Inverclyde council

Report To:	**Education & Communities Committee**	**Date:**	**2 September 2025**
Report By:	**Ruth Binks Corporate Director Education, Communities and Organisational Development**	**Report No:**	**EDUCOM/52/25/TM**
Contact Officer:	**Tony McEwan Head of Culture, Communities and Educational Resources**	**Contact No:**	**01475 712828**
Subject:	**Improving Young People's Representation in Boards and Committees**		

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 ☒For Decision ☐For Information/Noting

1.2 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the consultation undertaken by Young Scot to look at ways of improving the representation of Young People at decision making forums led by the Council.

1.3 In November 2024, the Committee was advised that Young Scot would undertake a consultation exercise with young people with the aim of co-designing a model that would improve the involvement of young people in the work of the Education and Communities Committee and that the findings from the consultation be reported back to the Committee.

1.4 This report summarises the findings of the exercise and presents recommendations for the Committee to improve the engagement of young people by refining the mechanisms which already exist to involve young people, so that they can play a fuller and more meaningful role in the work of the Committee.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Education and Communities Committee:

- notes the content of this report;
- notes the Young Scot Report 'Supporting Young People's Engagement in Boards and Committees in Inverclyde Council; and
- agrees to the pilot of a Young Person's Forum on Education and Communities to support the engagement of young people in committee business.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director, Education, Communities and Organisational Development

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

3.1 In September 2024, the Education and Communities Committee asked officers to bring forward proposals to improve the views and engagement of young people of the business of the Committee. In November 2024, the Committee was advised that Young Scot would undertake the consultation exercise and that the findings from the consultation be reported back to the Committee.

3.2 Young Scot undertook several engagement sessions between February and March 2025. Its report, 'Supporting Young People's Engagement in Boards and Committees in Inverclyde Council' can be accessed here is attached as an appendix to this report.

3.3 The consultation aimed to:

- develop processes, formats and engaging ways of involving young people – at different levels within the organisation's structures; and
- ensure young people have opportunities to feel their contribution is recognised, valued and they are playing an important role in relation the development of the work of Inverclyde Council.

3.4 As a result of the engagement with young people, the report made ten recommendations, which are detailed below with commentary from the service on how these can be implemented (in bold):

1. Engage with young people to co-design future decision making opportunities for young people/ Young people value the opportunity to be involved in decision making processes but recognise they need support to participate. **This can be achieved through Clyde Conversations and the proposal in section 4;**
2. Young people want to be seen as equal members/contributors within decision making spaces, recognising the parameters that might exist due to the significance and responsibility of governance roles and structures. **This can be achieved by continuing to strengthen pupil voice at Pupil Council level;**
3. If young people are to be meaningfully engages, committee, groups and meetings must be designed and delivered in ways which are accessible for all young people. This includes the venues and spaces that are used, how and when information is shared and the language and terminology that is used. S**ee proposal in section 4;**
4. To support young people to participate meaningfully, and feel safe, supported and respected, meeting should be held in venues and spaces which feel safe, equitable and non-intimidating; This could relate to central venues which are used for meetings, or looking at venue options for decision-makers to meet with young people such as schools, community centres etc. **See proposal in section 4;**
5. Meetings need to be designed and delivered in ways that are accessible, inclusive and equitable for young people to meaningfully participate in them. This includes thinking about the length of meetings, how information is shared/discussions are explained, options for online engagement etc. Young people would also like to see other ways for young people to feed in other than speaking in meetings. Again, young people would like to explore ways young people can meet externally and feed their contributions into the main Education Committee. **This could be achieved through Clyde conversations and see proposals in section 4;**
6. Young people need clearly defined roles within decision making structures. The role young people can play in decision-making is important. Young people see the value in them being equal members on groups such as the Education Committee. There is a role for young people to contribute in other ways, but the parameters for this need to be clearly communicated to young people so that they understand what they do and do not have the ability to inform and influence. Young people should be able to share their views and contribute to all discussions, not just being asked to share their experiences. Young

people should be able to actively participate – to ask questions as well as answer them. There must always be established feedback loops so young people understand how their contributions are informing and influencing decisions. This includes clear communication even when their contributions cannot be taken forward. **Clyde Conversations and see proposals in section 4;**

7. There should be opportunities for a number of young people to engage with and contribute towards the Education Committee (and other decision-making roles). It is not enough to have one young person present. Attention needs to be paid to the diversity of young people engaged to ensure representation from across ages, backgrounds, schools and communities. If young people are not directly to attend the Education Committee, mechanisms must be created to ensure groups of young people can meet and their views be fed in. **This can be achieved through Clyde Conversations and the development of the Council -also see proposals in section 4;**

