

# Step Up. Speak Out

North Ayrshire's

## Youth Participation and Citizenship Strategy

2021 - 2025

Ensuring young people voices are heard, actioned  
and respected in North Ayrshire

*'Nothing  
about us,  
without us'*



North Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath



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## Foreword

### Hello and welcome to our new youth strategy – Step up, Speak Out! We are two of your Members of Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) 2019-21!

As MSYPs, youth voice is essential, important and something we are incredibly passionate about, and we, just like North Ayrshire Council, know every voice matters and deserves to be heard. Of course, this structure is not only about being heard, but the actions that follow from the many meaningful conversations, engagements and consultations that are going to take place over the next few years, right here in North Ayrshire.

If you're reading this strategy, you're already on the right path to make meaningful change in the issues that affect young people! We hope that you can find the best way for you to step up, speak out and see what opportunities you can get involved in right now! Make memories and friends, build skills and confidence and use your voice!

For our Council departments and the wide range of partners that are reading this we hope you find this strategy helpful as a guide to ensure you are working with young people from the outset when planning your own work to improve their lives – It is important that decisions made about young people have them at the heart of the consultation, planning, delivery and feedback.

This strategy follows on from the Year of Young People (YoYP) 2018, since as the young people of North Ayrshire said youth voice and rights were one of the most important things that the legacy of YoYP should leave behind.

YoYP was a great opportunity for many young people to speak out, but we need that to happen as the norm every single day, week and year and for all organisations working with young people to action. Not a photo opportunity, not a tick box exercise, but young people genuinely being heard and included as a vital part of any decision-making process.

Young people are so much more than the future. We're here, and ready to use our voices to make change right now.

-Emily Nix and Aaran McDonald  
North Ayrshire MSYPs 2019-2021



**It has been a pleasure** and a new learning experience for me as Connected Communities, Participation and Democracy portfolio holder to have the opportunity to work alongside the team and be part of this youth participation strategy. I feel that these have been very challenging times for not only our young people and children but our society.

Going forward, with this strategy provides a clear understanding of the needs and issues our young people are facing. The work they have produced and continue to do so is inspiring for others to see and to help North Ayrshire Council to continue to deliver.

We need our young people to be part of all decision making, their needs and voices must be heard. To have their voices be part of everyday decision making is one the Council and other partner organisation aims to achieve. Please help our young people, please sign the pledge. I know I will.

-Councillor Louise Mcphater,  
Cabinet Member for Participatory Democracy



**We have always been proud of our young people** and the contribution you make to the local area. That has been recognised far and wide over recent years, encouraging us to keep improving how we all work together effectively.

So, with the creation of this new strategy, we now we have a great opportunity to make even more of a commitment to you. Young people are at the heart of everything we do within the Community Planning Partnership and the Council in North Ayrshire, and we want to ensure now that your voices shape our way of working for years to come.

This means that we need to make a commitment to new and better ways of listening to you and working with you, especially as we adapt to the pandemic and how that is affecting us all.

We need to do this at the right time, ensuring that you initiate, influence and help us to deliver supports and services that make a difference to you, and projects that you need our support to deliver.

And more than ever, your rights are at the forefront of our thinking. And that needs to be more than respecting new legislation. It is about honouring the relationship we have with you and understanding all the ways we can reach you and work with you and making it easier for you to reach us.

As we jointly commit to our ambitious new Youth Participation Strategy, we promise that we will be the partner you deserve.

-Audrey Sutton,  
Executive Director of Communities and Education

## 1.0 Executive Youth Council's Vision for the Future

**As the representative voice of young people in North Ayrshire, the Youth Executive Committee have set out what their hopes and visions are for the future of North Ayrshire, particularly under the themes of:**

- Voice and rights
- Health and wellbeing
- Poverty and inequalities
- Digital access

"We hope that young people will be included in every discussion and decision-making process on issues that affect us. It is important that we are included, as we will be the ones living with the effects of these decisions. After the success of the Year of Young People, and the steps that we took to ensure young people not only had their voices heard but taken seriously on a variety of matters and could see action being taken, we have made progress in ensuring that young people are involved in decision making processes across the council and beyond. Using a co-design, co-production and co-delivery model, we can ensure that young people are listened to and respected by both council departments and our partners, while helping make meaningful change in their communities. This means being involved in policy making, decision making and often in rolling out these decisions or programmes. Over the coming years, we aim to see this model being used much more across North Ayrshire and hopefully beyond, allowing for young people to be at the heart of decision making and seeing promises made to them being followed through.

We are excited that the UNCRC will have been incorporated into Scots law by the end of the current parliamentary term, securing the importance that every child's rights are met. It is vital that every staff member is trained on Children and Young People's rights. The incorporation of these rights into Scot's law means for how we approach service delivery across the council. We trust that the appropriate training information and support will be made available at both local and national levels.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted many things to us, such as mental health support, digital access, and the resilience and value of young people across Scotland. With mental health continuing to be a major issue among young

people, we hope to see an improvement in mental health services for children and young people, with a greater emphasis on support being available in schools, something which has been highlighted to us throughout the pandemic. We hope that resources become more readily available in communities, and that in general, the stigma around mental health reduces.

With the pandemic moving much of our lives online, we believe that young people should have access to everything that they need in order not only to survive, but to thrive in everything that they do. This includes having access to support services, financial literacies and everything they need to get online, whether for educational or social reasons. With education moving online during Lockdown, this only emphasised the digital divide in our area. We hope that over the coming years digital technology itself becomes more accessible to people of all backgrounds as life itself moves online. Technology has its benefits, it brought so many of us together when we otherwise would not have been able to. But for it to be truly inclusive, we must find ways to make it more affordable for all.

Covid-19 has also shown the best of young people not only in North Ayrshire, but across Scotland. We were asked to stay away from friends and family, move to a new way of learning, as well as deal with the many stresses the pandemic brought into our homes. We have adapted well to the many changes occurring in daily life, along with the uncertainty it has brought about for our futures. We've stood up for what we have believed in, and what was right, with some of our very own young people influencing decisions at Scottish Government level about the 2020 exams.

Since the last Participation Strategy, one key thing we must focus on, is that young people are capable and able to have a positive impact on the world around them. We are mature enough to have our voices heard on a variety of issues, we will take them seriously. We hope that over the course of this Participation Strategy, adults and decision makers hold this sentiment close: there is nothing about us, without us. We can and will bring positive changes to the world round us."

