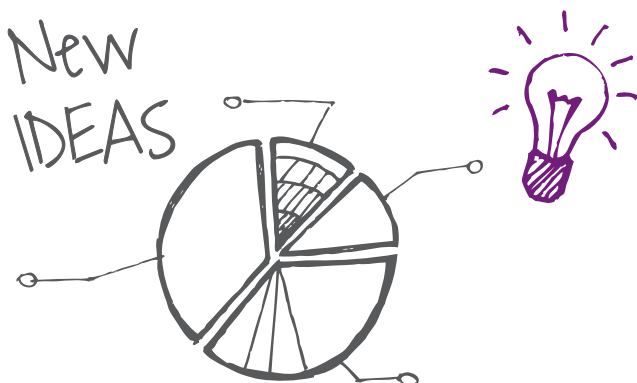
Subjects taken through the process to date include Gender Inequality – which led to the publication of a storybook for 4-7 year olds that challenges traditional gender stereotypes), Mental Health (with young people organising a consultation day for over 130 young people whose views will be included in NHS Lothian’s review of young people’s services) and LGBT+ Issues (working with LGBT Youth Scotland, young people have developed an online survey completed by 880 young people and teachers).

YEA staff also support Edinburgh’s MSYPs inputting into Scottish Youth Parliament national campaigns.

In addition to this, City of Edinburgh has a Councillor designated as young People’s Champion and also has a Champions Board that provides a forum for care-experienced young people to engage with and participate in policy, planning and consultation on issues that lead to improved outcomes for looked after and accommodated children and care leavers.

There isn’t a young person on the city’s Education, Children and Families Committee as yet as discussions are still ongoing in terms of how young people’s views can best be represented at committee.

Most schools in Edinburgh have Pupil Councils which allow pupils to express views in order to influence specific school projects, and all primary school pupils from P3 upwards are asked to complete the Growing Confidence



Pupil Wellbeing Questionnaire, consisting of statements on among others, self-regard and self-confidence, resilience and personal coping skills. Secondary school pupils complete a different survey which is based on the Education Scotland pre-inspection questionnaire.

Following on from a pilot engagement project funded by the Scottish Government in 2017³⁴, City Of Edinburgh Council has started a year-long project called ‘What kind of Edinburgh?’ which involves adult decision-makers working with children and young people. The aim is to develop relationships so that decision-makers understand things better from the child/young person’s point of view, use this understanding to deliver better services and make sure children and young people know they have done the things they said they would. The Children’s Services Plan identifies strategic outcomes which help structure the engagement, focusing on the child/young person’s views on themes such as participation, learning, poverty, physical and mental health and wellbeing, equality and equity. The City has used the opportunity of Year of Young People 2018 to explore the idea of Edinburgh as a children and young people friendly city and will develop the approach as a legacy of the year.

Falkirk

Falkirk Council has two pupil representatives on its Education Executive serving alongside two religious representatives and two parent representatives. The pupils can take an active part in debate, but do not have voting rights.

Falkirk Council Children’s Services actively encourages and supports school pupil’s forums and school councils within each of its schools, each of which makes representation to the Head of Schools and the Director of Children’s Services on issues they feel are important to their school community.

Falkirk Champions Board was formally launched in September 2017 as a means of giving looked after children within the Falkirk Council area a voice on how they are cared for, and to influence policy and practice. Members of Falkirk’s Champions Board regularly meet with Falkirk Council Chief Executive, Falkirk Council Director of Children’s Services and the Leader of Falkirk

Council to raise issues relating to LAC and care experienced young people and to seek a constructive solution to these issues. Falkirk's community planning partners also support young people's active participation with local decision making within a variety of youth groups and youth fora. This approach is central to the way that work with children and young people is delivered locally.

Falkirk Council actively supports four MSYP's, and children and young people are playing a central role within Falkirk's community planning partners approach to locality planning. The Place Standards have been adapted to make them more appropriate for children and young people, and these have been used across the Council area, within every secondary school and a large number of primary schools. Children and young people's input has helped shape the actions contained within each locality plan and also the work of the locality theme groups.

In Spring 2018, Falkirk Council conducted a review to assess how effectively the council engages with young people, to strengthen and prioritise areas for improvement and to provide an insight into how young people wish to engage with the Council. This work is now being taken forward with the input of young people.

Young people from across the Falkirk Council area are due to visit the Young People's Council in Creteil, France in 2019 to explore how youth engagement has helped redesign more appropriate services for young people within the Creteil area. As well as this, in September 2018, Falkirk Council was successful in securing external funding to develop a project with young people that will focus on building the capacity of a group of young people to become Service Design Change Agents. The young people will work side by side Service Mangers within Falkirk Council to promote new delivery models that fully take accounts of the needs and aspirations of young people.

Fife

Fife Council has recently replaced its Big Shout group – a multi-agency forum consisting of fieldworker practitioners and managers, involved in developing activity designed to increase levels of participation in local community

planning arrangements – with a new high level strategic partnership that will report direct to the Children's Services Partnership. The new group has recently agreed their Terms of Reference with the stated purpose of playing a central role in promoting and coordinating participation and engagement work across Fife.

Among its key remits will be to ensure that there is active and meaningful engagement of children and young people in decisions that affect them and the planning and delivery of services across Fife and identifying shared outcomes and indicators in relation to such engagement and participation.

As part of the work of this group the Education Service in Fife is finalising their Pupil Participation Strategy and related workforce development opportunities for teaching staff and classroom assistants, to improve understanding of a rights based approach to participation and engagement.

Within the seven area committee boundaries of the Council that has the third largest geographic spread in Scotland, Community Development teams, have identified a professionally qualified Community Education Worker and a Senior Youth Worker to lead on giving support to the local MSYPs and youth forums. This ensures that young people involved in these programmes have access to the wider local community planning structures and initiatives in order to ensure that young people's voices are heard in this process.

The Council is also in the process of publishing a framework for Participatory Budgeting, building on the local exercises that have been conducted across Fife over the past three years. This will include recognition of the YouthBank Scotland model which exists in two committee areas. That works alongside other approaches to engaging young people in this area of community development work.

Young people in Fife have regular opportunities to engage directly with Local Elected Members through presentations and inputs to area and strategic committees, young people being represented on area and strategic committees as 'youth reps', attendance by Local Elected Members at youth events and open days as well as a recent development of young people becoming involved with local Community Councils.

Glasgow City

Glasgow City Council has one youth representative, serving as a non-voting member on three council committees – the Education Strategic Improvement Board, the Education, Skills and Early Years Committee, and the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement Committee.

Glasgow Life is the Arm's Length External Organisation (ALEO) that provides direct support to the city's Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP's) and to members of the Glasgow Youth Forum (GYC).

Glasgow has the highest number of MSYP's of any local authority area, with 16 MSYP's representing eight constituency areas. The Glasgow Youth Council (GYC) are a youth-led organisation with 60 members made up of volunteers aged 14-25 who either live, work, study or volunteer within the Glasgow City boundaries. The Youth Council, led by a seven-person Executive Committee which is elected annually, meet once a month to focussed on policy, training or citizenship issues, and are directly supported by Glasgow Life staff.

MSYP's have automatic membership of GYC and all other young people can join. The GYC consult and engage with young people across the city through their social media pages on Facebook and Twitter, they also have strong links with City Councillors, the Council Administration, MSPs, MPs and other key decision makers

In the summer of 2016, the members of the GYC consulted with 1,347 young people across the city to find out what mattered to them. These findings were then collated and were published in their first ever manifesto. Issues covered include accessible and affordable transport, protecting youth work and social work budgets, fair wages for young people and protecting teacher number.

Glasgow City Council are currently developing a Glasgow Youth Forum that aims to establish a meaningful dialogue between young people and decision makers in addressing issues of common concern.

Glasgow's Health and Social Care Partnership (GHSCP) working jointing with Who Cares

Scotland (WCS) secured funding from Life Changes Trust in November 2017 to develop and implement a young people's champions board for care experienced young people to share their views on care experience and to implement changes as a result of their views. Who Cares Scotland administers the Board – now called People Achieving Change (PAC) – on behalf of GHSCP. The PAC meets once a month and has a full time development worker and part time participation assistant to support it.

Highland

The running of Highland Council youth work services – alongside other services such as leisure, museums and libraries – are delivered by the arms-length charity High Life Highland. In what is a unique set up in Scotland they – on behalf of the council – annually appoint a Youth Convener, aged over 16 years, on a stipend of £15,925, to act as the young people spokesperson working with the Council and its Community Planning partners and the Highland Youth Parliament.

The Highland Youth Convener is the only young person in Scotland to have voting rights on the council's Education committee (The Care, Learning and Housing Committee) and full attendance and speaking rights on all council committees and the full council meeting.

The region has 29 Secondary Schools, and each has a Pupil Council that elects two representatives to be members of a Highland Youth Parliament (HYP). Two representatives from each of the Highland's Youth Forums and young people with care experience, also attending. The HYP, therefore, has over 100 members with representation from across the region. As one official said: "This costs but it is well worth it as the information from the sessions advise the work being undertaken in our nine Community Planning areas."

The Parliament event lasts a day and a half, with an overnight stay, which allows young people from all nine areas of the council with the largest landmass in Scotland to further work out their key priorities. In the most recent Parliament summit the main topics were Mental Health, Transport and Sexual Health. The Parliament gives young people the space to fully air their views.

The Parliament also holds an annual Apprentice Day at which members meet with senior managers, elected members and Community Planning Partnership representatives. This allows Service managers to gauge young people’s views on their service and to give young people a better understanding of the services that are provided for them. The Parliament has an Executive Committee of 16 people who meet regularly to ensure that issues arising from debate are followed up with action.

When it comes to Education matters these are generally dealt with through the Pupils Councils and the work undertaken with them by the Highland Youth Convener (See later in this report).

Inverclyde  

Inverclyde Council does not have young people on any of its committees. Here the role of youth engagement lies with the Community, Learning and Development team. It supports the local Inverclyde Youth Council that plays an active role in consulting young people and taking forward actions from the feedback that they provide. This influences local decision makers and elected members. Successes so far include the launch of the Inverclyde Youth Participation Strategy in 2017 and the Penny For Youth Thoughts consultations.

The Council does have a Councillor appointed as Young People’s Champion (See later)

The LGBT Group has also drawn up a LGBT Youth Charter in partnership with council officials and Youth Summits have been established to allow the Leader of the Council and Youth Champion to meet with young people on a regular basis and improve dialogue.

The local MSYPs meet with elected members as and when required to discuss issues affecting young people and a Clyde Conversations Event is held annually to give over 120 young people the opportunity to discuss issues affecting them. These events are attended by elected members and a report from them is submitted to councillors following each event

It is hoped that joint surgeries can be carried out between MSYPs and Councillors in the near future.

Midlothian 

Midlothian Council does not have any young people appointed to formal council committees although they are represented on its Corporate Parenting Board and on the Champions Board for young people with care experienced. Each school has a Pupil Council and like other areas Midlothian has a Youth Forum, known as Midlothian Youth Platform.

Although they don’t attend committee meetings young people have influenced key policy areas, and undertake research for these areas. An example of this is mental health system change, where young people were key to the research and application for funding.

Midlothian Youth Platform members and the local members of the Scottish Youth Parliament hold information and influence sessions with elected members and senior managers in the Council Chambers. In so doing they have heavily influenced the council and community planning in relation to mental health and wellbeing issues.

As part of Year of the Young People, the Midlothian Community Planning Partnership strategic planning day, to establish the three year policies for Midlothian, will be led by young people.



assessing



Moray

Moray Council was the first authority in Scotland to allow a pupil (and parent) to sit on its Children and Young People's Services Committee (Formerly Education Committee) in May 1999. The pupil representative has no voting rights.

School visits are often organised to the council chamber – sometimes by the local ward member who will describe to those in attendance what it is like being a councillor. At such events pupils are encouraged to take on the roles of Chair, proposer and seconder of a motion or amendment then engage in a debate leading up to a vote, thus giving them practical experience of what it is like being an elected member.