8. Attention must be paid to when meetings are held to ensure young people can contribute equitably. Young people's educational engagement and key pressure points across the academic calendar (holidays, exams etc.) must be considered. Where business must be conducted during the working day, schools should be worked with to ensure time is given for young people to participate. **Clyde Conversations, Youth Council and see proposals in section 4;**

9. Traditional ways for doing business may not be suitable to enable young people's participation. Frequency and regularity of meetings must be designed to support young people to regularly contribute. If young people are be equitable members of decision-making groups/committees them meetings should be scheduled in line with the availability of all members – including young people. If other options for young people's participation are preferred, scheduling of meetings must be delivered in ways which allow young people to meet in line with these to ensure adequate time is given for young people's inputs to be tabled, considered and responded to. **Clyde Conversations, Youth Council and see proposals in section 4;** and

10. Young people need mechanisms and support to hold decision-makers to account for how they are listening to and acting upon the inputs of young people, to ensure young people's contributions hold weight and are taken seriously. **Clyde Conversations, Youth Council and see proposals in section 4.**

3.5 The Council has several well-established mechanisms in place for engaging and consulting with young people including:

- Clyde Conversations;
- Youth Council;
- Pupil Councils within schools;
- Pupil Council forum which meets regularly with the Education and Communities Directorate; and
- Inverclyde's MSYPs as members of the Thriving Communities Partnership

3.6 Clyde Conversations is perhaps the most wide-ranging of the engagement forums because it is designed and delivered by young people drawn from our secondary schools. The discussion topics are chosen by young people themselves and representatives from services from the subject areas attend to take evidence and respond to questions. Elected members are also invited and often attend the engagement sessions.

3.7 Inverclyde Youth Council, along with the MSYPs for Inverclyde, carryout various pieces of consultation work with young people across Inverclyde. It hosts focus groups, carries out interviews and conducts surveys with young people from all areas and backgrounds. The information gathered during these pieces of work is then communicated to the youth services team, Inverclyde council and its partners and is used to inform practice and provision of services.

The views of young people that are gathered are used to plan what activities and groups are available in I Youth Zones, plan holiday programmes and informs detached youth work provision. The information is also used to inform the responses of the youth councillors and MSYPs when they are being asked to represent the views of Inverclyde's young people.

4.0 PROPOSALS

4.1 Although there are fairly comprehensive existing mechanisms in place to engage young people and for their views to be heard, it is acknowledged that more can be done to engage young people in the specific work of the Education business of the Education and Communities Committee.

4.2 Given the feedback from the young people, it is proposed to pilot an adaptation of the meetings of the pupil councils with the directorate to include members of the education and communities committee. To date the meeting agendas have been led by the young people themselves, but the meetings have also discussed the budget and the Education Improvement plan. The initial proposal for the pilot is to have two meetings over the year with members of the Education Committee, one on-line and the other in person. Members of the Youth Council and MSYPs could also be invited to these meetings and representation will also be sought from care experienced young people and seldom heard groups. This new group would be known as the young Persons Forum and the first pilot meeting could take place prior to the November Committee.

4.3 Clyde Conversations was initially set up for decision makers to hear the voice of young people. Since its inception it has gone from strength to strength and is led by the young people themselves. However, in recent years, despite invitations being sent out, attendance by decision makers has dropped off. It is proposed to try to increase attendance by decision makers at these events by further promoting the event and rationale for attendance. The work of Clyde Conversations already influences the committee planning, however there are opportunities to strengthen this.

4.4 If agreed by the Education and Communities Committee, the service will pilot the establishment of a new Young Person's Forum in the coming months where the business of the Committee will be discussed with young people and their views sought. Feedback from these forums will be presented back to the committee as they develop.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		x
Legal/Risk		x
Human Resources		x
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)		x
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights & Wellbeing		x
Environmental & Sustainability		x
Data Protection		x

5.2 **Finance**

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

5.3 **Legal/Risk**

None

5.4 **Human Resources**

None

5.5 **Strategic**

Improving our approaches to consulting with communities, including young people, forms a significant part of the objectives of the Council and service improvement plans.

5.6 **Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People**

(a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

	YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required.
x	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required. Provide any other relevant reasons why an EqIA is not necessary/screening statement.

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
x	NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty for the following reasons: Provide reasons why the report has been assessed as not relevant.

(c) <u>Children and Young People</u>

Has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.
x	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children's rights.

5.7 **Environmental/Sustainability**

Summarise any environmental / climate change impacts which relate to this report.

Has a Strategic Environmental Assessment been carried out?

	YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.
x	NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented.

