Chapter XXX:

SYP

HOW TO

Everything you need to know about being a Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament

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Glossary
Below are some frequently used abbreviations you may come across during your time as an MSYP.

• MSYP - Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament.
• SYP - The Scottish Youth Parliament.
• LA - Local Authority.
• NVO - National Voluntary Organisation.
• SW - Support Worker.
• BYC - British Youth Council.
• UKYP - United Kingdom Youth Parliament.
• YS - Young Scot.
• YLS - YouthLink Scotland.
• CYP-CS - Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People.
• CiS - Children in Scotland.
• GIRFEC - Getting it Right for Every Child.
• CfE - Curriculum for Excellence.
Our Vision
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.

Our Mission
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 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.

Our Values
SYP is driven by four core values, listed below.

- **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 Independence:** 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.

Our History
SYP was established on 30th June 1999, making us one day older than the Scottish Parliament. The first ever meeting of SYP was at Murrayfield Stadium.

Since then, SYP has produced several youth manifestos to coincide with the Scottish Parliamentary elections, and has led a number of successful campaigns, including Votes at 16, Love Equally, One Fair Wage, Care.Fair.Share., and POVERTY: See It Change It, and Speak Your Mind.

SYP Elections are held nationwide every two years to elect new MSYPs. The election in 2017 saw over 80,000 votes cast across Scotland.
Role of an MSYP

An MSYP has a very important role to play in shaping the future of Scotland for young people. SYP has two elected MSYPs from each of the 73 Scottish Parliamentary constituencies, as well as MSYPs from NVOs.

As an MSYP, you will:

- Consult with constituents (the young people in your constituency), gathering their views on issues affecting them. These views will help to shape SYP policy, which allows us to influence issues that matter to young people.
- Act as an ambassador of the organisation, taking forward the values and aims of SYP, as chosen by you, the MSYPs.
- Campaign enthusiastically, both locally and nationally, to ensure the voices of young people are heard by decision-makers in Scotland.

Throughout your term, you can submit Members’ Motions to create policy, campaign locally for our national campaign, participate in media opportunities, lead youth engagement sessions, and become involved with projects. These opportunities raise the profile of the organisation and champion the work of SYP.

Ultimately, you are representing the young people of Scotland; your peers elected you to work hard to effect change for them - it’s now over to you to make it happen!

Role of the Board

SYP is governed by the Board of Trustees. The Board meets frequently to discuss the work and progress of the organisation, as well as any procedural changes that may need to be made. The Board is made up of seven MSYPs, including the Chair and Vice-Chair. An MSYP who can demonstrate their commitment to the organisation at a strategic level can submit their application to become a Trustee ahead of the Annual General Meeting (AGM), which typically occurs during the summer National Sitting. At the Sitting, MSYPs vote to elect their Board for the following year.

Chair

The Chair of SYP is elected by the SYP membership. The Chair is the figurehead of the organisation, and has the final decision on SYP matters. The Chair heads and directs the Board of Trustees, and is the main point of contact for media opportunities, discussions with external stakeholders, and meetings with politicians.

The Chair is the key representative of the organisation, and he or she will chair meetings of the organisation, represent SYP at a strategic level, and work with the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team in maintaining and developing relationships with outside agencies, as well as high level policy and decision-makers.

Vice Chair

The Vice Chair works with the Chair to develop and promote the organisation. The key responsibilities of the Vice Chair are to deputise for the Chair as required, to assist in the leadership of SYP and, in the absence of the Chair, to chair SYP Board and full SYP meetings. The Vice Chair also facilitates Conveners Group meetings as a non-voting member.

Trustees

The Trustees work alongside the Chair and Vice Chair to develop and promote the organisation. The key responsibilities of a Trustee are to input into the Board’s decision-making process, and to oversee specific portfolio areas that are related to the work of SYP, such as public affairs, youth engagement, projects, and communications.
Role of the Conveners Group

The Conveners Group is the primary policy and campaigning steering group of the organisation. The Conveners Group is comprised of the MSYPs elected to convene each of the Subject Committees at the Annual General Meeting. Deputy Conveners are also elected for each of the Subject Committees to support the Convener in their duties, and act as a substitute should it be required.

They are responsible for almost all issues relating to SYP policy and campaigns including, but not limited to:

- Short-listing options for national campaign selection.
- Designing the national campaign.
- Acting as ambassadors for the national campaign within SYP.
- Deciding SYP’s policy and influencing priorities.
- Overseeing the SYP policy process including Members’ Motions, Committee Motions, the structure of motion debates, and the voting processes at Sittings.
- Any other policy or campaigning matters.

The Convener is elected by the Subject Committee to coordinate and lead on its work over the course of one year. The Convener works with their Deputy and the rest of the Committee to agree what issues they would like to consider and acts as the primary contact for the SYP Staff Team. The Convener also has the responsibility of ensuring the views of their Committee are represented at Conveners Group meetings.

Role of Subject Committees

MSYPs sign up to one of the following Subject Committees before or during the Annual General Meeting for the following year:

- Jobs and Economy.
- Education and Lifelong Learning.
- Transport, Environment, and Rural Affairs.
- Social Justice.
- Justice.
- Sport and Leisure.
- External Affairs.
- Equalities.
- Culture and Media.
- Health and Wellbeing.

MSYPs could be in two different Subject Committees during their term. The membership of each Subject Committee is limited to approximately 17 MSYPs to ensure that each committee is similarly sized. Information on joining Subject Committees is emailed to MSYPs before the Annual General Meeting.

