

Commission on Parliamentary Reform

Your Parliament Your Voice - Scottish Youth Parliament

Saturday 25th March

We asked: How would you like the Scottish Parliament to engage with you?

You said:

- The Scottish Youth Parliament's (SYP) Education Committee Convener has spent some time building up a working relationship with the Scottish Parliament's Education Committee Convener and clerking team to see how they can feed into the Committees agenda. This has been a new development and is a constructive way to engage and influence the Committees priorities. If the Committees were to host informal sessions with their counterparts in the SYP to discuss issues that affect young people it would be help ensure their voices were being heard.
- There is a UK Youth Select Committee in House of Commons – would like to see similar process at the Scottish Parliament. Providing a proper connection between Youth Parliament and the Scottish Parliament for young people to have their voice heard.
- Investigate issues – get young people's views on issues affecting them. Parliament should take evidence etc. through a formal process. At Westminster through the UK Youth Select Committee this process results in a debate at the House of Commons. Votes taken from over one million young people throughout the UK reflecting the needs and ambitions of Young People. Could be reflected at the Scottish Parliament. Committees can make difference (Government deciding policy following advice from Youth Committee).
- Not all committees engaging with young people (SYP). Would prefer to take their issues to the Parliament rather than Parliament selecting what they want young people's views on.
- Bills – even though they might be interested in the topic not all young people are able to read and understand a full bill. Parliament should do more to make sure all legislative materials are accessible to all people.
- Reaching out to young people who already have the knowledge about the legislation, could do more to reach the young people who do not have the expertise to approach the Parliament and Committees on their own.
- Similar to MSPs, MSYPs have a mandate to represent their peers. When elected the MSYP select a topic to specialise in via the subject committee. Through their term as a member the young people develop knowledge and expertise in their subject area. There should be a formal process where they can formally engage with Scottish Parliament committees to share this

knowledge and influence legislative scrutiny, ensuring the views and aspirations of young people are considered.

- There was some discussion regarding the accessibility of the Scottish Parliament website. Some felt the information available was either too simplistic or extremely wordy.
- Most of the MSYPs who attended the workshop follow at least one committee on social media but don't communicate via social media with the Committees. It is very much a one way communication channel. Young people are extremely active on social media; therefore committees should do more to actively engage with them on those platforms.
- MSPs have a role to understand they have an obligation to use all the engagement tools that are available to them.
- The MSYPs take considerable time to petition committees to engage with them. This time could be more productively used if there was a formally recognised engagement process. The SYP would have to examine the resources required to support the SYP committee conveners if they were to be more actively involved in the work of Scottish Parliament committees.
- The general opinion of the Parliament is that young people don't really hear much about it, only if they have an interest in what is happening do they find out.
- Streaming on Facebook more accessible for young people, the more barriers you put up the less likely young people are to engage.
- Holyrood more welcoming than Westminster – more about consensus politics – there was praise it for being open and accessible.
- Education programme for schools is beneficial. Tours etc. help people to feel closer to the Parliament.

Recommendations

1. A Youth Select Committee similar to the setup at the House of the Commons to better represent the views and ambitions of the young people in Scotland.
2. Expanding the outreach programme getting young people into the Parliament who are currently not engaged with politics.
3. A people's chamber (jury) to get people more involved and directly impacting the work of the Parliament.
4. Great communication and working between list and constituency MSPs and their respective MSYP.
5. The Scottish Youth Parliament should be able to sit in the Scottish Parliament on a bi-annual basis.
6. A formal engagement process between the committees of the Scottish Youth Parliament and the Scottish Parliament.