

# LETTER FROM SCOTLAND'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

## LOCAL ELECTIONS 2022

Dear candidate for council,

We, the children and young people of Scotland, and those who seek to represent them, want our voices heard. The office that you wish to be elected to is integral to our futures. This open letter highlights some of the key things we need you to think about whilst you make decisions for us. Our priorities are:

- Hunger
- Education
- Gender equality
- Wellbeing
- Transport
- Youth services

Hungry children cannot concentrate in class and fall behind their peers academically. They are also less likely to come to school in the first place, so are missing out socially too. Free breakfast provision is an absolutely essential service for the young people of Scotland. The attainment gap perpetuates the cycle of poverty. Free breakfast provision isn't just food at the start of the day, it shows young people that they're wanted and valued in their learning environments.

We believe to succeed in today's global economy we should create an equal playing field for all children and young people through education. If we support and nurture all children and young people, especially those from disadvantaged areas, and encourage them into higher and further education, we could create a more diverse, skilled, efficient, and effective workforce for tomorrow.

Women in Scotland are underrepresented in politics. At the last local elections just 30% of candidates were female. As children and young people, we feel that this should change. Future public servants should reflect the demographics of Scotland, meaning fairer representation for Scotland.

More than ever it's important that we put in place provisions for looking after young people's mental health before it gets to the point that they need help from underfunded services like CAMHS. We need community-based support to better the general wellbeing of young people, free and accessible to all.

Transport is a prerequisite to gaining life opportunities. Therefore, dire routes intensify disadvantages for those living in rural areas. In remote locations, children and young people confront the dual problems of duration and route. Local solutions are needed to ensure young people can both survive and thrive in their local communities.

There isn't much for young people to do that doesn't cost money. Activities and extracurriculars are expensive and thus can lead to children and young people living in poverty feeling isolated and left behind from their peers. We need youth centres and outreach projects for young people to ensure everyone feels supported in their communities.

The diversity of issues affecting us is as wide as those affecting adults. We need your support to amplify our voices and remember that whether we are old enough to vote or not, you are standing to represent us.

Yours faithfully,

- Emma Rennie – Magic Breakfast Youth Campaigner
- Grace McCabe – Magic Breakfast Youth Campaigner
- Rowan Wallace – Magic Breakfast Youth Campaigner
- Andrew Will MSYP – Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament for the YMCA
- Aimee Ross MSYP – Member of the SYP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch
- Paige Holland MSYP – Member of the SYP for Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley
- Urooj Chaudry MSYP – Member of the SYP for Glasgow Pollok
- Thalia Ashby MSYP – Member of the SYP for Dundee West
- Fatima Bari MSYP – Member of the SYP for the Federation of Student Islamic Societies
- Phoenix Lynn MSYP – Member of the SYP for Airdrie and Shotts
- Ryan Macintyre MSYP – Member of the SYP for Argyll and Bute and Chair of Cowal Youth Forum
- Angus Blacklock – Young Ambassador and Trustee, Edinburgh Children’s Hospital Charity
- Members of Young Humanists Scotland
- Graeme Luke, Chief Executive Officer, Scouts Scotland
- Martin Dorchester – Chief Executive, includem
- Helen Forrest, Chief Executive, Children’s Health Scotland
- Juliet Harris, Director, Together (Scottish Alliance for Children’s Rights)
- Marguerite Hunter Blair, Chief Executive, Play Scotland
- Lesley Fox, Chief Executive Officer, Smart Play Network
- Genna Millar, Project Coordinator, Dundee Bairns
- Kevin Kane, Policy and Research Manager, YouthLink Scotland