The elected Conveners of each of the Subject Committees compose the Conveners Group. More information about Subject Committees can be found in the “Policy, Influencing, and Impact” section of this document.
Role of the Procedures Group
The Procedures Group of the Scottish Youth Parliament is a small group of MSYPs that advise the Board of Trustees or the Conveners Group on matters of procedure and internal processes. They serve for a one-year term, and are selected by the Board from an application process.

They typically meet three times a year, and will usually take on an issue referred for their consideration by the Board or Conveners Group. They do not have the ability to enact new procedure or amend existing procedure, but can make recommendations to the Board.

Role of the SYP Staff Team
To support the work of our MSYPs, SYP employs a staff team based in its Edinburgh office. The SYP Staff Team typically comes from a range of backgrounds (public policy, communications, campaigns, event management, project management, youth engagement), and are recruited to support MSYPs to carry out their duties. The Chief Executive is responsible for the management of all members of the SYP Staff Team.

Role of Support Workers
A SW supports MSYPs locally and helps them carry out the work of SYP in their constituencies. MSYPs should inform their SW of any work they plan to undertake locally for SYP, as the SW will be able to provide advice and support on a local level.

THE SYP EXPERIENCE
Being an MSYP is great for your personal and professional development. Here are just some of the great benefits of being an MSYP:

- Meeting new people and making new friends.
- Being a part of national campaigns and projects.
- Representing young people across Scotland.
- Being an ambassador for a national organisation.
- Influencing policy and decision making in Scotland.
- Effecting change.
- Gaining valuable transferable skills in public speaking, youth engagement, media, and influencing.

SYP is great for your CV, and allows you to make real changes to improve Scotland for young people.
Chapter Two: Policy, Influencing, and Impact

CONVENERS & THE CONVENERS GROUP

The Conveners Group of the Scottish Youth Parliament is comprised of the MSYPs elected to convene each of the Subject Committees at the Annual General Meeting.

Conveners serve a one-year term and have two main roles:

- Representing and coordinating the work of their Subject Committees.
- Representing the views of their Subject Committees at Conveners Group meetings.

Deputy Conveners are also elected for each of the Subject Committees to support the Convener in their duties, and act as a representative of the Convener should it be required.

Coordinating the work of Subject Committees

The Convener is elected by the Subject Committee to coordinate and lead on the work of the Committee over the course of a year. The Convener works with their Deputy and the rest of the Committee to agree what issues they would like to consider and is the primary contact for SYP Staff.

The Convener will also represent the Committee at meetings and events, and will frequently be the first port of call for media opportunities specific to their subject area.

The Convener also has the responsibility of ensuring the views of their Committee are represented at Conveners Group meetings.

The Conveners Group

The Conveners Group is the primary policy and campaigning steering group of the organisation. They are responsible for almost all issues relating to our policy and campaigns including, but not limited to:

- Shortlisting options for National Campaign selection.
- Designing the National Campaign.
- Acting as ambassadors for the National Campaign within SYP.
- Deciding SYP’s policy and influencing priorities.
- Overseeing the SYP policy process including Members’ Motions, Committee Motions, the structure of motion debates and the voting processes at Sittings.
- Any other policy or campaigning matters.

POLICY

As their democratically elected voice, SYP has a responsibility to communicate the views of young people to local and national decision makers to ensure they are taken into account when policy and laws are being developed.

We do this in a variety of ways, for example through national campaigns, building strong relationships with elected representatives and government, and responding to consultations from the Scottish Government, the UK Government, both parliaments and other organisations.

In order to do this, SYP develops policy based on the views of young people to provide a basis to achieve this influence and impact.

How SYP makes policy

The Scottish Youth Parliament develops policy in a number of different ways. The importance of the
policy, and the length of time we use it, depends on how it was developed, and the number of young people that were consulted. All of SYP’s current policies are contained in a Policy log which is available on the SYP website. The three types of policy include:

- **Manifesto Statements** (last for five years)- These policies are developed through our manifesto process, which takes place every five years. The manifesto decides much of SYP’s policy and campaigning work. The policy contained within it is the most important policy, and supercedes all other types of policy, lasting the full five years before the next manifesto is developed.

- **Policy Statements** (last for three years)- These policies are developed through motions which are passed at SYP National Sittings. They lapse after three years, but can be renewed by another vote at the Sittings, or by the Conveners Group if they are still relevant.

- **Policy Recommendations** (last for one year)- These policies are developed through consultation responses, written evidence, online surveys, etc. They lapse after one year, but can be renewed by the Conveners Group if they are considered to be important for SYP’s current work.

**Policy Hierarchy**

The types of policy that SYP develop are hierarchical and rank as follows:

- Manifesto statements.
- Policy statements.
- Policy recommendations.

This means that a manifesto statement cannot repeal or contradict a policy statement, and a policy recommendation cannot repeal or contradict a policy statement.

The reason for this hierarchy is the strength of the mandate that SYP has to make the assertion that this is representative of the views of young people in Scotland, i.e. a manifesto statement is the strongest mandate that SYP has to make an assertion on behalf of young people in Scotland because over 70,000 young people responded to this consultation.
Chapter Two: Policy, Influencing and Impact

How MSYPs can make policy

MSYPs can make policy in two main ways: firstly, by submitting a Members’ Motion to be debated at the National Sittings; or secondly, by being actively involved in the work of Subject Committees (see section on Subject Committees).