## 2.0 Glossary and Terms

**This strategy talks about everything youth participation related in North Ayrshire – there are a lot of documents, strategies, plans and partners that we talk about and it can become a bit overwhelming!**

We have created a quick list of terms that we talk about and what they mean:

### Key acronyms:

**SYP:** Scottish Youth Parliament

**BYC:** British Youth Council

**CLD:** Community Learning and Development

**NAC:** North Ayrshire Council

**ESOL:** English Speakers of Other Languages

**ASN:** Additional Support Needs

**BAME:** Black and Ethnic Minorities

**NEET:** Not in education, employment or training

**GIRFEC:** Getting it Right for Every Child

**SHANARRI (Wheel):** Safe; Healthy; Achieving; Nurtured; Active; Respected; Responsible; Included

**CCC:** Child Centred Council

**YoYP:** Year of Young People

### Key words and phrases:

**Citizenship** – when you actively involve yourself in activities such as local politics, volunteering and participation in your community

**Participation** – when you take part in something such as a local youth group, pupil council or local youth forum

**Democracy** – control of an organisation or group by most of its members.

**Community Council** – A Community Council is a voluntary organisation set up by the Local Authority (by law) and run by local residents to act on behalf of its area. As the most local tier of elected representation, Community Councils play an important role in local democracy. Community Councils are comprised of people who care about their community and want to make it a better place to live.

**Locality Planning Partnership** – an inclusive network of both local people, elected members and organisational representatives who work in an area

**UNCRC** – the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. This document outlines 54 'articles' put in place to protect the rights of the child. Articles 1-42 directly affect the young person, with 43-54 being more to do with organisational and structural responsibilities.

**Seldom-Heard** – young people with specific characteristics such as care experienced, young carers, ASN, ESOL, Ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+



## 3.0 *Where are we now?*

**Since the start of the last strategy, we have come so far in our journey to ensure young people have a voice, provided opportunities and co-produce and co-deliver on vital pieces of work that benefit North Ayrshire's young people.**

**Here are some of our highlights:**

### **COSLA Gold Award**

The North Ayrshire Youth Services team were awarded the COSLA Gold Award for their work in ensuring the strategy was true to its word. The award recognised the work of the Youth Services team in creating a culture of participation, which allows young people to have a real impact in shaping the services the Council delivers and ensuring young people were directly involved in the decision-making process.

North Ayrshire's engagement approach has been a blueprint for engagement across the community within towns and cities across Scotland. Three months into the "Year of Young People", other local authorities are being encouraged to follow suit and rethink how they engage and use the voices and opinions of young people within their communities to support inclusive decision making.

### **Child Centred Council**

North Ayrshire became a Child Centred Council in 2017. Resolutions include the importance of young people's voices, support for care-experienced young people and food security and work with the Children's Commissioner on equalities. Additional commitments to supporting young people in North Ayrshire include our Children's Services Plan; our Fair for All equalities strategy pledges on child poverty, employment for care leavers, developmental milestones, raising attainment, fewer looked after young people and mental health; and our Joint Cabinet and extended youth participation structure, which is recognised as sector leading.

### **Youth Participatory Budgeting**

In North Ayrshire we have run with the Youth Participatory Budgeting process for a number of years ensuring young people are involved in distributing and applying for funding, shortlisting applicants and voting on bids that benefit young people in their community. Enabling digital voting has seen North Ayrshire PB Participation reach record breaking numbers of over 12,000 votes in a year and allows young people to decide on where money is spent to benefit their peers.

### **Interated Children's Services Plan**

The North Ayrshire Childrens Services Plan sets out the vision for Children's Services - for all our children and young people to have the best start in life and for North Ayrshire to be the best place in Scotland to grow up.

Focus groups took place with young people to check the priorities were what young people wanted and that nothing was missing - creating a youth friendly format and animation on the plan - both visual and voiced over by young people.

### **Child Poverty Action Plan**

The cost of the school day is a crucial theme, as advocated by our Fair for All Commission and by our families in North Ayrshire. We already have a whole-system commitment to this from our partners across North Ayrshire and we continue to look for new approaches to this.

A short life working group was set up with Elected Members, Executive Director, partners and young people from across all localities to discuss Cost of the School Day and is developing a policy that will be applied across the local authority. Young persons' animations were based on the feedback of young people.

### **Tackling Period Poverty**

After a discussion with young people at Joint Cabinet meetings, it became clear that access to free sanitary products was a great need among young women in North Ayrshire. In response to this discussion, North Ayrshire Council worked with our young people to become the first local authority in Scotland to provide free sanitary provisions across all their schools and council buildings.

### **Mental Health Toolkit**

Young people highlighted to our MSYPs that there was a lack of mental health lessons and resources within schools. Our youth work team and young people secured funding, designed and created a mental health toolkit with resources, distractions and information about help available which has since been put into all schools and community centres to support staff and volunteers in discussing mental health with young people.

### **13 Ways Campaign**

Young people recognised the rise in young people suffering from serious mental health issues and unfortunately the rise in suicides that came with this. In response to this, a partnership with North Ayrshire Suicide Prevention Taskforce and our Youth Exec Committee created the award winning 13 ways (suicide prevention) campaign. This campaign provided a series of animated videos led by young people sharing key messages on suicide prevention, written and narrated by young people. A large part of the consultation on the content and design was facilitated during Joint Cabinet conversation cafes, and through workshops at youth councils. This won an award - Health and Wellbeing at National Youth Link Awards.

### **North Ayrshire Youth Festival**

Our annual youth festival sees around 200 young people from across North Ayrshire come together for 2 days of interactive workshops, team games, spooky walks and sports. Youth forums from each locality come together to plan, apply for funding, book equipment and deliver the event with support from Youth Work Staff.

### **DigiAye Family Quiz**

At the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic, staff quickly drew together a digital engagement plan which included running a weekly quiz via Facebook Live using the Kahoot app. As the quiz gained in popularity, and through engagement with our young people, we introduced BSL interpreters making the quiz even more accessible for children, young people and families to enjoy. There are regularly 40 teams participating, and due to its popularity, the quiz has continued on as we come out of the pandemic. It is now also used as a tool to engage with young people to gather their views on a variety of issues.

