Work with us
to make the Year of Young People 2018 a
catalyst for ALL children and young people having
a voice in decisions that affect them
Where are we now?

“If it’s to do with young people then ask them, involve them and empower them. Young people’s dreams are the best realities, and if you enable young people to enhance the dream of your service or experience, then the impact will be unparalleled.”

– Year of Young People Communic18 Ambassador

Children and young people have a right to a voice in decisions that affect them. This is reflected in national legislation and policy, and there are excellent examples of policymaking and services that reflect children and young people’s priorities.

But we still have a long way to go in making such practice the norm. Too often young people find that decisions are made about their lives without their say.

We want your help to change this, to ensure young people are active participants in decisions about services, policies and legislation that affect them throughout the Year of Young People 2018 and beyond.

Our vision for children and young people’s participation

• “Nothing about us, without us”
  The voices of children and young people should be heard and acted on in decisions that affect them. Their involvement should always be factored into the development of policy. They must have an avenue to hold adult decision-makers to account when they are not involved.

• Participation for ALL children and young people
  All children and young people have a right to be heard in ways that are appropriate to their needs. We know some children are not heard. Adults must take responsibility to ensure barriers to participation are removed.

• A resourced and skilled children and young people’s workforce
  This is essential for engaging with young people and facilitating involvement in local and national policymaking.

Why should I involve children and young people?

“Young people should be directly involved in local and national decision-making, including designing, co-producing and delivering services where possible.”

– National Youth Work Strategy

• Children and young people have the right to be involved in decisions that affect them. This is laid out in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the UK Government is a signatory.

• Children and young people are experts, by experience, on their own lives. By involving them we can create more effective public policy and better public services.

• It is good for young people’s health and wellbeing. It improves their relationships with adults and peers and increases their self-esteem.

• Children and young people have increased feelings of inclusion when they are involved in participation activities. In a school context this can have a positive impact on attainment and achievement.

• It is a key part of national legislation and approaches including the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the National Youth Work Strategy and Getting it Right for Every Child. It’s how we want to work in Scotland.

What gets in the way of this happening?

Our research shows that the following problems persist:
“We are all definitely moving in the right direction towards increasing youth engagement ... we must never forget the importance of remembering to ask children first.”

– Children in Scotland Advisory Group Member

Collectively we can change this!

Commit to the following actions and help us achieve our vision:

✓ Allow young people to inform your decisions whenever you are working with them. Actively try to engage with children who don’t often have the opportunity to have their voices heard.

✓ Consider what you are saying and how you are saying it. Information should be presented in a way children understand, and accessible for those with different communication difficulties.

✓ Young people need to know that their feedback is valued and has been taken into consideration, even when the final decision may not reflect their views. Tell them the reasons why specific decisions have been taken.

For MSPs:

• Support the full incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

• Proactively seek the voices of children and young people to inform your decision-making in your party and in parliament. Use Children in Scotland and YouthLink Scotland to support you to work with young people.

• Be creative in how you engage with children and young people. In your constituency, hold surgeries in places where children and young people are (such as youth projects, sports centres, schools, or shopping areas).

For Councillors:

• Invest in youth forums or councils, which support young people in decision-making processes. These activities must be supported by experienced staff from the children’s and youth work sectors.

• Create funding streams for meaningful engagement with children and young people into all aspects of your local authority policy development process.

• Be creative in how you engage with children and young people. Hold surgeries in places where young people are and make your surgeries more accessible.

For Community Groups, Charities, Trade Unions, and Business:

• Reflect on the impact of your work on children and young people and look at opportunities for them to have their say in planning and governance.

• Familiarise yourself with local youth work and children’s sector organisations to find out local priorities and build relationships with staff who could help you work with young people.

• Consider meaningfully involving young people in the governance of your organisation by recruiting and appointing young trustees and directors.
If you want to know more about involving children and young people, please get in touch using the contact details below and consider the benefits of joining Children in Scotland and YouthLink Scotland.

Further reading


Children in Scotland (2018): *The Impact of Children and Young People’s Participation on Policymaking*

Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland (2015): *How Young People’s Participation in School Supports Achievement and Attainment*

---

Children in Scotland
www.childreninscotland.org.uk
0131 313 2322
@cisweb
info@childreninscotland.org.uk
Rosebery House
9 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh, EH12 5EZ

A company limited by guarantee registered in Scotland,
Inland Revenue No. 83383. Charity No. SC003527

YouthLink Scotland
www.youthlinkscotland.org
0131 313 2488
@YouthLinkScot
info@youthlinkscotland.org
Rosebery House
9 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh, EH12 5EZ

YouthLink Scotland is a Company Limited by Guarantee.
Registered in Scotland No: 164547. SC003923