Members’ Motions

At each National Sitting, Members’ Motions are debated and, should they pass, become SYP Policy. Any MSYP can submit a Members’ Motion. The process for Members’ Motions, how they are selected, which are debated, the debate structure, and the voting process is decided by the Conveners Group. Generally speaking, these processes do not change much, and when they do, the entire membership is informed well in advance of the changes (for a more detailed timeline of the present process, see the Sittings section).

Tips for writing a Members’ Motion

- Be as specific as possible - motions that are vague or too wide in their scope do not make good policy.
- Present a problem, but also a solution.
- Be sure to use the SYP format. Your motion should start with “The Scottish Youth Parliament believes...”
- Language is important - be accurate and clear with the wording as SYP will be tied to this wording should the motion pass. On many occasions, MSYPs vote against motions because they have difficulties with the clarity of the wording rather than the sentiment of the motion itself.
- Check that there isn’t policy already on the issue.
- The SYP Staff Team is always on hand to support you with writing a motion if you would like some help.

Voting and Debates

When motions are debated at the National Sittings, typically the MSYP that proposed the motion will have a few minutes to present the motion. More recently, MSYPs have had the opportunity to speak formally to oppose a motion. This was introduced in 2014 to provide more formal recognition for those who opposed the issue.

The Chair of SYP chairs the motion debates. Who speaks, when they speak, and for how long they speak is at the discretion of the Chair.

A new system for Members’ Motions was introduced in 2015, whereby as many motions as possible are debated within the given debating time (usually around two hours), the order of which is decided by MSYPs through an online vote prior to the National Sittings.

Once the debate is concluded, MSYPs are asked to vote on the motion. They can choose to “Agree”, “Disagree”, or “Abstain”. A motion requires more than 50% of MSYPs present and voting to Agree. In other words, an absolute majority is needed for the motion to become SYP Policy.

Subject Committees

In addition to the full parliament, the Scottish Youth Parliament has Subject Committees. The Subject Committees are comprised of smaller numbers of MSYPs, usually around 16, and are divided up by different subject areas.

Subject Committees meet at each of the three National Sittings each year, and elect a Convener and a Deputy Convener at the Annual General Meeting. Despite only meeting a few times a year, Subject Committees are an important part of SYP. They typically undertake the following types of work:

- Discussing ideas of interest to MSYPs within the subject area.
- Assisting SYP in responding to consultations and calls for evidence within their subject area.
- Developing a Committee Motion for debate with the full membership.
- Learning more about a particular issue by undertaking research or inviting in guests to deliver presentations.

MSYPs sign up to one of the Subject Committees at the Annual General Meeting for the following year.
Campaign Selection

The Scottish Youth Parliament chooses its annual national campaign every year at the June Sitting. The campaign is chosen from existing Scottish Youth Parliament manifesto statements. The Conveners Group narrows the campaign possibilities to a five options, which are presented to the Membership for a vote during the Sitting. Every MSYP gets one vote.

Campaign Design

The Conveners Group leads on the design and development of the campaign, and begin their work following the campaign selection. The Conveners work together to determine the title, logo, strategy, aims, and activities of the campaign. This will all be prepared for the campaign to launch in October. MSYPs can share any ideas or suggestions with the Convener of their Subject Committee.

When the campaign is officially launched, all MSYPs will be given training on the campaign issues and actions. Resources will also be developed to give MSYPs all the essential information they need about the campaign - strategy, aims, key messages - and advocacy action ideas. These resources can include tips for event planning, draft letters and presentations, template tweets and press releases, and detailed information on each activity. The trainings and resources are designed to help MSYPs take local action, and make a change in their communities and/or NVO.

Campaigning Locally and Nationally

Scottish Youth Parliament campaigns have both a local and a national focus. The national campaign is led by the Board and Conveners Group. It is typically these MSYPs who will be involved in national media opportunities, attend high-profile meetings with the government, and steer the campaign.

However, all MSYPs have a responsibility to lead the campaign in their local areas or through their NVOs. Support Workers and the SYP Staff Team are available to help MSYPs with their local work. The Toolkit is also an important resource for this. The campaign trainings and resources are really important for this. For the campaign to reach across Scotland, all MSYPs must do work locally.
Chapter Two: Policy, Influencing and Impact

Helping raise the profile of an issue in the media.

If you have an issue you are passionate about, or a change you would like to see, please speak to the SYP Staff Team or your SW, who can help you find the best avenue to take to raise the matter in the parliament.

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The UK and Scottish Parliament

Scotland is one of the devolved nations of the United Kingdom. The Scotland Act 1998 (an Act of the UK Parliament) created a Scottish Parliament, and passed along to it the powers to make laws on a range of issues. This list has expanded and changed in the years since.

The issues upon which the Scottish Parliament can make laws are known as “devolved matters”. These include issues such as education, health, housing, local government, sport, and the arts. Other issues remain the responsibility of the UK Parliament, and are known as “reserved matters”. These include issues such as immigration, defence, foreign policy, and the Constitution.

As such, it is important for SYP to engage Members of the UK Parliament (MPs) and Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) about matters that affect young people.

MPs and MSPs work in a variety of ways to create policy and laws.

These include:

- Lodging motions to allow other MPs and MSPs to show their support for an issue, and perhaps have the issue debated in the parliament.
- Attending committee meetings to deal with a particular bill or issue.
- Speaking in a debate about a bill or issue.
- Introducing a bill to change the law, or propose an amendment (change) to a bill passing through parliament.
- Asking the government a question or writing to the relevant Cabinet Secretary or Minister.

