Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament will use their democratic mandate to defend young people’s rights on a national platform at tomorrow’s Young People’s Rights Review in Edinburgh.

Funded by the Scottish Government, the event - which will be hosted in Dynamic Earth in the capital - is a chance for the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) to ensure young people’s voices are at the heart of the Scottish Government’s Children and Young People Rights Action Plan, which is due to be published later this year.

The event, which will be attended by MSYPs from across the length and breadth of Scotland, will see the young people prepare to make their case on a particular rights-based issue through a series of workshops.

The morning’s workshops will be delivered by experts from leading rights-based organisations, including Alan Miller (Special Envoy, Global Alliance of Human Rights Institutions and Chair of the First Minister’s Expert Advisory Group on Human Rights Leadership), Andy Sirel, (Associate at JustRight Scotland), and representatives from the Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland.

In the afternoon, representatives from the Scottish Government - including the Minister for Childcare and Early Years, Maree Todd MSP - will take their seats to listen to speeches, with an opportunity to grill the young speakers on the topics covered, which will include mental health, LGBT+ discrimination, poverty-related attainment gap, and the minimum living wage.

SYP is particularly excited about this event, as its new national campaign, Right Here, Right Now, is firmly focused on empowering young people to uphold their rights, and calls on decision-makers to take a rights-based approach to their work.

Jack Dudgeon MSYP, SYP Trustee and campaign spokesperson, said: “Since we launched our campaign in October 2017, we’ve achieved so much already in the name of young people’s rights. We successfully campaigned for the removal of discriminatory ‘mosquito’ devices at train stations across Scotland, and SYP has been a key voice in supporting the drive to end the defence of justifiable assault on children, and to tackle the scourge of period poverty.
“The Young People’s Rights Review is an opportunity for MSYPs to use their democratic mandate to tell our nation’s leaders about the kind of country we want to live in - one which gives every young person the same opportunities, regardless of their socio-economic background, race, religion, sexuality, gender, or ability.

“We’d like to take this opportunity to thank the Scottish Government for working with us to ensure young people’s voices are at the heart of the event, in this, the Year of Young People, and we look forward to an excellent day of discussion collaboration.”

Minister for Childcare and Early Years, Maree Todd said: “In this Year of Young People it is exciting to be involved in an event that brings together the passion of our young people and the real opportunity to exchange inspirational ideas, views and recommendations. This year we are truly witnessing the outstanding contribution our young people make to communities, locally, nationally and globally and it is vital that we use this momentum to protect children’s rights going forward.

“I congratulate the Scottish Youth Parliament who are doing an incredible job through their campaign, in making sure that Scotland’s young people are aware of and understand their own rights, and that they are empowered to take action to defend them and those of others.

“Children are Scotland’s future and this Government is committed to making sure that we fulfil our responsibilities under the UNCRC. Our aim is to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all of our children and young people and the UNCRC is at the heart of our ambition to make Scotland the best place to grow up, be educated and to live and work. Our approach to children’s rights is central to our wider commitment to ensuring dignity, equality and human rights for all.”

[ENDS]
Notes to editor

1. All media enquiries to Karen Keith, Communications Officer, 07729 487627 or 0131 557 0452, or karen.k@syp.org.uk.

2. The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) represents Scotland’s young people. The charity’s vision for Scotland is of a nation that actively listens to and values the meaningful participation of its children and young people. SYP’s goal is to make this vision a reality, in order to ensure Scotland is the best place in the world to grow up.

3. A fundamentally rights-based organisation, SYP’s mission, vision, and values are grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In particular, Article 12 - “Young people have the right to express their views freely and have their opinions listened to in all matters affecting them” - is at the heart of all work carried out in SYP’s name.

4. As a completely youth-led organisation, the words and sentiment of Article 12 have profound importance for SYP’s work. The charity’s democratically elected members (MSYPs) listen to and identify the issues that are most important to young people, ensuring that their voices are heard by decision-makers. SYP exists to provide a national platform for young people to discuss the issues that are important to them, and supports them to effectively campaign for the change they wish to see. SYP was a key voice in the campaign to bring the voting age in Scotland down to 16, and played an integral role in the passing of the Marriage and Civil Partnerships Bill (Scotland) in 2014.

5. Politically impartial, SYP works with stakeholders, groups, individuals and representatives across the political spectrum who share the charity’s values, to enable SYP to deliver the policies that are important to Scotland’s young people.

6. The Young People’s Rights Review gives MSYPs the chance to engage directly with Scottish Government Ministers, senior civil servants and officials to inform, commend and recommend policy on young people’s rights. Through this co-production and participation, MSYPs will help to hold the Scottish Government to account for their young people’s rights obligations - a key part of the human rights based approach to policy-making. Funded by the Scottish Government, the event is a chance for SYP to ensure young people’s voices are at the heart of the Scottish Government’s Children and Young People Rights Action Plan, which is due in 2018.

7. Right Here, Right Now is SYP’s national campaign which runs from October 2017-October 2018, and has three main themes:
   - To influence law, policy and practice in order to strengthen the protection of young people’s rights.
   - To strengthen and enhance the status of MSYPs at a local level and within national voluntary organisations and to improve the links SYP has with other institutions such as the Scottish Parliament.
   - To promote young people’s rights to young people and those responsible for upholding these rights, empowering individuals to defend their own rights and the rights of others.