5.8 **Data Protection**

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
x	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 Consultation results are presented as an appendix to this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 N/A

YOUNG SCOT

young.scot

Supporting Young People's Engagement in Boards and Committees in Inverclyde Council

Young People's Engagement Findings Report

Supporting Young People's Engagement in Boards and Committees: Inverclyde Council

Thursday 27 February and Thursday 6 March 2025

Findings Report

Background Information

Following ongoing internal work and discussions around the valuable role young people can play within key functions of the organisation, Inverclyde Council approached Young Scot as part of their wider considerations around how young people can be best engaged as part of decision-making processes, in inclusive and meaningful ways. As an initial area of focus, Inverclyde Council's Education Committee was identified as suitable for this exploration.

Through discussions between Inverclyde Council's Service Manager- Community Learning and Development, Community Safety& Resilience and Sport, and the Young Scot Hive team, three co-design sessions were agreed with local young people to begin exploring this theme.

The overall outcome of these sessions was to gather experiences, views and recommendations from local young people which can be considered by Inverclyde Council as part of work to develop a toolkit to support young people's engagement across Council decision-making opportunities.

Project Aims

The key aims of this project were to:

- Support Inverclyde Council, through the delivery of three co-design sessions with local young people, to develop new approaches to embedding young people in decision making processes, starting with the Education Committee.

- Support idea generation to inform the development of a co-designed toolkit to support Inverclyde Council to ensure future engagement with young people around decision making processes is meaningful.

- Ensure successful delivery, and safeguarding of co-design sessions.

- Demonstrating a meaningful and manageable co-design model which can be applied in future activity, we hope to inspire staff and colleagues to involve young people across other areas of their work.

- Establish ways of working and models for delivery of engaging with young people around governance themes. This includes support to:

o Develop processes, formats and engaging ways of involving young people – at different levels within the organisation's structures.

o Ensure young people have opportunities to feel their contribution is recognised, valued and that they are playing an important role in relation to the development of the work of Inverclyde Council.

Methodology/Approach

Utilising Young Scot's YSHive process, we supported the young people to explore themes, develop ideas and test and refine these in order to ensure robust conclusions are drawn from our work and the recommendations reported on have been examined and refined. The stages of this process are:

- Explore – Frame the vision, probe problems and question the big picture
- Create – Seek opportunities to prototype and play with ideas to take a deeper dive into the issues
- Disrupt – Test ideas in the real world and question the future to learn if they have value
- Act – Share learning stories and pitch bold ideas to challenge decision-makers and influence real system change

Aligned to Lundy's Model of Child Participation, #YSHive provides a child rights-based approach, with a strong focus on exploration/research, ideas generation, testing and refining. Our process allows us to produce informed solutions and recommendations for action and implementation. Young people are at the heart of this process to ensure reporting meets their expectations as co-designers.

Across three sessions, delivered on 27 February and 6 March 2025, we engaged directly with groups of young people (19 young people in total), identified by Inverclyde Council from across local school and youth work groups, to explore methods and contribute ideas towards a toolkit that can be developed to support the creation of the right conditions to engage and interact with young people within governance structures, including a Board and Committee level.

Whilst the outputs from this engagement will be applicable across a range of settings, the initial focus was on how young people can engage directly with Inverclyde Council's Education Committee.

Through this engagement we provided the young people with opportunities to

- Share experiences of how they have previously been involved in decision making in their lives – this could be through school, clubs, extra-curricular activities and other areas.

- Identify areas they would like to be more involved in decision-making

- Identify the barriers they face to being involved in decision-making opportunities and explore potential solutions to overcoming these barriers

- Share their expectations of decision-makers in creating equitable spaces for young people to be involved, decision-makers expectations on how young people should behave within these spaces, and the support that is required from others, including teachers, parents/carers and youth-workers, to enable young people to meaningfully take part.

- Define key themes that should be addressed to ensure young people can meaningfully participate in the Education Committee and develop recommendations on how this can be done.

Delivery of Sessions

Sessions 1 and 2 – Thursday 27 February 2025, Greenock Town Hall

Both sessions followed the same session plan, but with two separate groups.
- *Group 1: 3:30-5:30pm - 13 young people from schools across Inverclyde.*
- *Group 2: 6:00-8:00pm - 5 young people from youth work services.*

Overview
The purpose of sessions 1 and 2 was to engage young people from the local area on their experiences of decision making opportunities, what has worked and what hasn't, and what opportunities they might like to get involved in in future.

We also wanted to provide young people with the opportunity to share their opinions on how young people should be involved in decision making opportunities within Inverclyde.

Within this report, where appropriate, all comments/insights shared have been kept in the original language/spelling provided by the young people.

Activities
Following a short ice-breaker activity, we delved into four activities designed to gather the young people's views and experiences on decision-making opportunities across their lives.

Activity One: Opportunity Body Map
We split the young people into small groups, and on large rolls of paper, asked them to draw the outline of a young person.