PARLIAMENTARY AND GOVERNMENTAL ENGAGEMENT

The UK and Scottish Government

The Scottish Government is responsible for implementing laws and policy on matters that are devolved to Scotland, whereas the UK Government is responsible for laws and policies that are reserved. The Scottish Government is led by the First Minister, and the UK Government is led by the Prime Minister. The government is usually formed from the party or parties that hold a majority of seats in the parliament. The government introduces most of the bills that are debated and passed in the parliament, and also proposes how the budget is spent.

The parliament and the MSPs or MPs who are not members of the government hold the government to account and examine its work. The government and the parliament are accountable to the people.

Some MPs and MSPs from the party or parties holding the most seats in the government have an additional role as a Cabinet Secretary or Minister. The First Minister chooses the Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers for the Scottish Government, and the Prime Minister chooses for the UK Government. Ministers and Cabinet Secretaries are given specific areas of responsibility, such as foreign policy, education, justice, and transport.
SYP is funded by the Scottish Government, and reports on the progress of our core work (campaigns, youth engagement, and policy development) on an bi-annual basis.

Engaging with Elected Officials

A vital part of the work of SYP is engagement with elected officials, including Councillors, MSPs, and MPs. Each MSYP is represented in the Scottish Parliament by a constituency MSP and list/regional MSPs, who represent areas such as North East Scotland, Highlands and Islands, and South Scotland. This means that every MSYP has eight MSPs to write to, meet with, and influence. Each MSYP is also represented at a UK-level by an MP.

It is important to write to your local elected officials to introduce yourself, and say a little about what you would like to achieve as an MSYP. Throughout your term, you will be writing to them about issues affecting your constituents, policies SYP would like to see implemented, and the national campaign. In your letters, you can ask for a face-to-face meeting either in their local constituency office, or in the Parliament. If you need help writing a letter or arranging a meeting, the SYP Staff Team is always available to help.

When you meet with an elected official, it is important to be prepared and know as much as you can about the issue you are addressing and what you would like the elected official to do. Using key messages which are issued by SYP can help with this. If you would like to discuss an issue ahead of a meeting, the SYP Staff Team is always available to help.

SYP is also a member of several Cross Party Groups in the Scottish Parliament. CPGs provide an opportunity for MSPs, organisations, and individuals to meet and discuss a shared interest in a cause or subject. When SYP receives an invitation to a CPG meeting, the Convener of the relevant SYP Subject Committee is invited, e.g. the Equalities Convener is invited to the CPG on Human Rights.
Political impartiality is a core value of SYP. Our ability to be neutral, and be seen as neutral, is vital to achieving our goals by maintaining strong working relationships with all legitimate political parties.

Our credibility and reputation is compromised when there is a breach of this impartiality.

MSYPs are elected as individual young people, not as a representative of a political party, and therefore have no right or mandate to be overtly linked or act in a party political manner when exercising their duties as an MSYP. This policy extends to all activities MSYPs undertake, including social media.

However, we appreciate that MSYPs will have their own political views. Therefore, this does not mean that MSYPs cannot be a member of a political party or be active within a political party. They simply have to separate these roles appropriately.

Political impartiality is a key part of the Code of Conduct, and therefore breaches are treated very seriously given their threat to the organisation. The SYP Staff Team is always on hand to support MSYPs if they are unsure about how this should be interpreted.
Chapter Three: Communications

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Keep in touch

Staying in contact with the SYP Office and staff team is vital throughout your term. Every member has been issued with an MSYP email address—it is very important you check this on a regular basis as this is the main way we will contact you. We do not want you to miss out on any exciting opportunities, so keep a close eye on your inbox.

Stay up to date

All MSYPs will receive SYP News, SYP’s fortnightly e-newsletter which contains all the latest information and opportunities. If you do not receive SYP News, make sure you contact the SYP Office so we can update the distribution list.

The SYP website is regularly updated with essential information, and details about new opportunities and upcoming events. You can stay up to date at www.syp.org.uk.

As SYP News is all about you and your work as MSYPs, please be sure to send in content (photos, stories, etc.) so SYP can let everyone know what you’ve been up to. Just email hello@syp.org.uk.

You can also keep an eye on SYP’s social media channels as this is where we’ll often share details of opportunities which arise at short notice. Please find further information about using social media and online conduct in the Social Media section of this guide.

Twitter-@OfficialSYP, Facebook- Official Scottish Youth Parliament, Instagram- @OfficialSYP, YouTube-OfficialSYP, Email-hello@syp.org.uk

What happens if the press call?

When a request comes in, the SYP Press Office will email or phone you to check if you are free to do the interview or provide a comment. The SYP Press Office will liaise with the journalist to arrange the interview, and will provide you with a briefing on the facts, key lines, and important arguments which need to be made.

Sometimes, journalists will try to speak to you without contacting the SYP Press Office first. If you are approached by the media, please don’t give any interviews without contacting the SYP Press Office first. This is both to protect the organisation, and to ensure you are properly prepared. If you are contacted by a journalist and you haven’t been able to reach the office, please politely say you cannot take on the opportunity until you have spoken to the SYP Press Office, and ask them to contact the SYP Staff Team directly.

How do I get involved in media opportunities?

