

Commission on Parliamentary Reform
Youthlink Scotland members' Network Meeting

Thursday 2 March 2017

Following introductory remarks from the Chair, **we asked: How have you engaged with the Scottish Parliament and what could make that engagement better?**

You said:

- Here is how we have engaged (see the Activity feedback summary at the end of this note);
- In relation to working with Committees it was observed that you waited to be invited in and that giving evidence at Committee was very much a closed opportunity with people invited based on who they were rather than what they know (it is the same organisations time and time again);
- It was suggested that in relation to political issues some groups with one view point had been invited but others had not (so do MSPs get the broadest range of views?);
- Committees receive a huge amount of evidence which isn't reflected in the report so for small organisations (for whom providing written views is lots of work) you don't seem to have much influence and don't get much feedback on how your evidence was used;
- Committees are not seen as exciting with MSPs hijacking the discussions;
- Committees should travel out more and speak to people at the local level and there should be more 'non formal' meetings – e.g. over a bacon butty;
- For some it appeared that Committees had held a pre meeting which gave the impression that the decision had really already been made before the meeting started. In order to influence Committees it was important that you were involved with Committees before that stage;
- MSP surgeries worked well in some areas but not in others and could be better if they supported local community services as well. MSPs should attend events more often (and without requiring a formal invitation) so they can be seen in their community. MSPs tend to get out and say 'here is what we have done' rather than meaningfully engage with people.
- More information is needed at a local level of how people can go to their MSP for support – but people need to know who their local MSP is first. More work is needed with young people on the role of the Parliament and MSPs. The onus is on the Parliament and not local people to address this. There could be a Parliament day when constituents can meet their MSPs. Some recognised that it was hard for some regional MSPs to be seen across their region compared with local councillors;

- Committees are doing some good work but the wider population doesn't know about it – committees work quickly which makes it harder for people to find out how to engage with them and the timetable doesn't involve people. More notice is needed so people can get involved which would mean getting better representative views.
- The language used by committees is a barrier to people getting involved. Committees also need to be clearer about what specific information they would consider helpful instead of asking for everything (when they may not use it) – what are the key issues on which they want views?
- It was felt that youth work was overlooked in terms of involvement in policy work by committees - and that the views of youth workers aren't always recognised as being different to those in higher education; there had been reducing financial support for youth work;
- Youth work is also cross cutting and may have something to say on a wide range of issues out with youth work but this isn't recognised; too often it is put into a silo of education or youth issues and not considered as part of other wider issues such as transport or health;
- There needs to be wider discussion that just the Parliament, Government and Local Authorities feeding into Committee work – there is still a role to engage directly with people;
- The Parliament's founding principle of 'equal opportunities for all' wasn't really true as peoples circumstances conspire against it;
- There should be a civic voice.

Youthlink Scotland members' Network Meeting- engagement activity

Activity Feedback Form - What is your experience of the Scottish Parliament?

Total number of participants: 26

I have watched a Scottish Parliament debate		
On TV	Online	Live at the Parliament
16	11	9

I have read about what the Scottish Parliament has done		
Newspapers	Online	Social Media
17	17	19

I have contacted an MSP				
By email	Written a letter	By Phone	Through social media	Face to face
13	5	5	12	3

I have met an MSP				
At the Parliament	At a local surgery	At an event	At school	Other
14	12	21	3	11

I have looked at the Scottish Parliament website		
once	1-5 times	More than 5 times
0	11	14

I have visited the Scottish Parliament to					
Watch business	Take a tour	Visit an exhibition	Attend an event	Have a look around	On a school visit
8	9	10	18	8	4

I have spoken about the Scottish Parliament on social media			
Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Other
8	4	0	7

I have watched a Scottish Parliament committee meeting		
On TV	Online	Live at the Parliament
13	13	9

I have given my views to a committee		
At a meeting at the Scottish Parliament	At an event in my community	By letter, email or on social media
6	12	8

