The Scottish Youth Parliament

About the Scottish Youth Parliament

The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) represents Scotland’s young people. Our democratically elected members, aged 14-25, listen to and recognise the issues that are most important to young people, ensuring that their voices are heard by decision makers. We encourage all of Scotland’s young people to play their part in achieving our vision and provide a national platform for their participation in democracy.

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:

“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.

Democracy - We are youth-led and accountable to young people aged 14 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.

Our work is designed to deliver five key impacts:
- Young people in Scotland influence, inform and contribute to policy making and practice.
- Young people who face inequality or barriers to participation are actively engaged in SYP.
- MSYPs have the skills, confidence, support and opportunities to carry out their role effectively.
- Young people in Scotland are aware of their rights are encouraged to participate and are seen as valuable contributors to a democratic society.
- SYP is an efficient and effective youth-led organisation, responsive to its MSYPs, young people other key stakeholders and is robustly resourced in a sustainable way.

Work of the Scottish Youth Parliament

Young people who are elected Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) have the opportunity to become involved in variety of exciting and educational activities. These provide a platform for young people to make a difference in their local community, represent their peers at a national level and to develop as individuals. More than this, young people are encouraged to shape, lead and dictate the work of the organisation, ensuring all our work is youth led.

The work of the Scottish Youth Parliament membership includes:

- Gathering three times a year for a National Sitting, a forum for the whole membership to congregate to debate and develop policy.
- Attending Subject Committee meetings at National Sittings.
- Lobby locally and nationally on the selected Scottish Youth Parliament Campaigns.
- Representing young people in their constituencies or organisations.

Recently, the Scottish Youth Parliament has:

- Been campaigning to raise awareness of children and young people’s mental health.
- Built on the success of the Votes at 16 campaign, and campaigned for 16 and 17 year olds to have the vote in all elections and referenda in the UK.
- Held a series of discussion days with the Scottish Government to gather the views of young people in relation to New Psychoactive Substances, Mental Health, Stop and Search and the Age of Criminal Responsibility.

The benefits of being a Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament are:

- Taking part in an excellent and nationally recognised volunteering opportunity.
- Meeting lots of people around the country who share a common passion for making a difference.
- Standing up for what young people believe in and campaigning decision makers to effect change.
Elections

The Scottish Youth Parliament was established in June 1999 and the process of electing Members has developed in the 19 year history of the organisation. In 2011, elections were unified and all Members were elected in one round of polling.

National Election Outcomes

A unified set of elections does not mean completely uniform elections across the country. Local Authorities and National Voluntary Organisations retain a degree of flexibility, but should adhere to delivering an election which meets standard outcomes.

1. To elect each and every single member of the Scottish Youth Parliament in a nationwide open and democratic election on the basis of guidelines set out by SYP.
2. Both local authorities and national voluntary organisations will run elections simultaneously.
3. Any 14-25 year old living in the area may stand as an MSYP. Candidates who attend an education establishment (or are in employment) outwith the constituency that they live in may stand as a candidate for the area they study or work in.
4. Candidates are only able to stand in one seat, whether that be a constituency or by representing a national voluntary organisation.
5. Potential candidates for MSYP must demonstrate a commitment to the role of an MSYP, including an appropriate time commitment.
6. By their first official meeting (June 2019 AGM), all MSYPs will take part in a training session, provided by SYP.
7. All those aged 12 (or in 1st year of secondary school) to 25 are permitted to vote for their Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament.
8. Elections will be conducted using the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system, (based on the Scottish Parliament constituencies, for local authority MSYPs) using either a traditional ballot box or an online voting platform, provided by Young Scot.
9. The elections, SYP and successful candidates achieve maximum exposure, publicity and status, through a collaboration of all election partners.

In order to elect MSYPs, Local Authorities and National Voluntary Organisations must agree to deliver an election which meets the above outcomes.

Elections 2019

The 2019 elections will see all Members chosen by their peers in March 2019. This year, the Scottish Youth Parliament is looking to build on previous successes and involve as many young people as possible in the process, both by standing as candidates and voting in the elections. The national targets are:

- 700 expressions of interest from young people seeking to be candidates.
- 300 confirmed candidates.
- At least 80,000 votes cast.
We are also aiming to promote the elections to new and previously under-represented groups, including the 18-25 year-old age bracket and marginalised communities.

The Scottish Youth Parliament staff team will support local authorities and voluntary organisations to make this the biggest election in the organisation's history and achieve the outcome of truly representative elected Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament.