

# The City of Edinburgh Council

10am, Thursday, 24 November 2022

## Young People's Assembly

Item number  
Executive/routine  
Wards  
Council Commitments

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Council is asked to approve the proposal to develop a young people's assembly which would enable the voices of young people to be heard both in their own communities and citywide, as outlined in this report, and instruct officers to proceed with its development in partnership with young people.

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## Young People's Assembly

### 2. Executive Summary

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2.1 A motion with an amendment and addendums was passed at Full Council on 22 September 2022 instructing officers to report within two cycles on how an effective forum for a wide range of young people's voices to be heard on a wide range of Council/city topics can be developed. The report should outline:

- How quickly an effective forum could be set up
- What its objectives and parameters should be
- How it could be structured to ensure equality in representation from all communities

Addendums further included:

- A proposal on how to provide a single forum and engagement process for committees and boards
- The need to involve potential participants in the design of the group, including membership, purpose and scope

### 3. Background

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3.1 Officers researched a number of potential options of youth participation in Scotland today, consulted with Young Scot and analysed two recent national studies of youth participation: 'Being Heard: Helping to create the next generation of civic leaders in Scotland' (2018) and 'Being Heard One Year On' (2020).

3.2 From this, we contacted youth participation teams in North Lanarkshire, Dundee, Angus, Midlothian, North Ayrshire and Renfrewshire. These authorities were identified as maintaining a high standard of youth participation in 'Being Heard' or had been recommended by Young Scot. Follow-up meetings were arranged with colleagues in North Lanarkshire, Dundee, Angus and North Ayrshire.

### 4. Main report

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4.1 We propose to adapt a model for Edinburgh based either on the four localities or the six Scottish Parliamentary constituencies (as is the case with the Scottish Youth Parliament). The intention from the outset is to create a structure together with

young people in order that it reflects their concerns and aspirations rather than impose an adult-designed model. The model proposed is based on an existing structure operating in North Lanarkshire (see Appendix 1) and we have already included young people in shaping the outline set out in this report (see Appendix 2). We will work with young people throughout to develop and implement this proposal.

- 4.2 The model could build on current examples of youth participation already embedded within local youth work provision as well as the previous Youth Talk approach, in which thousands of young people and decision-makers met in communities to identify issues and actions before the pandemic (see [Children and Young People's Participation October 2019](#) pages 3 and 4).
- 4.3 The proposed model would also enable current and future Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MYSs) to have a structured presence in their own constituencies/localities, allowing them to represent local young people more effectively and hear directly from constituents. This is a major challenge for MYSs at the moment and such an approach would help to embed their role.
- 4.4 In addition, we have staff located in each area, with extensive local knowledge and contacts who are able to facilitate this approach quickly. There are also voluntary sector youth work providers in each locality. Local groups could be supported by Council officers and local youth work agencies.
- 4.5 The central Youth Assembly could be supported jointly by Council officers and Lothian Association of Youth Clubs (LAYC). We will develop local groups and invite representatives from these groups to meet with elected members and senior managers four times each year in a Youth Assembly. The young people taking part in the Assembly would meet first to prepare, supported by officers/youth workers.
- 4.6 Young people could be invited to participate through schools (e.g., pupil councils, equalities groups, environmental groups), local youth and children's work provision and social media (which could also be used to allow young people who are unable to come to meetings to contribute their ideas and keep up to date with youth participation activities).
- 4.7 Both the local groups and citywide Youth Assembly would be supported using a youth work approach. Through a partnership approach with LAYC, there will be the opportunity to build in the offer of accredited youth awards, including Duke of Edinburgh and Hi5, Dynamic Youth and Youth Achievement Awards.
- 4.8 **Partnership:**

The forum should be a genuine partnership between young people and senior decision-makers (elected members and senior managers). This partnership should be based on the general principles outlined below and in Appendix 1 and needs to involve a willingness to listen, to adapt approaches, to act on commitments and to communicate the results of that action to young people. If it is to be effective, it will mean being challenged by young people and, in some cases, may mean having to cede some power.

#### 4.9 **Age range:**

Although the North Lanarkshire model is for young people from S1 onwards, we have previous experience of successfully including the voices of children as well as young people in participation work. [What kind of Edinburgh?](#) included 24 children (from Primary 6 and 7) and 16 young people (secondary-age and beyond). This required particular methods such as different activities for children and young people for some sessions, but it enabled children's voices to be heard as well as those of young people. We need to decide what the age range should be for the forum.

#### 4.10 **Diversity and inclusion:**

We would seek to ensure diversity and inclusion by targeting organisations working with under-represented and/or vulnerable groups. For example, young people within the most deprived SIMD data zones, LGBT+ young people, young people with additional support needs, black and minority ethnic groups, young people with disabilities, young carers, care experienced young people and those in kinship care. This work will be supported through LAYC's network and through existing Council networks and will build on the successful approach taken towards the recent Scottish Youth Parliament elections.

#### 4.11 **Name of the forum:**

It is proposed that participants should decide themselves what it should be called.

#### 4.12 **Feedback from young people:**

Edinburgh's Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) are elected by their peers and have significant experience of young people's participation and representation. They would also play a key role in the proposed arrangements. We therefore discussed the idea with them initially. We intend to involve many more young people in the development of the assembly/forums, building on the suggestions of the MSYPs.

MSYPs completed a short survey and took part in a group discussion.

In summary, the MSYPs welcomed the idea, with some noting that they are aware that colleagues from other authorities have similar structures and that this is a gap in Edinburgh. They cautioned that it might be difficult to get young people involved; however, they had numerous suggestions to help overcome this, including use of social media; targeting schools, youth groups and others; good communications; and being clear about the impact young people might have. There was also a note of caution about whether young people's voices would be successful in terms of bringing about change. Despite time pressures, the MSYPs are keen to be involved in development, recruitment and participation.

They felt that young people would find the word 'Assembly' in the proposed title off-putting, intimidating and too formal, and that a different name should be used.

The MSYPs' views are set out in more detail in Appendix 2.

#### 4.13 **Objectives and parameters:**

The overall aim of the forums is to ensure that young people's voices are heard and contribute to policy development and decision-making.

It will do this by enabling young people to raise and discuss issues directly with decision-makers and by providing an opportunity for decision-makers to bring issues to young people to find out about and explore their views.

The parameters in terms of content are issues of interest to young people. These should not be too narrowly defined i.e. solely in relation to youth work or schools.

#### 4.14 **General Principles of Participation:**

According to the 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - General Comment No 12: The right of the child to be heard', all processes through which children and young people are heard and participate must be:

- Transparent and informative
- Voluntary
- Respectful
- Child-friendly
- Inclusive
- Supported by training (for both young people and adults)
- Safe and sensitive to risk
- Accountable - a commitment to follow-up and evaluation is essential

These principles need to be at the heart of the new forums. These principles can be found [here](#) (paragraphs 132-134).

The **7 Golden Rules of Participation** will also need to inform the work. Developed by the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, the 7 Golden Rules for Participation are a set of principles that anyone working with children and young people can use. They inform adults what children and young people's participation should feel like. The rules are:

- Understand my rights
- A chance to be involved
- Remember – it's my choice
- Value me
- Support me
- Work together
- Keep in touch

More information about the 7 Golden Rules can be found [here](#).