Inside of the outline of a young person, we asked the group to write out the decision-making opportunities they have been part of, or opportunities they are aware of to take part in. This could include topic areas that young people are engaged on in schools/through clubs etc, but also in all areas of their lives.

Responses:

Group 1
- Junior Voice Leaders
- The Clydeview Lesson Plan
- Big Voiss Co-ordinators
- Young Coaches Education
- Voice Lesson Leaders
- Junior Leadership Team
- Umpires
- PSeven Transitions
- S1 – S3 Support
- Badminton Coaches
- Grieve and Growth Education
- Pupil Council
- Language Leaders
- Legacy Leaders

- Pupil Leadership Team
- Pupil Council
- Sports Ambassadors
- Mental Health Ambassadors
- 10 Minute Toilet Rule
- Cut Cost Caddy
- Future Assets
- Sports Leader
- SCQF
- Period Poverty Group
- Caritas
- Rights Respecting Group
- Phone Ban for First Years

Group 2
- School Leadership Team
- Yearbook Committee
- Prom Committee
- Scouts – deciding on what badges and activities we do
- People Council
- Learning Posters/design
- Lunch – what to eat
- Pupil Council
- Football – when and where I play
- Dinner – what to eat
- Pupil Council
- Classroom
- MVP
- Young Leaders
- Housegroups
- Girls and Boys Brigade
- Duke of Edinburgh

Group 3
- Pupil Parliament
- Committees
- Pupil Leadership Team
- Teacher's Affairs
- Student Affairs
- Activities for Class Rep
- College
- Agenda for Youth Council
- What I wanted from Saba
- School options
- What uni I would like to attend
- Youth Council
- House Ambassador

- I get a voice to help with decisions with drama
- I get to make decisions of what to talk about at my LGBT group
- BGE pupil consultation
- I get to choose to willfully learn new things
- I get to choose to go to my athletics club
- I get to choose to go our with my friends
- I get to choose what happens in my school (pupil councils)
- I get to choose what I wear
- I get to choose what we do in the youth club
- I get to choose what sports to play or do
- I get to choose what I do as I have free will

Outside of the outline, we asked the groups to detail the types of decision-making opportunities they would like to get involved in, both specific opportunities and the topics they would like to have a say in decision-making.

Responses:

Group 1
- How to access Parent Pay (the pin machines being took away)
- Exam System
- Canteen Food
- Toilet Lock
- Dress Code
- Fire bells being pulled
- Recycling programme
- Fights to do with vaping (how to address the vaping issue)

Group 2
- School food
- No blazers
- Allow branded clothing
- School spending
- Supported study times
- Lunch food
- New lunch food ideas
- More fun days/culture days in denominational schools
- School trips and activities
- More options for non-academic subjects for people looking to attend apprenticeships
- Doors should not be locked at lunch and interval
- Uniform to be taken more leniently
- Lunch food ideas

Group 3
- Work Experiences
- Bus Driver's behaviour
- Ethical Use of AI

- SQA wording
- I would like to have a say in things I think are immoral or wrong
- I want to have a say in street violence and drug misuse
- I would like to have a say in what happens near me
- I would like to have a say in the misuse of mobile phones in class
- I would like to have a say in safety and rights of the child
- I would like to have a say in the way education treat young people in school
- I want to have a say in school class
- What is taught in PSE
- How social areas are run (year specific)
- SQA
- How teachers treat pupils
- What food is offered at school
- Let us use AI! (teachers should use it too)

Activity Two: Identifying Barriers

Using the body maps, each group were then asked to write down the barriers that stop young people getting involved in decision-making opportunities. This could be practical issues, such as transport, costs, or this could be support needs and confidence levels in taking part in opportunities.

Responses:

Group 1
- Teachers have the final say
- The solution is not long lasting
- It is not in our power – it's an issue that needs to be dealt with higher up
- Some issues being discarded due to lack of interest by staff
- We feel we are pushed towards recycling, but see it is not carried through by staff
- Disrespectful to property
- Use of vapes in the toilets
- Being dismissed
- Judged by peers
- Travelling

Group 2
- They don't find all categories as important
- Because (sometimes) people don't like to listen
- Student's decisions in which we are passionate about where not taken seriously enough
- Age barrier
- Forced into it
- Don't understand how to
- Cause people don't listen
- People misuse the opportunity they have
- Misunderstood
- Cashless lunch system
- Focused on stopping vaping and not on the issues that lead to vaping

- We feel that staff are afraid to comment on dress code due to reputation
- Seen as too young
- Our views are moved to the side
- Younger years' ideas aren't took into consideration

Group 3
- Difference in views
- Voice not heard
- Not productive
- Bias
- Lack of incentives
- Transport
- Some kids don't care to have a say as they think it's a waste of time
- Political views
- Young people could feel scared or uncomfortable to speak up
- Another barrier could be that people don't think their say matters
- A barrier for children could be time (during school)
- Religious views
- Kids aren't mature enough
- Complex words
- Religion
- "Not mature enough!"
- Knowledge
- Words used are far too complex for young people and should be simplified
- Sexuality
- Accessibility
- Location
- Rigid school system – reluctance towards change
- Too shy to speak up
- Things being online only

Activity Three: Problem Trees

In small groups, the young people were given a "Problem Tree" tool – an A4 page with a tree diagram on it (roots – issues/barriers and branches – impact/solutions).

