

Scottish Youth Parliament Elections 2026

Candidate Code of Conduct



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Introduction

Thank you for applying to stand as a candidate in the Scottish Youth Parliament’s elections.

As the democratically elected voice of Scotland’s young people, the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) has a duty of care to the young people we work with and the staff who support us.

We work with a wide range of young people from diverse backgrounds and we have a duty to ensure every young person we work with feels safe and secure and has their rights upheld.

As a candidate in the SYP elections, you have a role to play in helping to make sure SYP is a safe space that values and respects all young people and protects the reputation and integrity of the organisation. This Code of Conduct has been designed to make sure you understand what this role is.

This Code of Conduct has been developed around SYP’s core values, which are:

SYP is Youth Led - we empower young people to take the lead in all aspects of our work.

SYP is Ambitious - we campaign for change to create a Scotland where young people are proud to grow up.

SYP is Bold - we defend young people’s rights and champion the issues that are most important to them.

SYP is Inclusive - we create brave and safe spaces where young people of all backgrounds feel able to participate.

SYP is Politically Impartial - this value surrounds all of our work to ensure our work is evidence-based and that the issues important to young people can be discussed and openly debated.

These values underpin everything you will do as a candidate.

All candidates in the SYP elections are required to read, understand, and agree with this Code of Conduct. Candidates must sign and act in accordance with it, on the understanding that failure to do so may result in you being removed as a candidate in the SYP elections.

This Code of Conduct sits alongside and should be read in conjunction with any local working agreement made between the candidate and your local authority or national voluntary organisation.

If you have any questions, or if you think someone has breached the Code of Conduct, please speak to your Election Coordinator or contact SYP at elections@syp.org.uk.

1. Responsibilities of SYP Elections Candidates

SYP belongs to all the young people in Scotland.

By standing in the SYP elections, candidates are committing, if elected, to represent Scotland's young people. They are therefore responsible for protecting the reputation and integrity of the organisation at all times during the SYP Elections process.

SYP recognises this is a voluntary role, and candidates will have other commitments outside of the Scottish Youth Parliament. While the elections process is important, your education, health and wellbeing, and personal lives are also important.

Candidates are expected to manage their time effectively and efficiently. If you are struggling to do this, you should discuss this with your Election Coordinator and explore ways to manage this.

Local responsibilities

SYP works as a partnership with Local Authorities and National Voluntary Organisations to deliver the SYP Elections.

All SYP Election candidates are supported by a Local Authority or National Voluntary Organisation ('supporting organisation') to take part in the SYP Elections programme. Local responsibilities are defined as those carried out in a Local Authority or National Voluntary Organisation.

- 1.1 - Candidates must always follow guidance, instructions, and local agreements from their supporting organisation or local authority when taking part in SYP Elections activities.
- 1.2 - Candidates must work collaboratively with the Election Coordinator from their supporting organisation or local authority. This includes keeping in regular contact with their Election Coordinator, attending local meetings and check-ins, taking part in local

youth participation activities, and attending training or events, as agreed between the candidate and Election Coordinator.

- 1.3 - As a candidate, you are acting as a representative of the Scottish Youth Parliament and of your supporting organisation or local authority. Candidates are in a position of trust and responsibility, and your behaviour should reflect this in their role and in a personal capacity. Therefore, candidates must behave accordingly and treat everyone they interact with during the SYP Elections process with respect.

Supporting organisations or local authorities may choose to remove support from a candidate if the candidate:

- Does not follow guidance or instructions.
- Does not actively engage with their Election Coordinator, supporting organisation, or local authority.
- Does not act in accordance with this Code of Conduct and/or any local agreements as outlined by their supporting organisation or local authority.

If a supporting organisation or local authority chooses to remove support from a candidate, this will result in the candidate being removed from the SYP Elections. Further information about this is included in section 8 of this document.

National responsibilities

- 1.4 - All candidates in the SYP Elections must be committed to SYP's core values.

SYP's internal policies and procedures, including this Code of Conduct, outline the standard expectations of behaviour as to how everyone involved with SYP must behave, and what will happen if these policies are breached. Key policies and procedures are listed on the SYP website.

- 1.5 - Candidates are expected to commit to taking part in the elections process. This will include:
 - Keeping in touch with your Election Coordinator throughout the process.
 - Responding to any communications from SYP and your Election Coordinator promptly.
 - Attending online and/or in person events, activities, and development opportunities, or sending apologies in advance if you cannot attend. Resources will be available for all candidates to work through independently if you are not able to attend development workshops.
 - Creating a candidate profile to promote your election campaign. The deadline for submitting this profile to SYP is **5pm on Friday 2nd October 2026**, but your Election Coordinator might give you an earlier deadline. Resources and training to help you develop your candidate profile will be available.
 - Taking part in opportunities to promote your election campaign in October 2026.
 - Encouraging young people to vote between 2nd and 15th November 2026.
 - Taking part in the SYP Elections evaluation and sharing feedback on your experience through the programme.