The material for discussion is usually provided by a teacher in advance. Those participating are generally older primary school pupils and the subject linked to matters being covered in class. The recruitment process for young people to attend committee is done on a rota basis, it has been Elgin Academy's turn this year. The schools normally put out the opportunity to S6 students and those doing Modern Studies or with an interest in business, law etc. The young people are treated as all other committee members and get their papers beforehand.

They are not invited to the pre-meet due to the confidential nature of discussion regarding head teachers and other such matters. Through partnership working Moray Council have had some success in establishing a Champions Board for care experience young people as well as pupil councils and committees in Primary and Secondary schools, but youth workers say more is required to ensure that ALL voices are heard. Through the Rights and Participation Strategy the council intends to use a range of methods including the four areas of learner participation, to expand the voices of young people beyond just decision-making methods of engagement – for example, through connecting with the wider community, in decision making groups, in learning/teaching and assessment and in opportunities for personal achievement.

Despite efforts, there has been no progress in re-establishing the Moray Youth Council although the authority's two MSYPs did attempt – with a designated youth worker – to get a new one up and running. It is hoped that when the Moray-

wide consultation (Place Standards) is concluded, in January 2019, new young people will be identified to assist in the Youth Council's rebirth. Those in the front-line wonder, however, whether Youth Councils are the best approach to involve young people in decision-making (see later).

Over the last 18 months Moray's two MSYPs have been involved in meetings, consultations, conferences, training sessions and sittings and have been asked to speak on behalf of their constituencies. They have been involved in designing the programme for Year of the Young Person 2018 and the Children and Young People's Rights and Participation Strategy for 2018-2021.

Many young people have had opportunities to gain accreditation for their volunteering to particularly acknowledge the work they have done. This has been greatly helped by undertaking residential work with the young people for the Champions Board, for example in combining tasks with social activities. This has improved engagement and understanding of needs and views and is fun. A Duke of Edinburgh Awards summit for young people, which mirrors the adult volunteers one, is planned for 2019.

North Ayrshire

North Ayrshire Council as part of its Child-Centred Council approach, has young people from their Executive Youth Council attend every Education Committee in a non-voting capacity.

North Ayrshires Depute Leader of the opposition is the Youth Champion. He meets with the Executive Youth Council on a regular basis and also has monthly one-to-one meetings with the lead officer for Youth Work.

A North Ayrshire Young People Strategic Group was established in 2018 which has an equal amount of young people to elected members. The group is chaired by a young person with an elected member as Vice Chair. Terms of reference have been created to provide guidance for all members. There is a work programme established and young people are leading on the three work streams – Health and Wellbeing, Poverty and Voice and Influence.

The North Ayrshire MSYPs meet four times a year with the Leaders of the Council through its Joint Cabinet Structure.

The Young People's Shadow Cabinet is the areas Executive youth council and it meets in the council chamber every six weeks. The Chief Executive of North Ayrshire Council works closely with the Executive Youth Council and meets with them throughout the year. Following consultation and discussion with young people a proposal for a shadow leadership programme was agreed and implemented and launched as part of Youth Work Week.

The local Community Planning Partnership has agreed a number of pledges including those of voice and participation, so all events must include young people involvement – this includes the attendance of MSYPs, young people as speakers or MCs and young people leading training or running information stalls.

In North Ayrshire joint cabinet meetings are held in a secondary school four times a year – this involves the Council's Cabinet (Leader and elected members) and the Youth Executive Committee who are joined by the Education Director and Senior Officers. Approximately 60 pupils take part in the full meeting which consists of a Question and Answers session followed by conversation cafes on agreed topics. A report is produced which highlights a set of actions which must be reported back to the young people. The report is also raised at the relevant locality partnership meeting enabling the golden thread of young people's voices and experiences to be heard at all levels.

Young people attend and participate fully in North Ayrshire Locality Partnerships (formerly Local Area Committees), have formal membership on the Council's Licensing Forum, a Youth Champion Committee has been established for care experienced young people in the council area and a Youth Participation Group to feed into the Corporate Parenting Steering Group.

The council also has a calendar of consultation that allow young people to participate through questions, peer research, focus groups and social media communication to give their views on a variety of topics ensuring that the voice of young people is heard.

North Ayrshire has a Youth Work Modern Apprenticeship Programme who have an advocacy role for young people and liaise and work with the Young People Champion on a regular basis. The advocacy role means that young people can be engaged on their terms and time frame ensuring that there is no impact on their curriculum time table.

North Lanarkshire

North Lanarkshire Council, which heralded by many as currently having the best young people engagement approach in Scotland, has a Youth, Communities and Equalities sub-committee that is a sub-committee of its Education Committee. Two young people are appointed as non-voting members of that sub-committee allowing them to attend and fully contribute to discussions.

Interestingly it is not the same two young people who attend each meeting – the North Lanarkshire Youth Council nominate those who attend each committee cycle so that all members who want to have a chance to attend. At the first meeting of the sub-committee at the end of 2017 both representatives were local MSYPs.

Praise was given to members of the council's Education, Youth and Communities Services team which is dedicated to liaising with MSYPs and youth forum members to develop their roles.

North Lanarkshire has a well-established and long running Youth Council (NLYC), made up from two representatives from each of the six locality youth forums (one for each main town in North Lanarkshire), and the nine members of the Scottish Youth Parliament, plus one representative from care experienced champions group TNT (22 members in total). Each youth forum is supported by a member of youth work staff locally, and NLYC is supported centrally by a development officer.

Youth engagement also happens within schools via pupil councils, in communities via a range of youth groups, and in partnership with other agencies. North Lanarkshire has embraced the opportunity offered by the Year of Young People to boost engagement opportunities, with young people worked together to secure external funding to support their planned activities. Across the year North Lanarkshire

Council has seen an increase in engagement and participation, with a number of new opportunities being offered to young people. It has also recorded an increase in measures such as youth volunteering and youth accreditation, in addition to a much increased social media presence (a useful engagement tool).

In June 2018, the council launched a partnership agreement, following a series of co-production workshops, between North Lanarkshire Children's Services Partnership and children and young people. This agreement details how we agree to work together. Every partnership agency has adopted the agreement and will continue work in order to review progress.^{35,36}

Orkney

Orkney Islands Council holds a Youth Conference and Chamber Debate, chaired by the Council Convener, on alternate years, that focus on key issues and topics brought forward by young people to address or debate. The findings from these gatherings help to determine youth policy. In addition to this an annual multi-agency conference, 'Growing Up In Orkney', takes place in February, at which senior pupils participate. The Council also welcomes representations from young people who wish to make cases to the council on issues that concern them – a recent example being a delegation from St Andrew's School who met the Convener and Councillors to press their campaign to reduce the use of non-recyclable plastic in local schools. A Young People's Summit was also held in January 2018 to allow young people a have their say on the Kirkwall Urban Design Framework.

The Council does not have young people on any of its formal council service committees, although the Community Learning and Development team have supported the establishment of a Youth Forum which is continuing to develop. A student does, however, sit as a student representative on the Orkney College Management Council – which is a sub-committee of the Education, Leisure and Housing Service. At present, the student representative sits 'in attendance' without a vote however a report recommending that student representatives be given a vote has recently been passed by Orkney College Management Council, for consideration by the full council.

The Orkney Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament have met with Council Leaders to highlight their work in the Scottish Youth Parliament and can request meetings as required. The Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing meets with sixth year school students twice a year to gather views on how the service they receive can be improved. In addition, he also meets three times a year with Orkney College student representatives on the College Management Council. All schools have a Pupil Voice structure in place. Two young people from Orkney Youth Café also, in early 2018, presented their film on how difficult it is for pupils from outside Orkney to adjust to Orkney life, informally to councillors.

Orkney Health and Care is considering developing a Corporate Parenting Board to allow young people with care experience a chance to influence service delivery. In addition, care experienced young people participated and contributed to a recent corporate parent multi-agency training event for Councillors and staff.

Perth And Kinross

Perth and Kinross Council has over the past year had two non-voting Young People on its Lifelong Learning Committee. Appointments were made by the area's Youth Forum and two of the areas MSYPs were chosen.

The council is also in the process of establishing a Youth Voice Group comprising of young people from within the authority's geographic area from Secondary Schools and other Youth Groups/ Organisations – to act as a springboard for young people's ideas and views on issues.

The Council also gathers young people's views in a range of other different ways, including through pupil councils, youth groups, the Corporate Parenting Board (which has care-experienced young people as full, active members) and through the Education and Children's Services holding its Senior Management Team meetings in schools and education establishments in order to spend some time hearing from children and young people in a range of settings.

Local MSYPs also regularly meet with the Convener of the Lifelong Learning Committee.

A recent Care Inspectorate report on Services for Children and Young People in Perth and Kinross, based on visits in 2017, was particularly glowing. It stated that there was clear commitment to meaningful community engagement and building community capacity and confidence adding: "Partners were strongly committed to ensuring that policies, planning arrangements and service developments fully reflect the views of children and young people. Pupil councils and a culture of participation were well embedded across schools. Child-centred communication was evident with good use of 'child to child' methods. Young people were actively consulted about important issues and their views informed key changes in communication content and method."

It adds: "A recent participation and engagement strategy and newly formed youth forum promised to offer a more systematic approach to participation."

Renfrewshire

Although there are no young people on service committees in Renfrewshire, the council has five Local Area Committees (LACs) which were established in 2008 which form part of the council's decision-making structure. The LACs include local Councillors, with voting rights, as well as nominated representatives of local community and voluntary groups and members of both the Scottish Youth Parliament and Renfrewshire Youth Voice. There the youth representatives – while not having votes – are able to discuss and question reports from the council and raise local issues through an 'open session' section included in each LAC agenda.

Changes were made to local governance arrangements in Renfrewshire Council in 2018 and whilst young people are not embedded in the renewed processes and structures, some effort is being made to consult with young people to establish the most appropriate ways to ensure that their voice can be heard, and access given to opportunities to influence and shape services.

Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament and Renfrewshire Youth Voice (representatives from local youth organisations and community-based youth fora) have met with the Leader of the

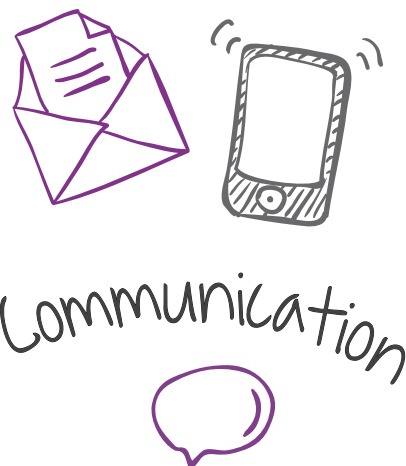
Council, Deputy Leader and Chief Executive. The senior leadership have given full support to young people wanting to play an active role in decision making and discussions have taken place on how to improve, develop and plan to involve young people in doing so,

One of Renfrewshire's MSYPs was allowed to speak at a meeting of the council in support of a Councillor's motion to encourage schools to engage young people in the development and delivery of Personal, Social and Health Education. The council had to suspend Standing Orders to allow this to happen.

In terms of its constitution, formal membership of the Renfrewshire Council Licensing Forum also includes a young person over the age of 16.

The Council also appoints Councillors to the Children's Champions Board. This is a forum for care-experienced young people to enable them to give their views to elected members and senior officers across the Community Planning Partnership.

The Council had a Young People's Champion between 2002 and 2012, who advocated and worked with young people across the authority, but due to restructuring and time lapse the post was not filled after that. However – to coincide with the Year of Young People another Champion has been appointed and she has been invited to collaborate and discuss the development of the youth voice in Renfrewshire beyond 2018.



Scottish Borders

Scottish Borders Council is now into its third year of having two young people serve on its Education Committee. Every two years a group of nine S5 pupils are recruited (one from each High School) to represent the pupil voice on the Education Committee's Education Theme Group. From those, two are chosen to sit on the Education Committee in a non-voting capacity (See later).