For each tree, the young people were asked to identify a barrier from the previous activity and then populate the branches with support, solutions and measures that can be put in place to tackle the barrier.

Each group was asked to feedback one of their "Problem Trees" and the solutions they identified.

Barriers	Solutions
Our views are moved to the side	Start a petition within the students for important matters
	Take the matter to a different group of people
	Invite an MP into school to discuss

	Be persistent
Younger years ideas aren't taken into consideration	Make time for them and give them time to come up with well-rounded ideas
	Make a pupil head of each year group
	Set up younger focus groups that don't include 4th year or above
	Older pupils can echo the issues
We feel that out school is focused on stopping vaping and not the issues that lead to vaping	Focus groups with younger peers
	Asking people anonymously why they started vaping (QR code)
Teachers have the final say	Survey for pupils and parents
	Talk with pupil representatives
	No pupil is too young for an opinion
	Teachers should discuss with pupil leadership team
	Teachers should show more respect
Seen as too young	Meeting with school
	More opportunities for groups
	Junior leadership team
Accessibility and Language	Discuss topics in a way that young people can understand
	Use surveys/QR codes (anonymously)
	Locations and transport
Too shy to speak up	Encourage them
	Comfort zone
	Give support
	Tell someone who can voice it for you
	Friendly environment
	Contact with other schools
	Stronger bonds between teachers and pupils
Things being online only	Try alternatives
	Bring back the money machines
	Reduce cash-free approach
	Improve feedback (pupils to teachers, teachers to pupils) - constructive
Rigid school systems – reluctant for change	More opportunities for pupil involvement
	Opportunities for hands on learning/apprenticeships at a younger age
	Early identification of students who do not benefit from the academic system
	Better access to non-academic subjects
	Better education on the SCQF
	More important for pupil councils within ALL schools
Decisions not taken properly – they don't find all categories important – they sometimes don't listen	They should listen to the views of pupils more
	All categories should be treated in a fair way
	All decisions from students should be taken properly

	In the decisions of uniforms students should take a part in decision making
	Learning to ask more and be understood more
"Kids aren't mature enough"	Listen and take ideas on board
	Have kids voices heard through an adult
Complex Words	Have someone explain what some words mean
	Simpler words
	Easier to access information
Accessibility	Provide food
	Incentives
	Benefits to young people for taking part
	Have built in accessibility for disabled people
Feeling as if their say doesn't matter	Listen and take responsibility/actions to their ideas
Voices not heard	Listening to young people
	Effective communication
Lack of incentives	Providing incentives for young people
Censoring	Respecting and allowing young people to have their voices
Time of meetings	Ask young people what time is better for them
Don't get listened to	Let young people have a voice and let their opinions matter
Don't get asked for our views	Reach young people via various social media channels
	Promote council opportunities to young people
	Promote ways to share your views in the places young people go – clubs etc.
	Advertising in schools could be better

Activity Four: Expectations & Roles

The young people were then invited to focus in on three key groups of participants in decision-making processes, and explore the expectations each group might have or that young people might have of those groups, in relation to participation in committees within Inverclyde Council. The three key participant groups were:

- Young People
- Decision Makers within Inverclyde Council
- Support networks that enable them to take part (parents/guardians, schools, youthwork etc.)

The young people were asked to consider:

- What each of their roles will look like,
- The support they might provide,
- Their commitment to the process,
- Anything they can do to ensure young people are able to take part meaningfully in decision making processes.

