

Children in Scotland magazine

Disrupted childhoods?

Helping young people
regain control online
Page 12



Lost and alone

Exploring the impact of
maternal incarceration
Page 8

The right ingredients

Challenging food poverty
and inequality
Page 16

Leading change

The project empowering
young women in politics
Page 26



Children in Scotland

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Welcome...



Jennifer Drummond
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#CiSMagazine

...to the August issue of *Children in Scotland magazine*

With summer shortly coming to an end it signifies a return to 'business as usual' for many. Schools and other education bodies are preparing to return for a new term, offices are becoming busier again and there are only a few short weeks until business resumes at Holyrood. It's therefore a good opportunity to reflect on progress made in the year so far, and the challenges that lie ahead.

In this issue, we take a look at some of the work that has been ongoing to make a real, tangible difference to children, young people and their families, and ask questions about what we do next. We cover issues such as digital literacy and empowerment (page 8), the 'invisible' children of female prisoners (page 12), long-term solutions to the issue of food poverty (page 16), and ensuring young people's voices are heard in Brexit (page 18). We also

hear about a wonderful project encouraging young women to use their individual and collective voice to lead change (page 26) – something the new chair of the Scottish Youth Parliament is determined to do (page 6).

For me, this issue marks my last at the helm until next year as I head off on maternity leave to welcome a new addition to our family. In the meantime, I leave you in the very capable hands of our incoming Acting Editor, Caitlin Logan, who will progress some of the exciting issues we have planned for the rest of the year, including our 25 Calls anniversary edition in October and our end-of-year, young people-led issue.

Happy reading – and see you next year!

Drummond

Contents



PAGE 08



PAGE 16



PAGE 26

FEATURES | PAGES 6-14

Chair of the Scottish Youth Parliament, Suki Wan, on **changing Scotland for the better** (page 06), findings of the Disrupted Childhood report on **young people's online behaviour** (page 08), and recommendations for **protecting children whose mothers face incarceration** (page 12).

AGENDA | PAGES 16-23

Elaine Kerridge calls for long-term change to tackle food poverty (page 16), **Amy Woodhouse** urges us to continue to use our voice on Brexit (page 18), **Carolyn Housman** reflects on Scotland's approach to child refugees (page 20) and **Councillor Stephen McCabe** discusses the new education agreement (page 22).

VOICES | PAGES 24-29

Learn more about the work of the **Kibble Group** (Members' Spotlight, page 24), find out how a new programme is **empowering women to use their voice** (page 26) and hear how **mindfulness is helping Edinburgh schoolchildren** (page 28).

REGULARS | PAGES 4,15,30

Catch up on all the **latest news** from the sector (page 4), find out more about what's in store at our **annual conference** (page 15) and get to know our staff on the **Tea Break** page (30). See page 11 if you want to **subscribe** to the magazine, and page 29 for **membership**.

Interviews, research & campaigns

- > Profile: Suki Wan, Chair,
Scottish Youth Parliament p06
- > Research on the impact of
mums in prison p08
- > Taking back control online p12

Glasgow girl

Meet 20-year-old Glasgow native, **Suki Wan**. The newly appointed Chair of the Scottish Youth Parliament is passionate about inclusion, gender equality and promoting children and young people's rights...

By Jennifer Drummond

What three words would you use to describe yourself?

Scatterbrained, optimistic, eclectic.

How did you become involved with the Scottish Youth Parliament?

I can thank my friend, and former MSYP, Thomas McEachan! I've always had an interest in making a difference, especially around human rights and equalities issues. Thomas recommended I run in the March 2015 elections after we were involved in a journalism programme together, I was successful, and the rest is history!

What has been your biggest achievement so far?

Leading the 2018 Glasgow Pride March alongside First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and formally opening Glasgow Pride in July. It was the most surreal and inspiring experience I've ever had. Calling on thousands of LGBT people and rallying for change for our LGBT+ community is something I'm proud to have been able to do.

Voted as Chair of SYP for the 2018-19 term, what are your priorities for the coming year?

There's a lot I want to achieve, but the biggest priority would be ensuring the 2019 SYP elections reach as many young people as possible, both as candidates and voters, and to increase our engagement and consultation with under-represented young people, for example, the young refugee community, ethnic minorities and young people not in education/employment/training.

What do you see as the biggest issue facing children and young people in Scotland today, and how do you plan to address it?

We are fortunate to have a government committed to making Scotland the best place in the world to grow up in. However, there is increasing risk and uncertainty around changes being made in Westminster – namely around Brexit. From economic impacts such as employment opportunities, to social impacts such as the ability to move freely for education or training, our MSYPs have heard across the board from young people worried about the future and what will happen to their opportunities and their rights. We have consistently been sharing young people's voices and our 'Rights Outright' Brexit

"I want young people to experience a Scotland without gender roles, stereotypes, and sexual harassment"

Manifesto details our top concerns. SYP Board Member for Brexit and MSYP for Orkney, Jack Norquoy, visited Westminster earlier in the year to discuss the manifesto with MPs and reiterate the importance of upholding young people's rights in the Brexit process. We will continue to advocate and campaign around Brexit to ensure young people are not locked out and can feel confident in their future.

Is there a project you have been involved which you are particularly proud of?

I was involved in Equally Safe from November 2016 as a member of the Strategic Board and part of the Children and Young People's Participation Team. This project, part of the Scottish Government's plan to eradicate gender-based violence and discrimination, is so important to me as a young ethnic minority woman growing up in Scotland. I want to ensure that the young people of the future experience a Scotland without gender roles, stereotypes, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. This was a concrete

step towards achieving this and the Equally Safe work is now being rolled out across Scotland.

You are a member of the Scottish Government's Advisory Council for Women and Girls. How did you get involved and what do you hope the group will achieve?

I was asked to join because of my involvement in gender equality projects such as Equally Safe and work around period poverty, as well as work with YWCA. The group is an amazing collection of inspiring women from all different walks of life and I'm incredibly grateful to be able to call myself a member. Outdated attitudes and mindsets are responsible for continuing sexist and misogynistic values throughout society. We hope to influence the cultural and social change that needs to come hand in hand with legislative change in order for gender equality to become a reality. If we can make an impact on that it will be a success.

What advice do you have for politicians and other decision-makers about meaningful engagement with children and young people?

Ask us! You were a young person once and you should ask yourself, how you would have wanted to be spoken to by an adult? Feedback is also incredibly important and maintaining an open dialogue so there is opportunity for further conversations to take place. Ensuring we know what has been done with the recommendations or opinions we have given will make sure we are not just a 'tick box' on the to-do list.

If you could pass one law, what would it be and why?

Incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots Law. Human rights should be a no-brainer and the very basis of our laws. Currently we're still having to argue for children and young people's rights, such as the right to education, the right to be listened to or the right to food, to be respected. The Scottish Government has set this out in their most recent Programme for Government but we have yet to see a statement of intent or a timeline for incorporation.

> To find out more about the work of the Scottish Youth Parliament visit syp.org.uk

Name: Suki Wan

Age: 20

Posts held:

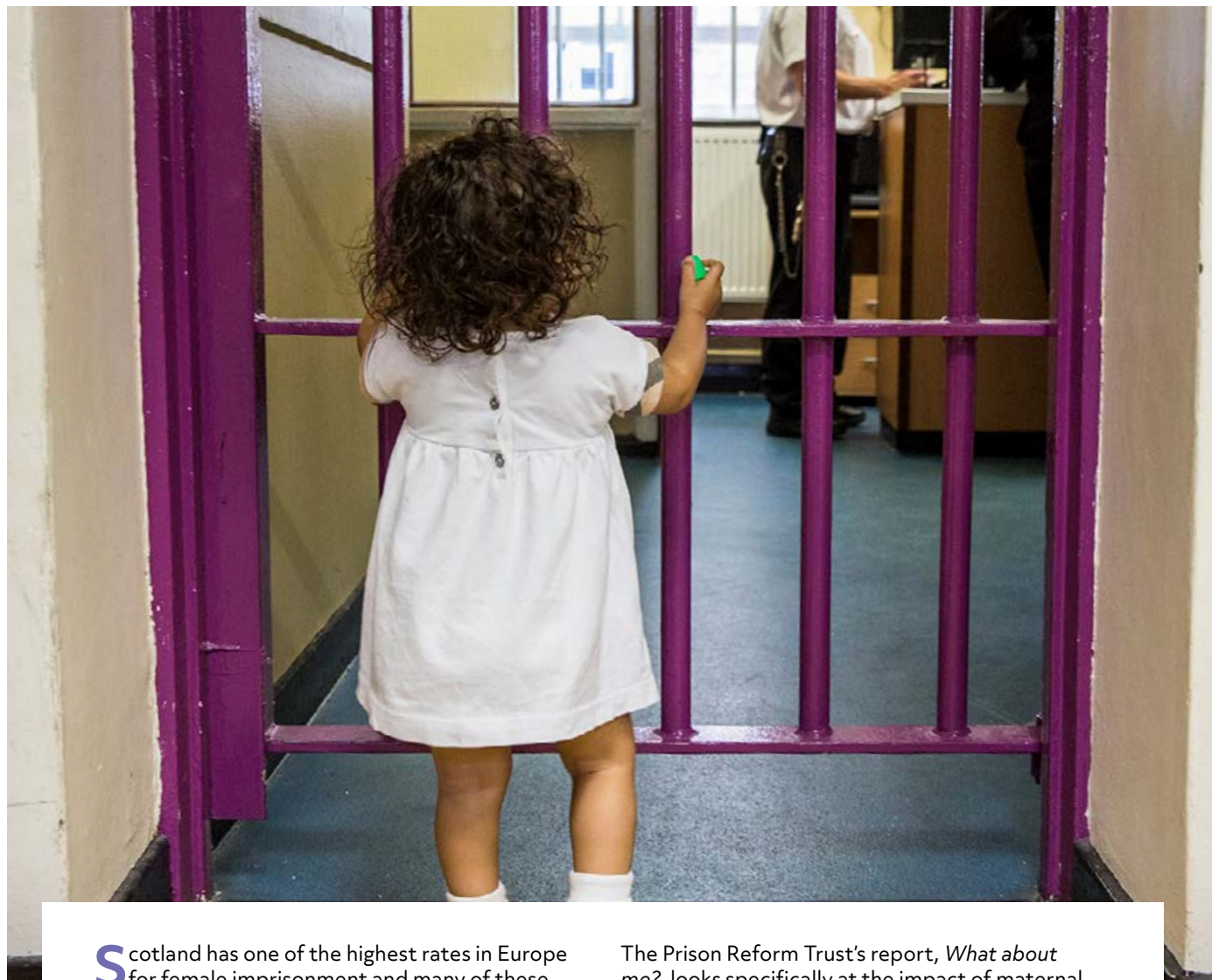
- Chair, Scottish Youth Parliament
- MSYP for Glasgow Shettleston
- Member of the Scottish Government's Advisory Council on Women and Girls
- Trustee, Together

Awards:

- MSYP of the Year 2018
- YWCA's 30 under 30 2017;
- SQA One to Watch 2017

Silent victims

New research reveals the long-lasting impact of maternal incarceration, and calls for the justice system to take a more child-rights focus when sentencing parents. **Anne Pinkman** explains



Credit: Andy Aitchison.uk

Scotland has one of the highest rates in Europe for female imprisonment and many of these women have family, including children, on the outside. Incredibly, there are no accurate figures for the families affected by imprisonment of the mother and no real research into how maternal incarceration affects her children.