The Scottish Borders Youth Voice Project (SBYV) covers all activities involved in engaging young people under 25 in the Scottish Borders from decision-making, youth-led campaigns and active citizenship through to the promotion of Children's Rights. The Community and Learning Development (CLD) staff assist youngsters in SBYV by helping them to feel empowered to be active participants in the decision-making process.

Due to the rural nature of the Borders creating a central youth forum group is challenging in terms of transport and costs, so instead a locality approach has been developed. Scottish Borders Youth Voice Teams (SBYVTs) have been established in two localities so far to raise awareness of young people's issues with the aid of local elected members and partner organisations.

In partnership with the nine Secondary Schools, SBYV support young people to attend local area partnership meetings, and more work is being undertaken to develop more ways in which young people can engage with local elected members.

In past years the council gathered feedback from the broader youth voice from across the region through an online young people's survey, but two years ago – in response to feedback from young people – it changed this to hold an annual world café consultation event in each of its nine secondary schools. Recent topics discussed were Youth Participation, Children's Rights, Child Sexual Exploitation, Transport and Young People's Health. The responses have been used to develop a Scottish Borders Children's Rights and Participation Strategy.

The Scottish Borders MSYPs work to raise awareness of young people issues by meeting

with local councillors, MSPs and MPs. Earlier in 2018 they gave a presentation to the full council on the 'Right Here, Right Now' Children's Rights campaign and each councillor in attendance made a pledge to support young people's rights.

In addition to this the SBYV, in partnership with Children and Families Social Work has been working with looked after young people to develop participation models that allow them to feedback on processes and decisions that affect them. The CLD team also assist young people to take part in national consultations, one of the most recent being supporting a group of pupils from Galashiels Academy to work with the Children & Young People's Commissioner's Office to develop its youth consultation on seclusion and restraint in schools.

Shetland

Shetland Islands Council in November 2017 amended its constitution to allow its two MSYPs official Observer status at meetings of its Education and Families Committee for matters being considered in public by that committee, and the duo have since been fully instated as Non-voting members of the committee (see later).

The council's Youth Service team work to ensure the Local Authority commitment in the Corporate Plan that 'Young People will feel their voices are being heard by the council, having regular opportunities to have a say on the issues that affect them' are met. This happens through supported engagement with young people through opportunities including the Scottish Youth Parliament's manifesto consultation and UK Youth Parliament's Make Your Mark. Between 2014 and 2017 participation returns in Shetland has been in the top three returns out of all local authorities in Scotland and its youth forum structure has been hailed as 'sector leading' by Her Majesty's Inspectorate. The structure is currently under review with a view to continuing to provide the most appropriate platforms for young people to have their voices heard.

Shetland's two MSYPs have been involved in work such as the 'Tackling Inequalities Commission' – set up by the Shetland Partnership and support is given to young people in making deputation

to Shetland Islands Council to raise important issues or campaigns that matter to local young people. The council has used a wide variety of engagement methods including commissioning research undertaken by young people living in Shetland, the purpose of which was to understand the issues and prepare a report around poverty and inequality for young people in the isles.³⁷

In early 2018 Shetland Islands Council established a new Corporate Parent Board to consider the care of looked after children and care leavers in Shetland, and the Shetland Islands Council Integrated Children and Young People's Strategic Planning Group has identified future actions to improve opportunities when it comes to young people influencing policy makers.

In 2016, Shetland's young folk took part in an Exite.ED initiative when they were asked for their opinion on the future for education in Scotland at an event in Islesburgh Complex, Lerwick. The aim was to help inform the Scottish Government's ongoing work into raising attainment levels, and closing the gap between the country's least and most disadvantaged young people.

Young people also assisted the council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Young Scot in providing their thoughts, views and insights towards the development of the Shetland five-year plan, Future Shetland.

South Ayrshire

South Ayrshire Council engages and consults with young people through a range of forums and settings, these include South Ayrshire Youth Forum, Scottish Youth Parliament, Young Scot website, Pupil Surveys and community based youth work settings.

The Community, Learning and Development team co-ordinate youth work provision through the South Ayrshire Youth Strategy Group. The Youth Strategy Group includes partners from Young Carers, LGBT, Corporate Parenting, Champions Board, Education, Employability & Skills, VASA and the Health and Social Care Partnership.

South Ayrshire Council has a designated Youth Strategy Officer and a designated Youth Champion, a Local Senior Politician, who attends the Youth Strategy Group and liaises directly with South Ayrshire Youth Forum.

South Ayrshire Youth Forum is a youth led organisation supported by South Ayrshire Council. The Youth Forum is responsible for representing the views of young people across South Ayrshire, ensuring their views help influence how the Council and its partners deliver their services. Within the South Ayrshire Youth Forum there are three Members of Scottish Youth Parliament who represent the views of local young people at a national level.

The Youth Forum hosts an annual Youth Conference, supported by South Ayrshire Council. The conference is attended by young people from schools, colleges and youth strategy partners. Each year over eighty young people attend the conference where they participate in workshops and consultations on issues relating to young people. The Youth Forum is responsible for collating the views of young people and is supported by South Ayrshire Council and partners. They address issues highlighted through consultations; an example of how youth voice has influenced service delivery from the youth conference includes the 'Say It Out Loud' survey that has helped shape how mental health services are delivered in schools and the community along with creating a charter mark.

The Young Scot website continues to provide young people with online information and opportunities to share their views. In the past twelve months there have been 15981 views to the Young Scot website from South Ayrshire and 8606 views to local South Ayrshire pages.

South Ayrshire Champions Board, established in 2017, provides a platform for young people who are Care Experienced to liaise directly with Elected Members, Council services and its partners, around issues that affect young people in who have Care Experience. In its infancy the Champions Board has already delivered awareness sessions to Council staff and influenced areas such housing support, sport and leisure access and employability opportunities.

South Lanarkshire

South Lanarkshire Council has had young people represented on the Youth Partnership committee within Community Planning for the past 15 years. The person attending not only inputs to the discussion but also has a central role in ensuring that the voice and issues of young people are listened to and taken account of. In this context they deliver updates on progress of activity linked to their remit as Chair of South Lanarkshire Youth Council and/or Member of Scottish Youth Parliament, as depending upon elections and wishing to stand, they can have a dual role.

Leading from this, South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture developed a Youth Sports Panel model to ensure young people are central to decisions and discussion around current and planned provision across South Lanarkshire. This forum is a new one but is developing well given the strong support for democratic involvement of young people across South Lanarkshire.

Young people are also developing and leading on engagement models, with the recent Biggar Youth Summit bringing together over 600 young people to meet service providers and engage in dialogue about service access, issues and future needs. Given the geographic characteristics, this was a big task and well executed by young people. They brought together and engaged 24 partners on a wet Monday morning! This model is being sustained as a good practice model legacy of Year of Young People 2018.

Also, as part of the legacy, the council is continuing to explore the creation of a Children and Young People's Cabinet in South Lanarkshire. This will complement the existing structures such as South Lanarkshire Youth Council which has been established for 21 years and also contributes to maintaining the strong levels of commitment to youth engagement in democracy as recognised in a recent HMIE CLD Inspection of South Lanarkshire.

The council has the same challenges as other CLD practitioners in understanding why young people continue to engage, however, young people report that they stay as they feel trusted, listened to and respected.

The Council Spokesperson for Youth, Councillor Julia Marrs, actively champions young people

and the need for their inclusion in all appropriate matters. South Lanarkshire Council has had a Spokesperson for youth for over 20 years and this has served as a model for other authorities.

Stirling

While Stirling Council has a provision to appoint two secondary school pupils as non-voting members to its Children and Young People Committee it has chosen not to do so as it does not, currently, have an active pool of young people to select from. The Education Service is, however, attempting to identify appropriate candidates and to structure committee meetings to ensure the experience is appropriate and meaningful to those taking part.

Stirling Youth Forum currently provides a platform for young people to have their voices heard, as well as being able to contribute to shaping and developing council services and priorities.

The Stirling Youth Forum is supported by the Youth Participation Team. It was formed in 2017 following requests from young people who wanted to have their voices heard. The request was met with huge support from the local authority and a variety of partners. Young people, the council and partners use the forum to consult on a variety of issues and this has been widened out through the Stirling Youth Portal (See – Other initiatives)

A Gathering – organised by Stirling Youth Forum in November 2017 – attracted over 200 young people and led to the identification of the four key themes seen as being of priority to local young people – education, mental health, transport and Stirling City Centre. The Council and partner agencies committed to work with the young people on these four themes over 2018 with a further Gathering being held in late October 2018 to celebrate the distance travelled and decide on what needs to happen next. Among initiatives under discussion are to have a closer link to the school pupil voices structures, to allow young people to participate in the Participative Democracy Certificate in order to build an accreditation offer into their involvement, and to support the development of a shadow Children And Young People Committee in parallel with the council's committee structure.

West Dunbartonshire

West Dunbartonshire Council’s current Community Learning and Development Three Year Plan was developed through consultation with various stakeholders, including young people. As part of the feedback the three key strategic priorities identified for young people were supporting them to access opportunities to develop skills for learning, empowering them to have an effective platform to impact decisions that affect their lives and to ensure they live in safe communities and gain support to improve their emotional and mental health and wellbeing.

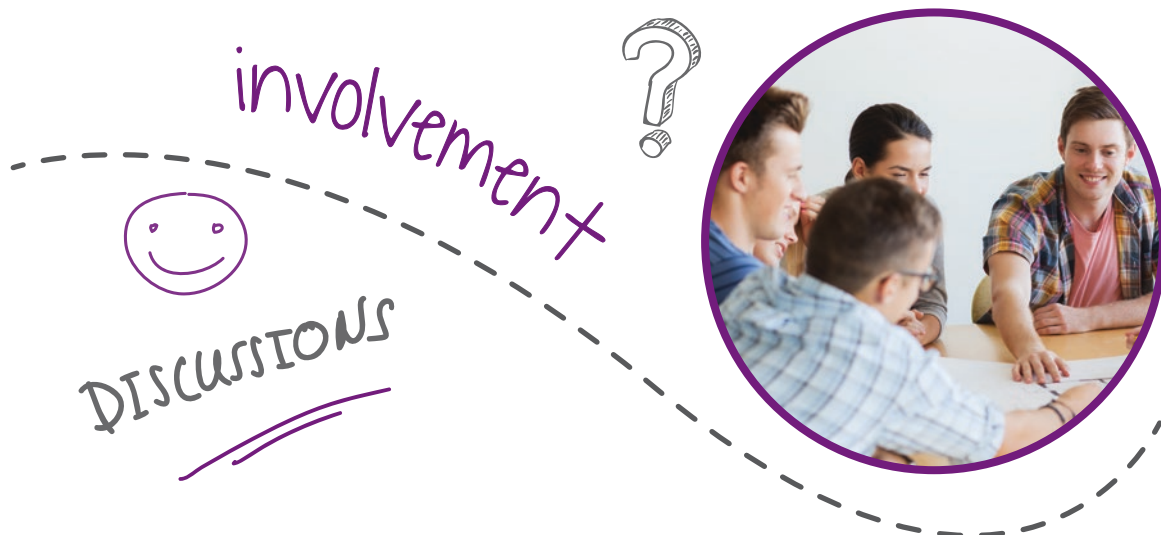
Engagement with young people is going to be a key area of work to be developed by the council over the next three years.

Working 4U are currently supporting young people to stand for the Scottish youth parliament elections which will include undertaking a participatory democracy certificate. For those not elected they will be encouraged and supported to develop and form a new youth council for West Dunbartonshire, the role of which will be to engage and consult with young people and influence local and national decision making structures. Partners from across West Dunbartonshire Youth Alliance will then be allocated representative positions within the council for young people who sit on a variety of youth management boards, including pupil councils and community councils.