Using flipcharts and post-it notes the young people identified the following:

Responses:

Young People: what they expect from the Education Committee
- Expect to be respected
- Should be polite and kind to everyone
- Expected to be made to feel welcome
- To not be dismissed – especially because of age
- Not to just be asked about youth issues but can have a say on everything discussed
- Be an equal member
- To be supported by others on the group
- To feel safe
- There should be an even amount of young people on the group (not just one)
- Engage young people of different ages
- Role could be to bring ideas in relation to their school
- Action is taken forward based on what the young people share/input
- Be allowed to make decisions
- Be given the proper amount of time to input/debate
- Given information in advance and in understandable language/formats
- Make sure you are 100% on any decisions made
- Find ways for us to take part that work for young people
- Accommodate young people within their meetings – be flexible
- Don't run long meetings – break into smaller parts

Decision Makers within Inverclyde Council: what they expect from young people who participate
- We should be polite and kind to everyone
- Young people should concentrate in meetings
- Expect us to respect their meeting
- Expect us to be mature in how we engage about issues
- Expect us to come with realistic ideas/inputs
- Expect us to take their views into consideration
- Expect us to attend regularly (be committed)
- Young people on the group should come prepared and be professional
- Expected to be actively engaged
- Expected to come prepared

Support Networks: What we need from them to help young people participate
- Support young people prepare for meetings
- Support at meetings
- School should provide transport
- Help us to share our views – speak on our behalf if needed
- Be a listening ear and a helping hand
- Use QR codes/technology to help us access helpful information
- Be encouraging

- Provide transport and lunch
- Help us feel safe
- Ensure accessibility

Key support identified included:
- Guidance councillors
- Youth workers
- CLD staff
- Teaching staff
- Parents/carers

Identification of Key Themes for Exploration in Session 3

Towards the end of Session 1 and 2, the young people identified eight key themes that should be looked at in Session 3 to form the basis for the recommendations that would be developed to enable Inverclyde Council to develop a toolkit and approaches to meaningfully and equitably embed young people within decision-making processes, including the Education Committee.

These eight themes are:
- Accessibility: what needs should be considered regarding where/when meeting are held and how information is shared.
- Environment: the venues and space that meetings should be held in.
- Roles: what role do young people want to play and to what extent should they been involved.
- Representation: how can we ensure that young people are fairly represented, how many young people should be involved and what support should be available for them to take part.
- Timing: when should meetings be held to make them accessible for young people.
- Frequency: how frequent/regular are the meetings and how regularly should young people be involved?
- Format – how can the meetings be run in a way that is accessible and inclusive for young people?
- Accountability – how can young people hold decision makers to account on decisions that are made within these decision-making spaces?

Session 3 - Thursday 6 March 2025, Greenock Town Hall

This session consisted of young people from the previous two sessions plus one new young person.
- *Group: 3:30-5:30pm - 13 young people from schools and youth work across Inverclyde.*

Overview

The purpose of session 3, was to reconvene the young people to recap on the last sessions and the areas covered. We also wanted to delve deeper into the key themes identified on how Inverclyde Council's Education Committee can be delivered in inclusive, accessible and equitable ways to meaningfully support the engagement of young people. Finally we wanted to explore the roles young people would like to play within the committee.

At the end of the session, our aim was to have developed some recommendations on how Inverclyde Council can develop toolkits and approaches to support the embedding of young people within decision-making processes.

Activities

Following a short ice-breaker activity, we delved into two activities designed to gather the young people's views and recommendations on this work.

Activity One: Recap Activity – Roles and Expectations

We split the young people into small groups, provided them with flipchart sheets with each of the following headings:
- Young People
- Decision Makers/Committee Members
- Support Network

Each sheet featured the key/common comments from session one in relation to roles and expectations of each of these groups and how they can contribute towards creating meaningful and equitable opportunities for young people to engage with the Education Committee.
Using sticky dots, the group were asked to vote on which ones they think are most important.
The purpose of this was to inform the developments of recommendations that can be shared with decision-makers around the expectations/hopes the young people have for future engagement with the education committee.

Responses:

Young people	
What you expect from Education Committee	**Votes**
Be an equal member	6
Expect to be respected	5
Find ways for us to take part that work for young people – Accommodate young people within their meetings – be flexible	5
Don't run long meetings – break into smaller parts	3
Be allowed to make decisions	3
Should be polite and kind to everyone	2
Expected to be made to feel welcome	2

There should be an even amount of young people on the group (not just one)	2
To feel safe	2
Engage young people of different ages	2
Role could be to bring ideas in relation to their school	2
To not be dismissed – especially because of age	1
Be given the proper amount of time to input/debate	1
Given information in advance and in understandable language/formats	1
Make sure you are 100% on decisions made	1
Not to just be asked about youth issues but can have a say on everything discussed	0
Action is taken forward based on what the young people share/input	0
To be supported by others on the group	0

Decision Makers	
What Education Committee might expect from young people	**Votes**
Expect us to be mature in how we engage about issues	12
Expect us to take their views into consideration	6
Expected to be actively engaged	5
We should be polite and kind to everyone	5
Expect us to respect their meeting	5
Expect us to come with realistic ideas/inputs	3
Expected to come prepared	1
Young people on the group should come prepared and be professional	1
Expect us to attend regularly (be committed)	1
Young people should concentrate in meetings	0

Support Networks	
What we need from support network	**Votes**
Ensure accessibility	8
Be encouraging	8
School should provide transport	4
Support at meetings	1
Support young people prepare for meetings	5
Provide transport and lunch	4
Help us feel safe	4
Use QR codes to help us access helpful information	0
Be a listening ear and a helping hand	3
Help us to share our views – speak on our behalf if needed	2

Activity 2: Developing Recommendations

Using the information gathered in sessions one and two, the group explored the eight identified themes that should form the basis for the recommendations that would be developed to enable Inverclyde Council to develop a toolkit and approaches to meaningfully and equitably embed young people within decision-making processes, including the Education Committee.