We are always happy to hear about your local work and support you to contact your local media to promote this work in your community. If you would like to get involved in media opportunities, please contact the SYP Press Office.

Getting involved in media opportunities is a great way to promote the work you are doing as an MSYP, both locally and nationally. The SYP Press Office will hold a media training session at least once a year, and any MSYP who has not received media training before will have the opportunity to attend. These opportunities will be promoted on the SYP website and in SYP News.

The Board of the Scottish Youth Parliament and the Conveners Group receive in-depth media training as part of the induction to their role, and so they are recognised as being particularly high-profile, or are deemed as potentially complex or controversial.
Chapter Three: Communications

When used effectively, social media can generate fantastic results. Using social media is a great way to support our campaigns and activities. The Public Affairs Team often issue MSYPs with communication toolkits, which contain guidance and template social media posts for specific campaign activities. While we encourage you to use social media to support your role as an MSYP, it is essential that you adhere to the social conduct set out below.

Online Conduct and Social Media Guidance

If you want to use social media accounts to promote your role as an MSYP, SYP would very much encourage you to have separate personal and MSYP accounts for your social media presence. This ensures that your personal information is kept private and does not interfere with the work you do as an MSYP. When using your MSYP account, it is essential that you always abide by the Code of Conduct when posting anything online. Here are some essential tips:

→ Tweet safely. Twitter is incredibly powerful: write something effective and it could go around the world. The same goes for something offensive.

→ Once you tweet, that message is public forever. Even if you delete it, someone else can always recover it. Always ask two things before posting online: “How would I feel if this was on the front page of The Sun newspaper?” and “How would I feel if my Mum read this?”

→ Please don’t make politically partisan comments on any account which refers to your role as an MSYP. That goes for any online activities – if you talk about SYP, you have to act as you would if you were representing SYP at an event.

→ With Facebook in particular, be careful about any groups you join. You might think it’s funny to join a group which mocks a rival sporting team, but the comments can be lifted and used for a negative story in the media.

→ As a general rule, if you have any concerns or questions about social media, then get in touch with the SYP Press Office.

Please bear in mind that the SYP Code of Conduct still applies to any activity on any of your social media accounts including personal accounts where content shared may be viewed as discriminatory or offensive. For furth information on this please see the SYP Code of Conduct. If you have any questions relating to Social Media usage then please get in touch with a member of the SYP Staff Team.

Staying Safe Online

It is also very important that you stay safe when using social media. The following tips can help you stay safe:

→ Never give out your personal information to anyone you do not know.

→ SYP will never give out your personal contact information - we will always use your MSYP email address, and we strongly advise you do the same when contacting people as part of your SYP work.

→ Be aware of cyber-bullies. They exist and go after people for no discernible reason. It can happen to anyone, and this type of behaviour should be reported straight away. SYP has a zero-tolerance policy against bullying of any kind.

→ If you see anything you don’t think is appropriate or makes you feel uncomfortable then make sure you report it.

→ Your local SW and the SYP Child Protection Officer are available for you to speak to if you see anything suspicious online.
Chapter Four: Youth Engagement

SYP engages with young people across Scotland locally through the work of MSYPs and nationally through the SYP Staff Team. SYP connects young people with local, national, and international decision-making structures to allow them to influence change, and spark an interest in democracy and politics.

To do this, SYP delivers an engagement programme, which is available to schools, youth groups, and other youth organisations. SYP’s youth engagement sessions are developed by young people, and support leadership and active citizenship to help young people make an impact on the issues they are passionate about.

Engagement Sessions

Sessions delivered by MSYPs

MSYPs will be trained to deliver engagement sessions in their local areas, which can cover topics such as the national campaign, democracy, and political literacy. It is important that you, as an MSYP, engage your constituents on a local level with the work of SYP to ensure that as many young people as possible are involved in our campaigns, policy development, events, and projects.

You can engage with local schools, colleges, universities, and youth groups to deliver a variety of sessions. SYP encourages you to get involved as much as you can and spread the word through your MSYP role within your local constituency. The SYP Staff Team can support you in this by providing resources or coming along to the session to support your facilitation.

Sessions delivered by the SYP Staff Team

Members of the SYP Staff Team also deliver engagement sessions throughout Scotland, covering the national campaign, democracy, campaigning, and rights. This raises awareness of the organisation, and widens the scope of SYP’s work. SYP is at the forefront of youth engagement in Scotland, working directly with thousands of young people each year. All of our sessions are designed and developed by young people.

Booking a Session

If you would like the SYP Staff Team to deliver a session in your local area, ask your SW or local youth group leader to complete a Booking Form, which can be found on the SYP website, and send it to the SYP Staff Team.

The SYP Staff Team will then work with you to book the session, and confirm all details of the session before its delivery.

Descriptions of all the engagement sessions SYP delivers can be found on the SYP website, along with the booking form and all the information you need to book the session.

Qualifications

MSYPs undertake a significant amount of work during their time as part of SYP. MSYPs should consider recording all the work that they do, as it can be linked to awards such as the Youth Achievement Award, the Saltire Award, and Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

MSYPs can speak to their SW or the SYP Staff Team if they would like more information about this.
Chapter Five: National Events and Opportunities

What is a National Sitting?
SYP’s National Sittings are the opportunity for MSYPs to meet with other MSYPs from across Scotland to discuss and take action on issues that are important to the young people they represent. At Sittings, MSYPs take part in workshops, debates, and training sessions, and, most importantly, set SYP’s policy agenda.