The Youth Alliance is committed to ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to influence not only them but the wider community. One of the initiatives the Alliance coordinates is an annual summer programme which regularly targets over 500 young people from areas of multiply deprivation, which it utilises as a platform to consult with young people on issues affecting them and the wider community.

West Dunbartonshire’s Champions Board was established in November 2017, and is funded by Life Changes Trust. It has a full time Co-ordinator and three care experienced ‘lead young people’ who provide a service to all care experienced young people across West Dunbartonshire. This includes children and young people from its three residential houses, foster care, kinship care, looked after at home, working with our Alternative to Care team and working with the council’s Throughcare and Aftercare service.

Regular meetings are held with care experienced young people, Corporate Parents, elected members and partner agencies, including Police Scotland with a wide variety of issues raised and discussed. The Champions Board has recently been involved in successfully negotiating free leisure passes for all care experienced young people in West Dunbartonshire, which allows them to have gym and swimming access across the local area.



West Lothian

The council does not have young people appointed to any of its formal committees but operate a number of working groups called Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels (PDSPs) where there is some representation by young people.

The PDSPs do not have decision making powers but are a pre-committee stage for the discussion of policy proposals, new and revised. The PDSPs consider the proposals and make comment and suggestions for officers and councillors to consider. In relation to their scrutiny function, the PDSPs receive quarterly service performance reports and can question officers and make recommendations.

The West Lothian Youth Congress has the right to send a representative to every meeting of each of these panels and are entitled to receive the same papers as councillors and to take part on the same basis too.

In addition to this, elected members and senior officers invite young people in the senior phase of their education to a consultation meeting on a quarterly basis where they are asked their views on the education that the council provides, and they also have the opportunity to make comment on all aspects of the provision. A minute of the discussions at these meetings are disseminated to all schools and headteachers are asked to act on any points of action.



Brain Storming

Western Isles (Na h-Eileanan Siar)

The Western Isles Council/Na h-Eileanan Comhairle has worked hard with the areas Community Planning Partnership to ensure that the needs of children and young people are identified and that Education and Children's Services are more inclusive and effective in meeting their needs, and the Comhairle will be considering further means and opportunities to engage with Children and Young People through the democratic process in the year ahead.

The council does not have young people appointed to any of its committees. The engagement with its young people primarily is through the Council's two Youth Champions – one for Lewis and Harris and one for Uist and Barra) supported by officers (See later).

The Champions attend youth focused meetings, including those of the four Youth Councils. The Youth Councils were also involved in taking funding decisions in respect of LEADER applications. Youth Councils also regularly engage with elected members.

The two Western Isles MSYPs sit on the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership and the Director of Education and Children's Services is currently looking to develop a process to enable young people to be consulted on reports going to the Education, Sports and Children's Services Committee.

Otherwise the Comhairle engages with young people through pupil councils and area youth forum.

Added to that, the opportunity for young people to join Community Councils will be a particular focus of the promotional activities undertaken by the council in advance of the next Community Council elections in September 2019.

Assessing some of the key initiatives

Current initiatives that can be shared.

Young people serving on committees

Young People currently serve as non-voting representatives on several council committees, with the majority sitting only on the Education/Children and Young People Committees alongside parent, staff and religious representatives. While, at the beginning of the year only Perth & Kinross, Dundee, Highland, Scottish Borders, Moray, East Dunbartonshire and Glasgow had young people interacting with Councillors at decision making level, several other councils are now opening up committees to young people. All, excluding Highland, have non-voting basis similar to the staff and parent representatives on such committees and many of those selected for the position are MSYPs

In Highland Council the Youth Convenor post is remunerated and holds voting rights (This initiative will be assessed separately).

So what benefit do young people and elected members and officials gain from this?

Moray

Moray Council was the trailblazer in the initiative of having a young person serve as a non-voting member of its Education committee.

The Council made its first non-voting pupil appointment on May 13th, 1999 (alongside a parent representatives) and there has been one there continuously ever since.

Sonya Warren, Chair of Moray Council's Children and Young People Services Committee, said: "I like having young people on the committee. It is reassuring when discussing issues that affect young people to be able to turn to them and ask: 'How do you feel about this?' It is good to involve them and

they contribute well to the debates, giving us a young person's perspective on issues that often impacts on the way we do things."

Holding the position over the past year has been 18-year-old Megan Smith, from Buckie, who is now studying English and International Relations at St Andrew's University.

She said: "It was such a good experience and really helpful as my aim is to try and get into journalism and my time on the council gave me a real understanding of politics and how local government works. Among the big issues was the teacher shortage and I was able to give members a young people's perspective on how this was affecting our schools."

There was no mechanism in place in Moray that allowed Megan to fully assess the views of all young people in the county but, as Head Girl at Buckie High School she gathered views from the school's Prefects and, from wider afield, those from fellow members of Moray Road Runners Club.

Of her time on the committee, Megan said: "I was nervous to start with but as I was given support by councillors and those around me I became much more confident. It is so important that the voice of young people helps share decisions and I hope that my contribution, as a non-voting member of the committee, in some way helped the council construct meaningful policies that matter to young people."

There are contrasting views among youth work staff as to what is the best approach concerning young people and committees. Staff report that they are often asked to nominate young people from the Youth Council to sit on committees but those who went weren't that keen to go back as the meetings were often more than two hours long with lengthy agendas. It has been suggested to the committee secretaries that if they really wanted to find out what young people had to say on particular matters that

they should come along to the Youth Council meetings rather than expect young people to take time off from their education to attend these long and arduous meetings. It often felt a bit tokenistic to the young people who were asked to attend.”

Dundee

Up until August in Dundee City Council, 18-year-old Scott Oswald – who is now training to be a Medical Student at The University of Dundee – was the sole student representative on the city’s Family and Children Services Committee. He is not a youth parliamentarian. His route to the committee was through the Dundee’s city-wide Pupils Council.

So how has Scott coped with his year in office.

“I could have done with a better induction into the way things worked. I did not know all the abbreviations for a start and had to get the teacher representative, who was sitting beside me, to explain them all to me. The world of local politics is a complex and difficult one. I’d not experienced anything quite like it before, but I soon got into the way of raising issues. It really takes the right type of person to cope with it. You need to be confident and have a brass neck and not be afraid to have everyone disagree with your viewpoint.

“Most of the time the reports were overly complex and focusing on levels of management, and generally not relevant to what I knew was going on in schools. Engagement was good but there was a degree of tokenism and I often felt I was not being listened to. In my view the best student engagement takes place at Universities. They really listen to the voice of their students.

“The party politics played out in the Council Chamber was really what got to me. It was awful so at times I just felt like standing up and saying: ‘Really, can we all start behaving like adults please!’ Party politics makes it difficult for those who are not involved to be in a position of influence.”

Where Scott does feel the system in Dundee works is in the informal forum meetings held between the Director of Family and Children Services, Director of Social Work and Director of

Education with 20 pupils appointed from each of the city schools. Here pupils use Survey Monkey within their schools to gather views and topics and feed the information to the Directors.

“We often gained more from the meeting with the lead officials than we did in the meetings with councillors,” he said.

Councillor Stewart Hunter, Chair of Dundee’s Family and Children Services Committee, was a pioneer in Young People Engagement in the city back in 2012.

“We were about to build a new school and I was asked along to a two-day Radio Station run by pupils. They asked if they could feed their views into the consultation. It was then I realised that we were not doing enough as a council to engage with our young people. Shortly after that we appointed our first young person from 6th year as a non-voting member of our Family and Children Services Committee and established our Pupils’ Council”

Asked what the views of fellow Councillors was to that, Stewart said: “To be honest there was a mixed reaction. Some were happy with the arrangement and others felt that they had been elected to make decisions, not outsiders. But over time I’m sure we’ve all seen the benefits.”

What are the drawbacks?

“Continuity has been a problem over the years. We have generally been lucky with the Young People that the Youth Council has chosen to represent them at Committee level but when we are only selecting 6th year pupils, how well they do really depends on the individuals and how confident that are. Some – like Scott – have been really good and ask questions, others have perhaps not been quite as confident, but overall it has been a success and I am delighted to say that our Leisure and Culture Dundee Trust – which runs our sports centres, libraries and museums – has just appointed its first young person trustee [October 2018].

“We have got a lot better as a council in trying to engage with young people. We are not talking at them anymore; we’re listening and – while we might not always agree to accept what they say – they now know that their views are being respected.”

Perth and Kinross

In neighbouring Perth & Kinross Council the two Young People representatives on the Education and Children's Services Committee are MSYP's Fraser MacDonald and Robert McCall.

Seventeen-year-old Fraser told us: "Despite some turgid documentation it has been an interesting and fascinating experience. As members of the Scottish Youth Parliament we contacted key decision makers and, in the case of the council, asked for a voice on the education committee and they said it was a fair point and gave us two places.

"We are now on the committee, get all the papers – public and private – and get all the relevant emails that the councillors get. We have also spoken at the Economic Committee so have an expanding influence. While it's important to be able to speak on other committees, Education should be the first step as it is the area that affects us most, it is there that we have a legitimate call on determining how things are run.

"One of the great things about MSYPs being on the committee is that we are politically neutral so do not show bias and can push for best solutions regardless of which political party comes up with the ideas.

"While serving on the committee we are treated as adults, the 'they're just kids' view is not there. We don't always get what we want but the cases we make are listened to and explanations are given if things can't be done. We are not patronised and there is no tokenism involved in having us there ... we matter."

Robert, who is 18, adds: "We have made a huge leap forward when it comes to young people engagement in Perth and Kinross over the past year, and have definitely made our mark. We were apprehensive that the change in council leadership could impact our ability to represent young people, but the new administration has been eager to have us on board and we've gained from the encouragement shown to us by the Education Department and councillors. I also work behind-the-scenes with officials, not Councillors, in developing health and wellbeing policies.

"It is great to see young people sitting around the decision-making table expressing the views of young people in schools and the Youth Forum, and having no party political affiliation or agenda gives us extra pull."

Where he has concerns is in the Religious representative having a vote on the Education and Children's Services Committee.

"No offence to the representative concerned but it seems unfair and is a bit demoralising that she has a vote, without doing the work or having the back-up of opinions from others, and we don't! She votes with the administration all the time which in my view undermines democracy."

With the assistance of fellow Perth & Kinross MSYPs Luca Delpippo and Sam Waite, Fraser and Robert are now attempting to form a Youth Voice group comprising of students in leading roles within Secondary School – to act as a springboard for young people's ideas and views on issues

Crucially, they say the roles will matter more than those that are in them, because when key players move on to University, College or work the position on the group will be filled by their successors in the roles.

Fraser and Robert's concerns now are that when the Year of Young People ends their position in the decision-making process may come to an end. They want what currently happens in Perth and Kinross Council to be the framework for future generations.



**NEW
PERSPECTIVE**

Shetland

In Shetland we find an engagement initiative with a twist that appears to be extremely effective.

MSYPs Dylan Morrish and Sonny Thomason are supported to sit in on the council's Education and Families Committee as co-opted members with no voting rights, but the arrangement, backed up with guidance from their Support Worker Martin Summers, goes a bit further than that. The council has tasked the duo to provide it with a comprehensive view of the young people of Shetland.

Their attendance at the key decision-making committee is further supported by the opportunity to have monthly meetings with Helen Budge, the Director of Children's Services, who, prior to meetings, goes through the agenda and papers with them explaining issues and ensuring that they are fully prepared and able to contribute equally to the debates and discussions taking place.

Seventeen-year-old Dylan – who has only been in the role since winning an MSYP by-election in June – explains: "Shetland Islands Council has gone out of its way to make us feel part of the decision-making process and it all works really well. We sit at the table as equals to the Councillors and are allowed to ask questions and speak on topics that affect young people. We don't have voting rights but that is something we can live with. Being an MSYP has also led to me to being co-opted to Lerwick Community Council, so I can speak on issues there too."