These eight themes are:
- Accessibility: what needs should be considered regarding where/when meeting are held and how information is shared.
- Environment: the venues and space that meetings should be held in.

- Roles: what role do young people want to play and to what extent should they been involved.
- Representation: how can we ensure that young people are fairly represented, how many young people should be involved and what support should be available for them to take part.
- Timing: when should meetings be held to make them accessible for young people.
- Frequency: how frequent/regular are the meetings and how regularly should young people be involved?
- Format – how can the meetings be run in a way that is accessible and inclusive for young people?
- Accountability – how can young people hold decision makers to account on decisions that are made within these decision-making spaces?

The following responses have been grouped under each of the key themes, from these, recommendations have been developed which can be seen on page 20.

Accessibility:
- Places
- Spaces
- How information is shared
- Emails, more continuous meetings e.g. this one
- Needs to be accessible for young people with disabilities
- Information needs to be easy for young people to understand
- Information should be given in a way we understand – online, notes
- Information should be shared through gmail, glow accounts
- It is well ok at greenock town hall
- We could do this in a bigger space
- Making a team online
- QR Codes
- Online sources
- Info QR codes
- Post things online in some sort of group
- Place close enough to travel to
- Shouldn't be too complex

Environment:
- Where should these meetings be held (that would work for young people)?
- Try to do different locations
- Could be held in schools where we are comfortable
- School
- Online
- Town hall
- In a less intimidating environment
- Town hall
- Meetings should be held, halls a peaceful place where you will not really hear lots of noise
- Community centre

- Online material
- Online question time
- Rotate high schools
- Town hall

Roles:

- What role do young people want to play?
- Full members?
- Invited to give input?
- At some/all meetings?
  - It's one thing to be listened to and another to influence
  - Be able to question and not just [be] questioned
  - Attend all meetings that affect us, that might imply full members
  - Be allowed to voice/raise our own issues
  - Even when the young people leave school, they should still get a say
  - Something where their voice can be listened to
  - At whatever meetings they can make
  - A young person's role is to talk about what we would like to see more of

Representation:

- How many young people should be involved?
- What support is available for them to take part?
- A group of people from each of the schools, maybe 2-3
- Committee style approach – meet termly and small group = more issues addressed
- Represent all young people
- Plenty of young minds
- Group of young people, hopefully representing different schools
- 1 rep from each school in Inverclyde
- Group of people so you can have multiple ideas and opinions

Timing:

- When should meetings be held?
- Days/times?
- Any times/dates to avoid?
- If during school hours, what support is required to make this happen?
- Mini bus
- Taxi provided
- Straight after school, 3/4pm Mon-Fri
- Avoid exam diet as there won't be as much pressure on young people
- During summer to avoid clash
- School provided transport
- I think meetings should be held mid-September away from Christmas and summer and also exam time

Frequency:
- How frequent/regular are the meetings?
- Having shorter and more frequent meetings that focus more in depth on one topic, instead of longer ones that cram all the topics to.
- Every month
- Regularly – young people must be committed and make whatever meetings they can
- If the meeting must be held during school hours, there should be measures in place to help. Students catch up on missed work
- Not too often as young people still need a life and have school, maybe once a month
- Shorter meetings more frequently

Format:
- How can the meetings be run in a way that is accessible and inclusive for young people?
- How long should they be? Should there be breaks? How should information be shared? How can young people share their views?
- The meetings involving young people should help include the opinions of young people, especially on topics that affect them directly
- Think they should be as long as the issues last but necessary breaks
- I think the meetings should be done online on a video call and last max 1 and a half hours
- Let some young people join meeting online from school support
- Once every couple of months
- For it to be accessible the council should think of the life of a young person and the other things going on in their lives such as studying and clubs
- A 'youth' committee that feeds into the actual committee with a rep on the actual [one] as well
- Time limit – 90mins -2 hours, online option – Zoom/Webex
- Instead of having a long 3 hour meeting, split them up into shorter ones
- Clear information of when young peoples input is required
- Having separate groups that meet outside of education council and reports back to them
- I think the meetings should have breaks, every 50-45 minutes, as your brain cannot concentrate for that long
- Possibly online meetings
- Meetings not incredibly long as young people have a lot to prepare for
- Having shorter meeting could be better as a young person could not be able to sit for 2-3 hours
- If people don't want to speak, try online/printed feedback

