

## **PUBLIC AUDIT AND POST-LEGISLATIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **POST LEGISLATIVE SCRUTINY - FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (Scotland) ACT 2002**

#### **SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH YOUTH PARLIAMENT**

#### **Introduction**

The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) 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 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.

#### **Our approach**

SYP welcomes the opportunity to respond to the 'Post-legislative scrutiny of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002' inquiry by the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee') at the Scottish Parliament. This response is based on the findings of a [research project](#) carried out by Abigail Wallace MSYP for Edinburgh Central for the Campaign for Freedom of Information in Scotland; co-designed questions by Kit McCarthy MSYP with the Scottish Information Commissioner (SIC) in the #WhatsYourTake survey prior to SYP's 66<sup>th</sup> National Sitting in Stranraer, Dumfries and Galloway; and the SIC's consultation workshop fuller write-up by the Scottish which was delivered by SIC and John Walker MSYP on 9 June 2018 (see [here](#), including

research findings on young people's views). MSYPs have also taken part in two Holyrood Conferences on FOI, and used FOI to support their local campaigning on topics such as instrumental music tuition and mosquito devices.

***Our findings in relation to 4. Could the legislation be strengthened or otherwise improved in any way? Please specify why and in what way.***

We believe that FOISA should benefit from an extension in scope would extend the scope of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act to private companies that have public contracts as well as other organisations that provide public services such as housing associations.

We believe that all public bodies should make it easier for young people to ask for information by making it clear that you will get a response to your Freedom of Information request in 20 days, creating simple forms which are consistent across local authorities, having accessible information online in plain English, advertising how you can make a request and increasing transparency.

We believe that the Scottish Information Commissioner should educate and engage with young people with partners on Freedom of Information (FOI) and call on the government for it to be taught in schools, to raise awareness of FOI among young people.

We believe that the Scottish Information Commissioner should create young-person-specific media campaign and online resources on Freedom of Information (FOI), to raise awareness of FOI among young people.

We believe that the Scottish Information Commissioner should create a template Freedom of Information (FOI) request form for public authorities to use, to raise awareness of FOI among young people.

**In conclusion**

Should you wish to meet with us, have us give evidence to your Committee or update us on how the findings will feed into your work, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us using the details below.

**Contact us**

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With special thanks to Keiran O'Neill MSYP who drafted this consultation response, approved by our Conveners Group – ten young people who lead on policy and campaigns at SYP.