There are three National Sittings each year, normally held over a weekend in the spring, summer, and autumn. There will be six Sittings during an MSYP’s term. Each Sitting is hosted by a different Local Authority, and recent Sittings have been held in the Scottish Borders, Inverclyde, Stornoway, and Edinburgh. If a Local Authority wants to host a Sitting, the local Support Worker or Service Manager should contact SYP’s Events and Campaigns Officer in the first instance. The Events and Campaigns Officer will discuss the event, and will work with the Support Worker and local MSYPs to organise the Sitting.

What happens before a Sitting?
Before a Sitting, SYP Staff will:
- Arrange a venue and catering.
- Carry out a risk assessment for the event.
- Work with the Board and Conveners Group to agree the agenda.
- Invite guests and speakers.
- Prepare information about the Sitting for MSYPs, Support Workers, and guests.

MSYPs will:
- Submit Members’ Motions and vote to decide the order that they will be debated.
- Prepare to attend the Sitting with their Support Worker and other MSYPs in their area.
- Consult with constituents to collect their views.

Support Workers will:
- Support MSYPs to consult with constituents and prepare for the Sitting.
- Register their Local Authority or National Voluntary Organisation to attend the Sitting.
- Arrange travel and accommodation.
Chapter Five: National Events and Opportunities

How do I register to attend a Sitting?

MSYPs and Support Workers must register to attend National Sittings. Support Workers are responsible for registering for their LA or NVO; MSYPs cannot register directly with SYP.

All young people attending this Sitting are expected to attend with a Support Worker, and be registered by them to attend. Any young person attending the Sitting under the age of 18 MUST be accompanied by a Support Worker. In exceptional circumstances, young people over the age of 18 can attend without a Support Worker but this must be agreed with SYP Staff immediately before any arrangements are made.

Sitting registration normally closes two weeks before each Sitting, and individuals not registered by this date will not be allowed to attend.

Can any other young people attend Sittings?

Each Local Authority or National Voluntary Organisation can bring their allocated number of MSYPs to National Sittings. If an MSYP cannot attend, a guest can come in their place. Guests must also be registered through their Support Worker by the registration deadline, and must be uploaded to the Members area on SYP’s website.

What information will I receive about the Sitting?

In the weeks running up to the Sitting, SYP will send information to MSYPs and Support Workers. This information will also be uploaded to the SYP website.

In the run up to the Sitting, MSYPs will receive information about:

- How to submit and vote for Members’ Motions.
- An overview of what will happen at the Sitting.
- Any other useful information.

An MSYP Pack will be sent to all MSYPs about four weeks before the Sitting, which will contain all of the information you need to prepare for the event and to consult with your constituents.

Support Workers will receive information about:

- How to register for the event.
- Travel and accommodation options.
- Health and safety arrangements, including a risk assessment.
- An overview of what will happen at the Sitting. Registration, travel and accommodation.

An overview of the timeline for Sittings is shown on the opposite page (please note, timings are approximate and may be subject to change).
Timeline
An overview of an example timeline for Sittings is shown below, although timings are approximate and subject to change.

1. **SYP announces the date and venue of the next Sitting**
2. **Call for Members’ Motions** – MSYPs consult with constituents and submit a motion – 12 weeks before
3. **Deadline for Members’ Motions submissions** – ten weeks before
4. **Sitting registration opens** – eight weeks before
5. **Online vote to determine which motions are debated** – eight weeks before
6. **Online evaluation** – one - three weeks after
7. **Conveners Group meets to prepare for the Sitting** – nine weeks before
8. **Members’ Motions online vote closes** – five weeks before
9. **MSYP Pack and final information is sent to MSYPs and Support Workers** – four weeks before
10. **Sitting takes place**
11. **MSYPs consult with constituents on the issues to be debated at the Sitting**
12. **Sitting registration deadline** – two weeks before
Consulting with constituents

MSYPs are elected to represent their constituents - the young people in their constituency. When MSYPs debate and vote for SYP policy (for example, through Members’ Motions and when deciding the next national campaign), they represent the voices of their constituents rather than their own opinions. Therefore it is really important for MSYPs to find out their views and opinions before coming to Sittings.

There are lots of different ways that MSYPs can consult with constituents. Some MSYPs carry out online surveys, hold stalls or surgeries, speak to young people in schools, youth groups, colleges and universities, writes blogs and newsletters, collect feedback on social media platforms, or use a combination of some or all of these.

What happens at a Sitting?

Although the agenda will be different at each Sitting, it will follow a similar format, and MSYPs will normally:

- Debate Members’ Motions and Committee Motions to create official policy.
- Meet in Subject Committees to discuss issues impacting Scotland’s young people.
- Discuss the progress of the current national campaign.
- Socialise with other MSYPs at an evening session.

Sitting Expectations, Attendance, Behaviour and Conduct

MSYPs are expected to attend every National Sitting, and SYP will make every effort to ensure that the dates are announced as early as possible, normally at the previous Sitting. If an MSYP misses two consecutive Sittings, they will be required to give an explanation to the Chair of SYP. The Chair will do all they can to ensure that the member feels able to attend future Sittings, but may also propose that the MSYP resigns from their position.

MSYPs are expected to adhere to the SYP Code of Conduct at all SYP events. The Code of Conduct sets out clear guidelines on what is expected of MSYPs during their time with SYP. It is designed to ensure that members are fully aware of their responsibilities. The document is not designed to put barriers on what MSYPs can do, but to ensure they are able to fully understand the role of an MSYP from the start of their term.