Accountability:
- Places
- Spaces
- How information is shared

- Emails, more continuous meetings e.g. this one
- Needs to be accessible for young people with disabilities
- Information needs to be easy for young people to understand
- Information should be given in a way we understand – online, notes
- Information should be shared through gmail, glow accounts
- It is well ok at green – ok town hall
- We could do this in a bigger space
- Making a team online
- QR Codes
- Online sources
- Info QR codes
- Post things online in some sort of group
- Place close enough to travel to
- Shouldn't be too complex

Recommendations

From the findings gathered throughout these sessions, we have complied the following list of recommendations that we would encourage Inverclyde Council to consider as part of any future discussions around engaging young people in decision-making processes.

1. **Engage with young people to co-design future decision-making opportunities for young people.** Young people value the opportunity to be involved in decision-making processes but recognise they need support to participate.

2. **Young people want to be seen as equal members/contributors** within decision-making spaces, recognising the parameters that might exist due to the significance and responsibility of governance roles and structures.

3. **If young people are to be meaningfully engaged, committees, groups and meetings must be designed and delivered in ways which are accessible for all young people.** This includes the venues and spaces that are used, how and when information is shared and the language and terminology that is used.

4. **To support young people to participate meaningfully, and feel safe, supported and respected, meetings should be held in venues and spaces which feel safe, equitable and non-intimidating.** This could relate to central venues which are used for meetings, or looking at venue options for decision-makers to meet with young people such as schools, community centres etc.

5. **Meeting need to be designed and delivered in ways that are accessible, inclusive and equitable for young people to meaningfully participate in them.** This includes thinking about the length of meetings, how information is shared/discussions are explained, options for online engagement etc. Young people would also like to see other ways for young people to feed in other than speaking in meetings. Again, young people would like to explore ways young people can meet externally and feed their contributions into the main Education Committee.

6. **Young people need clearly defined roles within decision-making structures.** The role young people can play in decision-making is important. Young people see the value in young people being equal members on groups such as the Education Committee. There is a role for young people to contribute in other ways, but the parameters of this need to be clearly communicated to young people so they understand what they do and do not have the ability to inform and influence. Young people should be able to share their views and contribute to all discussions, not just being asked to share their experiences. Young people should be able to actively participate – to ask questions as well and answer them. There must always be established feedback loops so young people understand how their contributions are informing and influencing decisions. This includes clear communication even when their contributions cannot be taken forward.

7. **There should be opportunities for a number of young people to engaged with and contribute towards the Education Committee (and other decision-making roles).** It is not enough to have one young person present. Attention needs to be paid to the diversity of the young people engaged to ensure representation from across ages, backgrounds, schools and communities. If young people are not to directly attend the Education Committee, mechanisms must be created to ensure groups of young people can meet and their views be fed in.

8. **Attention must be paid to when meetings are held to ensure young people can contribute equitably.** Young people's educational engagement and key pressure points across the academic calendar (holidays, exams etc.) must be considered. Where business must be conducted during the working day, schools should be worked with to ensure time is given for young people to participate.

9. **Traditional ways for doing business may not be suitable to enable young people's participation. Frequency and regularity of meetings must be designed to support young people to regularly contribute.** If young people are to be equitable members of decision-making groups/committees then meeting should be scheduled in line with the availability of all members – including young people. If other options for young people's participation are preferred, scheduling of meetings must be delivered in ways which allow young people to meet in-line with these to ensure adequate time is given for young people's inputs to be tabled, considered and responded to.

10. **Young people need mechanisms and support to hold decision-makers to account** for how they are listening to and acting upon the inputs of young people, to ensure young people's contributions hold weight and are taken seriously.

Next Step Options

Our hope is that this work, and the young people's brilliant contributions can go some way to informing and influencing decisions made, within Inverclyde Council, on how young people can be meaningfully engaged within the work of the Education Committee, and other decision-making opportunities.

Young Scot would be open to discussing ongoing support and engagement including;

- facilitating discussions with staff (including any young people currently involved) within Inverclyde Council to better understand the needs and ambitions around embedding young people within their internal decision-making structures.

- delivering some in-person training with Inverclyde Council staff to explore structures and approaches to ensure young people can meaningfully take part in Board and Committee settings. This could incorporate learning from the previous engagement with staff, and will include wider learning from other settings where Young Scot has supported organisations to engage with young people in this way.

For more information, please contact:

Allan Lindsay, Director: Participation Services

allanl@young.scot

YOUNG SCOT

young.scot