

Youth Convener Action Plan 2015/16

Role of the Youth Convener

The role of the Youth Convener set out in the Contract Specification is as follows:

- To assist in ensuring that young people's views in Highland are being voiced in partnership with The Highland Council and Community Planning Partners.
- To act as a representative for young people and Highland Youth Parliament in various council and public meetings discussing issues, policies and developments that have an impact on young people.
- To contribute towards making the Highlands the best place in Scotland to be young.
- To work for a good quality of life for young people and maximum availability of services for young people's personal, social and educational development.

My Aims for the Coming Year

Education and Employment

This area is one of the most influential factors not just for young peoples will to remain in Highland, but also the ability for them to remain. It is vital that the region develops all industries and educational opportunities for young people. While the new Inverness College UHI campus brings a fantastic learning opportunities and this must be promoted and supported, this cannot be at the abandonment of pathways such as employment or modern apprenticeships. Only 35% of school leavers nationally will go onto university, and so support should certainly be shared with the majority 65%.

In addition 88.6% of Scotland's young people will go onto a positive destination, and Highland should have an aim not only to match this, but exceed it as much as possible. Furthermore disadvantaged groups such as looked after young people and care experienced young people need to have resources suitable and specific to their needs in order to raise the number of those finding a positive destination.

I will also work on the issues in this area that young people have brought forward such as equal wages for young people, and the quality and consistency of PSE lessons.

Furthermore I will be working in conjunction with the Education Department to produce a structure to youth consultation within schools. This work has begun and involves working with youth forums in the region to consult with young people, and with the Highland Youth Parliament Executive Committee to identify region wide schools issues. These issues will be raised within the council with the Education Department and the outcomes of this fed back to the executive and youth forums.

Health

Health and wellbeing are extremely important to me and I would like to reflect this in my work. I will continue on Shaun's excellent work with SPEAK to create a better Highlands for those with mental ill health. I also will strive to work with sports initiatives as I believe that a healthy body leads to a healthy mind.

I also feel that general health services for young people need to be improved and I look forward to tackling this in my year. The youth convener has excellent links with groups such as the Children and Young People's Health Commissioning Group which I will use to my best ability to raise the issues that young people bring forward, and find effective and proactive solutions.

Transport

Transport has been a hot topic issue for years, with the local community feeling little to no resolve. While it is impossible to "fix" the issue within one year it is possible to make improvements that can continue with other conveners and agencies.

One problem with efforts to resolve transport issues in the Highlands is a lack of vision and clarity over what good transport would look like. Furthermore there has been a lack of communication both from local representative organisations directly with transport providers and between those organisations wishing to bring about that change.

To contribute to this area I would like to be part of developing a clear multiagency vision for transport in Highland, and work to bring about that vision.

Raising the Profile of Highland Youth Parliament

After speaking to members and the executive committee of HYP it has become apparent that they feel HYP is not being effectively promoted, and when it is promoted it is not fully understood as worthwhile by their peers. The youth forums and members of HYP need to be supported and provided with materials to promote all of the fantastic work they do and encourage others to join and improve the diversity of the groups.

I aim to support the local youth forums as much as possible in promoting them and increasing membership. I also will support the work of the forums and make sure their achievements are celebrated. This also needs to include effective and consistent promotion resources for young people to present to their peers and improve a consistent message they can share with them.

I also hope to work alongside the council's efforts on promoting local democracy. I believe this must also be done in conjunction with promoting the upcoming Holyrood elections in order to give young people a fuller understanding of what politics is and does. I will work to increase young people's understanding of how local democratic systems work, and of the issues which are being discussed on both a local and national level. I will also work on promoting voter registration for young people with a particular focus on 16-18 year olds who may need to re-register.

Continuing on Shaun's Work

I will be continuing on Shaun's fantastic work from the past year and hope to expand on it in my own new ways too. Our aims have matched well and I feel that this will give good consistency for the post.

Communication

I aim to provide both a sounding board and voice for young people living in Highland. To do this I will work hard to engage young people who were not previously engaged and support youth lead initiatives where I can. I also hope to use my time and resources effectively to give young people the loudest voice possible for their issues and aspirations through representation and working with HYP to create a clear aim for where they would like to go.

Final Statement

I am thrilled to be working as this year's youth convener. After seeing the role through a fantastic set of events and meetings organised by Shaun, I feel ready to take on this task and work hard to achieve positive outcomes for our young people. With my priorities listed above I believe that I can make this year a successful one and look forward to working with others to help leave behind a better highlands in which young people can both live and thrive.