Parental imprisonment is a recognised adverse childhood experience (ACE) but research on this subject has largely focussed on the impact of incarceration of the father. According to the last available Scottish Prison Services' Prison Survey there were 384 women in the prison population in Scotland in 2015. Approximately 65% of these are understood to be mothers.

"Children are often devastated when mum is sent to prison but their interests are rarely considered by the justice system"

The Prison Reform Trust's report, *What about me?*, looks specifically at the impact of maternal imprisonment on the woman, the child and the wider family when a mother is sent to jail.

It shows that children are often devastated when their mum is sent to prison but that, sadly, their interests are rarely considered by a justice system which is blind to their needs. For most children, their mother is their primary carer. Imprisonment not only damages the child's relationship with her, but can affect every area of their lives, including their housing, education, health, and wellbeing.

The evidence gathered told us that only one in 20 children whose mother is sent to prison each year is able to stay in the family home. Instead they may be placed with a number of different carers during their mother's sentence and will often encounter further disruption to their lives such as moving school and being

separated from brothers and sisters. Many will experience financial hardship.

Often children experience a wide range of emotions as a result of their mother going to prison, including grief, trauma, and shame. The knock-on effects of stigmatisation may also lead to social isolation and discrimination. As one young respondent, Aliyah, 13, told us:

"It was a horrible time. I was sad a lot of the time and didn't want to explain to my friends what had happened."

The disruption and heartache is felt on both sides. A mother interviewed for the report said:

"My family ceased contact with my children when I came to prison; they no longer see any extended family. My son lost his love for life and has attempted suicide twice as a result of me being in here. My daughter had to leave school to care for her brother. They had issues getting along as siblings, and I was not there to help them work it out. My son stopped taking any interest in school and refused to eat. My children were left to starve due to lack of financial help because the benefits stopped."

The report was based on conversations with children and young people who experienced having a mother in prison; mothers in prison and on community orders; grandparents who have had to pick up the pieces; and statutory and voluntary agencies supporting women and children. Five broad themes emerged.

- Children with a mother in prison are invisible within systems that should protect them
- Every aspect of a child's life is disrupted when a mother goes to prison
- Children feel especially stigmatised as a result of their mother's imprisonment
- Children affected by maternal imprisonment face many barriers to support
- With the right support, children can be resilient and develop the skills to thrive.

Despite the significant impact maternal imprisonment can have on children, the report found that the views and best interests of children are rarely considered by the criminal justice system. As a result, many face a range of barriers to getting support. No government agency has responsibility for ensuring the welfare of these children is safeguarded and their rights are protected, judgemental attitudes limit the support available, and specialist services are scarce.

A children's rights approach

The Human Rights Act 1998 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) require that the best interests of children with a parent in the criminal justice

system are considered at all times. Yet children are rarely given opportunities to be listened to or have their rights respected in adult criminal court proceedings.

This year the Council of Europe issued recommendations aimed at safeguarding the rights and interests of children of imprisoned parents. These recognise the vulnerability of such children and seek to alleviate the avoidable adverse impact of a parent's imprisonment on children. The recommendations spell out the obligation for a rigorous assessment of the needs and rights of every child with a parent in the criminal justice system, ensuring they are not discriminated against or punished because of the status of their parents and that their best interests are at the heart of any sentencing decision. It also recommends children not be separated or cease contact with their parents unless this has been deemed to be for their safety, welfare and wellbeing.

It is hoped these Council of Europe recommendations will strengthen the need for the United Kingdom governments to ensure the needs of children with a parent in prison are addressed appropriately and will also reinforce the recommendations we have made within *What about me?*

In Scotland specifically, we know it is a goal of the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland to give the UNCRC more force by incorporating it into Scottish law, which should offer some protections for those children affected.

Report recommendations

The research gathered for our report provides compelling evidence, as does the academic research that underpins it, that action is needed now to reduce and mitigate the harm caused by maternal imprisonment. The report contains a broad range of recommendations for a wide number of organisations and agencies including governments, prisons, Police, sentencers, Social Work services, education services, Probation and Criminal Justice, and the media.