National Sittings are SYP events, and SYP is committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment for all participants. SWs are responsible for ensuring the health and wellbeing of all members of their group, including while travelling and overnight. SYP will make provision to promote the wellbeing of all participants and to assist SWs in their role.

Social Media at Sittings

At all SYP events we actively encourage participants to tweet about what is happening. This is a great way to let constituents know what is happening, to share pictures, and to announce the results of debates and elections. There is always a dedicated hashtag, normally the number of the Sitting. Check out #SYP61 and #SYP62 for examples.

What happens after a Sitting?

After a Sitting, MSYPs and SWs will be asked to evaluate the event. Details of how to give feedback will be emailed shortly after the Sitting, and the results will help SYP to plan the next SYP Sitting, to make sure future events are successful, and to make sure MSYPs and Support Workers get the best possible experience from their time with SYP.

MSYPs should also feed back to constituents and local Councillors, MSPs and MPs about the Sitting outcomes, such as policies created. This could be through a blog post, newsletter, local surgeries or meetings in schools, youth groups, universities and colleges. There may also be opportunities to speak to local press, and to write blog posts for the SYP website.

SYP Awards

The SYP Awards is an annual celebration, held every year at the March Sitting, which recognises the amazing work that MSYPs and their Support WorkerWs do to represent Scotland’s young people.

Nominations can be made by anyone. The nomination period opens around four months
Chapter Five: National Events and Opportunities

before the Sitting, and is normally open for approximately six weeks. Details of each of the award categories will be emailed to MSYPs and can be found on the SYP website.

After the nomination period has ended, an independent panel of judges will meet to discuss each of the nominations and to agree the winners. The winners will be announced at the awards ceremony.

OTHER EVENTS

SYP often receives invitations for MSYPs to attend a wide range of events and take part in other opportunities throughout the year.

Events and opportunities could include meetings, networking and consultation events, awards celebrations, or residential trips both in Scotland and further afield.

Opportunities and other events provide MSYPs with the chance to represent SYP by speaking on panels, giving presentations, networking with other organisations, or facilitating workshops. There may also be opportunities for MSYPs to champion SYP project activities within the membership externally.

For more information about how opportunities are distributed in SYP, please see the Opportunities Policy.

Promotion of other events and opportunities

All events and opportunities that are open to all MSYPs will be posted on the ‘Current Opportunities’ page on the SYP website, and updates will be advertised in the fortnightly SYP News e-newsletter, and through official SYP social media channels. MSYPs may also be contacted directly or through their Support Worker by SYP Staff.

How are opportunities distributed throughout the membership?

The selection process varies depending on the type of opportunity or event.

Some opportunities (including consultation days, campaign events, and project-related activities, are led by SYP, and in most cases these will be opened up to all MSYPs.

SYP also receives invitations for MSYPs to attend events at the Scottish Parliament or organised by partner organisations, such as UKYP.

These may be offered to specific MSYPs, such as members of the Board or Conveners Group, with a specific remit relating to the event, but are often promoted to the whole membership.
What support is given?

When attending other events or participating in opportunities with SYP, MSYPs will be supported by the SYP Staff Team. Their Support Worker will also be copied into all emails between the MSYP and SYP staff.

The SYP Staff Team will support MSYPs as required by the event or opportunity. For example, by providing briefings, liaising with the event organisers, making travel and accommodation arrangements, and accompanying MSYPs to the event.

Travel Arrangements

In line with SYP’s Child Protection Policy, young people under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a responsible adult when travelling.

When an MSYP is invited to represent SYP at an event or opportunity, they will be asked to complete a registration form, outlining their travel requirements (including nearest train station and any railcards) and any additional support that they may need.

Arrangements will be made based on this information, so it is important that details are correct and that SYP staff are informed of any changes straight away.

Prior to the event, SYP will email MSYPs with details of their individual travel arrangements. Train tickets will be pre-paid and can be collected from either a self-service ticket machine or a ticket desk using a unique code and a debit or credit card (cards will not be charged). Any other arrangements will be discussed with MSYPs and Support Workers as required.

Expenses

SYP will cover reasonable expenses, where possible, for MSYPs to attend events and participate in other opportunities. In most cases, SYP will book travel and accommodation in advance, and will pay for meals where required. Any additional expenses should be agreed with the SYP Staff Team in advance of the event or opportunity.
Chapter Six: Local Events and Opportunities

How do I organise events in my local area?
Local events and activities should be discussed and coordinated with a local Support Worker. Please let SYP know about any events so we can help promote them.
SYP has also produced a ‘how to’ guide for planning events. Please contact a SYP staff member for more information.

Working Locally with Other MSYPs
Being an MSYP is an excellent opportunity to meet other young people and colleagues across Scotland. You will be working with your fellow MSYPs for a two year term, so it is useful to network and join up on local work and areas of shared interest. National events, local events, and social media can all help you get to know your fellow MSYPs.

When engaging in your local constituency, it is an advantage and great help to work with others. Collaborating on projects can help MSYPs achieve more than working separately. You can work with MSYPs in your constituency and LA to organise an event, arrange an engagement...
As part of its national work, SYP collaborates with a range of organisations and partners in Scotland and the UK.

### YouthLink Scotland
YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. It is a membership organisation and is in the unique position of representing the interests and aspirations of the whole of the youth work sector, both voluntary and statutory.