### **Alcohol and Drugs Project**

Young people recognised the need for more information on the dangers surrounding drugs and alcohol. Our Youth Exec committee decided they wanted to create a resource that would be accessible any time for young people to get support and information on scenarios they may encounter. Like the 13 Ways project, the resource is made up of blogs and an animation series, before creating information posters and workshops to go into schools and community settings. These are created in partnership with young people across the authority, youth work staff, modern apprentices and trusted professionals, ensuring the information provided is both youth friendly and accurate.

### **Youth Forums**

The Irvine Youth Forum have been proactive in delivering dignified food provision within the locality area on a weekly basis funded by participatory budgeting. They have supported Community Hub activities within Covid-19, got involved with the Saturday fake away programme and filmed sessions of themselves making tasty treats for all the family for social media channels. The groups wider involvement within the community has included representing young people at the Irvine Community Council, National Secure Adolescent Inpatient unit, North Ayrshire Food Forum and the Marymass Festival. The group apply for grants to enable young people to have access to fun things to do in their spare time free of charge and work in partnership to make a positive difference to their community.

### **Joint Cabinet Live**

During the Covid 19 Pandemic there was a shift in how services were delivered to young people and how the voices of young people were still heard throughout this unusual time. Young people and the youth work team created a new approach to Joint Cabinet by bringing it completely online to ensure young people were given the platform to discuss important issues and areas of concern to Cabinet and key decision makers.

Going from engaging one school at a time to simultaneously engaging 9 secondary schools on a variety of topics that affect young people. This has not made the reach of young people having a voice far larger, but it allows the team to engage with these young people on a more regular basis. It gives a larger representative view on topics that are of importance to them.

### **Year of Young People**

Year of Young People created a spotlight of the importance of our young people and how much they give to their communities already. North Ayrshire hosted a full year of large events, opportunities and activities for young people.

It was also the catalyst for some big changes in North Ayrshire including young people chairing Cabinet working groups, feeding into the final Cabinet Report and the creating of the North Ayrshire Child Centred Council approach - something that has gone from strength to strength from that year.





## 5.0 Participation Groups: How Can I get Involved?

**In North Ayrshire, having young people at the heart of the decision-making process provides fun and engaging youth work activities, allows them to become active citizens in co-designing and delivering and in making decisions that affect them.**

**There are so many ways, as a young person, you can get involved in ensuring your voice is heard to effect change.**

**The groups and opportunities that are already in place provides a platform for you as young people to actively participate and exercise their right to express your views on matters that affect you.**

### Groups

#### Executive Youth Council

The Executive Youth Council is North Ayrshire's representative voice for young people. This group of young people consult and engage with their peers, create local projects and events, engage with key decision makers and are involved in working groups, meetings and various workstreams.

The group is open to any young person that wants to participate

**Open to:** Young people aged 12+ people living in the North Ayrshire

**Contact:** Contact your local Community Worker

#### Scottish Youth Parliament

In North Ayrshire we have 4 elected Members of Scottish Youth Parliament. They hold their position for 2 years and are the local and national representative in ensuring that the voices of young people are heard and actioned.

If you want to engage with your local MSYP go to <https://syp.org.uk/members/find-your-msyp/>. If you are interested in running as an MSYP you can contact your school or local Community Worker.

**Open to:** young people aged 14+ (MSYP), aged 12-25 if you want to engage with your MSYP

**Contact:** Contact your local Community Worker or MSYP.

#### Pupil Councils

Each school should have a Pupil Council that acts as the representative voice for the school. We aim to engage with Pupil Councils in ways that best suit them. Engagement through schools is vital to this process and allows us to work with young people in an environment that they feel safe and comfortable in. We work with schools to seek the views of pupils in schools

**Open to:** Secondary school young people

**Contact:** Ask your school if you want to get involved

#### Youth Forums

The Youth Forums' young people represent the voices of their peers on a locality level with regular meetings that give our young people the chance to express their ideas, effect change, be part of their community and provide invaluable opinions and views to improve the opportunities available to young people within the community. They meet and discuss their aspirations to be part of the process in making positive change, carrying out consultations, plan and deliver events and projects and feeding into community councils and locality partnerships

**Open to:** Young people aged 12-25

**Contact:** Contact your local Community Worker

#### Group Work

Across our six localities (Irvine, Kilwinning, Garnock Valley, Arran, North Coast and the Cumbraes and Three Towns) we have a wide programme of youth work activities from issue-based work, youth participation, digital groups and interest focused groups. All these groups not only provide a safe space for young people to meet, but are underpinned by youth work outcomes to provide an opportunity to engage with young people to ensure their voices are represented within their locality, North Ayrshire and Scotland wide.

Local youth groups provide a safe space for young people to come along and be themselves. We encourage participants to express their voices and opinions within their peer group. There are a wide variety of youth groups and are a comfortable environment for young people to develop their qualities and skills while working on projects they are passionate about.

**Open to:** young people aged 12-25

**Contact:** Contact your local Community Worker

#### North Ayrshire Active Schools Leadership Forum

North Ayrshire Active Schools Leadership Forum is made up of representatives from all our leadership groups - North Ayrshire Sports Academy, North Ayrshire S3/S4 Young Leaders and North Ayrshire Young Ambassadors. Their role is to consult and engage with their fellow peers to influence change across all Active Schools Leadership programmes. They are involved in local meetings, steering groups and National forums.

**Open to:** S1-S6

**Contact:** Lauren Fletcher - Active Schools Co-ordinator

#### Seldom Heard Groups

Ensuring the voice of young people is as inclusive as possible is key to true youth participation. In North Ayrshire we engage with representatives of groups with specific needs and wants. Young people are invited along to all events. We are mindful this may not always be suitable and keep in regular contact and engage in a way that suits the needs of that group giving everyone in the community a place to feel welcomed, valued and included.

**Open to:** young people from specific groups (Young Carers, Care Experienced Young People, New Scots, ASN Groups etc.)

**Contact:** Contact your local Community Worker or your groups key worker

#### Digital Groups

We live in an increasingly digital world with young people leading the way in this form of communication. In North Ayrshire, digital youth work opens our services to young people across the area. Online meetings and group and digital events and activities are open to all and help break down the barriers concerning travel and time. Digital participation has opened many new opportunities in engaging and consulting with young people over a wide variety of platforms that are suited to the young person's needs and wants.

Some of the digital platforms that we use in working with young people include, Teams, Zoom and Facebook Live

Whilst we are aware that not every young person has access to devices and internet connection North Ayrshire works hard to break down these barriers through working with partners and securing funding to ensure that young people have access to this. This is accompanied by the use of our Mobile Youth Centre that is custom built with devices and internet access to engage with our most rural and/or vulnerable young people

# Engaging with young people

## Joint Cabinet

Joint Cabinets are unique to North Ayrshire in the way decision makers engage with our young people. These meetings give the young people a chance to speak to Cabinet Members, Chief Officers, the Council Leader and North Ayrshire Council's Chief Executive and work collaboratively to address any issues which may arise that the young may have identified. Feedback from these meetings and engagements is formulated into a report to be actioned by relevant partners.

**Open to:** Secondary school young people

**Contact:** Ask your school if you want to get involved

## Youth Council

Youth council is an event held every three months; bringing schools together, giving young people the chance to discuss local issues from a variety of partners. These events give young people a voice that will effect change through their actions.

**Open to:** young people aged 12-25

**Contact:** Ask your school if you want to get involved or contact your local Community Worker

## Youth Conference

The annual youth conference gives young people from all over North Ayrshire a chance to learn and engage in themed topics, with partners, outside agencies and professionals coming in to work alongside the young people.

**Open to:** young people aged 12-25

**Contact:** Ask your school if you want to get involved or contact your local Community Worker

## Street Work

Street work allows our youth workers and partner agencies the opportunity to engage with young people to identify, support and track young people's needs and aspirations. Going to where young people are at allows the team to meet young people in a setting of their choosing to engage with young people on any given topic.

## Detached Youth Work

This model of youth work engagement targets young people on their own territory (streets, parks, open and shared public spaces). Participation is voluntary and engagement is on the terms of the young people. Detached youth work can be characterised by a wide range of purposeful and intentional interactions between youth workers and young people and guided by Youth Work Outcomes.

## Outreach Youth Work

This model of youth work in North Ayrshire helps guide young people towards existing organised youth focused services which are available within the community. Whilst it can and does take place on the young people's own territory, it also works in existing community, multi-agency or educational facilities.

## Chit Chats

Chit Chats are held at least every three months, giving the community an opportunity to come forward and express how they feel about the specific topics and giving input on how they feel. Engagements such as this takes the community on a journey by showing them the plans and developments put in place from the feedback received.

**Open to:** young people aged 12+ people living in the community

**Contact:** Contact your local Community Worker

## Community Council

The Community Council is a group of elected volunteers in each locality that act on behalf of the community taking issues to the local authority through a series of structured meetings.

Any young person aged 16+ can get involved in their local Community Council by nominating themselves to be elected. Young people under 16 can have an advocate (Community Worker, Youth Worker) that will take their views, concerns or issues to this meeting and feedback as required.

**Open to:** young people aged 16+ people living in the community (under 16s can engage through their community worker)

**Contact:** Contact your local Community Worker






# Consultation

We engage and consult through all of the above groups and events. To ensure that we are engaging with young people out with these structures we also do this through Social Media and surveys and Participatory Budgeting (PB).

## Social Media

We engage with young people through various forms of social media. We recognise the value and convenience of this approach and provide updates, events, opportunities and signposting on our pages, as well as hosting online quizzes for young people to get involved in. Groups are open to all and are all free of charge.

You can follow us on:

-  'Like' North Ayrshire Youth Services
-  @NAYouthservices
-  NACYouthServices
-  NACYouthSnaps
-  North\_Ayrshire\_Youth

## Surveys

This Strategy is underpinned by the need and aspiration to ensure that young people's voices are heard, not only through our structured groups and youth representatives but to allow ALL young people to have a say on matters that affect or interest them.

Engaging with young people through surveys is a quick and easy way to ensure young people's views are heard at the start of any process that will affect young people. It gives decisions makers in North Ayrshire their views to ensure that processes, strategies, reports and decisions consider their opinions and concerns on matters that affect them before making any change.

Our service and that of our partners regularly consults with young people to gain insight into their views. This is done through:

- Online Events
- Face to Face consultation
- Focus Groups
- Digital Consultations (MentiMeter, Survey Monkey, Fun Retro)
- Polls
- Paper based consultation
- Social Media
- Voting (digital and face to face through Youth PB, Scottish Youth Parliament Elections)

## Participatory Budgeting

Participatory Budgeting is an opportunity to give young people active participation and decision-making powers on where funding is spent in their community. Young people are actively part of this process from deciding on key themes, designing applications, short listing applications and voting on successful projects.

Young people age 8+ can be involved in both e Youth, locality and themed PB events that run in North Ayrshire.

To be involved in the planning and delivery of PB you can do this through your Community Worker and the local youth forums





## 6.0 Our Key Themes

**The role of youth work as a driving force behind the Year of Young People in 2018 has been one of many highlights over the last five years. Young people's expectations have been raised, and as the UNCRC comes into Scots Law, youth work will have a crucial role to play to ensure young people's rights are recognised and realised.**

For the past year, North Ayrshire Council's Connected Communities Team has been engaging with young people, youth workers and stakeholders on the key themes affecting young people.

This has involved continuous consultation with young people through a variety of events and platforms including:

- Youth Councils
- Joint Cabinet
- YOYP Legacy Consultation
- Get Connected Covid Recovery Consultation
- Engagement with schools, this sector, seldom heard, youth forums
- Creation of a working group with young people, Cabinet and key stakeholders
- Submission of the Year of Young People Cabinet Report
- Workstreams created around each of the YOYP key themes
- An event in 2019 that brought together young people and key stakeholders to discuss the future of the new Youth Participation and Citizenship Strategy



## Key Themes

The most prominent themes include young people's voice and rights, health and wellbeing and poverty and inequality. During the COVID-19 pandemic another emerging theme was created on digital connectivity and isolation.

A Plan has been created to ensure these are actioned and will include:

### Voice and Rights

- We propose to establish a workstream to engage with a wide range of young people from across North Ayrshire to ensure that we have the right approaches and mechanisms in place to ensure their voices are heard.
- The current Joint Cabinet will be reviewed, and the contribution it makes to improving the overall agenda for young people. We will ensure a process is in place to identify the effectiveness of actions which come from the sessions.
- Participation in Joint Cabinet and other activities will be widened and deepened
- The Pupil Council voice will be strengthened and better recognised.
- Strengthening
- Creation of localised young people's rights working group in relation to UNCRC to ensure key stakeholders, staff and young people are trained in Realising Young People's Rights





## Health and Wellbeing

In relation to health and well-being, it was agreed that key themes around emotional health will be:

- In-school support for teachers
- Safe spaces in school and out with school
- Peer to peer mentoring programmes
- Male mental health
- The further development of the 'corporate parenting' scheme
- The Mental Health Toolkit – review progress and lessons learned; roll-out further and explore the creation of a social enterprise to roll out nationally
- Raising awareness of mental health services that are available for young people, using a variety of methods e.g. social media and apps.
- Specific project around alcohol and drugs awareness including a series of blogs, animated videos and workshop plans to be delivered in school and community settings
- Securing of £120,000 in funding from Youth Work Education Recovery Fund to support young people's mental health and wellbeing with a focus on arts, outdoor learning and outside activities



## Poverty and Inequality

The key proposal which emerged was to establish and brand a Young People's Commission to inform actions to address young people's experiences of poverty.

This would be the first such commission in Scotland and would be informed from the ongoing Fair for All Commission in North Ayrshire

This will develop current themes in relation to poverty, including:

- Food poverty
- The cost of the school day
- Financial Literacy
- Stigma
- Education
- Destigmatisation
- Action

It is proposed that this approach will sit within the new participation strategy to avoid stigma and will adopt the "13 Reasons Why" model, examining why poverty exists, with an accompanying action plan, including projects to mitigate poverty.





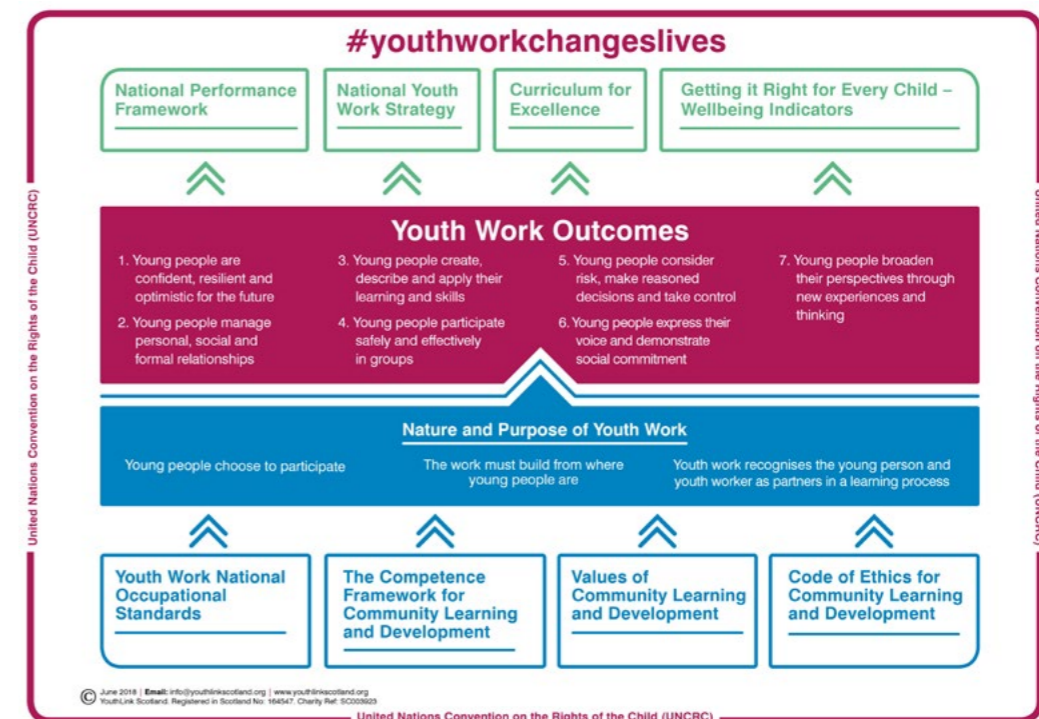
### Digital Connectivity

During the COVID pandemic digital participation in both education and social connections has provided a lifeline to so many. The completion of the Get Connected Survey it highlighted the need for digital connectivity for young people throughout North Ayrshire including:

- Funding for devices and digital connections for young people
- Training for staff and partners to fully utilise digital platforms in engaging with young people and their families
- Ensure digital events and information is accessible to all and delivered in a variety of formats
- Training for young people and their families on using digital devices effectively and safely
- Upgrade the mobile youth facilitate to bring digital connections to vulnerable and rural young people

## 7.0 National Youth Work Outcomes - in North Ayrshire...

All youth work provision being offered by North Ayrshire Council and partners is influenced by and measured against the National Youth Work Outcomes. The outcomes underpin all programmes that are being offered and delivered by our team. Although all outcomes influence the work we do with young people Outcome 6 focusses heavily on participation and strengthens our case to develop our young people's voices and participation levels.



Developed by the youth work sector in Scotland, we aim to meet these outcomes within a range of youth work contexts in North Ayrshire.

- Outcome 1: Young people are confident, resilient and optimistic for the future
- Outcome 2: Young people manage personal, social and formal relationships
- Outcome 3: Young people create, describe and apply their learning and skills
- Outcome 4: Young people participate safely and effectively in groups
- Outcome 5: Young people consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control
- Outcome 6: Young people express their voice and demonstrate social commitment
- Outcome 7: Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking

### Our Landscape

Our work is informed by a large number of national drivers, local links, improvement programmes and planning and delivery governance. The North Ayrshire Council Plan - North Ayrshire 'Fair for All' underpins and drives all our work and the links to all outcomes and this strategy.



## 8.0 UNCRRC and 7 Rules

### The United Nations Rights of the Child and the 7 Golden Rules for Participation

Children's human rights are protected by an international law called the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (often called the U-N-C-R-C for short)**. There are 54 rights – called 'Articles' in the UNCRRC.

The UK and therefore Scotland, like most of the countries in the world, has signed up to this law. This means that the Scottish government has agreed to do all it can to make sure children and young people have all their rights recognised, acknowledged and respected.

These include the rights to:

- Have a say in the decisions that affect them
- To a life, survival and development
- To have their best interests come first
- To not be discriminated against because of gender, sexuality, religion or race

The work of past and future Participation Strategies in North Ayrshire has been and will continue to be influenced and guided by these rights stated in the UNCRRC. With the UNCRRC being adopted into Scots Law this can only strengthen our position in ensuring these rights are embedded, recognised and realised in all engagement and participation work we do with young people.