While the duos activities are mainly focused in the Education arena, they have contributed to other discussions within the council including contributing to ZETRANS integrated transport work and – alongside others – negotiations with NorthLink ferries. Furthermore, the pair of MSYPs had the opportunity to attend the Heads of Planning in Scotland conference to promote the importance of reaching out and engaging with young people and the excellent work of organisations such as Young Scot and the Scottish Youth Parliament. Dylan's asked that the Head Planners in Scotland go back to each of their Local Authorities after the conference and make contact with their local MSYPs as a first step towards a new working relationship with young people in their regions.

Dylan continues: "We are expected to speak on behalf of all young people in Shetland, which is not easy when you consider that Shetland covers 570 square miles and has 15 inhabited islands. I suppose there is some pressure in that, but it's good pressure. We have a team of 50 'Year of Young People' Ambassadors who feed in their views, but a lot of it is also about getting out and speaking to people. Sonny and I have held Q&A sessions at the Anderson High School alongside Tavish Scott MSP and Shetland Islands Convener Malcolm Bell. We have two further visits planned that will see us go to Mid Yell Junior High School and Baltasound Junior High School in the Northern Isles of Yell and Unst. 2018 also saw the young people of Shetland stage 'The BIG Takeover' event in seven venues around Lerwick which was attended by Maree Todd, the Minister for Children and Young People."

A concern expressed by some across Scotland about youth engagement is that it is only as good as those who do it and with a steady change around in participants – the term of office for MSYPs is two years – is there a lack of consistency?

Dylan comments: "If the structure is in place and the training then it should be fine. At first it was a different world to me but, three months, on I feel really welcome. I hope to go to University next September and across Scotland many young people in engagement roles are already there. My colleague, Sonny, is now at College in Aberdeen so we work the role together – he focuses on all the written stuff, social media and on-line surgeries – while I do the physical stuff, like attending meeting. It works well. I will also be compiling a blueprint this year that will be handed on to our successors. It means a lot, to us both, to have a Council that goes out of its way to back and listen to the views of its young people. That is so important. Convener Malcolm Bell always makes himself available to me."

So what advice would Dylan give to other young people across Scotland who are not as engaged with their councils? He said: "Start by influencing your peers and gain support from them for what you want to do. The more support you can get, the more you will be heeded."

Glasgow

Eighteen-year-old Danyaal Raja MSYP has the unenviable task of representing all young people in Glasgow by serving as Chair of the City's Youth Council and a Non-voting representative on the Education, Skills and Early Years City Policy Committee, but he is unfazed by the pressures that brings.

Currently in the Second Year at University, studying Politics, Danyaal, who is in the rare position of having influence on committees other than Education, said: "Very few people get the chance to do this. I love being on the committees and the second I stop enjoying it, I will stop doing it.

"I am one of four co-opted non-voting appointees to the committee – the others being two parent representatives and a member from the Voluntary Sector. I found it quite daunting to start with but soon got used to the formal environment and, with the assistance of the heads of service, settled into the role, gathering views from young people through the Youth Council and expressing them in committee.

"Young people have a different way of looking at things. Most of the Councillors are affiliated to political parties and tend to do what their party says, which is not always the best thing for young people. I have no political affiliation when I serve on the committee so am able to freely express the views of young people from across the city.'

Councillor Ricky Bell, Convener for the Education and Skills and Early Years City Policy committee, is not entirely convinced that the set up that is in place for young people engagement in Glasgow is, at present, as good as it could be.

He said: "The Council has undergone a complete reorganisation and we are starting on new work programmes which will take the committee out of the Council Chamber and around schools. What I really want to see is more direct engagement with young people, we need to see if there is a better way than just having a young people's representative on the Education and Skills Committee. We have, for instance, Pupils Councils in most schools and there is not yet a mechanism in place that allows them to interact directly with the committee.

"The next challenge we have is closing the attainment gap and we will be taking learnings in this from visiting four schools. There is great work being done for young people in the more deprived areas of the city. We just need to learn to get better at engagement.

"When setting up the committee we had lengthy discussions on who should be our outside representatives, and since making our choices we have struggled to get their full attendance. It is a case of choosing the right people. While we cannot choose who we have on the committee, we need to ensure that those we choose, attend all meetings not just those with issues that spark their interest. To that end – and to help those involved get a better understanding of the workings of the committee and issues involved – we intend to organise training sessions."

Scottish Borders

Scottish Borders Council is now into its third year of having two young people serving on its Education Committee. Every two years a group of nine S5 pupils are recruited (one from each High School) to represent the pupil voice on the Education Committee's Education Theme Group. From those, two are chosen to sit on the Education Committee in a non-voting capacity.

If one of the elected representatives is absent, then one of the others can attend in their place. The role of the pupil representative is to review the council papers published a week in advance of the meeting, take the main discussion points to the pupil council/pupil voice groups in their school and gather any views the young people would like fed back on each item. Then, with assistance from the Engagement and Participation Officer, develop a presentation that can be taken to committee to highlight these issues.

The system used in the area with representatives from all nine secondary schools, allows all nine the opportunity to fill in at the Education Committee if others can't make it so those involved say there is never any difficulty in retaining young people's interest.

Eilidh Page from Hawick – who, partly inspired by her two-year membership of SBC's Education Committee, has moved on now to study politics and international relations at Aberdeen

University – has proven herself to be a truly affective voice for young people in the Borders, impressing many across the region.

She told us: “Politics is something that fascinates me, not just nationally but in small town environments. I was Head Girl at Hawick High School at the time of my appointment in 2016 and served on the Education Committee with Duncan Moore from Earlston High School, this allowed us to bring forward ideas that we had gathered from young people in our respective areas and influence decision-making.

“The Councillors were very welcoming and helped us through the process. One thing that I learned quickly was that with council work you need to keep up with the context of what is happening and read all the papers thoroughly. Councillor Sandy Aitchison, the education portfolio holder, was of particular assistance to us and even helped us press for better WiFi in our schools. Of course we did not get a vote which is acceptable, because we were only elected by our schools and not by the public at large, but we were given a full and legitimate say on issues such as the new build at Jedburgh Grammar and LGBT+ issues at Hawick High.”

Commenting on whether she felt only being able to speak on Education issues was restrictive, Eilidh said: “Education is the sector I feel most passionate about. It is the foundation of society and should be invested in. There is a lot going on there. The fact that I was also able to talk on other subjects at area forums and community council meetings also helped.”

She added: “I cannot credit Ceri and Pam, our two CLD support workers, enough. In the beginning they said to treat the experience of being on a committee as a trial. They said: ‘See how you get on and if neither of you are getting much from it then we will just put the idea to bed.’ Thankfully, both of us got a lot from it. I suppose it depends on your enthusiasm and drive as to whether it works for you or not. I’ve been told that our replacements have not been quite as engaging.”

She said the main way that she and Duncan gathered the views of young people in the Borders was by getting out and speaking to them as well as liaising with representatives from the nine secondary schools in the Borders on group chats on social media

To assess whether having a young person’s voice influencing policy was working in the Borders, we also spoke to Chief Education Officer.

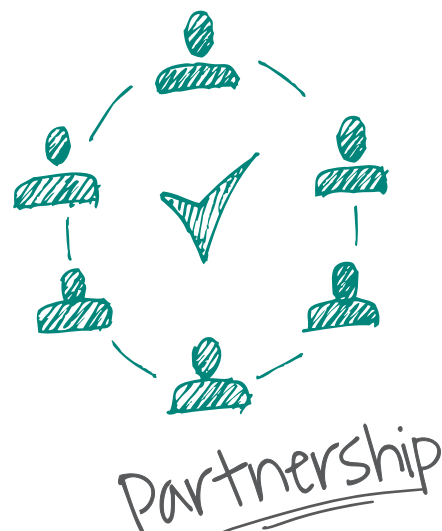
She said: “It works well for us. Our Young People representatives over the past two years have certainly not been shy. We ensure they are in a safe environment, give them induction and training and fully brief them, alongside the parent representatives, before meetings. Their input at committee has been invaluable in moving key issues forward.

So, are there any drawbacks?

“I suppose continuity could be an issue. Those that are nominated to serve on the Education Committee have a busy school and wider life and have added pressures from exams. But what they learn can be of benefit to them. Last year one of our young people representatives went on to study Law and this year Eilidh is studying politics in Aberdeen and Duncan is studying Law in Glasgow.”

East Dunbartonshire

A young person did serve on East Dunbartonshire Council’s Education, People and Business Committee until recently but stepped down ‘Due to Other Commitments’ but the post has recently been refilled.



Appointing a Youth Convener

Highland

Only Highland Council currently has a young person in the full-time role as Youth Convener.

Based at the High Life Highland Office in Ardross Street in Inverness, the Convener is appointed to be a full-time voice for young people in Highland

The post, which has been running in the region since 2005, carries an annual bursary of £15,925 and the Highland Youth Convener is the only young person in Scotland to have voting rights on the council's Education committee (The Care, Learning and Housing Committee) and full attendance and speaking rights on all committees and the full council meeting.

Working alongside the council's youth development team, they provide a consistent link for elected members and senior officers in the Highland Council, representing young people's views and acting as a sounding board on youth issues across the Highlands. The post-holder attends Council and Community Planning Partnership meetings works closely with young people across the Highlands through the Highland Youth Voice Parliament, Area Youth Forums and Pupil Councils in Secondary Schools, and assists the areas six MSYPs in making local young people's views known nationally. They are also tasked with maintaining links established by their predecessors and establishing new connections with organisations across the Highlands.

The 13th Youth Convener, is 20-year-old Esme Leitch from Lochaber, who took up her year-long role in August.

A former Community Radio presenter with Nevis Radio in Fort William and a member in 2017-18 of the Young Women's Lead Committee at the Scottish Parliament, she has a positive and enthusiastic personality with a keen perspective on how she wants to motivate and influence others in the year ahead.

She said: "I saw the job advertised and applied because I thought it would be a good opportunity to engage with people and enhance my personal and career development. I went

through an interview process and I was delighted when I was contacted and offered the 12-month position. I was a bit worried about not coming from Inverness and the travel that would involve but the youth team at Highlife Highland have been amazing and accommodating and I now work a proportion of my hours from Kinlochleven High School.

"It's been pretty crazy since I came into post. Initially there was a flood of messages that amazed and overwhelmed me. Now I have lots of people to meet and Highland Council and Highland Youth Parliament meetings to attend plus I have already started conversations with organisations such as WEA, Northern Alliance and NHS Highland in the region.

"The Youth Convener role covers a vast area, including Skye, but like my predecessors, I aim to visit as many school groups as I can. You can make it work if you plan it well enough."

Each Youth Convener is asked to draw up an action plan in which they list three priorities for their year in office. Esme has chosen Inclusivity, Rural Empowerment and Gender Equality. When asked for her views on youth engagement, she responded: "I don't like it when people say that they are keen to give young people a voice. Young people already have a voice. So, I don't see it as being about adults giving young people a voice it is actually more about adults listening more actively to the voices that are already there.

"Young people run in different circles from adults, we communicate differently and while we are at school they are at work, so it is important that space is found – possibly in the evening – to link up, so evening meetings may be a way forward to attract young people to come to the table and engage in the important discussions that take place.

"There also really needs to be a change when it comes to who sits around the table. We cannot, for instance, continue to have entire Community Councils made up exclusively of older people. In some countries, they have legislated youth quotas which reserve seats for young people in Parliament. Obviously, we cannot take away the public's democratic right to choose candidates but legislation of some type may help address what appears to me to be an imbalance across the age-ranges."

As for the uniqueness of her post?

"I can't believe that Highland is the only region in Scotland with a Youth Convener. It is so valuable in politics and policy making to have a full-time youth voice. I don't think of my role as being ground-breaking but it is important in that it hits home to many that young people's views should not be forgotten and they often are."

So, should the post be for a longer period?

"I don't think so. Some say if the post ran for two years it would be better because you would have more time to make your mark, but if it had been a two year post I don't think I would have applied for it."

