

Petitioner submission of 14 June 2023

PE1990/B: Introduce a Scottish Parliament Question session for young people

Firstly, I apologise for the delay in this submission.

Politics is an important aspect of our lives. We see it on the news every day, we see it in the heated debates with friends, but most crucially, we watch from the side lines as our MSPs and MPs fight to hold Government to account. The work of the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) and the Children's Parliament have been instrumental in holding up the UNCRC and our right to be heard and listened to as young people. However, there are issues.

According to Statista in 2021, there were roughly 920,174 young people between the age of 10-24. According to the National Records of Scotland in the middle of 2021, Scotland's population was estimated to be 5,479,900. That means that in 2021, 16.8% of the population was young people aged 10-24. The relevance of this is that many big organisations like SYP and the Children's Parliament are elected and do not represent the entirety of Scotland. They represent a tiny minority of young people and often do not consult widely. Unless you have Twitter or look at their website you will not be aware of consultations/call for views etc. In the Scottish Youth Parliament's recent manifesto, they consulted with 1% of the youth population.

My petition is calling on the Parliament to introduce a Question Time Session for young people. In the committee's recent inquiry into public participation, one of the recommendations made by the citizens' panel also calls for a public session of FMQs where the public can question the First Minister and his cabinet. We have to move away from tokenisation and instead move into giving young people an equal chance. Young people are already a minority/seldom heard group, so giving 5-6 young people a chance to meet with the First Minister against the backdrop of the youth population is not fair nor equal.

More and more young people are engaged in politics. We know this because of the amount of young councillors that were elected in the last Local Authority elections. Although my petition has a specific ask, I would hope that the committee would take into consideration how youth engagement can be embodied into the work of the Parliament. I would

strongly advise the committee to reach out to MSPs who are actively engaging with young people and see what they have found.

I commend the petition to the committee and hope it will take careful consideration of the issues I suggest. I would also like to highlight that I will be asking my MSPs to support this petition and would welcome their response.