



SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

Policy 4:

The Scottish Government should make sports and leisure services more accessible and affordable for young people, especially in rural and more deprived areas.

Endorsed by:



What's this all about?

Young people told us they are concerned about their physical and mental health, which they link to a lack of affordable and engaging sports and leisure activities and services. Decision makers must ensure there are opportunities for young people to participate in accessible and free sports and leisure activities within locally based facilities

“Exercise is vital to the development of humans as well as exercise has a positive impact on mental health. This is something that should be taken into consideration. These young people, especially from those who are deprived and living in rural areas, should be given an equal amount of resources to those who live in more affluent areas. This should also be something that is affordable or even free.”

– Young woman aged 14-17, East Lothian

“We have many health issues and at their root is the lack of access to safe, supportive physical activity and healthy food/food understanding.”

– Young person aged 22-26, Glasgow

What are young people in Scotland calling for?

- The Scottish Government must address young people's concerns about their physical and mental health by making sure young people can access free sports and leisure activities in their local communities.
"People living in rural areas often have to travel for ages in order to be able to access basic sports and leisure services that are readily available to those in more urban areas. This travel can be very expensive and time consuming and can discourage young people in rural areas from accessing sports and leisure services."
– Young woman aged 14-17, Argyll & Bute
"Absolutely, funding has been cut in so many areas as a way of 'saving money'. However, the repercussions of this mean that young people have nothing to do and thus become involved in crime and anti-social behaviour which costs society much more."
– Young woman aged 22-26
- Young people call for inclusion in sports for all young people, particularly for LGBTQ+ young people, disabled young people, girls and young women, young people from religious backgrounds, Care Experienced young people, and young people affected by poverty. Inclusion must be intersectional, taking into account the overlapping barriers for young people.
"Easy access to sports and leisure services allows for the young people of Scotland to have a safe and healthy outlet for their energy and emotions. It also encourages healthy habits and eating which limits the strain put on healthcare."
– Young people aged 14-17, Inverclyde

Evidence and Support

- [Research with young people in Scotland](#) found that young people from more affluent families report higher levels of physical activity.
- [Research by SportScotland](#) found that boys are more likely to meet recommended physical activity than girls.
- [Research with LGBTI+ people](#) found 31% felt excluded from certain sports due to sexual orientation or gender identity. Transgender people felt excluded more frequently (58%).

What has SYP done?

Previous [SYP Consultations](#) include [SYP's Response to the Proposed Youth Work Bill \(2025\)](#). The [SYP Policy Log](#) includes policies on funding protection for sports and leisure; investment in youth work; cost of the school day including extra-curricular and school trips; access to quality, affordable and accessible sporting facilities; statutory right to outdoor residential experiences; additional funding for outdoor learning centres; to ensure participation in sport.