As a priority it is recommended that:

Women with dependent children should be diverted from custody wherever possible

In 2011, the Scottish Government introduced a presumption against prison sentences of up to three months. This was in an effort to reduce the prison population but, as predicted, it has had little impact on overall prison numbers. The Scottish Government now intends to extend the presumption against short-term prison sentences of up to 12 months. Given that in 2016-17, nearly all (91%) prison sentences imposed on women were for less than 12 months, this change has the potential to significantly reduce the numbers of women, and in turn mothers, ending up behind bars.

Child impact assessments should be introduced to ensure that children are listened to, and are considered in their own right, at all stages of the criminal justice process

In 2017, the Scottish Sentencing Council held an event on children and the sentencing of parents, including the consideration of Child Impact Assessments. The Council agreed to consider further the issues raised in the course of discussion in taking forward the development of future guidelines.

In particular it focused on:

- how caring responsibilities should be taken into account during the sentencing process – whether as a mitigating factor, a factor to be considered alongside other offender and offence specific factors, or at a separate stage altogether
- to what extent such responsibilities should influence sentencing decisions, particularly where separation of a child and their primary carer is a possibility, and
- whether there may be a role for the court in seeking additional information about children who may be affected by sentencing decisions, including whether any provision has been made for their care and welfare.

Danielle's story

Danielle is a mother of two sons, aged 8 and 16, and received a prison sentence. Prior to sentencing, a criminal justice social work report was prepared which outlined the consequences for Danielle's children should she receive a custodial sentence and a recommendation for a Community Payback Order was made. The recommendation was not accepted and instead, Danielle was sent to prison. Her elder son was placed in residential care and the younger son with foster parents.

Danielle describes her time in prison as terrifying: "I said no to everything and shut myself away." As a consequence, she was unaware of the option of family visits with her children or the support available to her. She did however follow the advice of the local authority housing service to relinquish her tenancy voluntarily on the understanding that an application for accommodation on release would be considered more favourably. When Danielle was released on a Home Detention Curfew (HDC) she was informed that her application for a tenancy would not be considered until the HDC expired and she presented as homeless.

Although Danielle has now been out of prison for six months, she remains in temporary accommodation and her younger son is still in foster care, unable to understand why he cannot live with his mum. Her older son has chosen to live independently at just 16.



Credit: Children of Prisoners Europe

Accurate data on the number of children affected by maternal imprisonment should be sensitively gathered and appropriately shared

The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) does ask all women on admission to prison if they have children, but is mindful that some will be reluctant to disclose that they have children for fear that social work services will interfere in the care arrangements for their children. Not being aware of who may need further support following incarceration only serves to raise the risks and impact as children, partners and families are left without the support they need. Currently there is no accurate data on just how many children are affected, but the SPS is now actively reviewing its admission and induction process and is committed to doing more to encourage women to share information.

Better investment in women's community support to help break the cycle of reoffending, along with early intervention programmes

The Scottish Government has invested significant sums of money to develop services for women who offend following publication of the final report from the Commission for Women Offenders in 2012. Women's Centres have been established in a number of local authority areas and in other areas services dedicated specially for women have been developed. A national mentoring scheme for women has also been created. Figures and feedback suggest these services are proving to be very effective at reducing reoffending rates and improving the lives of women who offend. Efforts are also being made to divert women from the criminal justice system through various early intervention projects

A further recommendation is that training to improve awareness and understanding of the impact of maternal imprisonment on children should be delivered to all who engage with women and/or their children throughout the criminal justice process.

Although our report is UK-wide, the Prison Reform Trust will review the context of imprisonment, and reform of policies, in each of the devolved countries. In Scotland, I will be engaging with all relevant agencies to discuss the recommendations pertinent to them, identify how these can be addressed and provide the support required to move things forward.