During the elections process, candidates may also have the opportunity to attend local and national events and to take part in other campaigns and programmes. There may also be

opportunities in your local area or voluntary organisation. We encourage you to get involved in these opportunities where possible.

Following the elections, successful candidates are expected to complete an induction and MSYP training programme within the first three months. This will take place between December 2026 and February 2027.

2. Inclusion and Diversity

Inclusion is one of SYP's core values. SYP is committed to being truly inclusive, and works tirelessly to ensure policymakers and politicians hear the voices of young people from every community and background in Scotland.

Candidates in the SYP elections are very diverse. SYP actively takes steps to include young people from seldom-heard and vulnerable groups, and those furthest from their rights.

- 2.1 - Candidates must respect everyone they meet or engage with through their activities during the SYP elections process, including in online activity.
- 2.2 - To ensure SYP and Election Coordinators are able to make activities fully inclusive, candidates must ensure their contact details, consent form, and other relevant information is accurate and up to date. Candidates should inform their Election Coordinator if any information changes, including (but not limited to) any access requirements and emergency contact information.
- 2.3 - SYP will make every effort to ensure all candidates feel included in the organisation's work. If a candidate feels their needs are not being met, they must speak to their Election Coordinator as soon as possible.

3. Bullying and Harassment

SYP is committed to the implementation of equal opportunities throughout its work. SYP will not tolerate discrimination against anyone.

SYP takes incidents of bullying, harassment, and abusive acts very seriously and will seek to address the root cause of such incidents, including any form of prejudice.

- 3.1 - Election candidates must respect the rights of others to be free from bullying, harassment, intentional physical harm, or intimidation.
- 3.2 - Election candidates must respect the rights of others to be free from intentional or personally directed abuse or offensive language.

Bullying, harassment, and abusive acts of any kind are unacceptable in SYP. Any election candidate who is found to engage in behaviour of this type is likely to be removed from the elections process.

Election candidates must report any incidents of bullying, harassment, or abusive acts, to their election coordinator, or a member of SYP Staff.

4. Charity Law and Political Impartiality

Under charity law, SYP must not endorse or support any political party.

SYP is a non-party-political organisation. Remaining impartial ensures that we can work with decision makers from all parties on the issues that matter to young people. Political impartiality is fundamental to the credibility and integrity of SYP.

As an election candidate, you do not represent a party, a political campaign, or a campaign in a referendum; you represent all the young people in your constituency or national voluntary organisation.

- 4.1 - In order to ensure SYP complies with charity law, election candidates must:
 - 4.1.1 - Remain free, and be seen to remain free, from any party political influence during the elections process and, if elected, when representing your constituents.
 - 4.1.2 - Be clear they do not represent a political party or designated campaign, and that in their capacity as a candidate they do not endorse any political party, political campaign, or specific position in an election or referendum.
 - 4.1.3 - Not use SYP resources, including their presence or speaking time during the elections process or at SYP events, in a way which would clearly express a view that a person should support or vote for a political party or a political campaign.
 - 4.1.4 - Not publicly endorse a political party or designated campaign through social media, where they identify themselves as an election candidate or discuss your work with SYP.

Election candidates are entitled to be active, or hold membership of political parties, but you must make it clear that you are doing so in a personal capacity. You must not make any reference to your membership or involvement in a political party in any materials relating to the SYP elections, including on social media, in your candidate profile, or any materials relating to your candidacy in the SYP Elections.

5. SYP Policy Positions

As representatives of Scotland's young people, MSYPs create official SYP policy positions which demonstrate young people's views on a wide range of issues. These policy positions underpin all of SYP's advocacy, influencing, and campaigning activities. SYP will not take action on issues not covered by existing policy positions.

All SYP policy positions are created through consultation and discussion with MSYPs. Some of our policy positions, such as manifesto statements and Committee or Members' Motions, have been adopted based on consultation with thousands of young people.

- 5.1 - Candidates must bear this in mind when discussing policy positions and related issues, to ensure SYP's policy positions are consistent and demonstrate that SYP is the democratic voice of Scotland's young people.

- 5.2 - If a candidate wishes to speak about an issue not currently covered by an existing SYP policy position, such as an issue relevant to their local area or voluntary organisation, they may do so. However, they must:
 - 5.2.1 - Make it clear that their position does not reflect official SYP policy.
 - 5.2.2 - Demonstrate how their views on the issues have been informed by the views of young people in their local authority or national voluntary organisation.

If a candidate personally disagrees with an existing SYP policy position, they may choose to abstain from taking part in SYP activities relating to that policy position.

You can find out more about SYP policy [here](#).

6. Social Media, Communications, and Online Behaviour

Candidates are encouraged to use social media to promote their involvement in the SYP elections. SYP has a Social Media and Online Behaviour Policy to protect the young people we work with and the organisation.

- 6.1 - Candidates must use social media responsibly.

SYP recognises young people have a wide range of views, and SYP encourages this. However, candidates must think about whether their comments could negatively impact young people, SYP, or their local authority or supporting organisation, before they post anything. If a candidate is in any doubt, they should ask their Election Coordinator for advice.