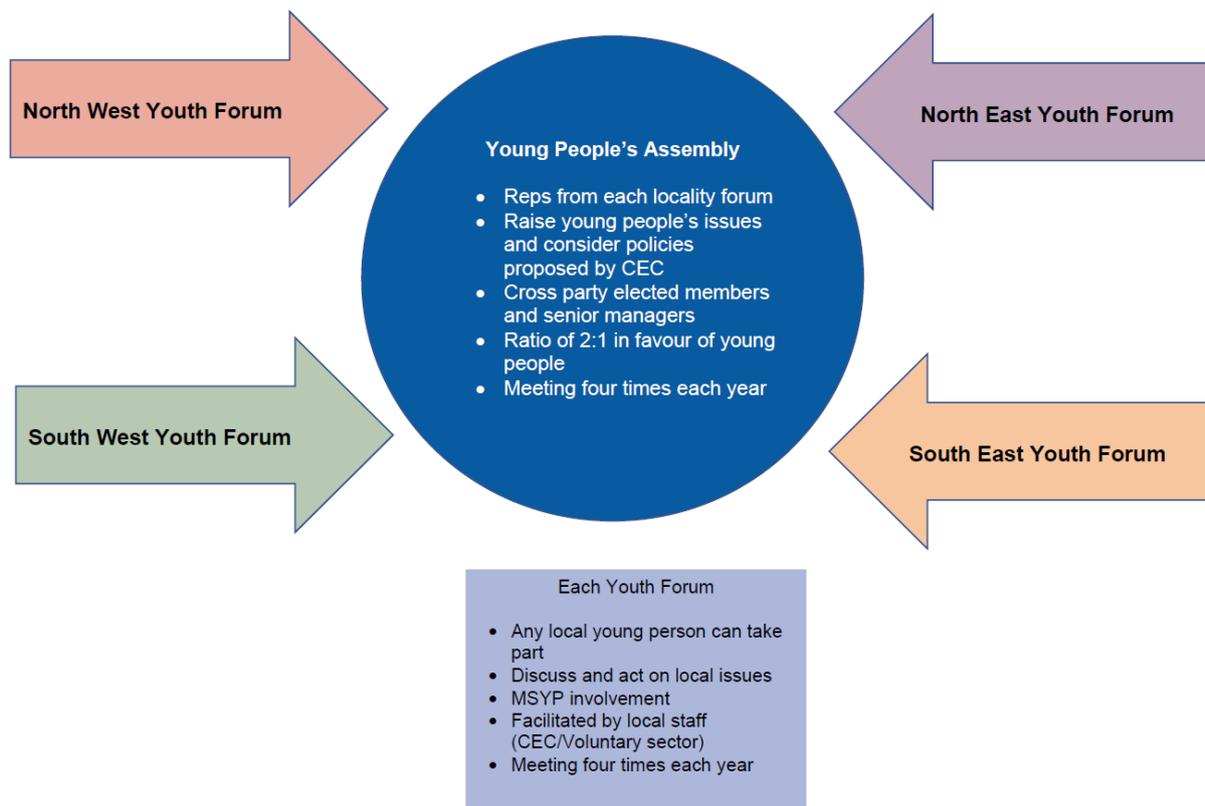
#### 4.15 **Caveats:**

4.15.1 Although there is no unified approach to young people's participation in Scotland, engagement works best when key decision-makers take an active involvement in the process. To work successfully, the forums will need

commitment from a range of stakeholders including elected members, senior managers, schools, locally based staff teams, voluntary sector youth organisations, key officers and LAYC. The young people who take part will also need to experience in action the general principles and the 7 Golden Rules of Participation outlined in Appendix 1.

4.15.2 The change required to make this work needs to be systemic and across the Council and beyond, rather than located solely within youth work and/or schools. Young people's lives encompass the range of services provided by the Council and others and they will have views and aspirations on a range of topics beyond those traditionally seen as 'young people's issues' or just relating to school/education.

4.15.3 Successful youth forums will require support from across the city, as outlined. They will require resources in terms of dedicated staff time and a budget to support its activities. In order to encourage greater 'buy in' from the third sector, consideration should be given to a co-funded post that could work across the Council and voluntary sector to lead, facilitate and support this work.



## 5. Next Steps

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- 5.1 **Timescale:** If this approach is agreed, we will immediately recruit a steering group (which would have input from young people) to start work on the creation of local forums and then the citywide assembly. It is hoped that the first local forums could meet early in the New Year with the initial Youth Assembly meeting taking place shortly after.

## 6. Financial impact

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- 6.1 This proposal is contained within current and planned staffing and budget resource. We will also explore the opportunity to work in partnership with the third sector, which potentially increases the shared resource available to support this work.

## 7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

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- 7.1 The views of young people have been taken into account in creating this report/proposal. It meets the Council's priority to consult with young people about decisions that affect their lives.
- 7.2 There are no health and safety, governance, compliance or regulatory implications.
- 7.3 There are no adverse effects relating to carbon impacts, adaptation to climate change and sustainable development.

## 8. Background reading/external references

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- 8.1 [BEING HEARD FINAL DOCUMENT.pdf](#)
- 8.2 [BeingHeard-June2020.pdf](#)

## 9. Appendices

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- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Background information on the North Lanarkshire model; Partnership working
- 9.2 Appendix 2 – Responses from Edinburgh Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament

# **Appendix 1 – Young People’s Assembly**

## **1. Background Information on the North Lanarkshire Model**

North Lanarkshire’s approach to youth participation is widely praised for its simplicity and effectiveness. Officers met with a colleague from North Lanarkshire to find out more about their approach and discuss issues and challenges.

It should be noted that the work in North Lanarkshire has grown and developed over a number of years.

The approach consists of nine Youth Voice groups based in communities across the authority. Each group is different and responds to local young people’s needs and priorities. Each group is supported by a Community Learning and Development Worker or a part-time youth worker. Youth Voice groups organise activities and events in their own communities.

Young people of secondary school age and beyond are recruited through voluntary sector and local authority youth work, schools, social media and general word of mouth. Any local young person can join their local Youth Voice group. The local Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament is part of each group.

The groups vary in number, with smaller communities having smaller groups and larger towns having bigger groups.

Two representatives from each youth voice group as well as the area’s nine Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament meet regularly as the North Lanarkshire Youth Council.

The Youth Council feeds into Future North Lanarkshire, which involves 18 young people’s representatives (including the MSYPs) meeting with nine cross-party elected members. FNL will meet four times each year. A young person will be the convenor and an elected member will be vice convenor. The ratio between young people and elected members participating is 2:1. Meetings take place in community centres rather than Council chambers to emphasise informality.

## **2. Partnership**

The forum should be a genuine partnership between young people and senior decision-makers (elected members and senior managers). This partnership should be based on the general principles outlined above and needs to involve a willingness to listen, to adapt approaches, to act on commitments and to communicate the results of that action to young people. If it is to be effective, it will mean being challenged by young people and, in some cases, may mean having to cede some power.

Support for the local groups and Youth Assembly should also be characterised by partnership working, in particular with third sector youth organisations which deliver the majority of youth work provision in the city. LAYC supports 95 community-based youth and children’s organisations and is keen to help support the central forum and to encourage local groups to support the local forums. Following on from the initial scoping discussions, LAYC is committed to working in partnership with Council officers to develop the new forums. Given the extent of their youth and children’s work network, this will be enormously helpful to the development of both local and citywide forums. LAYC can make an active contribution to this partnership through other resources that can support youth participation, including the

Inspire programme through Youth Scotland. This offers young people the opportunity to lead on a social action programme to secure small grant funds and develop the forum.

This partnership with LAYC is in line with the approach taken to develop the Edinburgh Youth and Children's Work Strategy as well as its rights and participation priority.

## Appendix 2 - Young People's Assembly

### Responses from Edinburgh Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament

(Summary of group discussion points in plain text; direct quotes in italics)

#### 1. What do you think of the idea?

Good idea but not sure how you would find the young people, it was hard to interest people when I was standing for the Youth Parliament.

Need a strong focus in publicity (posters, social media etc.) that would make people want to get involved – avoid vagueness, mention specific topics which young people might be able to influence.

Be as transparent as possible, emphasising the difference you can make (I'm always asked as an MSYP, 'what difference have you made?')

Expect young people to be sceptical.

Need good communications with young people – sometimes change takes time but you can tell them what you plan to do.

- *I think this is a fantastic idea as from speaking to other local authority MSYPs I have identified this is something missing from Edinburgh's decision-making processes. I know several young people from my constituency who would readily involve themselves in this!*
- *I feel in theory it's a good idea; however, is this something that young people are interested in? It would be great to have their views put across at such a local level but how we get the right mix of people that have the time and effort would be hard. It's my thought anyway.*
- *I think that it has lots of potential to help young people get involved in changing policy in their area.*
- *It's great and very inclusive.*
- *I think it's a good idea and will be a good way for young people to get involved in decision making.*
- *It's an excellent idea.*
- *In theory it's great but there has to be a way for these ideas to actually be implemented by councillors- otherwise they will just ignore what young people want.*

#### 2. What would make it work effectively? What are the best ways of getting young people involved?

Go into schools and speak about it – better if this involves young people (and we're happy to help with it)

Go to pupil councils, assemblies, other groups (e.g., equalities, eco groups etc.). But go beyond these too.

Emphasise what's in it for them – as well as 'making a difference' etc. emphasise what they'll get out of it in terms of confidence and skills and, especially for older young people, something to put on CV/voluntary work experience.

Use social media, especially TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat. Twitter and Facebook not so good.

Be clear about achievements.

Publicity in schools, youth clubs/groups, churches/faith groups, libraries, colleges, universities – encourage staff to speak to young people about it.

QR codes on publicity too.

Good idea to include P6/7 too although might have to have separate activities as their issues might be very different from S5/6 and older young people. Younger young people will have more time and could be involved for longer.

Have a recruiting period each year to constantly bring in new young people.