### What are the 7 Golden Rules for Participation?

These are a set of principles that not only underpin this strategy but influence all work carried out by North Ayrshire Council staff, partners and stakeholders in relation to all work in relation to children's rights and participation.

Designed to help anyone working with, and for, children and young people to support them to understand, experience and exercise their participation rights.

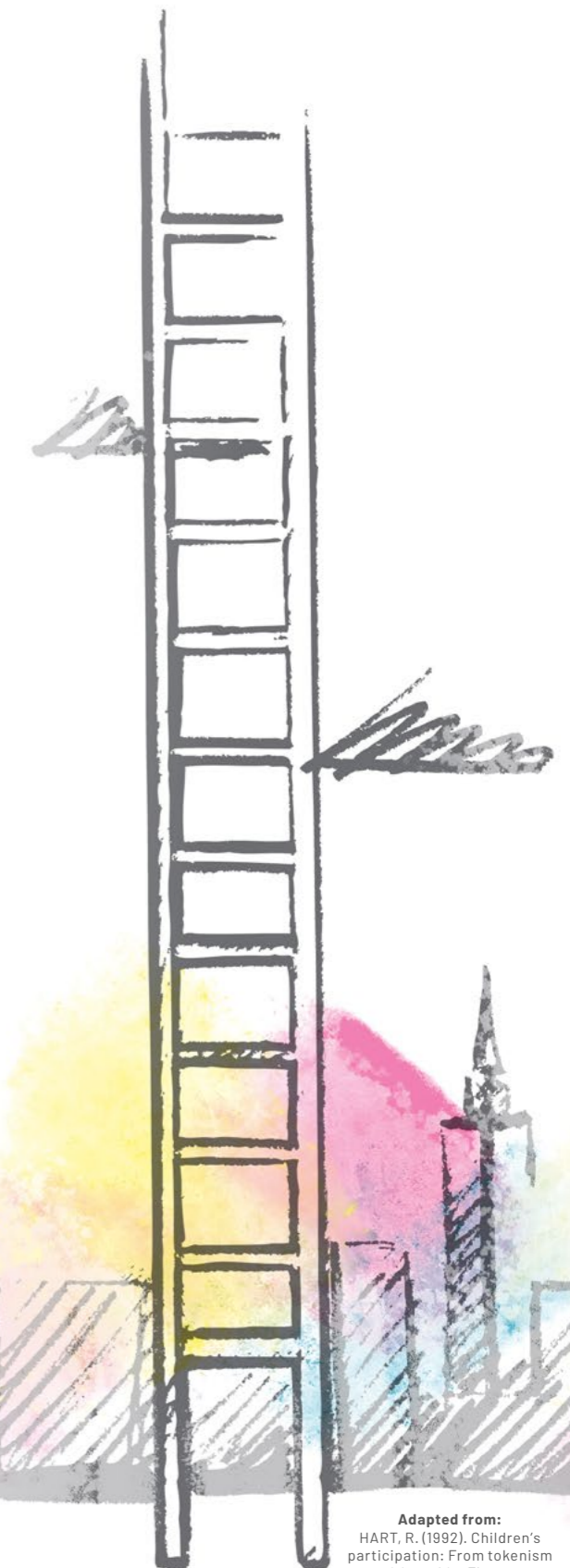
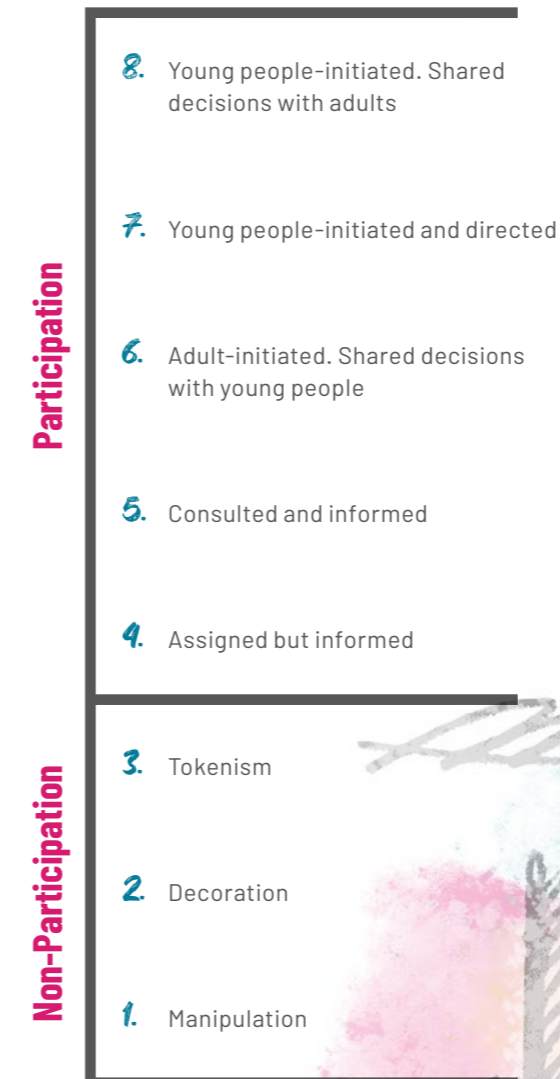
The Golden Rules inform adults what children and young people's participation should involve and feel like. The Golden Rules are directly informed by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's Article 12 and support the requirements necessary to achieve effective, meaningful and ethical implementation of participation rights.

The Golden Rules resource is not a tokenistic exercise or a set of 7 rules to tick off one-by-one. Instead, they are fundamental principles to be used within day-to-day work with children and young people. Building participation into practice is about building respectful relationships with children and young people. It's not about holding 'one off' events or consultations.



### Ensuring we meaningfully engage

Young people's participation cannot be meaningful unless their voice is seen as equal to adults. It is important that all young people can learn to participate in programmes which directly affect their lives. As a council we ensure that all engagement and consultation done with young people are delivered in partnership with young people from the outset, ensuring they are taken through the journey with us and informed on any decisions and feedback along the way.



Adapted from: HART, R. (1992). Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship, Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.