- 6.2 - Election candidates should not use their personal profile for SYP activities. Instead, we encourage candidates to create separate social media accounts for your election campaign. Candidates should not use their SYP election campaign accounts for any personal reason, and these should comply with relevant SYP policies as outlined in this document.
- 6.3 - Candidates who have personal social media accounts which identify them as a supporter, member or activist of a political party, must keep them separate from their role as an MSYP in line with the Political Impartiality policy, as detailed in section 4.
- 6.4 - Candidates must never use online communication and social media to intimidate, attack, harass or humiliate anyone or in a way that brings or is likely to bring SYP into disrepute, including on personal accounts and in private or group chats. As detailed in section 3, SYP takes a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of bullying and harassment. Any comments which could be construed as offensive, abusive or prejudice-based, or online bullying of any description, regardless in which capacity it was made (including through a personal social media account), is unacceptable. Candidates may be removed from the SYP elections process if they are found to have engaged in behaviour of this kind.

Statements such as ‘all tweets are my own’ and ‘these tweets do not represent the views of my organisation’ are not considered acceptable excuses for poor online behaviour and the Code of Conduct will apply.

SYP recognises that candidates will develop friendships and want to communicate outside of SYP, and there may be occasions where non-SYP related discussions take place between

candidates online or via social media. In these cases, the Code of Conduct still applies, including in any discussion about other MSYPs and other young people or partner organisations (including local authorities, national voluntary organisations, and other partners). Any private discussions over social media by MSYPs will be subject to the other obligations of this policy.

If a candidate no longer wishes to use of their 'official' candidate social media accounts after the SYP elections or after withdrawing from the election process, they should either remove any references to SYP, archive or delete the accounts as soon as possible.

7. Engaging with the media

The Scottish Youth Parliament has strict guidelines about dealing with the media.

- **7.1 - Local Media**

During the SYP elections process, the media may contact election candidates, or election candidates may want to approach the media to publicise their work.

Election candidates must contact their Election Coordinator before they approach, respond to, or give any comment to local media.

- **7.2 - National Media**

Election candidates **must not** provide any comment about SYP or the SYP elections to the national media, or comment on any other SYP matters without agreeing they may do so with the SYP staff team. This includes through social media.

Any election candidate approached by the media on any matter connected to SYP, or affecting another candidate or MSYP, must not provide any comment.

Any candidates approached by the national press must direct them to contact Scottish Youth Parliament staff.

8. Breaches of the Code of Conduct

SYP works with a wide range of young people from diverse backgrounds. We have a duty to ensure every young person we work with is kept safe and secure and has their rights upheld.

Concerns about the conduct of an election candidate will be addressed by the candidate's Election Coordinator and/or local authority or national voluntary organisation.

If concerns are raised about the conduct of an election candidate, Election Coordinators will seek to use an informal route to resolve this, where appropriate. The majority of concerns can be dealt with this in this way.

In certain circumstances, local authorities and national voluntary organisations may take a formal approach to addressing the conduct of an election candidate. These circumstances may include:

- Where an informal approach to resolving the issue has been unsuccessful.
- Where conduct issues have been reported on more than one occasion.
- Where a report is made to us of a serious nature.

In such cases, the local authority or national voluntary organisation's processes will apply.

If a resolution cannot be reached, your supporting organisation or local authority may choose to remove support from you as a candidate. If a supporting organisation or local authority chooses to remove support from a candidate, this will result in the candidate being removed from the SYP Elections.

Candidates who are removed from the SYP Elections because of a breach of the Code of Conduct will not be allowed to stand in the same or another constituency during that election.

9. Ending your time as a candidate

If you decide to withdraw from the SYP elections process at any time, please contact your Election Coordinator and they will remove your application.

Candidates who withdraw from the SYP elections process may provide explanations, reflections, feedback, or notes of thanks. However, they should carefully consider what information they provide and where this is shared. Any communications must be respectful and should not be used to attack or undermine other individuals or organisations.

The SYP Elections voting period will end on Sunday 15th November 2026, and you will no longer be a candidate from Monday 16th November 2026, regardless of when the election results are announced or the outcome of this election.

This Code of Conduct will apply until the results of the election are announced by the candidate's local authority or national voluntary organisation.

10. Declaration

The Code of Conduct is designed to ensure all SYP Election candidates are aware of, and understand, their role in ensuring the Scottish Youth Parliament is a safe space that values and respects all young people and protects the reputation and integrity of the organisation.

By submitting your application to stand as a candidate, you are confirming that you have read, understand, and agree to act in accordance with this Code of Conduct throughout the SYP Elections process.

SYP is aware that these documents are complex and is happy for election candidates to contact us with any questions or a summary of an area of the policy. SYP will work with the relevant local authority or voluntary organisation to support the young people involved in the SYP Election process, and will do so in a youth-friendly manner where their rights and dignity are promoted and respected.

If you have any questions or concerns about this document please get in touch with your Election Coordinator or email elections@syp.org.uk.