Enable young people to learn from their peers – can be more effective than training delivered by adults.

Be clear about the time commitment involved (this works well when taking on new roles at SYP).

Give people a chance to get to know each other – can be difficult to say what you think unless you feel comfortable in the setting.

Allow for a range of views – one person's view is not necessarily every young person's view. The Council and other services will still have to consult with young people more generally.

- *This would need clear communication such as a TEAMS page or social media group to collaborate and keep young people updated. From my experiences of SYP, it will need a session/resources explaining how the council works and makes decisions, and what it makes decisions about, as well as how this relates to national decision-making - essentially young people need to know what's going on. Additionally, young people will need to be invited from all backgrounds and of all identities to get a full read on young perspectives and explore how issues and affect all young people.*
- *Try to target it at schools and colleges as that's where the majority of young people are, explain to them the impact that they could have. Although getting a small group of young people's views is a great start will it reflect everyone? Will the need to consult young people link to SYP?*
- *Young people would need to get very regular information about the results the group has achieved*
- *Having a wide range of young people, making sure everyone gets to say something, Making notes and council officials being attentive and taking note*
- *Ensuring all the members have a way to communicate with each other (i.e., a Teams page etc.)*
- *The right people to go on.*
- *Social media is a really key tool in attracting young people, making links with other organisations already involved with youth work such as Young Scot or SYP (especially for those who have left school). For the slightly younger demographic schools (PSE lessons, bulletins, tannoys) are an ideal way of spreading information and getting young people talking.*
- *Make it appealing to them in some way*
- *Putting it in school notices and telling people about it at events*
- *Social media*

- *Advertise it on social media and get the word out in schools/colleges/universities or any other sort of youth groups or clubs*
- *Promote through schools and social media*
- *As previously mentioned, a way to actually hold councillors accountable to the decisions they make following the young people presentation- perhaps councillors would agree to implementing one policy prior to seeing the selection and then the young people would present them three or more that they deemed important- the councillors would then choose one of these to attempt to action (they would have been vetted for viability by young people's assembly members before).*

### **3. Is there anything missing or that could be improved?**

- *Maybe add in workshops? So that the young people themselves can get to know each other and then they can work more effectively as a team and in turn give more ideas*
- *Should meet more than 4 times a year*
- *Just to emphasise again that action actually has to be taken by councillors as a result of what they hear from young people - if this is going to be a shallow gesture then don't bother, invest the money into something else that will improve young people's lives.*

### **4. What would you like to see happen as a result of the Assembly? What would make it a success?**

- *Social media is a really key tool in attracting young people, making links with other organisations already involved with youth work such as Young Scot or SYP (especially for those who have left school). For the slightly younger demographic schools (PSE lessons, bulletins, tannoys) are an ideal way of spreading information and getting young people talking.*
- *Make it appealing to them in some way*
- *Putting it in school notices and telling people about it at events*
- *Social media*
- *Advertise it on social media and get the word out in schools/colleges/universities or any other sort of youth groups or clubs*
- *Promote through schools and social media*
- *Young people's ideas actually being implemented by the council*

### **5. Young People's Assembly (the name)**

Assembly sounds a bit 'out there', off-putting and very formal – 'connotations of a lot of people in suits'.

Maybe something surprising in the title to make you look at it again. Acronyms are good. Shouldn't sound 'adult cringey'.

Like the name Future North Lanarkshire – sounds optimistic.

- *Maybe something including "for young people" to make clear it's a safe space/designed to benefit them. I don't know that young people have a detailed understanding of what an 'assembly' is and it seems very formal so maybe there is a different word that could apply here.*
- *Assembly seems a little intimidating but I'm unsure what we could change it to*

- *The Youth Action Group*
- *Youth Chit Chat*
- *Maybe something including “for young people” to make clear it’s a safe space/designed to benefit them. I don’t know that young people have a detailed understanding of what an ‘assembly’ is and it seems very formal so maybe there is a different word that could apply here.*

## **6. Would you like to be involved in setting it up?**

Yes, from everyone although they have limited time. Agreed to include developments in regular MSYP meetings.

## **7. Do you have any other comments on the idea?**

Free food for participants is good – lets young people know their participation is valued.

- *It would be ideal for this to be promoted by young people for other young people and (to reiterate) have a social media element as this is an ideal way to reach them.*
- *I like it and really hope it works- best of luck in bringing it to fruition!*