The issue and impact of maternal incarceration has gone unreported and unrecognised for far too long and needs to be addressed. The Prison Reform Trust do not want any more children left thinking 'but what about me?'

Anne Pinkman is the Prison Reform Trust's Programme Manager for Scotland and Northern Ireland

> The Prison Reform Trust is a UK charity working to create a just, humane and effective penal system. Find out more: prisonreformtrust.org.uk

> The *What about me?* report, written by Prison Reform Trust associate Sarah Beresford, can be downloaded at prisonreformtrust.org.uk/WhatWeDo/ProjectsResearch

> Report highlights "invisible" children of female prisoners News, page 4



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Our annual conference is the flagship CPD event of the year for those working in the children's sector.

Join colleagues from public, private and third sector organisations, as well as across the children's sector, to learn about and explore the challenges and opportunities facing the sector today, hear about good practice, and plan improvements to your own services.

This year delegates will hear from key speakers including:

Richard Wilkinson is co-author of the 2009 seminal book 'The Spirit Level', and most recently 'The Inner Level: How More Equal Societies Reduces Stress, Restores Sanity and Improve Everyone's Wellbeing', published in June. He is co-founder of The Equality Trust and is currently Professor Emeritus of Public Health at the University of Nottingham.



Fiona Duncan is Chair of Scotland's Independent Care Review, the 'root and branch' review of the Scottish care system announced in 2016. The Review, now in its third stage, aims to deliver lasting change in the care system and leave a legacy that will transform the wellbeing of children and young people.

In the aftermath of the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing, **Fiona Murphy MBE** was instrumental in setting up a support service which worked with police officers to care and support victims and their families around the clock. As a result, a new Greater Manchester bereavement squad was formed, led by Fiona, comprising nurses, coroners, police family liaison officers and mortuary staff.



At the age of 21, **Jack Parsons** described himself as 'unemployed, uneducated, young and poor'. After a rocky start, but determined to be a success, the young entrepreneur founded and is CEO of the successful Big Youth Group which aims to help young people aged 18-30 start and grow a business, secure a full time job and gain new skills.

Three ways to book

Web: childreninscotland.org.uk

Tel: 0131 313 8828

Email: events@childreninscotland.org.uk

Find out more at childreninscotland.org.uk/children-in-scotland-annual-conference-2018/

Cost

Member	Two-day pass from £169.00
Non-member	Two-day pass from £199.00

One-day passes are also available. See website for more information.

Leading the way

A new programme aims to empower young women to tackle discrimination, challenge harassment and influence political change. **Patrycja Kupiec** explains more



In 2015, YWCA Scotland – The Young Women’s Movement conducted significant research into the Status of Young Women in Scotland (SYWS). The results identified a need for support, especially for those interested in being involved

in politics. Across the survey, young women told us women can be reluctant to enter politics because of the level of scrutiny over their appearance and the value judgements made about them and noted that female politicians get berated and chastised with multiple comments about their appearance. One respondent told us: “I’m fed up hearing about Theresa May’s shoes”.

The Young Women Lead programme is a direct response to those 175 young women calling for support and

opportunities to become leaders and challenge discrimination. The programme, open to self-identifying women aged 30 and under, is designed

to create a unique and exciting space to hear the voices of young women in Scotland on gender inequality and representation. Co-designed with young women and the Scottish Parliament, 35 young women from all over Scotland (we had a participant flying from Orkney for each meeting and the Highlands were really well represented too!) participated in our inaugural year.

Part of the focus of Young Women Lead is to increase young women’s political participation. All women who may have experienced stigma and discrimination as a result of structural inequalities based on their gender, sexual identity, ethnicity and age are underrepresented in Scottish politics. We wanted the diverse voices of young women to be heard in this political space and to give them an opportunity to directly feed into Scottish politics.

