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**To: Fionnuala Casey
NIA Library**

22 July 2020

As requested by AQW 5514 from Rachel Woods MLA, I am depositing this paper in the library in relation to the Assembly Commission's decision to establish a Youth Assembly as announced today.

Yours sincerely



ALEX MASKEY MLA

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112****Paper Submitted by: Director of Parliamentary Services****Subject: Proposal for an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly****Date for discussion: Commission Meeting on 11 May 2020****Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the Assembly Commission) considers this paper and:

- (a) Agrees the proposal for an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly outlined in paragraphs 39 to 104.*
- (b) Notes the anticipated additional annual running cost for the Youth Assembly is estimated to be:*
 - 2020-21 £141k*
 - 2021-22 £152k*
 - 2022-23 £174k*
 - 2023-24 £156k.*
- (c) Notes that two of the Education Officers have expressed an interest in taking up the role of Manager of the Youth Assembly on a job sharing basis.*

Preceding

Papers/Discussions: *Assembly Commission paper (AC1613, 12 June 2019): Options for a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly. The Assembly Commission considered that paper at its June 2019 meeting and agreed that a detailed paper work should be prepared on its preferred option of an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly. The issue of establishing a Youth Assembly was previously considered by the Assembly Commission some years ago and that is outlined in this paper.*

Timescale: *Routine.*

Fol Implications: *The contents of this paper are non-disclosable as it is a policy development paper and the establishment of a Youth Assembly has potential commercial implications.*

Legal Implications: *There are no specific legal issues at this stage other than prioritising compliance with current safeguarding legislation and best practice.*

Financial Implications: *The anticipated additional annual running cost for the Youth Assembly is estimated to be:*

- 2020-21 £141k*
- 2021-22 £152k*
- 2022-23 £174k*
- 2023-24 £156k*

Submission Number: AC2112

- Staffing Implications:** *The model outlined requires the recruitment of two full-time youth workers (1 X AG7, 1 X AG6); one existing AG5; additional input from existing Secretariat staff at various levels. The two new posts would cost £95,000 per annum.*
- Equality/Section 75 Implications:** *The establishment of a Youth Assembly has equality and Section 75 implications, which are outlined in this paper.*
- Equality Screening:** *The proposal will be equality screened. The Equality Commission has offered to assist in that screening.*
- Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA):** *A DPIA will be undertaken during the development of this proposal.*
- Consultation:** *There has been considerable engagement and discussion with a wide range of relevant stakeholders, including the statutory, public, and community and voluntary sectors; colleagues in other jurisdictions and the Assembly Secretariat; and extensive discussions with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), Koulla Yiasouma. A full list of the contributors is at Annex 3.*
- Attachments:** *There are six annexes to this paper:*
1. **Annex 1: ‘Towards a Youth Assembly’ – Speaking Truth to Power:** NI Youth Forum proposals for a youth assembly (April 2018)
 2. **Annex 2: ‘A new Youth Assembly for Wales?’** – a comparative exploration into the best practice elements of 17 youth parliaments in the UK, Europe and globally (Human Rights Wales, October 2015)
 3. **Annex 3: List of Contributors**
 4. **Annex 4: Youth Parliaments** (RaISe, December 2018)
 5. **Annex 5: Comparative Analysis of Neighbouring Models**
 6. **Annex 6: Costings**

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Submission Number: AC2112

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- *The Assembly Commission’s Corporate Plan 2019 to 2023 contains a commitment to, “Establish and support the delivery of a Youth Assembly”, with implementation due in the 2021-22 business year.*
- *As part of the development of options for a Youth Assembly, consideration has been given to the objectives that it should have and how well each of the implementation options supports these. Objectives include:*
 - *Providing opportunities for young people to get their voices heard on issues that affect them;*
 - *Acting as a platform for youth advocacy and having a direct influence over policy and legislation; enabling young people to have a voice on the services, policies and issues that affect them;*
 - *Supporting young people’s personal development, including skills and confidence; and*
 - *Supporting the active, collective participation of children and young people in decision-making.*
- *Contributors to the discussions around the development of this Youth Assembly model suggested a number of issues that require consideration when taking forward and developing the best option for a local Youth Assembly. Those include:*
 - *The need for delivery of outputs and delivery on outputs; a strong online presence;*
 - *Use of a co-design process to develop the operation and functions of a Youth Assembly;*
 - *A Youth Assembly must feed into the business of the Assembly;*
 - *The young people involved must be properly trained and prepared for their role;*
 - *A Youth Assembly must support the building of capacity in young people to take forward their aims and objectives;*
 - *A Youth Assembly must be the clear and authentic voice of young people;*
 - *A Youth Assembly must work with partners; young people must be “warmed up” to the idea of a Youth Assembly prior to its establishment; safeguarding will be a key issue; and*
 - *A Youth Assembly should avoid duplicating existing activities; and the promotion of good mental health must be a key pursuit.*
- *The general analysis of youth parliaments around the world suggests that direct evidence of their impact on policy is limited, although youth parliaments do give young people a chance to express their points of view, and to create connections between young people and parliamentary and government officials. Youth parliaments also raise awareness of issues of concern to young people and provide them with experience of participatory democracy.*
- *For the purposes of this paper, the key comparative focus has been on the most relevant examples in these islands, namely the Scottish Youth*

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Submission Number: AC2112

Parliament, the Welsh Youth Parliament, the UK Youth Parliament, and the Dail na nÓg, all of which provide clear lessons to be learned and a range of pitfalls that would be best avoided.

- *Building on the consultation and discussions with stakeholders that had already taken place, an Internal Steering Group, consisting of Assembly Secretariat officials from Clerking, Communications, Outreach and Engagement, and the Education Service, was established in September 2019 to develop detail around this model. The Group was guided by the principles and expectations highlighted below, and drew on a wide range of experience to consider how an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly might be structured and operate.*
- *Following the Group's deliberations, an operational structure and model was developed. This was considered by the NICCY, Koulla Yiasouma, who provided additional input and guidance, resulting in the model outlined below. The NICCY's input and advice has been invaluable and provides an important complement to the expertise of the Internal Steering Group.*
- *In developing a model for an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly, a number of assumptions have been made, including:*
 - *The Youth Assembly is not a statutory body.*
 - *The operation of the Youth Assembly is dependent on the availability of appropriate funding.*
 - *Co-design, partnership, and tangible outcomes and outputs are essential.*
 - *The Youth Assembly will have a two-year initial pioneer phase, subject to review.*
 - *The Youth Assembly will become part of the permanent processes of the Assembly.*
 - *Members of the Youth Assembly will have a range of opportunities to interact with MLAs.*
 - *The development of an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly allows Assembly Secretariat staff to provide an insight into the legislative, democratic, and policy development processes.*
 - *The Youth Assembly will pursue the widest representation possible, including a number of seats reserved for communities of interest.*
 - *The core age range for Youth Assembly members on selection will be 13 to 17 years old.*
 - *The Youth Assembly will enhance the quality of the work of the Assembly.*
 - *Members of the Youth Assembly will receive appropriate training, support and development prior to and during their tenure.*
 - *Core structures for the Youth Assembly will ensure delivery on the criteria for youth participation in the Lundy model (see paragraphs 39 to 104).*
 - *The Youth Assembly should not be considered a mechanism under which the Executive Departments discharge their statutory obligations*

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

under the Children’s Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 or Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Youth Assembly will be one of, but not the sole, participation mechanism for the Executive Departments.

- *The NICCY has recommended that the Assembly hosts a day of discussion with young people setting out options for the operation of the Youth Assembly, followed by a debate amongst the young people to agree their preferences. Such engagement would illustrate to young people that the Assembly is committed to effective engagement with them and their role in co-designing the body’s operation. This engagement will form part of the final stage of the development of the Youth Assembly and will include other stakeholders from the youth sector to support the young people.*
- *Committees play a key role in the Assembly, and will play a similar role in the Youth Assembly by providing the smaller working units needed to undertake more focused work and to provide outputs for the body.*
- *In its pioneer phase, the Youth Assembly will have four committees, with that number being open to review. The members of the Youth Assembly will decide the remits of the committees. For example, they may focus on specific issues reflective of extensive surveying of young people and the views of the members of the Youth Assembly, or they may map more directly onto the Assembly’s Statutory Committees. It will be up to the members of the Youth Assembly to decide on the work of its committees.*
- *The committees of the Youth Assembly must have a direct and meaningful role in the development and implementation of policy and legislation. Members of the Youth Assembly will decide on any structures within the committees, for example the selection of a chair.*
- *The Youth Assembly will not be a campaigning group; rather it should be an integral part of the Assembly’s function. The Youth Assembly will divide its work between providing advice and feedback in relation to the Assembly’s programmes of work, for example the business of the Statutory Committees, and advising on additional areas of work or issues that arise.*
- *The relationship between the Youth Assembly and the Executive Departments should be based on engagement at the earliest stage in the policy development process and characterised by a partnership and co-design approach.*
- *There will be two plenaries of the Youth Assembly in each year of its mandate i.e. four across the two years of the pioneer phase. Plenaries will be scheduled close to the beginning and end of each of each year and will involve compressed working periods.*

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Submission Number: AC2112

- *The members of the Youth Assembly will decide on the agenda for these plenaries, with support and advice provided by staff, based on the Youth Assembly's agreed work plan.*
- *Plenary sittings of the Youth Assembly will be held in Parliament Buildings and will be chaired by the Speaker of the Assembly, unless the Youth Assembly wishes to meet elsewhere for a particular reason. The Speaker will perform the same role for the Youth Assembly as he does for the Assembly. The first plenary of the two-year mandate will allow the Youth Assembly to agree its standing orders and its code of conduct.*
- *A partnership agreement will be developed between the Youth Assembly, the Assembly Commission, the Assembly's Statutory Committees and the Executive to set out the arrangements for engagement, provision of support etc.*
- *The Youth Assembly will require a strong online presence because this medium is generally the focus for learning and communication between young people. This will comprise a website and other social media platforms etc. There will be appropriate moderation and specific rules and guidance for the use of those platforms. The Assembly will need to establish a separate closed accessible system for communication with and between members of the Youth Assembly. This system will be co-designed with the Youth Assembly, with advice and guidance provided by the NICCY and other relevant stakeholders.*
- *There will be a close relationship between the Youth Assembly's committees and those of the Assembly. That engagement must be more than Assembly Committees simply passing on consultations to the Youth Assembly or seeking its view on specific issues. The Youth Assembly must be embedded in the processes of the Assembly. Communication between the two bodies must be proactive and two-way. Assembly Committees must listen to the views of their Youth Assembly counterparts and provide opportunities for them to co-design policy and legislation.*
- *There will be 90 members of the Youth Assembly, of which 36 seats will be reserved for communities of interest and specific Section 75 categories i.e. religious belief, political opinion, race, age, sexual orientation, gender, disability, and those with dependants, for example young carers or young parents. To those categories would be added young people who are looked after and those living in material deprivation. The advice of the NICCY will be sought regarding the recruitment process for those young people. Recruitment will be co-designed with young people and supported by partner organisations.*
- *The other 54 members of the Youth Assembly will be recruited on the basis of three members from each of the 18 parliamentary constituencies (three members from each). Three of the 11 local councils have already developed youth councils and it is hoped that, following the pioneer phase of the Youth*

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Submission Number: AC2112

Assembly, councils will be in a position to nominate members of their representative youth bodies to sit in the Youth Assembly (this proposal will form part of the review of the pioneer phase of the Youth Assembly).

- *A series of regional information sessions (six centres, each covering three constituencies) will take place prior to the recruitment process. These sessions will give young people a clearer understanding of what is involved in being a member of the Youth Assembly. The sessions will include a range of activities to stimulate young people's interest in the issues facing politicians. Local MLAs will have a key role to play in these sessions and will be crucial to raising awareness.*
- *The success of the Youth Assembly will require the support of a range of partner organisations across the youth sector. There are a number of references to their input in this paper. They will play a key role, with young people, in shaping and informing the final form of the Youth Assembly and it is anticipated that they will input to the recruitment of and support for members of the Youth Assembly. Applications will be sought from organisations wishing to partner the Youth Assembly.*
- *The total additional resource requirement for the Youth Assembly is estimated to be:*
 - *2020-21 £141k*
 - *2021-22 £152k*
 - *2022-23 £174k*
 - *2023-24 £156k*
- *This is based on reallocating one of the four Assembly Commission Education Officers to work solely on the Youth Assembly and being able to access support and assistance from other Assembly Secretariat staff as and when required. However, the outworking of this will be an estimated 20% reduction in the level of events and visits that the Education Service will be able to deliver. That said, given the scale of the proposed Youth Assembly, officials consider this to be manageable.*
- *The nature and importance of the proposed Youth Assembly is such that its being financed by the Assembly Commission, a Department or the Executive, either individually or collectively, could be seen as compromising the integrity and independence of the body. Whilst a more appropriate and secure source of funding might be a grant from the Consolidated Fund, to be administered on the Youth Assembly's behalf by the Assembly Commission, this would undoubtedly introduce considerable additional bureaucracy and cost. Therefore it is recommended that the Assembly Commission should take the lead in establishing and operating the Youth Assembly, including the partnership arrangements as set out earlier.*
- *It is recommended that the Assembly Commission considers this paper and:*
 - *Agrees the proposal for an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly outlined in paragraphs 39 to 104.*

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Submission Number: AC2112

- *Notes the anticipated additional annual running cost for the Youth Assembly is estimated to be:*
 - 2020-21 £141k
 - 2021-22 £152k
 - 2022-23 £174k
 - 2023-24 £156k
- *Notes that two of the Education Officers have expressed an interest in taking up the role of Manager of the Youth Assembly on a job sharing basis.*

BACKGROUND

Previous Proposal (2011)

1. The Assembly Commission's involvement in the development and establishment of a Youth Assembly started around 10 years ago and has been well-documented.
2. In summary, following some developmental work by officials, initial proposals for the development of a Youth Assembly were presented to stakeholders, including young people. Those draft proposals were presented to the OFMDFM junior Ministers and the Minister for Education in March 2011, who supported the establishment of a Youth Assembly. The proposals were then presented to the Assembly Commission which approved, in principle, the establishment of a Youth Assembly and a public consultation on the proposals. That consultation took place from May to September 2011, with responses overwhelmingly supporting the Youth Panel's proposal to establish a Youth Assembly.
3. For a variety of reasons, not least the very difficult economic climate at the time, and no funding provided by the Executive or Departments, that pilot Youth Assembly did not proceed. Modified versions of the proposals continued to be presented; however, none were taken forward.
4. Since the development of the 2010-11 proposals, there have been consistent calls from the youth sector and others, including political parties and individual MLAs, for the establishment of a Youth Assembly. Those calls have generally been directed towards the Assembly in the expectation that it will take the lead, despite the reality that the Executive Departments have expressed a need to engage with young people around the development of policy etc as part of their statutory commitments. Furthermore, the Executive Departments already undertake a considerable annual spend to support engagement with young people around specific issues and policies.

Current Development Process

5. The current development process originates in the Assembly Commission's request in March 2018 for a paper setting out options for a Youth Assembly and the formal expression of it in Corporate Strategy 2018 to 2023 and

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

Corporate Plan 2019 to 2023, the latter of which commits to “*establish and support the delivery of a Youth Assembly*”.

6. As highlighted above, a multitude of factors have changed since the 2010-11 proposals were shaped, not least an entirely new online and social media landscape that must be embraced, but also navigated with extreme care. Young people’s expectations and priorities have changed considerably, although the financial environment continues to be challenging.
7. Aspects of the 2010-11 proposals retain their validity, including the desire to hear young people’s voices and act on them, and to ensure broad and fair representation. However, the current safeguarding environment, the need to ensure that funding a Youth Assembly offers provable value-for-money benefits to the Assembly, and the importance of credible and worthwhile outputs from a Youth Assembly led to the Assembly Commission’s request in March 2018 for a paper outlining new options.
8. Options were duly developed and put to the Assembly Commission in June 2019. Those options were:
 - Do nothing;
 - A Youth Assembly in partnership with the Department of Education and the Education Authority (EA);
 - A traditional, stand-alone, contracted-out, Youth Assembly model, as per the 2010-11 pilot proposals;
 - An Assembly Commission-supported model that replicates many of the features of the Assembly; and
 - An Assembly Commission-supported model that is largely online.
9. After consideration, the Assembly Commission agreed that its preferred option was for an Assembly Commission-supported model that made clear the independence of the Youth Assembly in setting its own agenda. The Assembly Commission also requested that a more detailed proposal based on this option should be prepared.
10. Building on the consultation and discussions with stakeholders that had already taken place in preparing the options paper, an Internal Steering Group, consisting of Assembly Secretariat staff from Clerking, Communications, Outreach and Engagement, and the Education Service, was established to help develop the detail around this model. The Group was guided by the principles and expectations highlighted in the paragraphs below, and drew on its members’ wide range of experience to consider how an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly might be structured and operate.
11. An operational structure and model was duly developed and further discussions were then held with the NICCY, who provided additional input and guidance. It should be noted that the NICCY’s input and advice has been invaluable and it provided an important complement to the expertise of the Internal Steering Group.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

12. As highlighted in the options paper put to the Assembly Commission in June 2019, the concluding comments (paragraph 31(c)) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in relation to the UK Government's report (2014) on the Government's fulfilment of commitments on the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, recommended that the UK Government:

“Expedite the establishment of Youth Parliaments in all devolved administrations and territories as permanent fora for children’s effective engagement with national legislative processes on issues that affect them”.

13. At that time, neither Northern Ireland nor Wales had functioning youth assemblies. However, Wales has since developed a youth parliament, which means that Northern Ireland is the only jurisdiction in the UK and Ireland without a Youth Assembly.
14. Additionally, the Children’s Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 puts an onus on Departments to take children and young people’s views and needs into account over a range of scenarios. While not specifically impacting on the Assembly, nor creating an imperative for the creation of a Youth Assembly, a Youth Assembly would be of use to the Executive Departments in fulfilling their obligations under the Act. However, it is important to emphasise that a Youth Assembly should not be the sole mechanism through which the Departments discharge their statutory obligations under the Act or, indeed, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
15. The Children and Young People’s Strategy 2019-2029 was published in December 2019. Below is a graphic from the Strategy highlighting the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children and young people. The Strategy’s aims, objectives, and desired outcomes are entirely compatible with the establishment of a youth assembly and puts the onus on the Executive to act.



16. The Northern Ireland Youth Forum (NIYF) is currently continuing to develop proposals for its own youth assembly and has been one of the most prominent advocates for a youth assembly over the past number of years. An outline of the NIYF's youth assembly proposals is attached at Annex 1. This suggests that its youth assembly would begin operation in February 2019, but that did not happen and the NIYF has indicated that it continues to develop its proposals and is seeking funding to support them.
17. Human Rights Wales (see Annex 2) suggests that, while the aims of national youth parliaments around the world vary, most exist to fulfil one or more of the following objectives:
- Provide an opportunity for young people to get their voices heard and listened to on issues that affect them.
 - Provide a national mechanism for young people to speak directly and have their voices heard and listened to by government, parliament and other key decision makers.
 - Act as a national platform for youth advocacy having a direct influence over national policy and legislation.
 - Provide national platforms for the participation of young people in democracy, creating stronger more inclusive countries that truly aim to empower young people by involving them in the decision-making process.
 - Enable young people to have a voice on the services, policies and issues that affect them.
 - Develop the political education of young people, supporting and developing their understanding of democracy.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Submission Number: AC2112

- Support young people’s personal development, including skills and confidence.
 - Support the active, collective participation of children and young people in decision making using all the legal means and procedures at their disposal.
 - Support the active participation of young people in the political life of the country and to help them become active and responsible citizens.
18. Those objectives can be delivered through the model for the structure and operation of a Youth Assembly set out in this paper and they were also reflected in the proposal for the 2010-11 Youth Assembly, which was to provide young people with the opportunity to:
- Develop positive, respectful relationships with each other and promote good relations between young people;
 - Listen to the views of young people in their local area;
 - Campaign on issues of interest to young people;
 - Research, investigate and debate issues of interest;
 - Engage meaningfully with MLAs, Ministers and policymakers in the Assembly and the Executive; and
 - Respond to a limited number of consultations of their choice.

DISCUSSION

19. The development of the June 2019 options paper for the Assembly Commission was guided by considerable engagement with a wide range of relevant stakeholders, including the statutory and voluntary sectors and colleagues in other jurisdictions, as well as the NICCY and the Assembly Commission’s Education Service. A list of those contributors can be found at Annex 3. As noted in paragraph 11, the NICCY provided considerable assistance in refining the Assembly Commission-supported model for a Youth Assembly, developed by the Internal Steering Group.
20. The discussions with stakeholders highlighted a number of issues that the model for an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly seeks to recognise and facilitate, including:
- **Delivery of outputs AND Delivery on Outputs:** The NICCY stressed that the Youth Assembly should deliver tangible outputs as, otherwise, the considerable cost would not provide value for money and the body’s credibility may be questioned. Contributors stressed that young people are most likely to respond to a consultation if it is clear to them how their views will be taken on board and delivered on. Outputs of a Youth Assembly must be seen to be acted on.
 - **Strong Online Presence:** The NICCY also highlighted the need for a modern Youth Assembly to be available to young people via the medium that they favour i.e. online. This should be supported by plenary and committee meetings.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Submission Number: AC2112

- **Co-design Process:** Young people must have a say in the development of the function and operation of a Youth Assembly, as well as its outputs.
- **Feeding into Assembly business:** Delivery of outputs by a Youth Assembly will require working with the Assembly and feeding into its business. This is likely to be seen as the highest expression of a Youth Assembly’s effectiveness. Contributors stressed the importance of aligning the function and work of a Youth Assembly with that of the Assembly.
- **Training and Preparation:** All contributors highlighted the need for members of a Youth Assembly to be properly trained and prepared for the role that they will be required to perform, including an understanding of rights, the democratic and legislative processes, policy development and implementation, and a range of other skills.
- **Capacity Building:** The majority of contributors see a Youth Assembly as a way of building young people’s capacity to participate more effectively in the democratic and legislative processes and in civil society more generally.
- **Clear and Authentic Voice:** A Youth Assembly must primarily exist to articulate and act on the views of the young people that it represents and with whom it engages. All of the contributors to discussions stressed the need for a Youth Assembly to be youth-led, rather than to be just a body through which consultations can be channelled and events organised.
- **Partnership:** A Youth Assembly must engage and forge partnerships with all relevant stakeholders, including statutory bodies such as the Department of Education, the EA and the NICCY, as well as the voluntary youth sector and, as they are developed, the local council-supported youth fora (currently only three of the eleven local councils have established these).
- **Building an Audience:** Contributors agreed that it will be essential to “warm up” young people to the idea of a Youth Assembly before it is established and launched. This will allow the body to hit the ground running and shorten a lead-in period. It will also facilitate the surveying and polling of young people — that will be a key part of the initial work of a Youth Assembly.
- **Assembly’s Education Service:** The Service will be essential to the success of any Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly. The Education Service was instrumental in the development of the 2010-11 pilot proposal and is well-aligned to the youth sector in its many forms. Contributors acknowledged the work that the Education Service does.
- **Safeguarding:** This was an issue emphasised by all the contributors during discussions. Colleagues supporting youth parliaments in neighbouring jurisdictions stressed the need to ensure that this risk is

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

managed to the highest degree and that it should be a primary consideration in the development of all aspects of the Youth Assembly.

- **Avoiding Duplication:** This was another concern voiced by all contributors. There is already a great deal of work being undertaken by the statutory and voluntary sectors with young people. It will be important that a Youth Assembly draws on this in a purposeful way and does not seek to replicate it, not least to ensure value for money.
- **Mental Health:** All the contributors to the discussions highlighted this as a key issue for young people that continues to come out top in issues surveys.

Models of Representative Youth Bodies

21. The Assembly's Research and Information Services (RaISe) undertook a comparative analysis (see Annex 4) of other relevant youth parliaments in other jurisdictions. There is limited comparative research on the subject of national youth parliaments, only country-specific information. However, it is clear that countries all over the world convene representative youth bodies and operate them in a variety of ways with different expectations and outputs. The RaISe paper contains a comparative analysis of 17 national representative youth bodies.
22. The RaISe paper highlights a recent survey conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) showing that youth parliaments were found to exist in half of the 128 countries surveyed. While some of those youth bodies had formal ties to the national parliament, most were coordinated by non-governmental organisations, Government Ministries, schools or local authorities, and meet only once a year, typically in the national parliament building. The age ranges of those attending the bodies range from 8 to 35, but the IPU recommends that the focus should be on young people below the voting age, to avoid the body becoming an alternative to the national parliament.
23. The IPU goes on to identify three broad objectives of youth representative bodies:
 - To listen to young people and give them a chance to express their points of view, and to create ongoing connections among youth, and between young people and parliamentary and government officials;
 - To raise awareness and to confer knowledge about parliamentary work; and
 - To provide young people with the experience of participatory democracy and encourage the development of debating and other leadership skills to increase active citizenship and arouse interest in public affairs.
24. The RaISe paper also reflects on a recent comparative analysis of European youth parliaments undertaken by the academics Mark Shephard and Stratos Patrikios.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

25. Their analysis suggested that direct evidence of the impact of youth parliaments on policy was limited. The authors noted that:

“...while the structures and resources are in place, and one would also add that the media attention is also there, institutions rarely translate youth preferences and grievances into tangible and applicable policy outcomes. So, on the whole, YPs do not fulfil their potential as direct channels that aggregate youth voice and transfer it to policy-makers (democratic function). Instead, activities are invariably focused upon socialising adolescents and young adults in the workings of a democratic polity (civic education).”

26. Their paper concluded that, while the influence of youth parliaments on legislation and policy is clearly limited, such bodies do give young people a chance to express their points of view, and to create connections between young people and parliamentary and government officials. Such bodies can also raise awareness of issues of concern to young people and provide them with the experience of participatory democracy. These findings reinforce the need for a Youth Assembly to have tangible outputs, which the model for an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly seeks to ensure.

Lessons Learned from Neighbouring Jurisdictions

27. The options paper presented to the Assembly Commission in June 2019 focused on a comparative analysis (see Annex 5) of the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP), the Welsh Youth Parliament, the UK Youth Parliament and the Dail na nÓg. The Welsh Youth Parliament is the most recently established of those bodies and its journey from development to operation was the most readily accessible.
28. All of the neighbouring youth assemblies make use of partners for a variety of reasons. Ireland and Scotland use their partnership with local councils to provide representatives and to give support and information to those representatives. Additionally, the councils also have a stake in those youth assemblies and are closely involved in their work through sharing representatives. The Welsh and Scottish models have particularly clear partnerships that provide them with representatives for their reserved places i.e. representation reserved for vulnerable groups and hard-to-reach and marginalised communities, as well as to ensure equality in the representative body.
29. The Dail na nÓg was praised by many for its efficiency and good organisation. However, there was criticism that its plenary meetings are only biennial, that the representatives not on the National Executive have less input in to its work and that the body is seen as lacking profile. That said, it offers many positive lessons in partnership and working methods.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

30. There are clearly significant safeguarding issues involved in operating any representative youth body. One example is the new Welsh Youth Parliament's (WYP) choice to hold open public elections for its representatives. The sheer number of young people publicly disappointed in their pursuit of a seat for the WYP is also a cause for concern.
31. Models of representation that allow a youth assembly to draw from existing representative bodies for its members would seem a better solution. These partner organisations can support and facilitate their representative(s) in their youth assembly work and have a stake and level of ownership of the body, as well as providing an appropriate conduit for their member to communicate with other young people about their work in a youth assembly and to seek their inputs. Additionally, having representatives over the age of 18 presents the need to ensure that those participants have Access NI checks, and the Assembly will be responsible for ensuring that any partner organisations' staff also have current appropriate Access NI certification.
32. The WYP's decision not to provide its representatives with dedicated email addresses and social media handles is also noteworthy and should be considered as a sensible safeguarding measure.
33. Criticism of the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) as being remote from the Scottish Parliament is important. The model used for the SYP is one of a standalone body, core-funded by the Scottish Executive that has only last year — after many years of operation — developed a partnership agreement with the Scottish Parliament. This would seem to suggest that this youth assembly model is more focused on campaigning than on accessing and shaping the policy development and legislative processes. An "in-house" Youth Assembly model that is established by the parent legislature could avoid such pitfalls. This model is also much more likely to provide a Youth Assembly with greater access to the key decision makers and those in charge of policy development through a much closer relationship between the legislature and its Youth Assembly.

Local Councils

34. The Scottish and Irish youth parliaments make extensive use of partnerships with local government, including representatives being selected by local councils. As part of the discussions to inform this paper, and on the recommendation of the NICCY and EA, input was sought from Belfast City Council (BCC), Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC), and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) on their youth councils.
35. The **BCC** Youth Council has 40 representatives who are selected through an application process and taster sessions, as well as an "informal chat". The BCC Youth Council is seeking to work closely with council committees and delivery on this aim is currently being progressed.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

36. The **DCSDC** Youth Council is in development and a tender for its operation is proceeding. It is likely to have 60 representatives. A steering group will work with the representatives to shape a youth manifesto.
37. The **LCCC** Youth Council works in partnership with PSNI, Police and Community Safety Partnerships, EA and the Department of Education, and receives some EU funding. It currently has 26 representatives and is seeking to mount a campaign around mental health that will generate a report to be taken to the council for action. The LCCC Youth Council is seeking to build capacity in young people, to recognise their voices, and to support them to become “peer mentors” and advocates for the youth council and involvement in the democratic and policy-development processes.
38. The EA is currently working to support the development of a youth council in each of the 11 council areas. Additionally, each council will need to develop a youth engagement body of some kind as part of the community planning process. The EA is hopeful that these bodies can be put in place over the next 18 to 24 months. Therefore, following the Youth Assembly’s initial two-year pioneer phase, it should be possible to work more closely with the councils’ youth fora including, potentially, drawing representatives from them to sit in the Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly.

An Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly

39. As the RaiSe research at Annex 4 shows, many youth parliaments function relatively well and have records of successful campaigning and youth engagement. However, these examples often fail to achieve meaningful outputs that impact on the development of policy or the shaping of legislation.
40. An Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly will have at its heart a close relationship between itself and key decision makers, as well as ready access to all aspects of the statutory landscape. It is also the model that is most likely to provide follow-through, from surveying young people to ensure that their views inform — and are seen to inform — the development of policy and legislation that will impact positively on their lives and is responsive to the issues that they have raised and chosen to champion. The Assembly and the staff who service it are therefore best placed to service and support a Youth Assembly.
41. The Assembly Commission’s preferred option of a Commission-supported Youth Assembly has a number of positives, including:
 - a) Provides the strongest guarantee of delivering on the principles and outputs of a Youth Assembly, both in terms of the expectations of the stakeholders that contributed to discussions for the June 2019 options paper, and in terms of young people and the Assembly.
 - b) Most likely to ensure that the work of a Youth Assembly feeds into that of the Assembly and vice-versa. Most importantly, this model supports the highest level of output possible by contributing to departmental legislation at Assembly Committee Stage or indeed by contributing to Committee-led

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Submission Number: AC2112

- legislation. This would seem to be the highest goal for a Youth Assembly — the ability to influence legislation for the benefit for young people. This goal is rarely, if ever, achieved in other models.
- c) Even if provision of a Youth Assembly is outsourced by the Assembly, risks would still accrue to the Assembly any negative media attention would most likely be focused on the Assembly. However, an Assembly Commission-supported model provides the highest degree of risk mitigation.
 - d) Offers a much greater likelihood that the Youth Assembly will retain momentum and purpose as it will be fully supported by the Assembly Secretariat, providing continuous support and guidance from a range of staff with considerable expertise in supporting and advising a legislature in all its roles and functions.
 - e) The Assembly Secretariat resource outlined in the previous point would be required to support an effective Youth Assembly model and cannot be adequately sourced within the youth sector i.e. the Assembly Secretariat would almost certainly have to provide support and access for a Youth Assembly in any event.
 - f) Provides constant access to the Assembly Secretariat, providing a model of youth participation and access unrivalled internationally.
 - g) Any required youth sector expertise can be recruited, which essentially leads to the best of both worlds in terms of support.
 - h) Incorporates the best aspects of other options, including partnership working and the incorporation of an online presence.
42. The Assembly Commission's preferred option also has negatives, although it is considered that these can be mitigated:
- a) An Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly may be an issue for the youth sector for a variety of reasons e.g. it may be seen as not being led by young people and would not provide a source of funding, employment and profile for bodies in that sector.
 - b) The Assembly Commission would carry all risks associated with the Youth Assembly.
 - c) An Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly may be perceived as being too much under the direct control of the Assembly, rather than providing the co-designed development and youth-led activity that will be important for the legitimacy of a Youth Assembly.

Overarching Assumptions

43. A number of important assumptions have been made about the structure and operation of an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly, namely that:
- Safeguarding and GDPR are paramount.
 - The Youth Assembly will not be a statutory body.
 - The successful operation of the Youth Assembly will be dependent on the availability of appropriate funding.
 - Co-design, partnership, and tangible outcomes and outputs are essential.
 - The Youth Assembly will have 90 members.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

- The Youth Assembly will have a two-year initial pioneer phase (commencing in 2021-22), subject to review.
 - The Youth Assembly will become part of the permanent processes of the Assembly.
 - Contact time with Youth Assembly members will be resource intensive.
 - Members of the Youth Assembly will have a range of opportunities to interact with MLAs.
 - Assembly Secretariat staff will provide an insight into the legislative, democratic, and policy development processes.
 - The Youth Assembly will pursue the widest representation possible, including a number of seats reserved for communities of interest.
 - The core age range for the Youth Assembly members on selection will be 13 to 17 years old (18 year olds would already be eligible to vote). This ensures that the objective of making the Youth Assembly the voice of the voteless is realised, although some flexibility will be required and there will be an upper age limit of 21 years old on selection to ensure representation from communities of interest.
 - The Youth Assembly will enhance the quality of the work of the Assembly.
 - Appropriate training will be required for staff facilitating and supporting the Youth Assembly.
 - Members of the Youth Assembly will receive appropriate training, support and development prior to and during their tenure.
 - Core structures will be necessary to ensure delivery on the criteria for youth participation as set out in the Lundy model (see paragraphs 98 and 99).
 - The Youth Assembly should not be considered as the sole mechanism through which the Executive Departments' discharge their statutory obligations under the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 or S75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
 - Plenary dates for initial pioneer phase of the Youth Assembly and other time commitments will be advertised prior to recruitment. These dates will be set to minimise clashes with young people's educational commitments (this may mean the need for meetings during holiday periods, evenings, or weekends).
 - Partnership agreements will be developed between the Youth Assembly and the Assembly and with the Executive. These will be developed through a process of co-design between the Assembly, young people and partner organisations.
44. In a written response to discussions held with stakeholders during the past year, the NICCY commented:

“NICCY welcomes the intention of the NIA to operate the Youth Assembly (YA) itself. Whilst we believe an externally commissioned Assembly can be effective, success is more likely if it is embedded within the NIA. Ownership of the YA and its integration into NIA is essential to ensure that the latter is able to fully incorporate the voice, views and experiences of young people into its work”.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

45. The NICCY has also recommended that the Assembly hosts a day of discussion with young people setting out options for the operation of the Youth Assembly, followed by a debate amongst the young people to agree their preferences. Such engagement would illustrate to young people that the Assembly is committed to effective engagement with them and their role in co-designing the body's operation. This engagement will form part of the final stage of the development of the Youth Assembly and will include other stakeholders from the youth sector.

Proposed Structure and Operation of Youth Assembly: Activities

46. The Youth Assembly will not be a campaign group; rather it will be an integral part of the Assembly's function. The Youth Assembly will divide its work between providing advice and feedback in relation to the Assembly's programmes of work (e.g. the business of the Statutory Committees) and advising about additional areas of work or issues that should be addressed.
47. The relationship between the Youth Assembly and Executive Departments should be based on engagement at the earliest stage in the policy development process and characterised by a partnership and co-design approach.

Proposed Structure and Operation of Youth Assembly: Plenary Sitings

48. There will be two plenary sittings in each year of the Youth Assembly's two-year mandate — four across the two years of the pioneer phase. Plenaries will be scheduled close to the beginning and end of each year and will probably involve compressed working periods.
49. The members of the Youth Assembly will decide on the agenda for plenary sittings with the support and advice of members of staff and based on the body's agreed work plan.
50. Part of the remaining engagement to be undertaken with young people and relevant stakeholders in the Youth Assembly will be to consider what the objectives and planned outcomes from plenary sittings should be. It is likely that the objectives will include being able to debate and vote on motions brought by the Youth Assembly's committees and individual members, as well as to ratify decisions and have debates on the ongoing work of the committees and to consider and discuss any other work that the Youth Assembly undertakes.
51. Youth Assembly members may also wish to consider how they want to use the plenaries as an opportunity to scrutinise the work of the Executive and the Assembly's Statutory Committees etc. The plenaries will also provide for discussion and agreement on the remit of committees and associated structures, as well as discussions on a range of issues of interest to the Youth Assembly and its members.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

52. Plenary sittings will be held in Parliament Buildings and will be chaired by the Speaker of the Assembly, unless the Youth Assembly wishes to meet elsewhere for a particular reason. The Speaker will perform the same role for the Youth Assembly as he does for the Assembly. The first plenary of the two-year session will also ratify the Youth Assembly's standing orders and its code of conduct.
53. The plenaries will not be subject to live broadcast, but recordings will be made and these can be used appropriately.
54. The Youth Assembly may wish to consider whether MLAs might attend its plenaries as observers.

Proposed Structure and Operation of Youth Assembly: Committees

55. Committees play a key role in the Assembly and will play a similar role in the Youth Assembly by providing the smaller working units needed to undertake more focused work and to provide outputs for the body.
56. In the pioneer phase, the Youth Assembly will have four committees (this number can be open to review going forward). The members of the Youth Assembly will decide the remits of these committees. For example, they may wish to focus on specific issues reflective of extensive surveying of young people and the views of the members of the Youth Assembly, or they may map more directly onto the Assembly's Statutory Committees. It will be up to the members of the Youth Assembly to decide on the work of its committees.
57. Each committee will be supported/facilitated by Assembly Secretariat staff, who are well placed to provide advice on the structure and operation of committees, and how best to access and work with the Assembly's Statutory Committees.
58. Staff will work with the members of the Youth Assembly to support them in making informed decisions about their annual work plan. As well as the committee activity highlighted above, this could include the inclusion of scrutiny of the education, social care and youth justice authorities, and the performance of the NICCY and other human rights-based bodies.
59. The committees of the Youth Assembly must have a direct and meaningful role in the development and implementation of policy and legislation. Members of the Youth Assembly will decide on any structures within its committees, for example, the selection of a chair.
60. These committees and their remits and structures will be subject to the consideration and agreement at the first Youth Assembly plenary sitting. This occasion will allow the committees to gain profile and have their rationale explained. The role of the committees will be to take forward relevant work and to establish two-way communication directly with relevant Assembly Statutory Committees, Ministers, Executive Departments and officials.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Submission Number: AC2112

61. Discussions about the establishment of the Youth Assembly's committees will take place during training and development sessions for the Youth Assembly's members prior to the first plenary.
62. The Youth Assembly committees will generally meet in the periods between plenary sittings. Meetings will take place in Parliament Buildings or at another location. These meetings are likely to take the form of day-long sessions that will be advertised in advance of recruitment to the Youth Assembly to allow young people to assess the commitment involved. These meetings will be clerked by Committee staff from the Assembly Secretariat.
63. The committees will also work continuously online in addition to their scheduled meetings.
64. All members of the Youth Assembly will have a place on a committee.
65. The committees will not be subject to live broadcast, but their activities will be publicised.

Proposed Structure and Operation of Youth Assembly: Online Presence and Brand Identity

66. The Youth Assembly will require a strong online presence as this medium is generally the focus for learning and communication between young people. This will comprise a website and social media platforms etc. with appropriate moderation and operation under specific rules and guidelines. The Assembly Commission will need to establish a separate, closed accessible system for communication with and between members of the Youth Assembly regarding the body's business. This system will be co-designed with the Youth Assembly, with advice and guidance provided by the NICCY and other relevant stakeholders.
67. With safeguarding in mind, the Assembly will not provide individual members of the Youth Assembly with publicly accessible email addresses or social media feeds. Online communication with the Youth Assembly would be via controlled means in the interests of safeguarding. Much of the communication between members of the Youth Assembly, for example committee work, will be via the closed system and there will be scope for members to approve online content before it goes live on the website. The members of the Youth Assembly will have as much say as is practicable over the content of the website and social media. The necessary moderation mechanisms will be in place for the purposes of safeguarding.
68. It will be for the members of the Youth Assembly to create a brand identity for the body, with advice, support and facilitation provided by staff and, where necessary, relevant specialists. Members will also decide their title, for example Members of the Youth Assembly (MYA).

Proposed Structure and Operation of Youth Assembly: Communication between the Youth Assembly and Assembly Committees

69. In order for the Youth Assembly to deliver on its aims and objectives, there must be a close relationship between its committees and those of the Assembly. That engagement must be about more than Assembly Committees simply passing on consultations to the Youth Assembly or seeking its view on specific issues. The Youth Assembly must become embedded in the processes of the Assembly; communication between the two bodies must be proactive and two-way. Assembly Committees must listen to the views of their Youth Assembly counterparts and provide opportunities for them to co-design policy and legislation.
70. A key way to ensure that close cooperation between the Youth Assembly and Assembly will be through the Secretariat staff who will support the Youth Assembly. It is anticipated that Assistant Assembly Clerks will act as clerks to the Youth Assembly committees. These Secretariat officials are key members of the Assembly Committees' operation. They play a major role in the development and implementation of forward work programmes and will bring that experience and understanding of issues to the Youth Assembly committees. Additionally, they will be best placed to reflect the work of the Youth Assembly committees in that of their respective Assembly Committees. The basis for the relationship will be outlined in a partnership agreement.
71. A key link between the Youth Assembly and the Assembly will be the Clerk to the Youth Assembly. That position will be held by an Assembly Committee Clerk (excluding the Education Committee Clerk). The holder of this post will have responsibility for supporting and advising the Youth Assembly in its communication with the Assembly, the development of a work plan and activities more generally. The post holder will also support liaison between the Speaker and the Youth Assembly, and the role will be additional to their role as a Committee Clerk.
72. Formal communication will be in writing as this is the accepted form of record of the Assembly's Committees and it ensures that those communications are public (where appropriate), registered, minuted, acknowledged and responded to, and vice versa. It is important that the views of the Youth Assembly are formally recorded, reflecting the special relationship that the Youth Assembly will enjoy with the Assembly.
73. Youth Assembly members will be able to request to give evidence to Assembly Committees, which in turn will be able to make similar requests to the Youth Assembly committees. There will also be further opportunities for MLAs and members of the Youth Assembly to interact and engage.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112*****Proposed Structure and Operation of Youth Assembly: Relationships with the Executive and Departments***

74. The Children Services Co-operation (NI) Act 2015 puts an onus on Executive Departments to take children and young people's views and needs into account on a range of matters. However, as mentioned previously, the Youth Assembly must not be seen as simply a body for consultation by Ministers and their Departments. Rather, the Youth Assembly provides an opportunity for young people to be engaged at the earliest stage of policy development and should be seen as a partner by Ministers and Departments.
75. Supported by a partnership agreement, Ministers and their Departments will engage with the Youth Assembly in a proactive and positive manner, including the provision of information and briefings, which would include evidence-giving sessions with the Youth Assembly's committees etc. For this to work, there must be a clear commitment on the part of the Executive and Departments that they will work in partnership with the Youth Assembly, as per the partnership agreement.
76. A partnership agreement will be developed between the Youth Assembly and the Executive, the Assembly's Statutory Committees and the Assembly more generally to set out how engagement between the respective bodies will work.

Proposed Structure and Operation of Youth Assembly: Recruitment and Representation

77. Ensuring a diverse and representative membership of the Youth Assembly is essential. However, safeguarding and GDPR considerations remain paramount. Also, and as mentioned in paragraph 30, the Welsh experienced of a large number of young people being publicly disappointed in their pursuit of a seat for the WYP through elections. As such, a process of public election is not necessarily appropriate.
78. There will be an onus on members of the Youth Assembly to seek to represent the views of young people in their area and more widely. Members of the Youth Assembly will receive all relevant training, development, and support to allow them to fulfil that role.
79. It is proposed that the Youth Assembly will have 90 members in total (see the overarching assumptions in paragraph 43), of which 36 seats will be reserved for communities of interest and to meet specific Section 75 categories i.e. religious belief, political opinion, race, age, sexual orientation, gender, disability, and those with dependants (e.g. young carers or young parents). To those categories would be added young people who are looked after and those living in material deprivation. The advice of the NICCY will be sought regarding the recruitment process involving these young people. Recruitment will be co-designed with young people and supported by partner organisations.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

80. In that regard, the NICCY has indicated:

“Consideration must be given to how young people who may have vulnerabilities or access challenges will be supported not only to apply but also to participate in the YA. Young people will often be engaged with youth groups or school who may be able encourage and even support their participation. The NIA should facilitate those staff to provide appropriate support to young people. However there can be no expectation that young people are involved with other groups in order to be eligible to apply to be members of the Youth Assembly in either category”.

81. The NICCY has also reinforced that recruitment is only the beginning of the story: the young people must be properly supported to attend and participate in the Youth Assembly. This will include practicalities such as transport and access to technology and there must be ongoing, tailored support.
82. The remaining 54 members of the Youth Assembly will be recruited from the 18 parliamentary constituencies — three members from each. As mentioned earlier, only three of the 11 local councils have already developed youth fora. Hopefully, following the pioneer phase of the Youth Assembly, councils will be in a position to nominate members of their representative youth bodies to sit in the Youth Assembly (this proposal will form part of the review process of the pioneer phase of the Youth Assembly).
83. A series of regional information sessions (six centres, each encompassing three constituencies) will take place prior to the recruitment process. These sessions will give young people a clearer understanding of what it might mean to be a member of the Youth Assembly. The sessions will also involve a range of activities to stimulate young people’s interest in the issues facing politicians. Local MLAs will have a crucial role to play in those sessions.
84. Following the regional information sessions, the selection process for seats will take the form of an initial application/expression of interest, a taster session, followed by interviews. This process will provide a pool of candidates for membership of the Youth Assembly and will mean that vacancies can be filled without the need to run further sessions. The advice and support of the NICCY and partner organisations will be sought regarding the content of these taster sessions.

Proposed Structure and Operation of Youth Assembly: Partner Organisations

85. The success of the Youth Assembly will depend partly on the support of a range of partner organisations across the youth sector. There are a number of references to their input in this document. They will play a key role in shaping the final form of the Youth Assembly and will input to the recruitment process and provide support for members of the Youth Assembly. Applications will be sought from organisations wishing to partner the Youth Assembly.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112*****Proposed Structure and Operation of Youth Assembly: Code of Conduct and Standing Orders***

86. With the support of staff, the Youth Assembly will develop its own code of conduct and standing orders to govern the operation of the body.

Proposed Structure and Operation of Youth Assembly: Prior to Establishment of the Youth Assembly

87. In line with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Assembly Commission will consult on the proposed structure and operation of the Youth Assembly directly with young people. This will take the form of a practical workshop session that will also involve engagement with adult stakeholders. The advice and guidance of the NICCY and youth sector will be sought with respect to the organisation and content of that consultation.
88. In addition, the Assembly will equality screen the proposals for a Youth Assembly. The Equality Commission has indicated its willingness to assist in that exercise.

Proposed Structure and Operation of Youth Assembly: Costs and Staffing

89. Needless to say, the funding required for the Youth Assembly should be in place before recruitment starts. In addition, the NICCY has advised that no sponsorship from outside the public sector should be sought as that could compromise the independence of the Youth Assembly.
90. Funding for Year 1 of the Youth Assembly has already been identified in the Assembly Commission's budget. Funding for the rest of the Pioneer Phase and beyond will also need to be identified. It could be suggested that the nature and importance of the Youth Assembly is such that dependence on funding from the Assembly or the Executive, either separately or together, might compromise integrity and independence of the body. Whilst a more appropriate and secure source of funding might be a grant from the Consolidated Fund, to be administered on the Youth Assembly's behalf by the Assembly Commission, this would undoubtedly introduce considerable additional bureaucracy and cost. Therefore it is recommended that the Assembly Commission should take the lead in establishing and operating the Youth Assembly, including the partnership arrangements as set out earlier.
91. The NICCY has recommended that the Youth Assembly would require at least two members of staff who are suitably qualified and who have experience of participation processes, and at least one of those should come from a youth work background. In addition, any staff working with the Youth Assembly will need to have an appropriate level of Access NI clearance.
92. The annual staffing costs are likely to be c£160K. However, the extra annual resource required would be £95K. This represents a full-time secretariat of two staff, one at AG7 level and one at AG6, and a manager at AG5 level. Two

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

of the existing Education Officers have expressed an interest in taking up the role of Manager of the Youth Assembly, and this is currently being explored by management. In addition, the three staff will be supported by other Assembly Secretariat staff as and when required and it is thought that that support can be met from within existing resources as the Youth Assembly becomes mainstreamed within the Assembly's business and processes.

93. It is important to note that reallocating one of the existing Education Officers will mean a 20% reduction in the level of events and visits that the Education Service will be able to deliver.
94. In addition to staffing costs, an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly will have operational costs, which are of the order of £46k to £75k per annum.
95. All travel and subsistence costs connected to membership of the Youth Assembly will be met from the body's funding. It is important that there is discussion around whether some Youth Assembly members will need these costs paid in advance, for example, those living in low income households. The inclusivity of the Youth Assembly must not be compromised by the issue of cost to its members.
96. The cost estimates are set out in Annex 6.

Proposed Structure and Operation of Youth Assembly: Review

97. The NICCY has recommended an independent external review of the Youth Assembly should commence prior to recruitment and continue to the end of the pioneer phase. The NICCY has recommended that the review should use a rights-based model and should test whether the Youth Assembly has met the requirements of the Lundy Model (see following paragraph) namely: voice, space, audience and influence.

Proposed Structure and Operation of Youth Assembly: Lundy Model

98. Professor Laura Lundy of Queen's University, Belfast, has developed an internationally recognised youth participation model that reflects on Article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): "*Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously*". The Lundy model is outlined below:

Submission Number: AC2112



This model provides a way of conceptualising Article 12 of the UNCRC which is intended to focus educational decision-makers on the distinct, albeit interrelated, elements of the provision. The four elements have a rational chronological order:

- **SPACE:** Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their view
- **VOICE:** Children must be facilitated to express their view
- **AUDIENCE:** The view must be listened to.
- **INFLUENCE:** The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.



99. With regard to the questions that Professor Lundy poses, the proposed model of an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly model provides the “safe and inclusive” space that is required. The Youth Assembly will be “owned” and “operated” by its members on behalf of young people at large. Selection and recruitment to the Youth Assembly will be open to all in the age range, with special arrangements in place to ensure that communities of interest, Section 75 categories and other groups who lack a voice, such as young carers and young parents, are represented. The Youth Assembly will agree its own arrangements for plenary and committee meetings and its members and other young people, through surveying etc., will be able to give their views on a wide range of issues in a protected environment that is designed for their needs and benefit. Communications systems with and between the young people will be closed.
100. There will be no live broadcasting of the proceedings of the Youth Assembly and its operation will be governed by the needs of safeguarding the young people and GDPR. However, the Youth Assembly’s partnership with the Assembly and the partnership agreement that it will have with the Assembly and Executive will ensure that the voices of Youth Assembly members and

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

young people at large will be heard. The support provided by Assembly staff will also facilitate the communication of views and ideas. The Youth Assembly will have access to the Assembly's Committees and MLAs and, through them and its engagement with the Executive Departments, will have direct access to the policy development and legislative processes.

101. The proposed open recruitment to the Youth Assembly and the information sessions and tasters that will precede, mean that young people will have the choice of whether to participate. The same will apply to the Youth Assembly's surveying and information gathering, and the co-design process that will shape the Youth Assembly will involve young people and that will continue as the Youth Assembly evolves.
102. The close connections between the Youth Assembly and the Assembly Committees will underpin the communication of young people's views and ensure that they are fully taken on board. This will be a key part of the partnership agreement between the Youth Assembly and the Assembly and the Executive. A direct and permanently open channel of communication will exist between them and the process will be clearly and openly advertised.
103. It will be extremely important for the partnership agreement between the Youth Assembly the Assembly and the Executive to set out a process for the consideration of young people's views and a feedback mechanism to show how they have been acted on. There are a number of administrative systems used by the Assembly Committees to track issues and how Departments respond to them to ensure that a response is given and that it satisfies the Assembly Committees. These, and other systems, will be shared with the Youth Assembly.
104. All the stakeholders organisations and young people who contributed to the development of proposals for an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly, made it clear that it is not enough just to be seen to be listening to young people — there must also be clear, demonstrable evidence that their views have been taken on board and have helped shape the development of policy and legislation. The stamp of the Youth Assembly should be recognisable on all relevant policy and legislation.

Recommendation

105. It is recommended that the Assembly Commission considers this paper and:
 - a) Agrees the proposal for an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly outlined in paragraphs 39 to 104.
 - b) Notes the anticipated additional annual running cost for the Youth Assembly is estimated to be:
 - 2020-21 £141k
 - 2021-22 £152k
 - 2022-23 £174k
 - 2023-24 £156k

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

- c) Notes that two of the Education Officers have expressed an interest in taking up the role of Manager of the Youth Assembly on a job sharing basis.

Risk/Corporate Governance issues

106. There are risks associated with the development and establishment of an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly, but it is felt that they can be mitigated. Amongst those risks are:
- **Safeguarding** — Management of this risk will be undertaken by applying all statutory requirements and using best practice. Additionally, the Assembly will need to be very clear in setting out issues for which it cannot be responsible.
 - **GDPR** — Management of this risk will include training for young people and staff in all aspects of GDPR and the application of all statutory requirements.

Corporate Governance

107. The Assembly Commission has formally committed in its Corporate Strategy 2018 to 2023 and Corporate Plan 2019 to 2023 to *“establish and support the delivery of a Youth Assembly”*.

Next Steps

108. Subject to the Assembly Commission’s agreement to the recommendations in paragraph 105, officials will progress the establishment of a Commission-supported Youth Assembly.
109. The first stage will involve engaging with relevant stakeholder groups and young people to add detail to the structure and operational model described in paragraphs 39 to 104. This process of co-designing the ‘flesh’ of the Youth Assembly will ensure that the body has the support of the sector and is responsive to the wants and needs of young people.
110. Below is an **indicative** timetable of activities for quarters 2,3,4 of 2020 and quarters 1 and 2 of 2021:

Timescale	Activity	Notes
Spring 2020	Discussion forum with relevant stakeholders and young people to put ‘flesh’ on the Youth Assembly structure and operational model.	The co-design element of this is extremely important to ensure that the Youth Assembly delivers on the wants and needs of young people.

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Submission Number: AC2112

Timescale	Activity	Notes
	Establishment of an External Steering Group.	The Group will help to guide the further development and delivery of the Youth Assembly.
Summer 2020	Further development of the roll-out plans for the Youth Assembly — Internal Steering Group and with an External Steering Group. Consideration of the recruitment of the youth workers to support the Youth Assembly. Identification of partner organisations.	Activity will focus on the best ways to begin building an interest in and audience for the Youth Assembly. Advice on best practice in the sector for recruitment will be sought. Through an application process.
Autumn/Winter 2020	Roll out of an audience-building plan for the Youth Assembly and awareness sessions. Development and delivery of the recruitment of the youth workers.	Creating anticipation for the Youth Assembly and creating awareness of what it will do and how to engage with it. According to best practice.
End of 2020	Youth workers recruited and Youth Assembly profile established.	Training of the youth workers.
Winter/Spring 2021	Youth workers begin to engage with youth sector and young people to create anticipation for the Youth Assembly and begin issues surveying.	Further audience-building and information dissemination. Surveying of young people to establish information for the members of the Youth Assembly to consider and respond to.
Spring/Summer/Autumn 2021	Recruitment of members of the Youth Assembly and roll-out of training for them.	Delivery of the recruitment process and provision of training for the members, working towards a first plenary sitting in late

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – ASSEMBLY COMMISSION**Submission Number: AC2112**

Timescale	Activity	Notes
		September/early October 2021.

AUTHOR: PETER HALL

‘Towards a Youth Assembly’ – Speaking Truth to Power

NI Youth Assembly – Updated Proposals April 2018

Background:

The NIYF have lead the campaign for a Youth Assembly for 12 years. During this time we have seen limited development despite securing significant support politically and across the Youth and Community Sector.

According to the NI, Young People’s report to the UN Committee, 2015:

“Children and young people want adults and duty bearers, to not only listen to their views on issues affecting their lives, but to also afford them more opportunities to have their views routinely taken into account and where possible acted on, within more rights respecting democratic decision making processes, particularly in schools, in their community and by government.”

The NGO report to UNCRC went on to say that:

“... there has been no adequately funded, systematic mechanism for supporting the involvement of children in decision-making at either community or Government level since 2012.”

Subsequently, in June 2016 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that:

“Expedite the establishment of Youth Parliaments in all devolved administrations and territories as permanent fora for children’s effective engagement with national legislative processes on issues that affect them;”

NI is the only jurisdiction in the UK and Ireland to have never had a Youth Assembly.



Youth Congress Sitting 22nd February 2018:

The NI Youth Congress sat for the second time on the 22nd February 2018. The event was a huge success with over 200 young people in attendance as well as their Youth Workers. (See Youth Congress Evaluation Papers for more info).

The Youth Congress was officially dissolved on the 22nd February and young people are now working towards the Establishment of a NI Youth Assembly.

Key Principles for a successful Youth Assembly:

- It should be Youth Led and Adult Supported;
- It should compliment and connect participative practice that already exists;
- It should be flexible and inclusive;
- It should be underpinned by quality assured youth work practice;
- Participation should be open to all – the best models show a diversity of young people engaging in a meaningful way;
- Stormont should be used as a venue;
- With workshops designed to build capacity and confidence.

Draft terms of reference for a NI Youth Assembly:

It is proposed that a NI Youth Assembly should have two main functions:

1. To act as a mechanism through which the NI Assembly and its committees would seek the views of young people on the range of policy, strategy and political issues for which it has authority to act. In addition, it would be possible to seek a young person's perspective on additional issues based on the work of the Assembly and Current Affairs in NI and beyond.
2. To provide a mechanism for young people to raise and consider issues of importance for them; to refer them to members and officials of the Assembly and to seek support in progressing these. This function is seen as important to the success and sustainability of the Youth Forum as it would provide a function that would remove concerns about tokenism.

Young people have noted that the Youth Assembly should have the ability to move / influence legislation; the following proposals have been put forward:

- Provide a mechanism whereby the Members of the Youth Assembly can directly influence the policy making process;
- Provide opportunities for young people to present to the Assembly twice per year; propose legislation and pass to the Assembly – possibly once or twice per year;
- Seek Assembly support proposed through Assembly debates; Ministerial Questions etc.

In the absence of an Assembly it is proposed that:

- Young people present to permanent secretaries twice per year;
- Young people meet directly with the Secretary of State once per year;

Committee Structure:

The Youth Assembly should be able to link into NI Assembly Committee Structures; therefore it is proposed that:

- Young people can participate at / present to NI Assembly Committees;
- That Young People have a direct link to the C&YPS committee (EA /DE);

Methodology:

- Youth Assembly open to young people aged between 11 – 25;
- Needs assessment: will be carried out annually via a major online Youth poll entitled 'The Big Youth Survey'
- The Youth Assembly will connect to local communities via ongoing NIYF programme work; a participation workers practitioner forum and links to local authority based youth councils;
- An Annual Youth Festival will take place – preferably over a residential where young people will engage in issue based workshops; capacity building; team building and be afforded social time;
- A NI Youth Assembly Annual sitting will take place once per year in the Assembly Chamber, Stormont (using the same format of the YC Annual sitting 2018);

Structure of the Youth Assembly:

- The Youth Assembly will be a flexible and fluid model of youth participation, designed to engage as wide a range of young people as possible, from a diversity of backgrounds.
- It will allow those currently involved in youth participation as well as those who are not the opportunity to participate via a Youth Festival and local events;
- At the NI Youth Assembly Youth Festival young people will put themselves forward to speak at the NI Youth Assembly Annual Sitting;
- 108 Youth Assembly Members will be selected randomly to take seats at the Youth Assembly Sitting;
- This process will be designed to ensure various interest groups and geographical areas are represented and will be based on the principles of deliberative democracy;
- Young people will also be afforded the opportunity to attend the Annual sitting as delegates to participate in pre debate workshops and observers during the debate;
- The NIYF Executive Committee will act as a steering group for the Youth Assembly;
- Executive Committee members will be expected to participate in all Youth Assembly activities.

