

In response to the Scottish Government's conversation around the Local Governance Review: Democracy Matters

Response from the External Affairs, UK & International Relations Committee of the Scottish Youth Parliament
November 2018



Introduction

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

We are a fundamentally rights-based organisation, and our mission, vision and values are grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In particular, our purpose embodies Article 12: that young people have the right to express their views freely and have their opinions listened to in all matters affecting them. As a completely youth-led organisation, the words and sentiment of Article 12 have a profound importance for our work.

Our democratically elected members listen to and recognise the issues that are most important to young people, ensuring that their voices are heard by decision-makers. We exist to provide a national platform for young people to discuss the issues that are important to them, and campaign to effect the change they wish to see.

SYP's Values are:

Democracy - We are youth-led and accountable to young people aged 12 to 25. Our democratic structure, and the scale of our engagement across Scotland, gives us a mandate that sets us apart from other organisations.

Rights - We are a fundamentally rights-based organisation. We are passionate about making young people aware of their rights, and ensuring that local and national government deliver policies that allow those rights to be upheld.

Inclusion - We are committed to being truly inclusive and work tirelessly to ensure the voices of every young person from every community and background in Scotland are heard.

Political Impartiality - We are independent from all political parties. By working with all stakeholders, groups, and individuals who share our values, we can deliver the policies that are most important to young people.

Contact us: Laura Pasternak, Public Affairs Officer
Laura.p@syp.org.uk, 0131 557 0452

Visit us: On our website: www.syp.org.uk On Twitter: @OfficialSYP
EXA Committee Twitter: @EXAComSYP

Our approach

SYP's External Affairs, UK & International Relations Committee comprises of 16 young people and we wish to relay the views of Scotland's young people to the Scottish Government in relation to your conversation around the Local Governance Review: Democracy Matters. We would be grateful if you could take account of these views in your consideration of this area of policy development.

Our views were gathered at a workshop our Convener Bailey-Lee Robb MSYP co-produced with the Scottish Government's Local Governance Review team and our Committee members at our 67th National Sitting on 21st October in Kilmarnock.

It is important to note that there were only four MSYPs present for the session itself, while this response has been approved by SYP's Conveners Group and the entire External Affairs, UK & International Relations Committee. The consultation resources and Regional Deliberation Events have also been widely advertised to the entire membership.

Our findings

What does 'local' mean to MSYPs?

- Wards (Local)
- Catchment Areas
- Street
- Town
- 'Glesga'
- Edinburgh
- Dundee
- Parish Community

Responses ranged from 'local' covering your street, catchment area, Parish Community, town or city. There was no consensus on one meaning of 'local' - no one-size-fits all definition.



Would you like your local community or community of interest to have more control over some decisions?

If yes, what sorts of issues would those decisions cover?

This question was asked to MSYPs and then followed up with, **what do you want to see this review achieve**, with all responses being posted under this questions.

- Youth Council / Youth Reps having voting rights on Local Authority committees.
- *The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that Community Councils should be empowered and funded with adequate resources to a base level to ensure*

that they can properly fulfil their roles as the first tier of local government in Scotland; and urges local and central government to work together to ensure that Community Councils can operate more effectively. Policy statement passed with 57% on 9th June 2018, Members' Motion by Aaron McDonald MSYP.

- Want to see Local Government to be more democratic after the review, through elections and more representative make-ups of both Community Councils, Local Government, and Local Authority Committees, with the suggestion to look into quotas (like Norway) e.g. Certain number of councillors had to be female, or under 30 etc.
- Ask Local Authority Committees to ensure its outputs are more accessible to young people - 'so [papers] not always 600 pages long'.
- Young people think that local government is boring, we need to change that.
- It is important that the review takes into account the Children and Young People Commissioner Scotland's Seven Golden Rules for Participation into account for young people. For more info, see [here](#).
- *Dundee Decides* is a good example of local participation. For more info, see [here](#).