The programme, which runs for 12 months, saw participants set up a model committee in partnership with Scottish Parliament Outreach Services and digital staff, hosting a series of committee meetings at the Scottish Parliament to gain hands-on experience of how the Scottish Parliament works. We supported participants to feel empowered, confident, and comfortable

The first graduates from the Young Women Lead programme, including Children in Scotland’s Lisa Clark (right)

Image supplied by YWCA - The Young Women’s Movement

“We want the voices of young women, in all their diversity, to be heard in political spaces”

giving oral or written evidence to Scottish Parliament Committees. This was intended to enable young women to be more visible and enjoy greater participation in parliamentary business, whilst also gaining skills to enhance their employability, political engagement and voter engagement.

This year, the first Young Women Lead Committee agreed to launch an investigation into sexual harassment experienced by young women and girls in education; a topic that is incredibly timely and sadly hugely under-researched. They led on outreach work including surveys, focus groups, and a social media campaign. They discussed their findings at committee meetings chaired by Deputy Presiding Officer, Linda Fabiani MSP, and heard from a range of witnesses including Zero Tolerance, Rape Crisis Scotland, Scottish Women's Aid, and Girlguiding Scotland.

The results of the investigation were published as a report earlier this year, and presented to the Scottish Parliament. The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education, John Swinney, has welcomed the report and assured Linda Fabiani and the Committee that the government will "engage seriously on the contents of its report."

Beyond political participation and mobilising young women to achieve change, our programme

also focuses on wellbeing and inclusive engagement. We understand the importance of developing a strong peer network for social change and support. By the end of the three-year project we hope to have built a network of 100 young women leaders with the skills and collective resilience to tackle gender discrimination on an individual, national and international level, and to support each other on this journey within an inclusive and collaborative culture.

Patrycja Kupiec is Director of YWCA Scotland – The Young Women's Movement

> For more information on YWCA Scotland visit ywscotland.org

> Recruitment for Year 2 of the Young Women Lead programme began in August, mentored by this year's graduates. Approximately half of the spaces on the programme are reserved for referrals (recognising some young women might not have the confidence to apply), and applications are welcome for the remaining places. Contact hello@ywscotland.org for more information, or to make a recommendation.

"Beyond political participation, our programme focuses on wellbeing and inclusive engagement"

Young Women Leading: Esme Leitch

My name is Esme (*right, top*). I'm 20 years old and currently live in a remote rural village in the West Highlands. I applied to be part of the Young Women Lead Programme as I am passionate about gender equality, with a particular interest in female empowerment in rural communities, such as the highlands, where I have witnessed first-hand the more emphasised gender roles, a larger pay gap and fewer women in leadership positions compared to urban areas.

My experience with YWL has been absolutely amazing and totally life-changing. I have had the chance to be inspired by and form friendships with other passionate and politically engaged young women which has been incredibly empowering. Activism and fighting for gender equality can sometimes feel quite lonely and hopeless but having this supportive network of amazing women has empowered me to be brave and proactive in making change in the world.

I studied politics at school but I have learned so much more about the parliament and the Scottish political system than I knew before, which has encouraged me to become much more engaged in politics and consider a career in it in the future. The programme also gave me the confidence to apply for a job I otherwise may not have. I was successful and take up my new post shortly.

I will certainly be using the work I did with YWCA Scotland as part of my new role and cannot thank the team at YWCA Scotland enough for the amazing opportunities I have had over the last year. I look forward to continuing being part of their work!



Young Women Leading: Hannah Forsyth

I chose to apply for the YWCA Scotland's Young Women Lead programme because it sounded fascinating and I didn't know much about how the Scottish Parliament is run. Thanks to the programme I can now confidently say that I understand how committees operate, and I can also navigate the maze of rooms in the parliament building!

I've gained a lot of confidence in researching topics that matter to me, speaking to civil servants and advocating for change. There are loads of other benefits as well; I've had the chance to attend lots of fantastic events and even dress up as a Suffragette! (see left)

The Young Women Lead scheme gave me confidence in my own abilities and to apply for legal training. I've been lucky enough to get a scholarship and I'm off to train to be a barrister in October!

