

Youth Democracy Engagement - DCMS
Scottish Youth Parliament response
September 2026



The [Scottish Youth Parliament](#) is the democratic voice of Scotland's young people. Our vision for Scotland is of a nation that values and practices the meaningful participation of its young people who realise their full potential. Our mission is to represent the voice of Scotland's young people on issues affecting them, and to empower young people to champion and defend their rights.

The Scottish Youth Parliament has advocated for young people's meaningful participation in democratic processes since we were established in 1999. Amongst our many successes, SYP was a leading voice in the Votes at 16 campaign in Scotland and in the campaigns to make young people's rights a reality. We have also been facilitating the UK Youth Parliament programme in Scotland for over 20 years, and we have enjoyed a positive relationship with the UK Government throughout that time.

Our 16 members of the UK Youth Parliament are a diverse group of young people who are elected to represent each of Scotland's eight Parliamentary regions. Within these regions, they consult with members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) and other young people to understand these views and experiences, and to communicate these through campaigning and advocacy activities. They are supported by an experienced staff team to plan, facilitate, deliver, and evaluate their activities, and to report the impact of their work.

As a youth-led organisation, we are constantly seeking the views of our MSYPs and other young people to ensure our policy positions represent their views and experiences as clearly as possible.

About our response to the DCMS Youth Democracy Engagement consultation

Although youth policy is a devolved matter, and the present consultation is aimed towards hearing the views and experiences of young people in England, through discussion with Scotland's UK Youth Parliament representatives and our youth-led Board of Trustees, we feel the outcome from this consultation could have a wider-

reaching impact on young people across the United Kingdom, particularly if the results of this consultation affect reserved issues and topics such as the extension of the right to vote to 16 and 17-year-olds in all UK elections, and the future of the UK Youth Parliament. Therefore, we welcome this opportunity to respond to this consultation on behalf of Scotland's young people.

This response summarises young people's views from a workshop with eight of Scotland's current Members of the UK Youth Parliament (September 2026) and a research report, [Young People and Politics](#), developed in partnership by the Scottish Youth Parliament and [Young Scot](#), published in January 2026. Over 500 young people aged between 11 and 25 took part in the Young People and Politics research.

Executive Summary

Young people in Scotland want democratic participation to begin early, be accessible wherever they live, and lead to visible change. They need consistent political and citizenship education, trusted and youth-friendly information, well-funded youth work, and multiple local and national routes to influence decisions. Participation must be rights-based, rather than tokenistic: young people should be involved from the outset, decision-makers should be trained to engage them meaningfully, and clear feedback should show how their views affected the outcome.

The response highlights a gap between young people's interest in politics and their sense of influence. Although 82% believe young people's involvement in politics is important, only two-fifths feel they can make a difference to local or national decisions. Addressing this requires practical democratic education, action against misinformation, accessible opportunities to participate both online and in person youth voice structures, and sustained links between local youth forums and national structures such as the UK Youth Parliament.

Views on the UK Youth Parliament

Young people see the UK Youth Parliament as a meaningful national route for young people to be heard. They see benefits for members of the UK Youth Parliament,

decision-makers, young people, and the whole country more broadly. They think MPs and all governments should make a commitment to listen to young people and to take their views seriously.

For decision-makers, a national youth parliament ensures they have access to young people's perspectives to be informed on the realities of life for young people in all nations of the UK, and in local communities, including those from seldom-heard groups who are marginalised and furthest from their rights.

Young people's views being heard and respected are a key part of respecting children and young people's rights. Young people feel this could combat stigma about young people.

"[Decision Makers] aren't blindly following or are less likely to follow propaganda made up about young people and can make their decision making more realistic and backed up by evidence and accuracy."

"It allows young people to have a say in the future that they are so often told they must lead."

"Because if not [UKYP], what other opportunities do young people have nationally. We have local projects and groups, but UKYP is a celebration of young people's views nationally and should remain so."

"Young people should have a voice in matters that affect them."

Recommendations

- **Invest in multi-year funding for the UK Youth Parliament**

The UK Government should invest in multi-year funding for the UK Youth Parliament to ensure that young people across the UK have a strong mechanism for contributing to UK-wide decisions and for participating in accountability. Multi-year funding would increase the ability of local youth participation structures to engage with a diverse range of young people and feed these views into the UKYP, strengthening youth democracy and fulfilling children's rights across the UK.

- **Embed meaningful participation principles into local and national decision-making processes**

To respect and uphold young people's UNCRC Article 12 right to be listened to and have their views considered in issues affecting them, decision-makers should move beyond tokenistic consultation by embedding meaningful participation principles into local and national decision-making processes. Decision-makers should receive training on how to uphold UNCRC principles and how to meaningfully involve young people in their work. Decision-makers should also close the feedback loop to ensure young people understand how their participation has influenced outcomes, and to increase accountability for young people's participation in decision-making.

- **Provide safe and accessible spaces and resources for young people to learn about and discuss politics**

Currently, over three-quarters of young people use social media every day or a few times a week to find out what's going on in the world. Less than a third of young people find out what's going on in the world every day or a few times a week from trusted adults such as teachers or youth workers.

Local Authorities should provide safe and accessible spaces and resources for young people to learn about and discuss politics, through formal and non-formal education settings such as youth work, and in community spaces such as libraries. Opportunities and information should be available for all young people, regardless of their age, to build confidence and reduce barriers to their political engagement.

- **Commit to long-term, sustainable funding for youth work across the UK**

The UK Government, in partnership with devolved governments and local councils, should commit to long-term, sustainable funding for high-quality, consistent, and accessible youth work in every community across the UK to ensure young people have access to opportunities to learn about and participate in politics. Alongside this, youth voice mechanisms such as youth councils or forums, and peer-led campaigning initiatives should be supported and expanded to build young people's confidence and understanding of decision-making processes.

- **Action to challenge misinformation, hate and polarisation in politics**

Many young people felt politics is divisive, and action to challenge misinformation, hate, and polarisation would help them feel more confident getting involved in politics, although some young people suggested they have a negative view of politics and never want to be involved in or talk about politics as a result.

- **Clearer, accessible, and reliable information about politics which is specifically targeted at young people**

Young people would like more information about politics, which is reliable, easy to find, and easy to understand. Many of the young people who responded to this survey suggested there should be targeted adverts or websites which explain what politics is, what different political parties believe in, and how young people can get involved in formal and informal politics. Some young people suggested news sources should have a recognisable system for verifying the information they share.

- **Seeing other young people participating and influencing politics**

In our research, 82% of young people agree or strongly agree that it is important for young people to be involved in politics, and half of the young people who responded agree or strongly agree that they want to be more involved in politics.

Two thirds of young people agree strongly or agree that they feel comfortable talking about politics. However, only two-fifths of young people feel they can make a difference in local or national decisions. Some young people suggested seeing other young people participating in politics and seeing the impact other young people have made on politics would help them feel more confident talking about or getting involved in politics.