## 9.0 North Ayrshire Council Policies

### Where does this Strategy fit in?

**The Participation and Citizenship Strategy is linked by a golden thread that shows a clear and definitive link to how national policy affects local policy and how local policy influences the goals, visions and values of our council and communities.**

### North Ayrshire Council Plan – A Council that is Fair for All

Our Council Plan outlines our strategic vision and priorities and what we want to achieve showing our residents, employees, community planning partners, communities and other interested stakeholders the kind of council we are, what we stand for and our values. The council plan sets out a new strategic approach which is focused on making North Ayrshire a fairer and more equal society for our young people to grow and create better lives in. The outcome of engaging with, listening to and supporting communities to be active partners in what we do aligns with this strategy in recognising young people's involvement in the decision-making processes.

### Fair For All – North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership

Fair for All is our partnership strategy that promotes equity, ensuring that our council is inclusive and that everyone has an equal chance to participate and have their voice heard regardless of their starting point.

### Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)

The local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) is a strategy that pledges to, through North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership, tackle the root causes of poverty and mitigate its impact to create a better life for local people. This strategy is underpinned by priority areas – a working North Ayrshire, and healthier North Ayrshire, a safer North Ayrshire and a thriving North Ayrshire – children and young people. This links direct into the Participation Strategy by engaging with young people to increase control over their lives, build stronger communities and to offer preventative measures to tackle issues through early intervention.

### Children's Services Strategic Plan

The Plan sets out the vision for Children's Services – for all our children and young people to have the best start in life and for North Ayrshire to be the best place in Scotland to grow up

The Children's Services Plan priorities are:

1. Children and young people's rights and views are respected and listened to
2. Act early to improve what happens next
3. Make things fairer and better
4. Support mental health
5. Help children and young people to be active and healthy

Not only did young people help set the priorities for this plan but are engaged and consulted on the work under each of the themes on a regular basis to help shape plans around them

### Child Poverty Action Plan

The 2019/20 Child Poverty Action Plan and Report was developed using a collaborative approach with internal and external partners and summarises the existing and planned activity intended to reduce child poverty in North Ayrshire.

Continuous engagement with young people is key to this strategy ensuring that young people can access the information in a format that is relevant to them, being involved in workstream created from the action plan and continuing to be consulted throughout.

### Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)

The GIRFEC policy ensures that the child or young person and their family is at the centre of decision making and the support available to them. It takes into consideration the wider influences on a child or young person and their developmental needs when thinking about their wellbeing, so that the right support can be offered. This strategy not only acknowledges the individual needs of each young person but provides an opportunity to get involved in the decision-making process that affects their personal needs and wants.

### Getting it Right for Every Child – The 'Promise'

The Promise is responsible for driving the work of change demanded by the findings of the Independent Care Review. It works with all kinds of organisations to support shifts in policy, practice and culture so Scotland can #KeepThePromise it made to care experienced infants, children, young people, adults and their families – that every child grows up loved, safe and respected, able to realise their full potential.

### Child Centred Council

North Ayrshire Council became the first Child-Centred Council in Scotland, putting children and young people at the heart of everything we do and making sure that we give our young people the best possible start in life. The council aims to keep young people informed of all decisions made on their behalf, ensuring they are involved in the journey of any decisions from start to end.

### YOYP Legacy Themes

The Year of Young People took place in 2018. North Ayrshire created a Legacy Cabinet report which would shape the priorities for young people over the coming years. Three key issues were highlighted from this.

These were

- Voice and rights
- Health and wellbeing
- Poverty and inequalities

It was a national initiative which was embraced through a range of events, activities and strategic actions designed to leave a significant legacy for children and young people in North Ayrshire.

### National Youth Work Strategy

For the past year, YouthLink Scotland has been engaging young people, youth workers and stakeholders on the co-production of the renewed National Youth Work Strategy (NYWS) for Scotland.

Although there are a number of key themes that emerged the theme of 'Listening to our young people and involving young people in decision making at all levels' is the most relevant to our renewed Youth Participation and Citizenship Strategy



## 10.0 Pledges

**As we move forward into the work of our new Participation and Citizenship Strategy, we have engaged with our vast range of partners that are committed to ensure that young people's voices are heard, acted on and respected and pledge to support future actions:**

We will involve young people in decisions that affect them - in class, in school, and in policy making. We will use the Pupil Participation Strategy and the seven Golden Rules for Participation to ensure young people's voices positively influence the things that affect them.

**North Ayrshire Council Education**

Police Scotland pledge to recognise the benefits of informal conversation and engagement and seek every opportunity to ensure the voices of young people are heard and listened to.

Campus Police Officers pledge to speak to young people and listen to their opinions on educational inputs they deliver to meet their needs and aspirations, rather than what we think they would like/need to learn.

**Police Scotland**

As a Community Planning Partner, NHS Ayrshire & Arran is committed to involving children and young people in all aspects of planning and decision making about health and social care. As the NHS undertakes an extensive reform programme, Caring for Ayrshire, there will be many opportunities for young people to contribute to the future infrastructure for health and social care.

**NHS Ayrshire and Arran**

We pledge to continue our current methods of consultation - frequently and young people led. We will also involve new 'young people' who we don't currently engage with to allow them more ownership which will result in more young people, more active, more often.

**Active Schools**

Housing Services pledge to involve young people to ensure we deliver a service that meets their needs and aspirations.

**North Ayrshire Council Housing Services Tenant Participation**

We pledge to listen to the voices of care experienced young people and to support the Champions Board and Corporate Parents to create change in the Care System.

**Corporate Parenting Team**

Connected communities pledge to ensure young people are truly listened to and are given the tools to use their voice and effect change. We pledge that young people will be represented and listened to at all levels. We promise to support you and ensure that you are kept informed and given feedback. We promise you a journey through a range of opportunities, but you can get off the bus at any time.

**North Ayrshire Council Connected Communities**

The Countryside Rangers pledge to create leadership opportunities focused on environment issues to provide ambassadors/platforms to put forward views, opinions and decisions of young people.

**North Ayrshire Council Countryside Rangers**

The Carers Centre pledge to continue to work with young carers to ensure that their views and voices are heard to influence policy and the future.

**Carers Centre**

Barnardo's pledge to feedback to young people about the change that is happening because of their input.

**Barnardo's**

The NHS pledge that young people's voices are involved in creating and implementing policies, strategies and actions that improve health.