Ian Murray, Chief Executive of High Life Highland, is equally enthused about the initiative.

He said: "The Highlands Youth Convener post has overall been a huge success and has given young people an understanding on the route they can take to have their voices heard. Councillors and officers of the council have generally been supportive. They know the post

comes with gravitas with the person having been through a rigorous appointed process and having full back up.

"Generally the Youth Convener's role is to link with the Highland Youth Parliament, Youth Forums and the Pupil Councils in each of our 29 Secondary Schools. If there is a concern, say from a school that is of an administrative matter, we will provide back-up staff or if it is a more controversial political issue we will chaperone the Youth Convener in the background."

What then are the drawbacks?

"Well you have to accept that there are some young people who are switched on to the role and hit the ground running while others need more support. Most of those who have held the post have gone on to do greater things afterwards."

Council Leader, Councillor Margaret Davidson said: "The Youth Convener post is unique in Scotland and is part of our commitment to better understand and engage with issues important to young people in the Highlands."



Councillor as Young People's Champion

The majority of councils across Scotland have appointed Councillors to serve as Young People's Champions, acting as a voice for young people and helping to mentor young people in their engagement with the decision-makers.

Dumfries and Galloway

Councillor Adam Wilson from Lochmaben, as well as being the youngest member of Dumfries and Galloway Council, is also the authority's Young People's Champion.

Many councils across Scotland have members designated as Young People's Champions but few have guidelines on what the role should entail.

Adam, pictured on page 55, said: "The post was introduced as a result of the review into youth services. The aim is to be a support to young people in the region and act as a voice piece for them on the council, making sure their views are aired. There's a lot of good work taking place and I have been kept busy over this year having overseen the Year of Young People (YOYP) Plan on behalf of the Administration."

"There are no rules attached to the role. I just try to make it my own and over the year have gained in-depth knowledge in young people engagement through working with national organisations such as YouthLink, the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme, Young Scot and the Youth Parliament.

"Initially there was some opposition to the establishment of a Young People's Champion, in particular, in relation to there being no specific remit. But the role and post enjoy widespread support now."

The council's Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning Committee has two parent representatives, two religious representatives and two staff representatives but are without a non-voting young person.

Adam says: "That is possibly down to young people not having made a request to be there. We do have Area Committees and have tried to get young people involved there but Dumfries

and Galloway covers over 100 miles so travel to meetings is often restrictive. After the YOYP is over I intend to concentrate my efforts on trying to set up a Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council and continue to support the Champions Board for care-experienced youngsters."

He has attended a number of events since his appointment and has built very positive relationships with young people, this has helped challenge the notion that elected representatives are not interested in the views of teenagers and young adults.

Additionally, Adam has been involved in key phases of a number of projects as part of his Champion role, this has included the TIE (Time for Inclusive Education) Campaign, the Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy for Dumfries & Galloway including its new Regional Youth Council, as well as the Champions Board meetings that take place three times a year between young people who have experienced care and senior managers with a clearly identified Corporate Parenting responsibility. The Young Person's Champion is responsible for ensuring that young people are considered and included within all forms of decision making.

Renfrewshire

Renfrewshire Council had a Young People's Champion between 2002 and 2012, who advocated and worked with young people across the authority, but due to restructuring and time lapse the post was not filled after that. However – to coincide with the Year of Young People another Champion has been appointed and she has been invited to collaborate and discuss the development of the youth voice in Renfrewshire beyond 2018.

Dundee

In Dundee the City Council has created a new role of Children and Young Persons Spokesperson to ensure that there is a more corporate focus on young people's issues. Councillor John Alexander, Council Leader, said: "This role has been created to ensure that there is a cross-departmental focus on young people's issues. Many of those that are raised relate to a range of services and it is vital to have an individual with a remit to cut across departments and services."

Inverclyde

For 27-year-old Natasha Murphy being appointed the Young Peoples' Champion for Inverclyde Council was like an extension of her day job as a volunteer Children and Youth Worker with the Church of Scotland.

She said: "It is a varied role and how it is undertaken really depends on the person doing it. There is no guidance on how it should be done but flexibility is important. It would be wrong to have a strict set of rules and regulations. I got no guidance when I began although I did spend time speaking to my predecessor in the role.

Personally, I want to do more to reduce poverty and improve mental health among young people and that can be done through local and national government working together. I am hoping soon to be able to set up surgeries in schools – not on party political lines but to really capture the views of young people on what they want.

When asked for her views on having young people on committees, Natasha said: "I am not really sure how engaging that would be but, if it were to happen, young people should be on all committees not just the education one, plus it should not just be MSYPs who are selected to serve as they have in effect been pre-chosen for another role. I would be concerned that this would just end up another layer of bureaucracy."

Chair of Inverclyde's Children and Young People's Committee, Councillor Stephen McCabe added: "I think having a Councillor Champion representing any group, whether it be Older People, Veterans or Younger People, can only serve to promote the needs and interests of that group within the Council."

Western Isles

Things are not fairing quite so well in the Western Isles where the Western Isles Council/ Comhairle has appointed two Young People's Champions – Councillor Norrie Macdonald who covers Lewis and Harris and Councillor Paul Steele, Uist and Barra.

Norrie, who works closely with young people as a member of the local Island Games Association, says: "The concept is good, but we both feel

grossly underutilised. We are more than willing to support organisations like the Youth Forum, any school 'councils' and other Youth groups who feel they might benefit from having 'inside access' to the decision making processes; but because the Youth Champions role does not have a specific remit, it leaves us wanting.

"There is, and has been historically, a 'disconnect' between young people and the 'machinery' of representation and democracy. We need to inspire folk to believe that they can be part of the process, can influence the policy decisions that affect them, and that their voice is important.

"As things stand, our titles as Youth Champions are without real meaning. We'll need to start actively promoting ourselves to change that. Fleshing out the role over time, being trusted as a direct conduit to the 'corridors of power' and being accessible, communicative and transparent, is vital to its success and purpose. We have both pledged to 'pick up the pace'," he added.

Youth Councils

Youth Councils or Youth Forums are now established in most local council areas – with large geographic or largely populated areas having more than one.

Local MSYPs generally sit on the Councils and use them as a means of assessing the views of young people in their areas.

Not all Councils have had success in establishing these bodies and one or two have faltered due to changes in personnel with throughputs changing as some of those active members move on to university, college or work.

Youth Forums need nurturing and Community and Learning Development staff are doing an excellent job, but Youth Councils work best when there is support from Chief Executives and lead Councillors who can feed the views of those involved into the decision making process.

Moray Council is one that has struggled to re-establish its Youth Council despite valiant attempts made by the county's two MSYPs and a designated youth worker.

Fiona Herd, Locality Wellbeing Officer, said: "We now want to get the Moray-wide consultation (Place Standards) completed by January 2019 in order to get new young people involved. I'm not sure whether a Youth Council as such is actually the best approach to involve young people in decision making, we have been considering bringing representatives from across Moray to an annual event to ask them their views on matters that affect them rather than having one established group of young people representing the youth voice in Moray. Our original Youth Council became very cliché towards the end of its life and served more as something to put on a UCAS application than any kind of meaningful participation in the democratic process."

A Young People's Cabinet

Several Councils – mostly in urban areas – have established Young People Cabinets to shadow the Council Cabinet. This works well in most instances, but takes time to administrate.

Stirling

In Stirling a Young People's Gathering – organised by Aberdeenshire Council Youth Shadow Management Team has been established where young people meet with the Council's Strategic Leadership Team, including the Chief Executive and all Directors, three to four times per year as a sounding board to inform and influence decisions.

Aberdeenshire

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North Ayrshire

In North Ayrshire the Young People's Shadow Cabinet is the areas Executive youth council and

it meets in the council chamber every six weeks. The Chief Executive of North Ayrshire Council works closely with the Executive Youth Council and meets with them throughout the year. Following consultation and discussion with young people a proposal for a shadow leadership programme was agreed and implemented and launched as part of Youth Work Week.

A Children's Champions Board

Children's Champions Boards for care experienced and looked after young people have become one of the best new Young People engagement initiatives although in some areas like Aberdeenshire they have been around since 2014.

Most councils have established – or are contemplating establishing – a Corporate Parenting Board or 'Champions Board' to seek the views of looked after children. This is long overdue.

The concept is perhaps best explained in feedback we received from Dundee City Council: "The Champion's Board brings together Chief Officers, Elected Members, Young People and their supporters to discuss and make decisions on an agenda set by the young people themselves through a Young People's Participation Group. The process is intense and dynamic, and has led to a significant improvement in self-esteem and confidence for many of the individual young people involved as well as a better understanding by all, of the issues affecting children and young people"

The Life Changes Trust (LCT) funds support for Champion's Board across Scotland and was highly praised by all councils involved in this initiative, with many – like City of Glasgow and Moray – claiming that much of what has been achieved would not have happened without the financial backup from the Trust.

While there are many success stories, care experienced young people as a group currently do not stay on at school as long as other pupils and this affects their qualification levels and access to jobs. The MCR Pathways educational mentoring programme in Glasgow is a good example of LCT funding being put to good use.

The programme provides care experienced young people with one-to-one mentoring support from volunteers to assist them in getting the most out of their education. For some young people this might mean encouraging them to reconnect with school and for others nurturing academic ambitions but in all cases it enables the youngsters to focus on a positive future that offers a career not just a job. Mentors are recruited from all walks of life, and the key qualification is having the ability to build a positive relationship with a young person.

The Trust believes that this approach has the potential to improve the educational outcomes for care-experienced young people across Scotland over time.

Moray Council held a Champion's Board Conference this year and Jennifer Gordon, the council's Corporate Parenting and Communities Manager, said: "The initiative included social group activities and as an ice-breaker, we even had, to promote health and fitness, a 'smoothie bike' that made smoothies as you pedalled. These types of events encourage young people in care to become more engaged, but they really would not be possible without the financial backing from the Life Changes Trust."

Other councils with well-established Champions Boards include East Ayrshire, Fife, Falkirk, City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Dundee City and Renfrewshire.

Falkirk

As a good example of this initiative we chose Falkirk Council. There the Champions Board (CB) was launched in Sept 2017 at a formal event at Callendar House, Falkirk. There the Board is made up of the Chief Executive of Falkirk Council, Director of Children's Services, Strategic Lead of CB Project, four elected member including the Leader of the Council (all main parties are covered) and six young people, with support from members of Champions Board team. The board meets one week after full council and has met four times to date. The board is working on ten main priorities identified by its participation group. These include, ensuring work for care leavers, leisure passes to improve the physical and mental health of young people and generally improving services to support mental health.

The 15 young people who are engaged in the participation group have been offered wider in partnership with the Community Learning and Development Service. These have included Youth Achievement Awards, Duke of Edinburgh Awards and the Ocean Youth Trust. These opportunities have built the confidence and capacity of the young people to contribute to making the care system better for themselves and their peers. The team and young people have lots of plans for the coming year, this may include a Youth Exchange (subject to funding bid acceptance) to Creteil, France, where the young people will learn how a Youth Council works closely with Politicians in their local area.

Participatory Budgeting

The Scottish Government is working to meet a commitment that 1% of local government budgets are subject to participative budgeting by 2021.

Participative budgeting is now taking place in councils across Scotland and allowing young people a say on which projects in their area they believe are priorities for finances has begun – with key examples in Dundee, City of Edinburgh, North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, East Lothian, Scottish Borders and Western Isles.

Dundee

Dundee Council has established a Dundee Youth Fund which can award grants totalling £25,000 to projects and activities that are run for or by young people. All applications are assessed by a panel of young people aged between 10 and 26.

Priority in the fund distribution is given to applicants that seek to increase employability skills; increase awareness of physical or mental health; develop personal and social skills; develop entrepreneurial skills and social enterprises; encourage young people to be active outdoors; encourage young people to take care of the natural environment and to promote and enable equal access to opportunities.

Western Isles

The four Youth Councils in Western Isles are involved in taking funding decisions in respect of LEADER applications.

East Ayrshire

In the Year of Young People East Ayrshire, as part of the initiative, created a 'Young Person Participatory Budgeting' process where young people devised the project – including the criteria and application – and awarded money to groups and organisations who pitched their proposals to those attending various community events.

East Ayrshire Youth Work Network also created a grant scheme where affiliated organisations could apply for funding of up to £200 for projects that were for the benefit of young people from within the organisation.

North Ayrshire

North Ayrshire run Youth Participatory Budgeting Events and online voting where young people aged between eight and 25 can apply for funds of up to £1000. Each locality is allocated an amount of money (funded by monies previously known as Local Youth Action Fund). In the past year young people have awarded more than £100,000 to youth projects in North Ayrshire. Young people assess the applications and mark against certain criteria to go to the voting stage. Young people from across the community participate, through live events and on-line voting to allocate the funds.

East Lothian

Young people in East Lothian also took part in a Participatory Budgeting event in 2018 when around £40,000 was granted to youth services in two areas of the county with the decision on who should benefit from the cash decided upon by the young people themselves.

City of Edinburgh

In City of Edinburgh young people aged between 11 and 21 can vote for youth work projects in its Choose Youth Work participatory budgeting initiative. A total of £60,000 was allocated in the first year, and £166,000 over the past year on a citywide and locality basis. More than 400 young people helped to identify key priorities.

Renfrewshire

As part of the Local Area Committee review, and in line with the Community Empowerment Act, Renfrewshire Council aims to create a discreet Youth Challenge Grant funding where young people will be able to decide the criteria, range and awarding of grants is in draft stages. This will also provide the opportunity to deliver participatory budgeting exercises.

Scottish Borders

Youth Chex – a young people grant making scheme – has been running in the Scottish Borders for the past 10 years. Funded by CLD, it uses a preliminary budget approach that allows young people to choose which youth projects should receive grants. This year young people from across the region were asked to submit applications for a £1000 grant to support Year of Young People events – eight applications were received and five were successful after a public vote.



Gatherings for Engagement

Collaboration through events to allow young people space to engage and reach a consensus with decision makers over priorities, held within a controlled environment, is seen as a productive method of communication for many councils.

This works well in both urban and rural areas and allows a degree of inclusiveness when it comes to the views of hard to reach young people.

Many Councillors and officials think that having young people sitting in formal meetings is not always productive and that more creative ways need to be found to allow young people to lead on what they want their future to look like, large Gatherings of young people have proved successful in several Councils across Scotland and this has increased over the past year with events staged for the Year Of Young People.

Stirling

A Gathering – organised by Stirling Youth Forum in November 2017 – attracted over 200 young people and led to the identification of the four key themes seen as being of priority to local young people – education, mental health, transport and Stirling City Centre. The Council and partner agencies have committed to work with the young people on these four themes over 2018 with a further Gathering planned in late October 2018 to celebrate the distance travelled and decide on what needs to happen next.

The next steps in this work include having a closer link to the School pupil voice structures; allowing young people to participate in the Participative Democracy Certificate in order to build accreditation offers into their involvement and to support the development of a shadow Children and Young People Committee in parallel with the Council Committee Structure feeding views and ideas into the main council committees.

Angus Macdonald, one of Stirling's MSYPs, applauded the actions taken by Stirling Council to date but hints that more is required. He said: "Getting young folk closer integrated into the council set-up is a long-term aim but, for the here and now, I certainly would agree that the council is going out of its way to listen to the voices of

young people and including them through the Youth Forum and the ongoing Our Place Our Space projects.

"This way ultimately provides better ways to engage with young folk and encourages them to take the lead rather than merely including them on committees. I commend the council's efforts so far and I look forward to seeing initiatives in progress come to fruition over the next couple of years."

Renfrewshire

As in most Scottish local authorities, young people are not appointed to any committee in Renfrewshire, which is respected for its level of youth engagement. Here concerns were expressed by senior managers, practitioners and young people that the times of meetings, the structure and formality, and the lack of voting rights would reduce the participation of young people to observers and not contributors.

Debate and consultation continues to explore how young people can be included in the preceding discussions prior to papers or decisions going to board; young presentations, papers/reports to cover a wider range of youth views and opinions that can inform decision-makers on youth matters.

It is anticipated that members of Renfrewshire Youth Voice (representatives from local youth organisations and community-based fora) and the area's MSYPs will be invited to future meetings of a range of boards as part of Youth Voice induction. MSYPs have also discussed piloting a joint surgery with councillors. This is currently in the planning phase.

Dumfries and Galloway

One of the main challenges within Dumfries and Galloway is related to the size and rurality of the region. Bringing young people together is challenging due to expensive public transport with limited evening and weekend provisions. Additionally, for regional gatherings this can result in up-to 2+ hours travel for young people living in the far corners of Dumfries and Galloway.

Another challenge pertains to the numbers of young people who have an active interest in

engaging with decision makers or politics more generally. Much similar to the adult population, there is often an apathy surrounding politics and holding those in elected positions of power to account for their decision making on behalf of the community.

It has been identified by the regions MSYPs through consultation that many young people are unaware of their rights and the opportunities to become involved and as a result do not know that they can or how they can do so. Something that will be relevant to communities out-with Dumfries and Galloway is the notion that there is one 'Youth Voice' – yet young people, much like the adult population, have varied opinions on issues such as health, welfare, warfare, political parties, support, mental health, education and the environment.

The work that the council is championing locally seeks to emphasise the diversity of young people's identities, talents, ambitions and achievements with its main goal being to ensure that youth representation is built into service planning and the decision making processes.

Other initiatives

Across Scotland there are some other innovative pieces of work being undertaken to ensure the voices of young people are being heard out with the realm of the examples given above. Here are some worth a mention.

Questionnaires

Most Councils throughout Scotland regularly send out questionnaires seeking young people's views on subjects affecting them.

Throughout the year Vibrant Voices Campaign focus groups are held in East Ayrshire and surveys/questionnaires completed by young people to assist elected members as and when required. Almost 1000 young people provided feedback in recent consultation regarding a Health and Wellbeing Survey. The YPSD Standard Evaluation form, that measures the impact attending activities and programmes has on those taking part's confidence, team work and communication skills, shows that 93.4% of the 519

forms filled in from April to June 2018 state that there has been an increase in these skills.

In South Ayrshire schools the annual pupil survey was completed by 1268 secondary pupils and 3681 primary pupils. The survey provides young people with an opportunity to voice their views on the educational experience.

This shows how beneficial it is to get young people involved.

The downside of questionnaires is two-fold, however, as filling them in is never as good as face-to-face engagement with, and reaction to, the questions being asked, and too many questionnaires put young people off filling them in meaningfully, so they can become just a tick-box exercise.

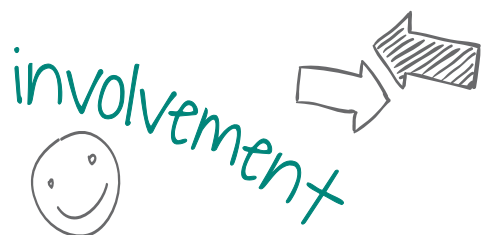
Member of Council Licensing Forum

In Renfrewshire the Licensing Forum is open for young people to participate in, but the time of meetings has proved to be a barrier. Other councils do – however- have young people on Licensing Forums.

Incentives for youth participation

Accreditation for participation is being undertaken or investigated by several local authorities as a means of encouraging more young people to engage and participate. This provides social opportunities plus credit which will show up as an achievement to the young person when he or she applies for work – in a similar way to the Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

In many councils Saltire Awards are seen as a form of accreditation for volunteering and some include youth engagement as an area of volunteering, in that it allows young people wider achievement and the development of skills that help them succeed in today's world.



Our findings: is what we do effective?

Overall in the course of our interviews we found a mixed picture of engagement with young people at local government level, despite strong commitment and performance by youth workers and Community Learning and Development staff.

In some areas there was a clear disconnect between Councillors and Young people. This was particularly evident regarding young people serving on committees, where most young people enthused over having a say at the heart of decision making but many Councillors were dubious about the benefits of their inclusion. Many Councillors refused to be questioned on the issue, deferring any comments to council officers, and some of those that did comment refused to allow us to publish their views. We thank all the councillors that agreed to allow their comments to be used. A key factor which we found heavily impacted on how meaningful young people were being engaged was the level of education they had concerning the issue they were discussing or the format of the meetings they were taking part in (e.g. Council committee). This is a right which is outlined by the General comment on Article 12 by the UNCRC.

Overall, the approaches made by local authorities to engaging young people is disjointed with no universal structures or programmes in place on a national scale. But, having said that, a lot of innovative work is taking place that deserves to be shared.

While Community and Learning Development staff, youth workers and officials designated to assist young people, were helpful, and clearly switched on to the needs and aspirations expressed, many elected members were less encouraged and some appeared to view youth engagement as more of a tick-box exercise. From interviews with some of the councillors who were unwilling to be quoted we got the impression that their concern was not with the feasibility or value of programmes but rather a denigration of their own power and, to a lesser degree, being put under greater accountability.

Party politics in some areas also got in the way of a effective engagement.

Community Planning Partnerships are viewed by the Scottish Government as the conduit for ensuring partnership working takes place between bodies providing public services and the voluntary sector. Many councils do have young people as members of their planning partnership boards, but not all. While many have only one young person involved, a general view by youth work professionals is that this works better with more than one young person present or having someone on the board who can give clear evidence of the views of young people.

Community Councils also have a part to play in growing new political talent. Several areas – such as Fife – have had success in having young people elected to community councils. Elsewhere young people have stood but been unsuccessful. Here co-option of one or two young people might invigorate debate and ensure that the views of young people are listened to at a grassroots level.

Seminars and Get-To-Know-You sessions on issues relating to young people were in general poorly attended by Councillors, most notably those on issues such as LGBTQ+ in schools, a subject which we found many councillors appeared to take little interest in.

Young people on the other hand were open and transparent about the positives and pitfalls embedded in full engagement at committee level and the challenges they faced engaging at a local level. Those that served on decision-making committees, while taking time to adjust, generally, admitted that after a month or two they felt welcomed and accepted.

Where engagement with young people really seemed to work was when the Chief Executive, Council Leader or a Councillor designated as a Young People's Champion took a keen interest in the process and acted as a mentor or encourager to young people in the front line. Good examples of this are in North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Aberdeen City and Perth and Kinross. The influence of a Chief Executive taking time to attend youth forums and having set meetings with young people, to register their views and understand their wishes, seemed to really have an impact with clear results of their actions being shown.

We asked Elma Wallace, the recently retired Chief Executive of North Ayrshire Council why this might be so, and she said: "Increasingly I find that involving, and meaningfully listening to, young people about how we can improve and reform public services adds a richness and a depth to our work. At Young Scot we have actively pursued the design, production and delivery of services by young people. This is now being taken further by local authorities, of which North Ayrshire has been one of the leaders. not just for young people's services but across a whole range of services. A further benefit of this is that it encourages young people to be more confident and more willing to step up to assist with making Scotland a better country in which to grow up."

Young People on Education committees were grateful for the briefing sessions they received from officials or committee chairs before meetings and found them extremely beneficial in helping them get to grips with the often-complex content of heavy agendas. Many agreed that undertaking these briefings with parent representatives, who are also no-voting members of the committee, was also viewed as being beneficial.

There was a mixed view on whether having young people on decision-making committees was the right approach. While this appeared to be working well and was a positive experience for most, outliers like East Dunbartonshire and Stirling had struggled with this initiative.

Across Scotland, local authorities pigeon-hole young people as being in the 'education box'. The reality, however, is that young people are interested in a much broader range of issues –

most notably Mental Health, Transport, Sexual Health and the Environment – which cannot always be voiced under the education umbrella. Interestingly, over the past year more credence seems to be afforded to an all-inclusive approach, most notable in areas like Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen.

