



SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

Policy 1:

Local Authorities must provide youth-specific spaces in local communities, with investment put towards cultural, social, and artistic activities where young people can gather and spend time together.

Endorsed by:



What's this all about?

Young people told us they want safe and secure spaces and places to meet up, socialise, and have fun, where they can access information, advice, and trusted adults outside of school. They have also told us there is nowhere they can hang out without having to spend money, and they are worried about how young people are being portrayed in the media because of this.

“Young people can meet others and create new connections which is good for mental health.”

– Young woman aged 12-13

“Youth work is an important informal education method. It has been proven to develop key life skills such as building confidence, social skills, inspiring creativity and educating young people about issues which are overlooked or missed by formal school curriculums. Investing in youth work will ensure that young people will grow to be empowered, competent and confident members of society.”

– Young woman aged 18-21, Edinburgh

What are young people in Scotland calling for?

- To respect and uphold young people's rights, decision makers must meaningfully involve young people in designing and developing fun and safe places where young people can hang out with friends, where they have the freedom to choose what they want to do, where they don't have to spend money, and where they feel they belong.

"There are a lot of people that have this pre-conceived notion that when a group of young people are hanging around in public places they are up to trouble. Lots of people will try to create problems where there aren't any, so if young people are going to be socially and physically active outside then there must be a societal change in the way public spaces are used. I don't think it's necessary to have youth dedicated spaces, we should be free to go wherever we want."

– Young woman aged 14-17

- Young people call for more free access to cultural and art activities, as well as a diverse range of indoor and outdoor spaces. These should support their mental health and allow young people with different needs and interests to spend time in places that suit them

"[S]afe spaces and places to hang out are massively lacking. Shops are only option for many young people and rural areas, sports grounds, basketball courts. Places are not accessible for young people even if they are in their areas. Free gym and swims etc, more accessible transport to help [young people] to get to these places...Train discounts...Places to go with people to help upkeep them...Leisure centres and swimming lessons should be offered to all."

– Young people aged 14-17, East Dunbartonshire

- Young people call for communities that are welcoming for young people. Decision makers must work to create local communities that are safe, inclusive and welcoming for young people, to support their increasing independence and belonging.

"Too many times I have been chased out of cafes or public places and parks for trying to spend time outdoors with my friends. Our parents don't want us inside but nobody else wants us outside. Clubs and spaces designed for the youth in my town aren't always friendly and can be expensive. People complain about teenagers being on their phones all the time but if the only way I can hang out with my friends without being chased out or yelled at is Discord or Snapchat, then why would I not be on my phone? The only place we can reliably hang out is the library but it's not open often and it's a library. It's not the place for excitable teenagers sometimes."

– Young man aged 14-17, Angus

Evidence and Support

- [Research with children and young people by Play Scotland](#) found that children and young people want spaces for play that are close to home, interesting and varied and include nature. They want to feel they are safe and welcome, and that the space is valued and maintained.

- Through a [research project carried out by A Place in Childhood](#), young people prioritised improving community safety, increasing activities for young people within communities, and meaningful involvement of young people in community decisions.

What has SYP done?

Previous [SYP Consultations](#) include [SYP's Response to the Proposed Youth Work Bill \(2025\)](#) and [SYP's Response to the Community Learning and Development Review \(2024\)](#). The [SYP Policy Log](#) includes policies on public transport measures for young people; funding protection and other measures for sports and leisure facilities and outdoor residential experiences; funding protection and other measures for arts, culture and media.