**Public Health- NHS**

Health and Social Care pledge to support North Ayrshire Young Carers, around services, what is important to them and making sure their voices are heard.

**HSCP - Young Carers**

North Ayrshire Council Communications pledge to communicate with you in your language, using channels that will reach you.

We will cut out corporate jargon and use engaging content, e.g. animations, graphics/vlogs on digital platforms.

**North Ayrshire Council Communications**

We pledge to make sure that young people are consulted when we write our reports and plans and that we listen and take on board their views.

**North Ayrshire Council Childrens Services**

Library Services pledge to look for ways to engage young people in cultural activities and spaces through identifying platforms and groups to co-create cultural services for the future.

**Libraries**

Childrens 1st pledge to continue to consult and engage with young people giving them a voice to create positive opportunities and change. Building positive relationships is key and breaking down barriers to ensure we're offering the right support and empowering young people to create positive and influential change.

**Children 1st**



# Voices of young people

Everyone of every age has the right to have their voice heard

*Yasmin*  
Largs Academy

Every person has a voice and should be given the opportunity to use it

*Alyssa McGarrnie*  
Arran Youth Foundation

I want to make sure every young person in my constituency knows how to get their voice heard and feels they can see change in issues they care about. They should know that no issue is too big or too small, and EVERY voice matters

*Emily Nix*  
MSYP

"Our ideas are just as valid as adults, we can help make a difference just as much as them"

*Nicole*

If young people have no voice, nothing changes

*Charlie*  
Redburn

Only young people understand how young people feel

*Unknown*

We need to make sure a legacy is left behind to make sure a difference is made to issues surrounding Health and Wellbeing for young people

*Nicole Tait*  
YOYP Legacy Group

Its one thing listening to young people's voices but it's the acting on our statements that should also be a priority

*Demi Morrison*  
North Ayrshire Champions Board

As some people do not have the courage to speak we need someone to voice our important views

*Unknown*  
Exec

Young people deserve to be treated with just as much respect as adults. Our opinion deserves a platform to create the changes needed for today

*Olivia*

Young people need a fighting force to make sure their views and voices are heard and taken seriously

*Jaymie Haswell*  
Youth Exec

I believe that policy makers and decision makers listen to young people's views because young people are going to be living in this country long after them and therefore will be affected by the choices they make today. Young people are the present and the future

*Jaymie Haswell*  
Youth Exec

I pledge to use the views of the young people to shape and guide my work and always put their views across before my own.

*Aaran McDonald*  
MSYP

We're here right now!! We're being affected by decisions made and so deserve a say on it

*Emily Nix*  
MSYP/ Youth Exec/  
UKYMP

I will make sure my constituents' voice is well represented and respected; I will try my absolute best to find the solutions to those issues.

*Erin McCluskey*  
MSYP

Our voices are the most important because we aren't just the future, we are RIGHT NOW. We need to fight or those who don't have the fight or fig er regardless of age, sexuality, race, religion etc

*Sarah Doherty*  
Youth Exec

I promise to do my best to listen to every voice from every background and do everything I can to help tackle the issues young people raise

*Emily Nix*  
MSYP

Young people are experiencing life right now and deserve a say in the decisions that will affect our lives. We're equal to adults and may provide a fresh perspective. If you don't include people who the change will affect, there's no point in making the change

*Emily Nix*  
Youth Exec



## Why are young people's voices important?

Young people's voices should lead to new practices, these relationships improve the quality of life for everyone

**Philip Gosnay**  
North Ayrshire Council Education

It is important to know what young people want and need!

**Kerryanne Owens**  
HSCP

It is important to get a young person's viewpoint to shape a vision for the future for themselves

**Liz Sullivan**  
North Ayrshire Council  
Connected Communities- Irvine

If it is activities or services for young people then it should be what they want and need

**Fiona Gartland**  
Barnardo's

Young people can have new/fresh eyes and ideas to look at issues from a different perspective. Their experiences are valuable and as valid as anyone else's. They have the energy to make their point heard

**Linda Tedford**  
North Ayrshire Council  
Countryside Rangers

Young people can bring ideas that are innovative – a bring fresh perspective

**Bruce Jackson**

North Ayrshire Council  
Communications Team

Hearing young peoples voices allows us to shape our programmes which in turn increase participation

**Leanne Hillan-Fowler**  
Active Schools

Young people are experts in being young people- adults shouldn't 'guess' what they like

**Dr Louise Sheridan**  
University of Glasgow

It is important that young people's voices are heard but also acted upon to make sure that decisions made are right for young people

**Brenda Know**  
Public Health- NHS

Young people challenge our 'traditional ways of thinking

**Pam Crosthwaite**

North Ayrshire Council  
Connected Communities

Giving young people a platform to voice what matters to them and what's important within their local community is vital






**Eilidh McDonald**  
Children 1st

## My Pledge

We want to ensure the 'nothing about us without us' becomes a reality in North Ayrshire – for all our services across North Ayrshire Council and our valued partners.

Please give us your personal or organisation's pledge to young people on how you will ensure that their voice is represented, valued and actioned in all planning, decisions, consultations and projects that you are planning and delivering.

Please share you pledge with us through Social media here:

-  'Like' North Ayrshire Youth Services
-  @NAYouthservices
-  NACYouthServices
-  NACYouthSnaps
-  North\_Ayrshire\_Youth

Use the Hashtag #NASTepUpSpeakOut  
#NANothingAboutUsWithoutUs






NAME

ORGANISATION

PLEDGE



## Follow us on:

-  'Like' North Ayrshire Youth Services
-  @NAYouthservices
-  NACYouthServices
-  NACYouthSnaps
-  North\_Ayrshire\_Youth

## Contact Us

Further information on youth participation and citizenship or for general information on Youth Work activities please contact:

*Donna Anderson*

Participation and Democracy Officer

[danderson@north-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:danderson@north-ayrshire.gov.uk)

## Useful Websites

North Ayrshire Council <http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/home.aspx>

Community Planning Partnership <http://northayrshire.community/>

Young Scot <https://young.scot/>

Scottish Youth Parliament [www.syp.org.uk](http://www.syp.org.uk)

Duke Of Edinburgh Awards [www.dofe.org](http://www.dofe.org)

Youth Achievement [www.youthscotland.org.uk](http://www.youthscotland.org.uk)

Youthlink Scotland <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/>

Youth Scotland <https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/>



North Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath