

# Response to Engender's Call for Evidence on Women's Rights

Submission from the Scottish Youth Parliament  
March 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.

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 Engender's contribution to the UN review of women's rights in the UK. We hope that some of our SYP Policy can be included or reflected in the overall report submitted to the UN CEDAW Committee in summer 2018. As requested, this response is brief, and more information can be provided on request.

SYP's Conveners Group decided to respond to this public consultation in March 2018 as part of the [Right Here, Right Now](#) national campaign on young people's rights, which launched in October 2017 after MSYPs voted to focus on this topic at the 63<sup>rd</sup> National Sitting in West Dunbartonshire in June 2017. This was following consultation with over 5,000 young people across Scotland.

Through a youth-led process led by the Conveners Group, the key messages of the *Right Here, Right Now* campaign, as well as official [SYP Policy](#) on gender-based bullying, harassment and violence, and Period Poverty, inform this response.

## Campaign key messages

*Right Here, Right Now* will work to ensure that Scotland's young people are aware of and understand their own rights, and are empowered to take action to defend their own rights and those of others.

Furthermore, *Right Here, Right Now* calls for Scotland's decision-makers to take a human rights-based approach to all policy-making, service provision, and planning, ensuring young people's voices are at the heart of decisions affecting them.

## Gender-based bullying, discrimination harassment and violence

- **Action should be taken to tackle gender-based violence, violence against women and girls, sexism, and gender-based discrimination** ([Lead the Way](#) Manifesto Commitment passed 12<sup>th</sup> March 2016 with 90% agreement).
- **There should be more after-care support and protection for survivors of sexual violence and abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, human trafficking, and domestic abuse.** ([Lead the Way](#) Manifesto Commitment passed 12<sup>th</sup> March 2016 with 85% agreement).
- **The Scottish Youth Parliament supports the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme, a peer-led initiative that tackles gender-based violence, and believes schools and organisations should consider introducing it into their education programme.** (Policy Statement passed 16<sup>th</sup> October 2016 with 94% agreement, Member's Motion by Jack Norquoy MSYP on behalf of Lucie Duffy former MSYP).
- **The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that preparing young people to practice safe sexual relationships is a crucial part of education, and that all schools, regardless of religious denomination, must provide high-quality, comprehensive, and inclusive sex education that takes into account issues of sexual orientation and gender identity.** (Policy Statement passed 26<sup>th</sup> March 2017 with 81% agreement, Members' Motion by Euan Waddell former MSYP.)
- **The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that young people should be closely consulted in order to effectively tackle gender-based violence in Scotland.** (Policy Recommendation, last extended by Conveners Group 14<sup>th</sup> Jan 2017).
- **The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that in order to tackle domestic abuse in Scotland, schools should provide gender and LGBT-inclusive Relationship, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education (RSHPE) that covers the principles of equality, the signs of abuse, how to report abuse and where to seek help.** (Policy Statement passed 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 with 80% agreement, Members' Motion by Kirsty McCahill MSYP.)

## Period Poverty

As part of the *Right Here, Right Now* campaign, we are calling for there to be an end to period poverty, as a violation of human rights, which can particularly affect young people who menstruate. On 26 March 2017, SYP approved the following policy statement with 99% agreement, the highest current percentage of agreement for any SYP policy:

**‘The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that access to menstrual hygiene products is a basic human rights, and that more effort should be made to ensure that those in disadvantaged financial situations have access to these products.’** - Members’ Motion by Suki Wan MSYP for Glasgow Shettleston.

A lack of access to menstrual hygiene products is a human rights issue, and young people are particularly affected. Universal, free access to these products will ensure young people and others have access to rights including the right to education, health (and therefore life), work, play, and to be heard - without discrimination.

We support Monica Lennon’s Private Members’ Bill [Sanitary Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill]. Please see our full consultation response to the Bill proposal [here](#). At their annual meeting with the Scottish Cabinet in March 2018, our members made the case for the Government to support the Bill.

## Conclusion

Gender-based violence, discrimination, harassment and bullying; human trafficking, forced marriage and FGM are all issues SYP wishes to raise with Engender to highlight in the CEDAW review, and we would appreciate if our policy calls around support, protection and education are taken into consideration in the report preparation.

Having these recommendations reinforced at the international level will really help drive progress in Scotland, ensuring it is the best place in the world in which to grow up.

## Contact

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