The role of Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament in engaging young people throughout Scotland should be commended. Interestingly most elected members we spoke to acknowledged this but added a caveat, or expression of concern, that the MSYPs were not 'typical young people' and were in many cases not able to gather the wide range of views from all young people. However, it should be noted that the SYP dispute this (see appendix point 1 for details of SYP diversity and the breadth of views gathered by SYP Parliamentarians) – MSYPs are elected by young people and are leading the way when it comes to engagement – it is hoped that in time this will encourage others to speak out.

There is clear evidence to suggest that the majority of young people who served on council committees – many of them MSYPs – move on to study Politics, Law, Business Studies, History or International Relations – subjects which often lead to civic leadership roles.

There were some councils that managed to engage with young people without having them on key committees – Stirling, Aberdeen City, North Lanarkshire and North Ayrshire are good examples of this. North Ayrshire, in particular, is an outstanding example of how an authority manages to ensure that the Young People's voice is heard throughout an organisation, underpinning all it does. This authority seems to have developed real engagement with consultation developed in a co-production model. The work of this council, alongside that of North Lanarkshire, deserves to be commended. It has a strategy which has been developed by its young people which contains a robust structure that allows robust engagement and young people being placed at the heart of the process.

As there are many competing demands on young people's time, incentives may be needed to motivate them including accreditation, social opportunities, remuneration or achieving quick

wins on their priorities.

Above all, young people need to see changes as a result of their input but also learn that not all they ask for will be given. Often a young person, instead of being fobbed off or patronised, prefers to receive a direct 'No'. A direct but negative response is in itself meaningful engagement and not tokenistic.

Highland Council's initiative of allocating a bursary to a young person to undertake the role of Youth Convener for its vast geographic region for a year – coupled with the council's establishment of a network of Pupil Councils and Youth Forums feeding into a Highland Youth Parliament – certainly deserves recognition. Here the young person selected is given access to all committees and tasked with gathering the view of all young people in the Highlands and bringing them to the heart of decision making. The scheme – run by High Life Highland on behalf of the council – has been in place for 13 years with generally good results, it is therefore surprising that it has not been emulated elsewhere.

One of the strengths of having young people at the heart of decision making is that they come from outside the political sphere and do not feel pressured to maintain a political image or tow any party line.

We want all young people in Scotland to have ambition and become confident individuals, successful learners, effective contributors and responsive citizens and what we have found that in many local authorities this is not being afforded to them.

Through mentoring and encouragement, young people can excel and take a keen interest in local politics and local decision making and there is evidence to suggest that those who gain support at a local level do go on to take a further interest in engaging with others.

Improvements we can make:

Our overall recommendation is that local authorities should be supported more by the Scottish Government, and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, through the sharing of good practice found elsewhere.

This will assist those in the front line of engagement, and prevent any council from working as an isolated unit as some seem to be doing at present. A national framework which guides local authorities and benchmarks progress is necessary although enforcing programmes or structures on local authorities risks a one-size-fits all approach which should be avoided. The innovative work currently being undertaken in young people engagement within many councils should be applauded and such progress and experience should be tracked and shared across all 32 local authorities.



Our recommendations

- 1 While it should be recognised that one size should not fit all, if young people are interested in serving on council policy-making committees in a non-voting capacity in Scotland they should be afforded the chance to do so on all relevant committees (excluding finance where legislation does not allow it).
- 2 Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament should – due to their unique democratic mandate – be viewed as the natural candidates for representing young people at committee level within local authorities. However, other young people should not be discounted. Workloads and time pressures must be taken into consideration. Any young person taking part in committee work must be fully briefed and gather views from youth organisations or groups in the areas they represent.
- 3 All councils – if they have not already done so – should be encouraged to create a Youth Engagement and Participation Strategy detailing plans for engaging young people more in all areas of council work.
- 4 All councils should develop a mentoring programme for young people participating in policy and decision making so that the young people involved are helped through the process of getting to grips with new procedures, formats and information.
- 5 All Council Leaders and Chief Executives should be encouraged to take more of a lead role in engaging young people.
- 6 Each council should have a Young People's Champion with a defined role in statute to advocate for young people.
- 7 Further work should be undertaken to devise a programme of best practice that can be shared amongst councillors akin to the Local Government Association's 'A Councillors workbook on engaging with young people'.
- 8 All Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) in Scotland are required to develop or adopt processes so that all children and young people can become aware of their rights and routinely have opportunities to exercise them through Community Planning, yet not all CPPs have young people on their boards. All CPPs should be encouraged to co-opt two young people to their board or a youth worker who can – through evidence – provide the clear views of young people on set issues.
- 9 The Year of Young people should not be the pinnacle for the way we engage with young people, but rather a legacy of meaningful change which embeds the views of young people within Scottish local policy-making.
- 10 The role of Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament in the development of youth engagement throughout Scotland should be commended and their access to meet and discuss issues with Council Leaders and Chief Executives should become part of normal practice for all councils.

11

The appointment of a paid Youth Convener (as in Highland Council) should be considered by local authorities.

12

When it came to equality many government and independent agencies such as Audit Scotland highlight gender imbalance as a concern in local government, but little reference is made to age imbalance. In Norway, political parties make efforts to ensure people under the age of 33 have a better chance of getting elected. By doing so each local authority takes into consideration the views of all ages and is more representative of the community at large. Political Parties in Scotland by adopting a similar quota system could, no doubt, attract more young voters to their ranks for doing so. The Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) should encourage political parties to follow the lead shown by Norway as a means of assisting age equality on councils.

13

A national framework which guides local authorities and benchmarks progress is necessary. Enforcing programmes or structures on to local authorities risks a one-size-fits all approach being taken. Progress and experience should be tracked and shared across all 32 local authorities.

14

Incentives such as accreditation for developing skills should be provided for young people to allow them to gain academic credits for the role they play in engaging with policy makers. This would not only benefit young people in their further career/education goals but also give tangible benefits to local political engagement.

15

All Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament should use this report as a tool to encourage their respective local authorities to endorse and implement these recommendations.

16

The role of young people involved in local decision making should be promoted and shared more widely through various mediums such as short films, social media and community awareness campaigns.

17

CoSLA and/or the Scottish Government should engage in a constant sharing of good practice vis a vis youth engagement as a means of continual mutual learning and improvement across all 32 local authorities.

18

Young People – over the age of 16 – should be encouraged to take part at Community Council level. There is evidence of success of this in Fife. All Community Councils should consider co-opting young people to their ranks.

In compiling this report we decided against collating evidence through Freedom of Information requests but instead contacted relevant young people, councillors and officials to get a better idea on how things are on the ground. This all took time. There is still room for further research in this subject through more detailed in-person investigation. The study could also be extended to include the engagement experience during the transition from secondary to further and higher education.

Acknowledgements

In drawing up this report we wish to acknowledge the support and guidance we have received from officials within the Scottish Youth Parliament, Young Scot, Youth Link and the Children and Young People Commissioners office, from Mathew and Lucy at LBD Creative, and officers within all 32 Scottish Councils that – with varying degrees of enthusiasm – helped us draw together this, the first extensive collation of examples of young people engagement happening at local government level across Scotland.

We dedicate this report to all young people in Scotland in the hope that it acts as a legacy to the Scottish Parliaments 'Year Of Young People' initiative and leads to lasting improvements in engagement between themselves and decision-makers across Scotland.

Writers

Councillor John Ross Scott is an award-winning journalist with over 32 years of experience in public service, including 25 years as an elected member in the Borders and Orkney and eight years as Chair of NHS Orkney. This is his second Independent Report – the first being 'Beyond Tweedbank: The case for the reinstatement of a Borders Rail Link to Hawick' (2004) which was sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Trust.

Kristopher Leask is an Orcadian student, currently at University of St Andrews in his second year studying International Relations. His interests include politics, both international and local, and Scottish education. An ambition of his is to work to increase the range and quality of opportunities available to young Scots across the whole country.



Engaging



Appendix

1) Quote from the Scottish Youth Parliament on the breadth of views its members gather and the diversity of its young parliamentarians:

There are around 160 Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament, two for each Scottish Parliament constituency, and two for each of its 11 National Voluntary Organisations.

MSYPs are obliged to consult with their constituents, to ensure that SYP genuinely represents all of Scotland's young people. For example, their Lead the Way manifesto was based on responses from 72,744 young people across Scotland, and MSYPs consulted with

around 12,000 young people in advance of their last Sitting in the Scottish Parliament.

SYP publishes a membership census every two year term, which shows how diverse its membership is. For example, over 10% of current MSYPs have experience of the care system, nearly 7% of MSYPs care for a parent or family member and more than 14% of MSYPs are non-white. The SYP membership also broadly correlates with the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data, meaning that many MSYPs come from some of Scotland's most deprived communities. The full SYP census is available on the SYP website www.syp.org.uk³⁸



Endnotes

- 1 Youth Participation in Local Government: Youth Outcomes of the Kenosha County Youth In Governance Program annual report 2016-17, Kenosha County Board, 2017, <https://kenosha.uwex.edu/files/2017/12/2016-2017-YIG-Annual-Report.pdf>
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- 5 UNCRC. 20 July 2009. "General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard" p. 8
- 6 UNCRC. 20 July 2009. "General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard" p. 8
- 7 UNCRC. 20 July 2009. "General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard" p. 9
- 8 UNCRC. 20 July 2009. "General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard" p. 9
- 9 UNCRC. 20 July 2009. "General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard" p. 10
- 10 UNCRC. 20 July 2009. "General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard" p. 11
- 11 UNCRC. 20 July 2009. "General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard" p. 29
- 12 UNCRC. 20 July 2009. "General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard" p. 29
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- 14 UNCRC. 20 July 2009. "General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard" p. 31
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- 16 <https://kenosha.uwex.edu/youth-development/youth-in-governance/>
- 17 <https://kenosha.uwex.edu/youth-development/youth-in-governance/>
- 18 The 2016/17 (most recent) report can be found here: <https://kenosha.uwex.edu/files/2017/12/2016-2017-YIG-Annual-Report.pdf>
- 19 <https://racine.uwex.edu/4-h-youth-development/youth-in-governance/>
- 20 https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/11.124%20A%20Councillor%27s%20Workbook%20on%20Engaging%20Young%20People_v02.pdf
- 21 https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/11.124%20A%20Councillor%27s%20Workbook%20on%20Engaging%20Young%20People_v02.pdf (2018, p. 3)
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- 24 <http://www.young-essex-assembly.org.uk/about-us/>
- 25 <https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/youngmayor/Pages/About-the-young-mayor.aspx>
- 26 <https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/youngmayor/Pages/About-the-young-mayor.aspx>
- 27 <https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/youngmayor/Pages/About-the-young-mayor.aspx>
- 28 According to the EACEA National Policies Platform database on youth participation in elections across the EU <<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/5-participation-overview>>
- 29 <https://nu.no/>
- 30 <https://elev.no/>
- 31 <https://kommunal-rapport.no/video/2018/05/slik-funger-ungdomsradene-landet-rundt>
- 32 <https://www.hordaland.no/nn-NO/politikk/politisk-organisering/ungdommens-fylkesting-og-fylkesutval/>
- 33 To be found at <http://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/home/children-and-young-people/>
- 34 See: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/11/8648>
- 35 More info on the partnership agreement can be found here> <https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=33798> and the summary poster, which all agencies and youth related services will display can be found here> <https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=21855&p=0>
- 36 All of this happens in the context of the North Lanarkshire Youth Strategy and action plan 2014-2018, which is nearing its end (due to be reviewed soon). A copy can be found here> <https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=14882&p=0>
- 37 See http://www.shetland.gov.uk/youth_services/povertyisbadletsfixit.asp
- 38 Ben McKendrick, Chief Executive of Scottish Youth Parliament (02/11/2018)

Printed copies of 'Being Heard: Helping To Create The Next Generation of Civic Leaders in Scotland' report are available at £25 each or Executive Summaries £17 each (postage included) – with bulk buy purchase prices also available – from John Ross Scott.

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