Learn more at www.youthlinkscotland.org or by following @YouthLinkScot.

### British Youth Council
The British Youth Council is the National Youth Council of the UK. A youth-led charity, it empowers young people aged 25 and under to influence and inform the decisions that affect their lives.

Learn more at www.byc.org.uk or by following @BYCLive.

### UK Youth Parliament
UKYP enables young people to use their energy and passion to change the world for the better. Run by young people for young people, UKYP provides opportunities for 11-18 year-olds to use their voice in creative ways to bring about social change.

Learn more at www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk or by following @UKYP.

### Together
Together is an alliance of Scottish children’s charities that works to improve the awareness, understanding and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

They do this by:

- Promoting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Helping children’s organisations to integrate the UNCRC into their work.
- Monitoring and reporting on the progress made at a Scottish and UK level.

Learn more at www.togetherscotland.org.uk or by following @together_sacr.

### CYPSCS
Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People is a person whose job is to help children and young people understand their rights and to make sure those rights are respected. Their goal is for children and young people in Scotland to be as safe and happy as possible. The Commissioner looks after the rights of everyone in Scotland under 18, and everyone in Scotland under 21 who has been looked after or in care.

Learn more at www.cypcs.org.uk or by following @CYPCS.

### Children in Scotland
Children in Scotland is the umbrella body for the children’s sector, representing children’s services organisations and individuals across the voluntary, private and public sectors.

Learn more at www.childreninscotland.org.uk or by following @CISweb.

### Young Scot
Young Scot is the national youth information and citizenship charity. It provides young people, aged 11-26, with a mixture of information, ideas, and incentives to help them become confident, informed, and active citizens.

Learn more at www.youngscot.org or by following @YoungScot.
Chapter Eight: Important Information

MSYP Contact Information

SYP needs to be able to contact MSYPs through email, phone, and social media. Staying in contact with the SYP Office is vital throughout your term.

Every MSYP has been issued with an MSYP email address - it is very important you check this on a regular basis, as this is the main way we will contact you. We do not want you to miss out on any opportunities, so check your inbox regularly. MSYPs are encouraged and expected to use their MSYP email address for all SYP business.

It is also important to keep the SYP Staff Team updated with your latest contact details, such as your address and mobile number. Please update the SYP Staff Team if this changes during your term. Email hello@syp.org.uk with your changes. If we do not have this information, you may miss out on opportunities.

SYPmail

As previously mentioned, all MSYPs will be issued with an MSYP email address through SYPmail. If you have not received yours by your first Sitting, please contact the SYP Staff Team.

to access your SYPmail go to login. microsoftonline.com

Email Signatures

MSYPs should have the following signature on all emails sent from their MSYP account. You can add a signature by logging into https://exchange2010.livemail.co.uk/ECP, clicking on “Settings” and copying the template below into the signature box. You should then edit the information in the template as required, and click “Save” at the bottom right of the page.

Your Name MSYP | Your Constituency | (If you have an MSYP Twitter account, add your Twitter handle, if not you can add @OfficialSYP here)

Gordon Lamb House | 3 Jackson’s Entry | Edinburgh | EH8 8PJ | 0131 557 0452

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Chapter Eight: Important Information

SYP aims to create a safe working environment for everyone within the organisation. We ask those involved with SYP to ensure that they help us create this environment and promote the work and values of SYP as a positive space. SYP strives to be inclusive for everyone. We ask members to help us by challenging behaviour, in a constructive way, to maintain this.

MSYPs are role models and ambassadors for Scotland; things that you say and post on social media are public and can be interpreted differently to the way they were meant. The relevant polices are highlighted in the Code of Conduct.

Code of Conduct
The Code of Conduct for MSYPs is signed by every individual member, usually at the first National Sitting of the membership. The Code of Conduct can be found on the SYP website or upon request from the SYP Staff Team.

Complaints Procedure
Complaints about MSYPs should be sent to the Vice Chair of the Scottish Youth Parliament, who, along with the Board, will assess the complaint and action as appropriate.

Disciplinary Process
The Disciplinary Process governs the process by which MSYPs are disciplined if they are found to have breached the Code of Conduct. A copy of this is available on request from the SYP Staff Team.

Child Protection
SYP has a Child Protection Policy and requires consent forms from all MSYPs to attend events and participate in opportunities. MSYPs should fill out a new consent form at their first National Sitting, which will be valid for two years. SYP keeps this information for two years, and then it is destroyed. By signing a SYP General Consent form, MSYPs are also agreeing to adhere to the MSYP Code of Conduct. Once again, it is very important that we have the most up to date information for MSYPs; if your details change, please let the SYP Staff Team know.

Essential Documents
You can access the following documents by requesting them from the SYP Staff Team. Some of these documents are also available for download from SYP’s website.

- Child Protection Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints Procedure
- Confidentiality Policy
- Disciplinary Code
- Drugs and Alcohol Policy
- Equalities and Accessibility
- Expense Policy and Claim Forms
- Health and Safety
- Photo/Video Consent Forms
- Sexual Health and Intimate Relationships
- Staff Contact Information Sheet

Creating a Safe Space

SYP aims to create a safe working environment for everyone within the organisation. We ask those involved with SYP to ensure that they help us create this environment and promote the work and values of SYP as a positive space. SYP strives to be inclusive for everyone. We ask members to help us by challenging behaviour, in a constructive way, to maintain this.