Timeline:**April 2018 –**

- agree draft methodology for a Youth Assembly;
- Establish Political Youth Champions Group made up of key political reps;
- Formally request use of Assembly Chamber for 1st Sitting of NI Youth Assembly to take place in February 2019

May 2018 –

- Engage key stakeholders & potentially refine methodology;
- identify potential sources of funding for a Youth Assembly;

June 2018 –

- commence PR campaign inviting expressions of interest to a Youth Assembly;

July 2018

- PR and Expressions of interest;

August 2018 –

- PR and Expressions of interest;

September 2018 –

- Seek support for a 'binding motion' at Stormont to support the establishment of Youth Assembly ;
- In the absence of a formation of an Executive at Stormont, seek alternative route via Westminster / Secretary of State;

October 2018 –

- Assess levels of Expressions of Interest and Host Youth Festival to coincide with NIYF AGM

November 2018 – January 2019 –

- Local events and workshops following on from Youth Festival
- Appointment of Youth Assembly

February 2019 –

- NI Youth Assembly Sitting

March 2019 –

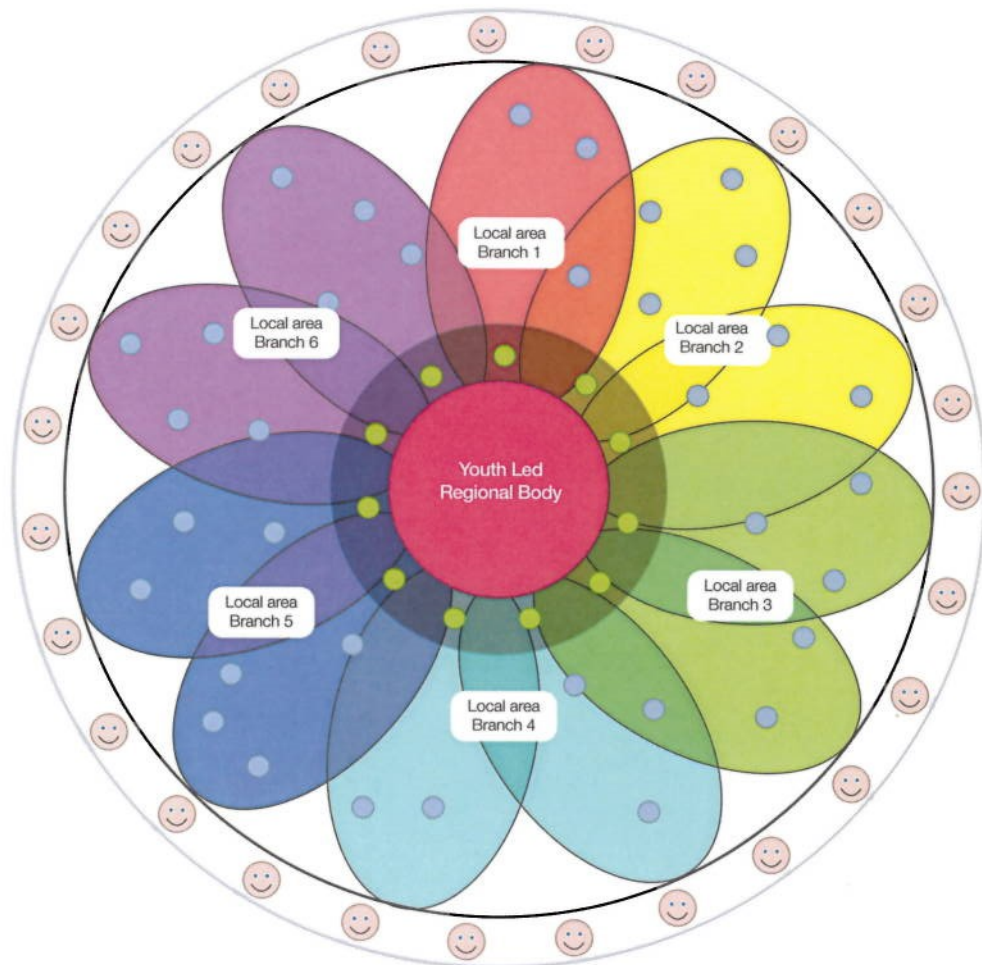
- Cycle of work commences based on above model leading to second Youth Festival and Assembly Sitting

Connections to grass roots and other models of participation:

This model is based on the NIYF Flower Model for regional youth participation. This approach ensures a connectedness between existing and emerging participation structures including:

- The Network for Youth (EA sponsored, NIYF lead);
- Local Authority Youth Councils and Community Planning;
- RVYO participation structures;
- Local participation structures;
- Young people not engaged in any youth work or participative practice.

The Flower Model:



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inner pink circle = Youth led regional body Outer circle = The youth population Green dots = The Government Inner shaded circle = NI Youth Assembly Blue dots = Local members 	<p>The local members consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual children and young people - Groups of children and young people - Youth and children's organisations that support children to have a voice - Youth participative structures such as youth councils, forums, committees etc. <p>The 11 ovals represent the proposed 11 different council areas. We propose that all but one of these (Belfast) are paired together reflecting the proposed ESA divisions.</p>
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Key



NI Youth Assembly – a vehicle for embedding and supporting sustainable devolved government in NI.

May 2018

Background:

Two decades on from the Good Friday Agreement, Young people in NI continue to feel effects of political instability, sectarianism and conflict. Paramilitaries continue to tax and recruit our youths; and minority groups continue to suffer inequality.

The absence of a Bill of Rights further exacerbates inequalities in NI. Young people have, for many years, argued from a rights based perspective and recently called on the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child to take action to ensure young people develop a greater knowledge of their rights.

Despite these things NI has a vibrant voluntary sector which, for decades, has worked to overcome inequality and bring about peace in NI.

Young people are routinely asked their views on issues that affect them and are encouraged to participate in consultations as part of the policy making process. However, this is often tokenistic, with the rhetoric rarely reflecting the reality. Young people are tired of putting forward their views time and time again only to be ignored and can see that what they put forward is rarely reflected in policy.

Following the Good Friday Agreement young people began to ask questions with regards to the establishment of participative and democratic structures that could meet their needs and that were reflective of the institutions set up in 1998. Around 12 years ago young people began a lobby for a NI Youth Assembly.

Young people are of the view that not only would the establishment of a Youth Assembly be seen as the delivery of one aspect of young people's rights as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 12); but it would also be a means to an end in that it would help to embed a non sectarian political culture which would be inclusive transparent and responsive.

A Youth Assembly would have far reaching outcomes; the Youth Forum continues to Lobby and have developed a model that has the potential to have transgenerational impact. We have piloted various aspects of this model and have witnessed remarkable outcomes.

Unfortunately our Government continues to ignore the will of young people and has played a proverbial game of ping pong with the concept, pushing it from one department to another claiming that there are no resources available to fund such an initiative.

According to Humphries, Macartan and Jeremy M. Weinstein, (American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 52, No. 2, April 2008, p.447) young people who do not feel represented or supported by any political party are two – three times more likely to join violent movements, voluntarily or involuntarily. Within this context Leadership and Civic Engagement are essential elements in working towards a society free from conflict. This ethos influences our work greatly as we aspire to motivate; support and inspire young people to participate in participative democracy and social justice projects at local; sub regional; regional and international levels.

When young people are provided with an opportunity to engage in civic action, research has indicated they are engaged as active citizens and are encouraged to make a positive contribution to their communities and to society. Additionally, it enhances young people's perceived competence for civic action and they rated themselves more likely to get involved in a community issue in the future. Furthermore, it has been put forward that engaging in civic action can be a means of connecting young people with their communities and receiving positive feedback from them (Brady & Canavan et al, 2012).

An evaluation carried out by NUI Galway of the Civic Engagement programme found that young people who participated in the programme are more likely to get involved in a community issue in the future than those who had not taken part and youth awareness of social issues in the community increased.

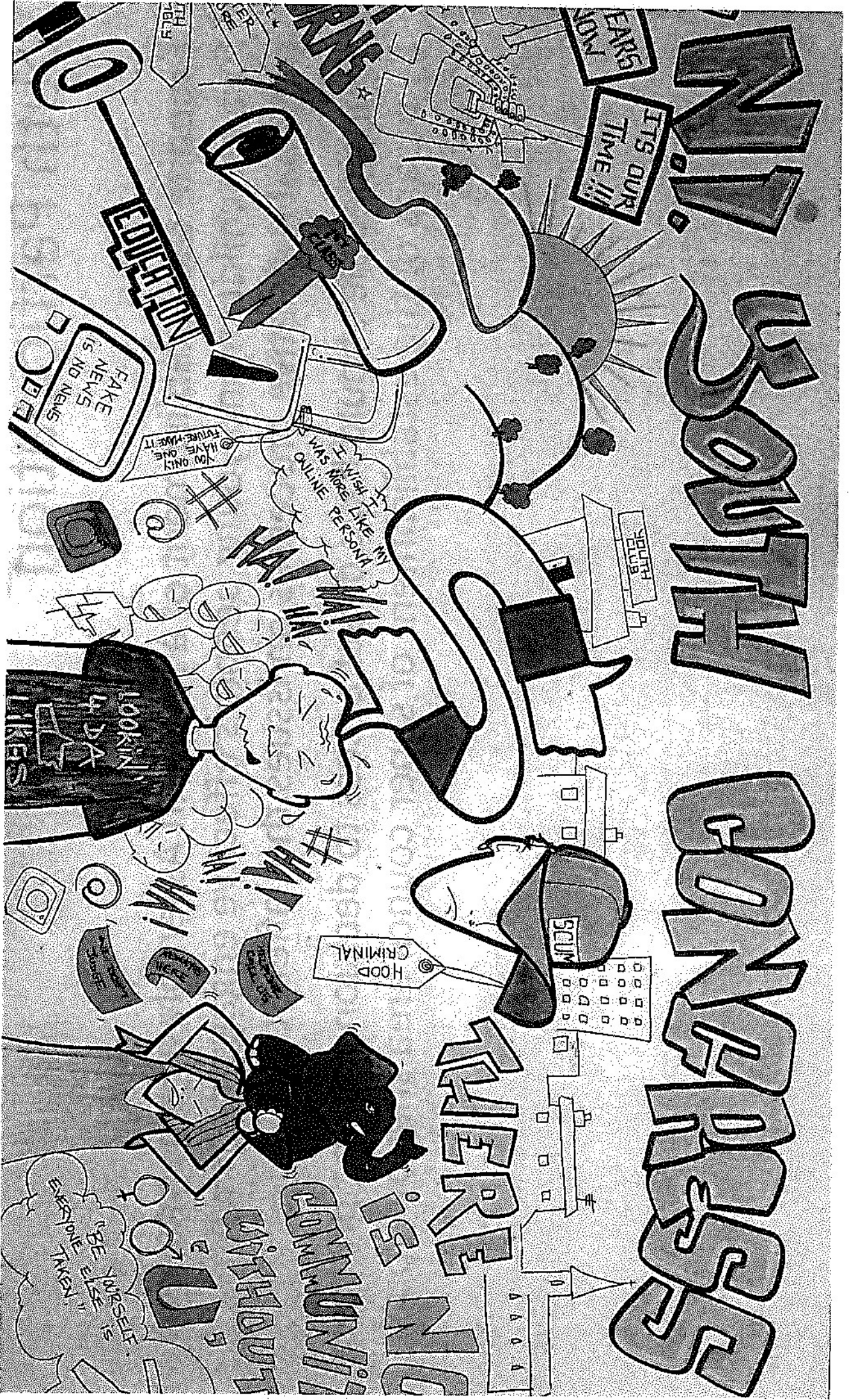
Examples of Good Practice:

Our experience has shown us that through a youth participation Young people will experience inclusive, non-sectarian participatory politics. The establishment of a Youth Assembly would accelerate this significantly leading to a culture of participative democracy embedded from age 11.

A Youth Assembly will ensure that Young people's voices will be strengthened significantly. Young people continue to be routinely discriminated against – this was reflected when the Stormont Executive attempted to pass anti age discrimination legislation which would have discriminated against those aged under 16.

We would argue that young people are one of the most marginalised groups in society with inequality between the young and the old apparent on multiple basis such as social; economic; educational; rights and health.

Our model for regional youth participation offers an opportunity to build social capital and inclusivity. Our model has the ability to reach out and support young people who the most 'marginalised of marginalised'; encourages social mobility; cross community and cross social class working and provides opportunities for young people to engage directly in the policy making process via a direct connection to the NI Assembly & Westminster Government.



NI Youth Congress - Manifesto 2018

Youth Participation

- Expedite the establishment of a NI Youth Assembly as a permanent fora for children and young people's effective engagement with national legislative processes on issues that affect them
- Young people should have direct access to decision-making processes by means of the establishment of super council area shadow youth councils

Mental Health

- The NI Executive to increase investment in Mental Health services to reflect the needs of young people.
- Public spending on mental health services in NI to be increased to reflect health needs of young people in the region.
- A minimum standard of Mental Health support services to be implemented across formal education sector
- A full review of statutory mental health services in NI
- The establishment of positive mental health modules in the curriculum.

Social Media

- NI Executive to develop a 'Social Media policy' that safeguards Children and Young People online.
- Public service providers (i.e. PSNI) to refrain from demonising young people on social media platforms.
- Social Media news networks and providers to refrain from demonising young people on social media platforms.
- Educational sector to develop and implement programmes which specifically focus on cyber-bullying awareness raising.
- Statutory/community and voluntary sectors to develop educational programmes that provide young people and communities with skills to utilize social media for campaigning and advocacy purposes.

Community & Youth Provision

- NI Executive to ensure that all communities are adequately funded in relation to youth facilities.
- Young people should have direct access to decision-making processes by means of the establishment of super council area shadow youth councils
- Mapping exercise to identify facilities and services for potential youth zone sites
- Development of 'Youth Zones' to ensure young people have increased access to free opportunities at a local level.

Anti-Discrimination

- NI Executive to ensure the implementation of right-based legislation to protect minority groups.
- The implementation of a rights-based stand-alone Irish Language act
- The implementation of a rights-based LGBTQI+ policy act
- Rights-based education and training to be made available for young people at local level through statutory agencies
- Rights-based education and training to be made available for young people at local level through community and voluntary sector agencies
- A review of race-relations legislation to reflect diversification of NI society

Education

- NI Executive to develop an Educational policy that reflects 21st century young people in NI
- Full review including consultation with young people of all NI school curriculums to ensure relevancy of subjects to young people growing up in the 21st century.
- Development of more vocational opportunities at GCSE level.
- Full review of the transition process of post primary education.
- A full review of the NI education budget with an emphasis on increasing resources.
- Campaign of work in partnership with key stakeholders to combat exam stress and unnecessary pressures on young people (and teachers) to measure success based on exam results – a more holistic approach to how we view education.

A new Youth Assembly for Wales?

A comparative exploration into the best practice elements of 17 youth parliaments in the UK, Europe and globally

By Rhian Croke
Human Rights Wales

October 2015

Report commissioned by the Board of Trustees of the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales

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Contents

1. Context	4
2. Objective	4
3. Methodology	4
4. Key findings	
4.1 Introduction	5
4.2 The main aims of national youth parliaments	6
4.3 Age ranges	7
4.4 Term of office	10
4.5 Number of young elected representatives by country	11
4.6 Election/selection of the young people to the youth parliament	11
4.7 Representation of the most vulnerable and marginalised young people	18
4.8 Oversight and funding	22
4.9 Influencing national policy making, speaking out collectively on issues chosen by young people and working with Members of Parliament	28
4.10 Monitoring the implementation of the UNCRC and reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child	35
5. Analysis and recommendations for a new Youth Assembly for Wales	39
6. A new Youth Assembly for Wales: the recommended model	50
7. Appendices	
(i) Funky Dragon model	
(iii) Northern Ireland Context	
(v) List of Youth Parliament Websites	

1. Context

Funky Dragon, the peer-led, children and young people's assembly for Wales lost its core funding in 2013. The organisation ceased to be operational on 30th October 2014. The Trustees of Funky Dragon, now known as the *Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales* are continuing to meet with a view to exploring how a replacement peer-led, representative national platform for young people aged 11-25 years might be re-established in Wales. At a later date, *the Children and Young People's Assembly* will research options for a Children's Assembly 5-11 years which would ideally sit alongside the *Youth Assembly for Wales*. To determine the best way forward, the Trustees have commissioned this study to identify good practice models for a new Youth Assembly for Wales and thereafter propose to undertake a national consultation with young people and other key stakeholders to agree a preferred option.

2. Objective

To identify a model for a new *Youth Assembly for Wales* based on existing good practice. The Trustees set a number of criteria for judging the new model, namely:

- Representatives must be democratically elected at a local level by their peers from across all of Wales.
- The governance structure must support a peer-led approach, e.g. with a mix of young people and professionals as Trustees.
- The structure must provide support for children and young people to speak out collectively, on issues of their choice.
- The platform must as a priority, enable children and young people to influence policy making in Wales at a national level.
- The platform must be independent and able to work with all Elected Members including Assembly Members and Members of Parliament to further children and young peoples' issues.
- The model must support children and young people in Wales to report directly to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and to be active partners in monitoring the implementation of the UNCRC in Wales.

3. Methodology

- A list of key experts' contact details in the field of participation and youth parliaments was collated with advice from the Trustees. These experts were approached by email and/or telephone to assist in identifying best practice examples of youth parliaments in the UK, Europe and globally. Relevant published reports were also reviewed.

- A short list of nearly 20 examples of youth parliaments from the UK, Europe and globally was compiled and further enquiries made direct with the youth parliaments (where possible), supplemented by desk based research. Enquires with the most promising examples (17) focused on examining the strengths and weaknesses of these youth parliaments against the prescribed criteria of the Trustees.
- The information was then analysed to evidence the best models and/or the elements of models, to give further consideration to.
- Further work was then undertaken with the Board of Trustees to discuss the key findings and agree the shape and key elements of the best model for a new Youth Assembly for Wales.

4. Key findings

4.1 Introduction

There is limited comparative research on the subject of national youth parliaments only country specific information.¹ From this study it has become apparent that countries all over the world convene children's parliaments or youth parliaments at the national and sub-national levels. It is also evident that children's committees, councils, youth forms, and youth parliaments can mean different things in different contexts. What is clear is that there has been a significant increase in the number of national and local platforms since the 1990s for children and young people to learn about democracy and to have the opportunity to have their voices heard by key decision makers. In research conducted by the Inter-parliamentary Union that consists of 122 members, they discovered that there are national youth parliaments in 35 % of 100 member countries that responded to their questionnaire.² In one district alone in Southern India there are 7,000 'children's parliaments' – one in every village.³

This study identifies the learning from the practice of 17 national youth parliaments⁴ from across the world, that meet some of the criteria set by the Trustees of the *Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales*.

¹ Shepherd, M. & Patrikios, S. (2012) Making democracy work by Early Formal Engagement? A comparative exploration of Youth Parliaments in Europe. *Parliamentary Affairs 2012*

² Inter-parliamentary Union (2011) Youth participation in national parliaments

http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/youth_en.pdf. The Inter-parliamentary Union is the international organisation of Parliaments. It was established in 1889. It is the focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and co-operation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy. The UK is one of its 166 members. It supports the efforts of and works in close co-operation with the United Nations, whose objectives it shares and its headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland.

³ Inter-agency working group on children's participation (2008) Children as active citizens: a policy and programming guide. http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Children_as_Active_Citizens_A4_book.pdf

⁴ Northern Ireland currently does not have a youth parliament so is not included in this sample but a national consultation was held in 2011 regarding the need for a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly. Further detail is included in the appendices to this document.

So what is a national youth parliament? Some national youth parliaments are annual events, held in the national parliament for a number of days, providing an opportunity for children and young people to learn about the functions of parliament, governance and democracy with the aim of promoting greater electoral literacy and increasing young people's civic engagement. Other national youth parliaments involve young people being elected by their peers to be constituency representatives for tenures of up to three years. These elected representatives then work proactively to further the issues of importance to their local young people population, usually working with their constituency member of parliament over the time period, to try and influence local and national policy-making. The majority of national youth parliaments are non-partisan organisations with independence from party politics as a core feature of their identity.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child approves of national youth parliaments as mechanisms to support the implementation of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). To be in accordance with the UNCRC, a youth parliament should have,

“democratic and non-discriminatory election processes, the inclusion of all children at all levels of society, the choice of topics for discussion, due weight for the views of children in the form of feedback or using the recommendations to effect change, introducing the parliamentary process, a consistent and ongoing forum and legislative provision for the children’s parliament.”⁵

4.2 The main aims of national youth parliaments

The aims of national youth parliaments' vary around the world, but most exist to fulfil one or more of the following objectives:

- To provide an opportunity for young people to get their voices heard and listened to on issues that affect them.
- To provide a national mechanism for young people to speak directly and have their voices heard and listened to by government, parliament and other key decision makers.
- To act as a national platform for youth advocacy having a direct influence over national policy and legislation.
- To provide national platforms for the participation of young people in democracy creating stronger more inclusive countries that truly aim to empower young people by involving them in the decision making process.
- To enable young people to have a voice on the services, policies and issues that affect them.

⁵ Aisling, P (2013) Children and International Human Rights Law: The Right of the Child to be heard. Routledge. p.196

- To develop political education of young people, supporting and developing their understanding of democracy.
- To support young people’s personal development, including skills and confidence.
- To support the active, collective participation of children in decision making which concerns them using all the legal means and procedures at their disposal.
- To support the active participation of young people in the political life of the country and to help them become active and responsible citizens.

4.3 Age ranges

As illustrated in Table 1, the age range of children and young people is variable but largely concentrated on the teenage age group, with Scotland, Wales, Belgium, Australia, Canada and Pakistan extending beyond the age of 18 years and Finland, Bolivia and Yemen in this sample being the only countries with parliaments for children under 11 years.

Table 1: Age ranges of youth parliamentarian’s by country

Country	Age range
Wales	11-25 years
UK	11-18 years
Scotland	14-25 years
Ireland	12-17 years
Cyprus	12-18 years
Finland (children)	9-13 years
Belgium (Flemish speaking)	12-30 years
Belgium (French speaking)	16-30 years
Greece	17-20 years
Slovenia	13- 15 years
New Zealand	16-18 years
Pakistan	18-29 years
Australia	Depends on each State e.g. New South Wales 15-18 yrs and South Australia 16- 25
Canada	Approx 15- 21 years but depends on each province.
Yemen	10 -18 years
Zimbabwe	Students of school age (not clear exact age range)
Bolivia	12 and under for the Assembly & 13 -17 Senators in the Upper House

The *Children and Young People’s Assembly for Wales* Trustees proposed that a new *Youth Assembly for Wales* should have an age range of 11- 25 years based on the history of youth policy in Wales and a commitment to support vulnerable older young people.

However, international expert Harry Shier eloquently describes the complexity of this age criterion,

“I think there are issues that need closer examination. For example, I would be concerned that the setting of 11-25 as the target age-group obscures essential differences between those who already have full adult voting rights as electors of the Welsh Assembly but do not have rights under the UNCRC (18-25), and those who do not have adult voting rights, but do have UNCRC rights to call on in demanding voice and influence (11-17).”⁶

This position was furthered, by a staff member who supports the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) whose age criteria is 11-18 years,

“UKYP only covers 11-18 year olds. You could have a MYP also being a MP. We believe that once young people have the vote there are other channels to support them to have a voice in the political process and the issues of under 18 year olds and over 18 year olds are very different.”⁷

The Head of Citizen Participation, Play, Recreation and Culture for the Irish Government’s Department of Children and Youth Affairs who oversees the Irish Youth Parliament and National Executive, that has an age criteria of 12-17 years, added,

“When you reach the age of 18 you have so many more rights, all the rights of the adult. It is so important that the UNCRC does not get buried in the youth agenda at EU and international level and the rights of children and young people who are under the age of 18 are protected and promoted, its also not good practice to have 25 year olds and 11 year olds in the same room.”⁸

In a survey undertaken by the National Assembly for Wales in 2014, 60% of young people believed that there should be separate meetings for different ages.⁹

The Former Chief Executive of Funky Dragon commented;

“that it is challenging to go below the age of 11 years because it is difficult to have frank discussions relevant to teenagers with children present who are under 11. With regards to the upper age criterion it is about supporting those who experience the low end of the minimum wage, unemployment benefit and housing benefit also there is the funding issue that European funding is more likely to be available for the 15-25 age group, you are able to become a volunteer at 18 years of age so it is possible for this age group to support the younger age group, and this age group are

⁶ E-communication with Harry Shier, academic at Queens University Belfast.

⁷ Interview with staff member from the British Youth Council April 2015

⁸ Interview with Head of Citizen Participation, Play, Recreation and Culture for the Irish Government’s Department of Children and Youth Affairs, September 2015

⁹ National Assembly for Wales (2014) Your Assembly, Your Say, Your Way. <http://www.yourassembly.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/YOUTH-ENGAGEMENT-REPORT-E-smaller.pdf>

much more able to participate in work that involves travel to Europe or further a field.”¹⁰

In Scotland, 14 years is the age at which a young person can become a candidate for election for the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) and when the SYP consider the young person old enough to participate in the SYP process. However they do work with 11- 14 year olds, *“encouraging them to start thinking about becoming a part of politics and consider that in the next 2 year elections they will be able to stand”* and from the age of 12 years young people can vote for their candidates. The upper age criterion of 25 years as in Wales, corresponds to Scottish Youth Policy. In a report carried out by Professor John Curtice from Strathclyde University argues,

“The Scottish Youth Parliament must address the mismatch between those it purports to represent and those who participate in elections. The organisation must make it a priority to engage young people over the age of 18 and/or give serious consideration to reducing its upper age limit, possibly to 21.”¹¹

A SYP staff member said they have decided to continue to try to engage this age group, because of the principles and values of youth policy in Scotland and have for example developed stronger relationships with the National Union of Students, working with them collaboratively over the cycle of the referendum. *“16 – 18 year olds are so much more engaged with the political process because they are usually still in school or college, or youth clubs. The turn out for 18-24 year olds has been a problem.”* SYP has decided to keep the upper age of 25 years with a view to reviewing it in the future.

The Northern Ireland national survey on the development of a youth assembly, was inconclusive on the age range, the Youth Panel¹² debated this issue at length and considered a range of views on the availability and capability of the various age groups. The Panel recommended the following age range:

“(a) Minimum Applicant Age – 15. The Panel felt this was the suitable lower limit, as it is when young people begin GCSEs, which are essentially a young person’s first formal “qualification.” The Panel’s opinion is that at 15, young people are able to maturely rationalise their opinions and efforts for a Youth Assembly.

(b) Maximum Applicant Age – 20. In practice, with the two year term, this would mean the oldest possible MYA would be 22. The Panel felt that this was the eldest age at which a Youth Assembly would still be relevant to young people; beyond this age most young people are moving into a career from apprenticeships/ universities – that is, an age where they can be more singularly served by the N.I. Assembly.”¹³

¹⁰ Interview with Former Chief Executive of Funky Dragon and International Children’s Rights Advocate and Consultant.

¹¹ SYP Elections Commission “ Young choices: the future of elections to the Scottish Youth Parliament” Final Report – August 2012

<http://www.syp.org.uk/img/ElectionsCommission/SYP%20Elections%20Commission%20Report.pdf>

¹² For further detail on the Northern Ireland context please see appendix 1

¹³ With regards to the development of a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly, a detailed report was carried out in 2011¹³ by a Youth Panel brought together by the Northern Ireland Assembly outlining a proposal for the creation

Also of vital importance to this debate is the fact that the National Assembly for Wales has recently consulted on reducing the voting age to 16 years. It is possible that a reduction of the voting age, from 18 to 16 could happen in Wales.¹⁴ In this sample and as is outlined later in this report, the small country of Slovenia, like Wales, has taken proactive steps to embed children's rights into policy, legislation and practice and has a voting age of 16 years.

Based on this feedback and analysis, the age criterion of a new *Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales* should be given further consideration by the Trustees.

4.4 Term of office

Table 2: Term of office

Country	Term of office
Wales	2 years
UK	1-2 years
Scotland	2 years
Ireland	200 young people are elected from local youth councils for a biennial one-day youth parliament event. 31 representatives, one young person, elected from each youth council serve a 2 year term.
Cyprus	2 years
Finland	2 years
Belgium (Flemish speaking)	3 years
Belgium (French speaking)	2 years
Greece	1 year
Slovenia	1 year
New Zealand	8 months
Pakistan	1 year
Australia	Varies state to state but usually residential camps in the summer holidays
Canada	Varies province to province e.g. BC 1 month
Yemen	2 years
Zimbabwe	1 year
Bolivia	1 year

Representatives of youth parliaments who are elected usually have a longer term in office than those who are selected by elites.¹⁵ In Belgium (French speaking), Finland, Yemen, Cyprus, Scotland and historically in Wales, the term of office is two years; the UK Youth Parliament is one to two years depending on the area. Representatives in Greece, Pakistan and Slovenia hold office for 12 months. Ireland runs a hybrid system where 200 young people are elected for a bi-ennial one-day event while 31 representatives form a national executive. One young person is elected from each

of a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly. Assembly Youth Panel (2012) Towards a Youth Assembly for Northern Ireland. <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/visit-and-learning/youth-assembly/youth-panel-report/>

¹⁴ <http://www.yourassembly.org/whats-happening-assembly/current-work/vote16/>

¹⁵ Shepherd & Patrikios (2012) Making democracy work by Early Formal Engagement? A comparative exploration of Youth Parliaments in Europe. *Parliamentary Affairs* 2012

youth council to serve a two year term which includes monthly meetings. The Belgium Flemish Youth Council young representatives have the longest term of three years. In Australia and Canada they run residential camps ranging from a few days to a number of months.

4.5 Number of young elected representatives by country

Table 3 sets out the number of elected representatives in the 17 youth parliaments in the sample. The number of young elected representatives in most countries closely mirrors the number of parliamentarians in the lower or main national legislative chamber, for example, UK, Finland, New Zealand, Bolivia, Greece, Slovenia, Zimbabwe Ireland and Cyprus. In Scotland and Ireland and historically in Wales there are more young people elected representatives than adult members of parliament. In Pakistan there are less. In the Belgian Flemish Community 12 young people (under the age of 25 years) and 12 youth workers are elected representatives with voting rights but there is no limit on the amount of young people who can attend the General Assembly.

Table 3: Number of young elected representatives

Country	Number of elected representatives
Wales	100
UK	369
Scotland	Up to 200
Ireland	200 young people for biennial event, 31 form national executive
Cyprus	80
Finland (children)	380
Belgium (Flemish speaking)	12 young people and 12 youth workers
Belgium (French speaking)	68
Greece	300
Slovenia	100
Pakistan	240
New Zealand	120
Australia	Varies according to each state
Canada	Varies according to each province
Yemen	50
Zimbabwe	210
Bolivia	130

4.6 Election/selection of the young people to the youth parliament

According to the criteria of the *Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales* Trustees, representatives must be democratically elected by their peers at a local level from across all of Wales. This is in line with Article 12 and Article 2 of the UNCR.

Practice in some youth parliaments the sample does not match this particular criteria but they have been included in this analysis because their practice matches other criteria within the set agreed by the Board of Trustees. Those who clearly did not match the criteria were French-speaking Belgium, Greece and Zimbabwe¹⁶ where selection is based on written skills, letters in Belgium and on-line essays in Greece, speech writing and public speaking in Zimbabwe. This practice rather obviously discriminates in favour of young people who are successful academically and discriminates against those who may be academically weaker but may feel strongly on many issues and are potentially better representatives of their peers. Article 12 and Article 13 of the UNCRC indicate that children should be supported through other forms to express their views particularly if they are unable to express themselves orally or for other reasons.

Many national youth parliament delegates are appointed by elected members or officials at the national or local level as the following examples illustrate,

New Zealand Youth Parliament

Young people, aged 16 – 18 years, from around New Zealand are chosen by their local (electorate or list) Member of Parliament (MP) to be a Youth Member of Parliament (Youth MP). There is no set process for an MP to select their Youth MP. Youth MP's are independent, as opposed to belonging to a parliamentary party.¹⁷

Pakistan Youth Parliament

In Pakistan selection interviews are carried out by the Youth Parliament's adult steering committee.¹⁸

British Columbia Youth Parliament

Members of the British Columbia Youth Parliament (BCYP) are not elected to the Youth Parliament. Instead, potential members apply for the limited number of available positions. Applicants must be nominated by an organisation that supports youth activities (i.e. community, school, or church club or group). The applicants are then selected by a committee made up of representatives of the Senate and the BCYP cabinet. The selection committee attempts to ensure that all parts of the province are represented. This includes selecting at least one applicant from each of the electoral districts for the actual provincial legislature (subject to there being an applicant from that electoral district). At the December sitting, all members are assigned to an electoral district. Members who come from an electoral district that is over-represented (usually from one of the larger urban centres) may be assigned an electoral district from which no applications were submitted. Otherwise, some electoral districts may have two or more members.¹⁹

¹⁶ <http://zimbabweyouthcouncil.org/new/?p=179>

¹⁷ <http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/features/00NZPHomeNews201305161/youth-parliament-mps-announced>

¹⁸ http://www.youthparliament.pk/Selection_Process.asp

¹⁹ <http://www.bryp.org/>

Australia

Australia has a YMCA sponsored youth model parliament programme.²⁰ There is a YMCA youth parliament in every Australian state and territory. The first Australian Youth Parliament was held in Brisbane in 1963, based on the American "YMCA Youth and Government" concept. Participants generally represent their local member of Parliament or Member of the Legislative Council. In many of the states the participants cover the burden of the costs of being involved in the youth parliament.

Finland Children's Parliament

The Finnish Children's Parliament comprises of approximately 380 children aged 9-13 years who are nominated by municipalities, currently representing 60% of the municipalities in Finland.²¹ *"Finnish municipalities have the right to appoint one official member and one deputy representative to the Parliament."*²²

However, in a number of other youth parliaments, young people representatives are elected by their peers on to the national youth parliament as illustrated in the following examples,

Cyprus Children's Parliament

In the Cyprus Children's Parliament young people are elected by district electoral assemblies which consist of delegates nominated by the pupil's councils of secondary schools and of non-school delegates (up to 10%) who apply for membership.²³

Bolivia

The children and adolescents themselves choose their representatives, who are elected from local grassroots groups and organisations. Later, these children take part in municipal and departmental events and elections, and finally arrive at the National Child and Adolescent Parliament.²⁴

Slovenia²⁵

The Children's parliament in Slovenia is regarded as unique because the electoral processes begin once each child starts school and therefore captures all children in Slovenia. The work is mainly organised within 'home class communities' where half an hour a week is allocated within the school curriculum and legislated for under the Primary School Act. There is an official *Rules on the Rights and Duties of Primary School Pupils*, issued by the Minister for Children which obligates all school head teachers to provide the opportunity for children's parliaments to occur in schools twice a year involving all classes of the school. Once the children's parliament has

²⁰ <http://ymca.org.au/Pages/Home.aspx>

²¹ Finnish Children's Parliament Foundation Response to the Consultation on a European Commission's Communication on the Rights of the Child (2011-2014)

²² <http://valhalla.norden.org/news-archive/the-finnish-childrens-parliament-takes-a-stand-on-vital-issues>

²³ Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children
<http://www.pccpwc.org/en/Children%20Parliament.html>

²⁴ http://www.unicef.org/bolivia/protection_participation_8685.htm

²⁵ Slovenian example taken from Parkes, Aisling (2013) Children and International Human Rights Law. Routledge.

been concluded in the classroom the children then elect the young person who they think should represent their class in the children's parliament of the school.

This then spans out to the regional level, where community children's parliaments elect representatives from the many school parliaments. Instead of teachers in attendance there is the mayor and the municipal council's representatives. From this level, young people are then elected to attend the national children's parliament which is held annually in the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia.

According to Parkes 2013,

*"the structure [in Slovenia] has become an invaluable source of expression and has facilitated open and free communication between children, young people and teachers at one level but more predominantly between school children and state representatives at another level."*²⁶

Funky Dragon²⁷

Historically, in Wales, the Grand Council, the main body of Funky Dragon, comprised approximately 100 young people: 4 from each of the 22 unitary authorities in Wales²⁸ and 12 co-option seats for other organisations. The co-option seats were available for election at Funky Dragon's annual general meeting, usually held in July. The seats were detailed as follows. Statutory Sector: 22 places. Voluntary Sector: 22 places, School Councils: 22 places, Equality: 22 places. Members of the grand council were also elected onto the management committee where a chair was elected.

Each local authority wide youth forum was offered four places. It was up to each forum to democratically elect their representatives. Representatives were asked to commit to a two year term with the Grand Council.

Each local authority wide forum was responsible for carrying out its own election process. The only conditions Funky Dragon put on the process were:

- The young people involved were aged between 11 and 25 years.
- The election must be a fair and democratic process.
- Only young people were able to vote.
- One young person should represent the statutory sector e.g. youth clubs, social services etc.
- One young person should represent the voluntary sector e.g. local charities, uniformed group, young farmers etc.
- One young person should represent the local school councils.

²⁶ Aisling (2013) Children and International Human Rights Law: The Right of the Child to be heard. Routledge.

²⁷ For further detail on the Funky Dragon model please see Appendix 1

²⁸ Note there is statutory requirement for Local Authorities to have a Country Youth Forum under the Children and Families Measure (2010) The Children and Young People's Participation guidance, issued under the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, states that the opportunities for children and young people as individuals to participate, should be integrated into day to day services as well as specific participation structures such as forums for children, forums for young people, or groups/forums which represent children and young people who are marginalised, vulnerable or have a special interest in a particular issue. It also states that there must be a County Youth Forum - a representative body of young people to act as a channel for young people's views across their local authority and to represent those views to local and national decision-making bodies.

- One young person should represent young people from specific interest groups. [These were: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT), Disability, Young carers, Looked After, Black and Minority Ethnic, Homeless, Been in the juvenile justice system, Long term health problems (not disabled)].

UK Youth Parliament

The UK Youth Parliament runs annual or biennial youth elections, using the first-past the post system at the local education authority level, with the number of places based on population per constituency (the authority area). The number of Members of Youth Parliament (MYP) allocated to each constituency varies depending upon the number of young people who live in that area. Elections generally take place between December and February each year. Over the past couple of years over one million young people have voted in UKYP elections. As a staff member of the UKYP explained,

“In England young people are either elected indirectly via the elected youth councils or directly in the local constituency. Young people find information out about the candidates principally via their schools if it is through the direct route. In England half are elected via the elected youth councils half elected through direct elections...

Young people are usually elected on a local issue they want to change – it is very challenging to make the change in one year. We have to support the MYP to realise that when they start their term. I would recommend a 2 year cycle, some of our members are on a one year cycle and some are on a 2 year cycle.”²⁹

UKYP recognises the regional and national boundaries of the UK, as defined by the Westminster Government, and has developed a regional group supported by a Regional Coordinator in each of the nine English regions. Historically, agreements have been developed, or are in development, with relevant agencies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (the Scottish Youth Parliament, Funky Dragon – Wales, and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum) to ensure the young people in those areas are represented on UKYP.

Scottish Youth Parliament

In Scotland, local authority election coordinators decide on either first-past the post or Single Transferable Vote. An independent commission on the Scottish Youth Parliament Election process recommended that ‘*all territorial members of the Scottish Youth Parliament should be elected via a common process. That process should allow all eligible young people in an area to cast a vote*’.³⁰ This, the Commission reported would enhance the SYP’s standing as a national representative body.

There are 146 constituency Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP) with space for two MSYPs from each of the 73 Scottish Parliament constituencies.

²⁹ Interview with staff member of UKYP

³⁰ SYP Elections Commission “Young choices: the future of elections to the Scottish Youth Parliament” Final Report – August 2012
<http://www.syp.org.uk/img/ElectionsCommission/SYP%20Elections%20Commission%20Report.pdf>

Constituency MSYPs are elected through elections across Scotland's 32 local authority areas every two years. As a SYP staff member explains,

*"It is the 32 local authorities that really administer 32 elections. All happens at the same time. For example in Glasgow local authority area there are 12 MSYPs across 6 parliamentary constituencies. So Glasgow local authority develop a structure of support to support these MSYPs."*³¹

There are some parliamentary constituencies that cut across local authority boundaries but this is unusual and they have a process to support this. However, the SYP Electoral Commission, recommended, that

*"Future Scottish Youth Parliament elections should use local authority boundaries rather than Scottish Parliamentary constituencies, as the basis for its territorial elections. The number of MSYPs for each local authority should be proportional to the age relevant population, with larger local authorities divided into smaller electoral areas."*³²

The report outlined that this approach would,

*"avoid any instances where part of a constituency is disenfranchised, help to reduce the incidence of voters voting in the 'wrong' constituency because their school is located in a different area from the one in which they live, and would be expected to make it easier for local authorities to support the electoral process."*³³

This recommendation was not reached by consensus, there was deliberation on the importance of MSPs collaborating with their MSYPs which supports and enhances the MSYP's experience and their effectiveness and also fosters awareness among young people of how parliamentary elections are conducted. The Scottish Youth Parliament continues to elect their representatives according to Scottish Parliamentary constituency.

There are two categories of MSYPs, those directly elected by their constituents and those elected via voluntary organisations that support the representation of hard to reach, diverse groups. There are 54 voluntary organisation MSYPs with space for two MSYPs from each voluntary organisation that signs up to become a member of the Scottish Youth Parliament. Eight voluntary organisations are currently represented by MSYPs.

The SYP Elections Commission, to ensure a sound electoral process occurs, irrespective of the MSYP's route to membership, recommended that;

³¹ Interview with SYP staff member.

³² SYP Elections Commission "Young choices: the future of elections to the Scottish Youth Parliament" Final Report – August 2012

<http://www.syp.org.uk/img/ElectionsCommission/SYP%20Elections%20Commission%20Report.pdf>

³³ Ibid

“Any MSYPs nominated by youth-involving organisations should be required to conduct an internal election amongst its membership in accordance with rules agreed with the Scottish Youth Parliament.”³⁴

MSYPs are usually represented on local youth councils, so the local authority will support this and support them to feed into the local youth council about the work of the SYP. So they can hold the dual role of being elected to the SYP and elected to the youth council. The March 2015 Scottish Youth Parliament elections witnessed campaigning taking place across the country, with debates and hustings inspiring and engaging young people to become a part of the democratic process of voting for candidates to be elected to the youth parliament. As the SYP blog reports,

“Following almost three months of campaigning from young candidates across Scotland, young people aged 12-25 were asked to cast their vote to elect their local MSYP. Young people were able to cast their vote by submitting a paper ballot or using the secure e-Voting platform facilitated by Young Scot, depending on the method chosen by their local authority.

The elections were open for two weeks and held between Monday 2nd and Friday 13th March 2015. The results were announced at a series of events held by individual local authorities between Friday 13th March and Wednesday 25th March 2015, where many of the local authority Chief Executives acted as Returning Officers.”³⁵

The Scottish Youth Parliament has been described as a good example of transparency working in the election process.³⁶ The Scottish Youth Parliament can request documentary evidence to clearly demonstrate how the nominees were elected using an open and democratic process and strict rules are in operation.³⁷ The SYP Electoral Commission in 2012 did recommend that,

“the Scottish Youth Parliament should consider establishing a permanent Elections Implementation Board, with responsibility for overseeing and co-ordinating the conduct of future elections.”³⁸

Irish Youth Parliament

Dail na nÓg is the national youth parliament for 12-17 year-olds in Ireland. It is a biennial event, to which 200 representatives from the 31 Comhairle na nÓg or local councils are elected by their youth council peers to become delegates. The Department for Children and Youth Affairs funds and oversees Dáil na nÓg, which is hosted by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The topics discussed at Dáil na nÓg are chosen by young people themselves in the 31 Comhairle na nÓg. Recommendations from Dail na nÓg are followed-up by the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive which consists of 31 young people elected by their peers of the

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ <http://www.syp.org.uk/blog/2015/04/21/70000-votes-cast-in-scottish-youth-parliament-national-elections/>

³⁶ Aisling (2013) Children and International Human Rights Law: The Right of the Child to be heard. Routledge.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ SYP Elections Commission “ Young choices: the future of elections to the Scottish Youth Parliament” Final Report – August 2012
<http://www.syp.org.uk/img/ElectionsCommission/SYP%20Elections%20Commission%20Report.pdf>

Comhairle na nÓg youth councils, meeting monthly and supported by a steering group of national experts and policy makers for the following two years.³⁹

Yemeni Children's Parliament

Every two years, the Children's Parliament holds an election which follows democratic processes in accordance with Yemeni election laws. In the 2010 election, the Children's Parliament members increased from 38 children to 50 children, making it a body that represents all groups of children in Yemen, including: boys, girls, working children, orphans, children with disabilities, and children from minorities.

In April 2014, the Children's Parliament concluded their election for the period 2014-2016 in all Yemen. More than 30,000 students from 60 schools in Yemen participated in the election to vote for their candidate who will represent them in the Yemeni Children's Parliament. The election was launched by the Ministry of Education, government representatives, non-governmental representatives and the Media.⁴⁰

4.7 Representation of the most vulnerable and marginalised young people

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has recommended that state parties

*“ensure that the youth parliament is representative of all sectors of the State party's population, including children from distinct ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural groups”.*⁴¹

UK Youth Parliament

The UK Youth Parliament is composed of representatives aged between 11 and 18 years old (inclusive) from across the UK. UKYP particularly encourages the involvement of young people who are socially excluded, but also representation from established groups such as local youth councils.

The UK Youth Parliament explains that socially excluded children are represented naturally through the election process. e.g. children in care, disabled children, refugees.

“Out reach happens very successfully with the Make our Mark ballot which is about determining what young people's issues are. As part of this process, UKYP goes out to schools, Pupil Referral Units, special schools. Etc. This is how we reach marginalised groups.”

³⁹ Briefing on the work of the Citizen Participation, Play, Recreation and Culture Unit Department of Children and Youth Affairs, August 2008

⁴⁰ <http://www.yementimes.com/en/1653/report/2047/Children%E2%80%99s-Parliament-where-are-they-now.htm>

⁴¹ CRC/C/GRC/CO/2-3 para 31. a http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/co/CRC_C_GRC_CO_2-3.pdf

However, the UK Youth Parliament would like to be able to support some groups that require additional support,

“In terms of a change, the Scottish model that has some reserved seats for specific groups e.g. girl guides, we don’t have a problem for example regarding girls representation because 51% of our elected representatives are girls but we do have challenges with representing disabled groups but then we would require additional funding to be able to support them sufficiently.”⁴²

Scottish Youth Parliament

In the Scottish system there are two categories of MSYPs, those directly elected by their constituents and those elected via voluntary organisations that support the representation of hard to reach, diverse groups. There are 54 voluntary organisation MSYPs with space for two MSYPs from each voluntary organisation that signs up to become a member of the Scottish Youth Parliament. As a staff member from the SYP explains,

“Hard as we try via direct elections it is incredibly difficult to reach hard to reach groups. Local authorities work hard to reach these groups but the reserved places approach is still needed to support the representation of these groups and to ensure diversity.....

It is also a two way relationship with these organisations – they get their issues raised on a national platform via our programme of work and with other young people but it also provides SYP access to other networks to do their outreach and youth work activity. So SYP delivers youth work sessions on citizenship, politics democracy, children’s rights. As part of the lead up to the referendum SYP tried to increase young people’s interest in voter registration, what a polling booth will be like, what you can expect on the day etc. Bespoke sessions.”⁴³

Following the elections in spring 2011, they ran a session at the June Sitting to explore the demographic breakdown of those newly elected and re-elected MSYPs in attendance. Overall, the results of the census revealed their membership to be extremely reflective of Scotland's young people and the population as a whole.

Irish Youth Parliament

In Ireland, additional places are also made available for young people from Gaeltacht (Irish language speaking) areas as well as from seldom heard or minority groups.⁴⁴ Representation of some socially excluded groups such as disabled children, refugees, looked after children etc. are selected from representative organisations of which they are members.⁴⁵

⁴² Interview with British Youth Council, April 2015

⁴³ Interview with SYP staff member.

⁴⁴ Shepherd & Patrikios (2012) Making democracy work by Early Formal Engagement? A comparative exploration of Youth Parliaments in Europe. *Parliamentary Affairs* 2012

⁴⁵ Aisling (2013) Children and International Human Rights Law: The Right of the Child to be heard. Routledge p.199

Cyprus Children's Parliament

The Cyprus Children's Parliament reserve places: 1 Maronite-Cypriot, 1 Latin-Cypriot and 1 Armenian-Cypriot representing the three constitutionally recognized Cypriot minorities. The Greek Children's Parliament is attended by children from Greece and also children from Cyprus.⁴⁶

National Indigenous Parliament, Australia

In Australia, to mark the 50th anniversary of Indigenous Australians obtaining the right to vote, the Museum of Australian Democracy, YMCA, and Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) collaborated on a week long event in May 2012 for the first "National Indigenous Youth Parliament" (NIYP).⁴⁷

Yemeni Children's Parliament

In Yemen all governorates⁴⁸ are represented in the youth parliament; *"there are 48% girls and 52% boys, as well as the participation of 6 very creative children who have physical disabilities, which does not limit their right of expression and participation."*⁴⁹

Bolivia Child and Adolescent Parliament

In Bolivia, quotas and outreach work have helped diversify membership and ensure marginalised voices are heard.⁵⁰

Pakistan Youth Parliament

In Pakistan, the parliamentary sessions are generally patterned after the National Assembly of Pakistan in terms of its Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business. Efforts are made to facilitate representation of young females along with other segments of the society such as rural population, religious minorities, etc. roughly in the national proportion in the Youth Parliament Pakistan.⁵¹

Funky Dragon

In its 10+ year history Funky Dragon trialled a number of mechanisms for involving young people from minority groups. Latterly, the model used had one equality place for each of the 22 unitary authorities in Wales. In the Funky Dragon 2012-2013 report there was a detailed discussion regarding ensuring the representation of minority groups.

"There has been much debate around the former "equality" position on the Grand Council. The young people wanted to keep the philosophy of ensuring wider representation without creating any possible stigma they may come with specifically identifying a young person with an "equality" title. The Grand Council have decided

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ <http://www.aec.gov.au/indigenous/niyp/>

⁴⁸ A **governorate** is an administrative division of a country. It is headed by a governor.

⁴⁹ <http://www.yementimes.com/en/1653/report/2047/Children%E2%80%99s-Parliament-where-are-they-now.htm>

⁵⁰ National youth participation of youth around the world: A summary of report of findings from a young researchers' project. Plan International 2009 <http://www.plan-uk.org/what-we-do/childrens-voices/youth-advisory-panel/publications/byc-international-report/>

⁵¹ http://www.youthparliament.pk/About_YPP.asp

that as part of the election process in each Local Authority, there needs to be clear consideration of how the three reps can be responsible for representing different groups and young people within their local authority area. As such, they decided that one of the representatives should have specific responsibility for equality and for representing minority or 'specific interest' groups (LGBTQ, young carers, disabled young people, young people involved with the youth justice system, black and ethnic minority young people and young people living in care) for their area. The philosophy behind this decision by the Grand Council is to try to ensure and to demonstrate our support for minority representation from a local to a national level and so that we can continue to ensure that the young people who are elected as representatives on Funky Dragon represent as wide a range of their peers as possible. In order to support this process of change the Grand Council have requested that a member of Funky Dragon staff be present at all Local Authority elections. Funky Dragon staff should give a presentation on the roles be able to any answer questions and support the election process. They also decided that the election of Funky Dragon representatives without the presence of a Funky Dragon member of staff may not be recognised, unless non-attendance has been discussed and agreed beforehand. The Grand Council's decision is that if the local authority forum is not able to demonstrate how it will represent equality groups through this new structure we may call for a re-election on these grounds.”⁵²

Many of the selection systems for youth parliaments globally are via school and this does not support for the most part reaching the minority groups. As discussed below in relation to the Finnish model of participation,

“The involvement of disadvantaged children is not provided for in legislation or in selection processes for formal child and youth participatory structures. All formal participatory structures select children and young people via the school systems and in this way expect that they have equal chances to participate since all children attend an educational institution. In practice, there is no evidence that immigrant children, asylum-seeking children, minority children, disabled children, street children or other disadvantaged groups are equally represented in the existing participatory structures or participate in surveys and hearings (with the exception of surveys and interviews specifically targeting these groups). Examples of good practices in other countries have shown that the involvement of these children requires extra human and financial resources and does not happen simply because they attend a school. Children who do not attend school (for example, street children or school dropouts), even though this is a very small minority in Finland, need to be taken into account too.”⁵³

The evidence suggest that to realise the representation of minority or marginalised young people it is important to reserve places and to designate additional support and resources to encourage and sustain full involvement in the workings of the youth parliament and to ensure that a full range of voices are heard.

⁵² Funky Dragon Annual Report 2012-2013

⁵³ Child and Youth Participation in Finland: A Council of Europe Policy Review 2011 http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/participation/PolicyReview_en.pdf p.121

4.8 Oversight and funding

The Trustees of the *Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales* prescribe that a governance structure must deliver a peer-led approach, i.e. with elected young people working alongside professional advisers as Trustees and be a body that is independent from Government. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child states that,

*“children should be supported and encouraged to form their own child-led organisations and initiatives which will create space for meaningful participation and representation.”*⁵⁴

This is also supported by the Council of Europe Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 which emphasises the need to,

*“invest in non-governmental organisations directed by children and young people, as favourable spaces for learning about, and exercising, democracy and citizenship”.*⁵⁵

The majority of youth parliaments in this sample are funded by governments and often also part-funded by non-governmental organisations.

When it comes to oversight, most of the youth parliaments in the sample are either managed by adults or co-managed by young people and adults. Only a small minority can be described as youth-led organisations. Some youth parliaments are managed or overseen by parliamentary bodies (40% of youth parliaments in a study undertaken by the Inter-parliamentary Union have a formal affiliation with the national parliament⁵⁶) and governmental bodies. Other youth parliaments are joint initiatives between government and non-governmental organisations with a small minority being autonomous, charitable youth-led organisations although even these receive the majority of their funding from government, bringing into question how independent from government they actually are.

Please see below examples of the different support structures for youth parliaments represented in the sample,

New Zealand Youth Parliament

The New Zealand Youth Parliament is an initiative led by the Minister of Youth Affairs. The Minister works with a committee of her Parliamentary colleagues (representing every party in Parliament) to administer the Youth Parliament. The organisation of the youth parliament is overseen by a multi-party parliamentary steering committee.⁵⁷ A representative from each party represented in Parliament is invited to join the committee. The aim is to ensure non-partisan organisation of the

⁵⁴ CRC GC No.12, The right of the child to be heard, CRC/C/GC/12, July 2009

⁵⁵ Recommendation CM/Rec (2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18. <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1927229>

⁵⁶ http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/youth_en.pdf.

⁵⁷ <http://www.myd.govt.nz/documents/youth-parliament-/hansard-youth-parliament-17-july-2013.pdf>

youth parliament as well as active participation by all parties. The Ministry of Youth Development organises and promotes the annual event of the Youth Parliament, with the Minister of Youth Development being responsible for the event overall.

The Ministry of Youth Development works closely with other agencies within the parliamentary complex including the Office of the Speaker, Parliamentary Services and the Office of the Clerk of the New Zealand House of Representatives.⁵⁸

Irish Youth Parliament

In Ireland, the Citizen Participation Unit of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs of the Irish Government funds and oversees the Comhairle na nÓg (local youth councils) and the biennial Dáil na nÓg (national youth parliament).

Yemeni Children's Parliament

The Yemeni Children's Parliament is managed by both non-governmental organisations and government working together.

Greek Youth Parliament

In the case of the Greek Youth Parliament, the Hellenic Parliament Foundation *"is a private, non-profit organization within the Hellenic Parliament charged with fostering both the principles of Parliamentarism and Democracy and the participation of the Hellenic Parliament in the cultural, social, and educational life of the nation."*⁵⁹

Bolivian Child and Adolescent Parliament

The non-profit Bolivian Children's Alliance coordinates the organisation of the annual children's parliament with the Social Policy Commission and the Parliamentary Management Support Unit of the Chamber of Deputies.

Cyprus Children's Parliament

The Cyprus Children's Parliament is coordinated by a non-profit organisation called the Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

Slovenian Youth Parliament

Slovenian's Youth Parliament is coordinated by the non-profit organization called the Friends of Youth of Slovenia Association.

Australia, Canada, USA

In Australia, each state has a youth parliament which is coordinated by the non-profit organisation called the YMCA there is also a YMCA sponsored model youth parliament programme in the USA and historically in Canada.

Other youth parliaments are overseen by non-profit youth councils⁶⁰ for example, in Belgium (French), Belgium (Flemish), Zimbabwe and the UK youth parliaments. A

⁵⁸ Example drawn from <http://www.myd.govt.nz/young-people/youth-parliament/index.html>

⁵⁹ The Hellenic Parliament Foundation
<http://foundation.parliament.gr/central.aspx?sid=1061344193813231434741>

⁶⁰ Youth Councils are usually membership associations made up of youth organisations and groups of young people.

staff member from the European Youth Forum which is the platform of the national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations in Europe, commented,

*“What we have seen sometimes with youth parliaments is that they don't act on the positions they adopt....so we encourage structures that would act on behalf of the parliament.....I feel that youth parliaments are sometimes the creation of existing political structures who do not want an extra structure pushing them into action. Therefore I think the structures are sometimes weak in their establishment. As for what we would call for – we'd be interested in action...as many platforms calling for and implementing change as possible”.*⁶¹

Most youth councils receive the majority of their funding from national government. The examples below outline the Belgian (Flemish) and Belgian (French) and UK Youth Parliament structures that are supported by youth councils.

Conseil de la Jeunesse⁶²

The Belgian French Youth Council is composed of a General Assembly, a Board of Directors and a team of permanent workers. 15 young people from the General Assembly are elected to compose the Board of Directors, managing the main orientations of the youth council. A president and two vice-presidents (internal affairs and international affairs) are elected among the members of the Board of Directors. The Youth Council is managed on a day to day basis by a team of eight permanent workers. They implement the decisions taken by the General Assembly and the Board, offer a training course to young people about the participation processes and accompany them in the management of projects and support their approach to political lobbying.

Flemish Youth Council

The Flemish Youth Council is an unincorporated association. The current legal basis of the Flemish Youth Council is Article 7 of the Decree of 2012 which foresees the

*“establishment of a Youth Council and provides the current criteria for its functioning. Its objectives are “to provide advice on all matters affecting youth, on its own initiative, on request of the Flemish Government or on request of the Flemish Parliament, and to represent youth.”*⁶³

Every three years, the Flemish Youth Council elects a new Assembly, which consists of 12 individual youth and 12 youth workers. So members come from youth organisations and young individuals interested in participating in the youth council's work. At least one third of the 24 members have to be less than 25 years of age. All young people aged 12-30 years are able to cast their votes on site via e-ID. The 24 young people meet every first Wednesday of the month at the General Meeting. The meeting of the Flemish Youth Council is called the General Assembly (GA). The GA of the Flemish Youth Council meets monthly except in August. This meeting is open to

⁶¹ E-mail communication with staff member from European Youth Forum

⁶² <http://www.conseildelajeunesse.be/qui-sommes-nous/youth-council/>

⁶³ <https://vlaamsejeugdraad.be/>

all interested. It allows young people to participate in the meeting without voting rights. Only the elected members have voting rights.

“The funding of the Youth Council is defined through the Act on Flemish Youth and Children’s Rights Policy, which prescribes that between 1% and 2.5% of the distributed youth budget should be allocated to the Flemish Youth Council (this amounted E632, 000 in 2011 or 2.22% of the youth budget.”⁶⁴

UK Youth Parliament

The UK Youth Parliament is described as a youth-led organisation. Corporate and administrative governance is overseen by the Board of Trustees of the British Youth Council. The British Youth Council is the National Youth Council of the UK. A youth-led charity, empowering young people aged 25 and under to influence and inform the decisions that affect their lives. They support young people to get involved in their communities and democracy locally, nationally and internationally, making a difference as volunteers, campaigners, decision-makers and leaders.

BYC is an incorporated charity governed by a Memorandum and Articles, and a Rule Book. Their Board of 13 Trustees meets six times annually. The British Youth Council's Board of Trustees is a group of 13 young people aged 25 and under who are elected by BYC members at the Annual Council Meeting each year. As BYC's lead representatives they are responsible for guiding the strategic direction of BYC. The UK Youth Parliament is one of the projects of the BYC.

“£700,000 is the total amount it costs to run the UK Youth Parliament and we receive £285, 000 from the Cabinet Office. So this is 48% of the total amount. We have to raise the rest of it from trusts and grant making bodies, European funds and we receive some monies from local authorities.

“Even though we receive some of our funding from UK Government, we feel that we are independent because the young people choose the issues that they want to campaign on this is not influenced by Government locally or nationally.”⁶⁵

Other youth parliaments are non-profit or charitable organisations in their own right for example Funky Dragon and the Scottish Youth Parliament. Historically Funky Dragon was core funded by Welsh Government⁶⁶ and Scottish Youth Parliament continues to be core funded by the Scottish Government. Funky Dragon because it’s funding and organisation was linked to Welsh Government⁶⁷ and not the National Assembly has been criticised for being vulnerable to Welsh Government funding priorities, not engaging effectively with National Assembly back benchers and its independence thus called into question. The Scottish Youth Parliament perhaps because it is a model that runs down parliamentary constituency lines has not faced

⁶⁴ Youth Policy in Belgium: Council of Europe Youth Policy Reviews, p.28
https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/IG_Coop/YP_Belgium_en.pdf

⁶⁵ Interview with UKYP staff member.

⁶⁶ Funky Dragon received core funding from the Welsh Government from 2002 – 2014. In 2012 -13, Funky Dragon received £418,000 from the Welsh Government, as well as ESF funding of £326,000 and smaller amounts from other sources.

⁶⁷ The historical funding link between Welsh Government and Funky Dragon goes back to before the separation of powers of the corporate body of the Welsh Assembly and the Welsh Government.

such criticism. The governance arrangements of the Scottish Youth Parliament are outlined below,

Scottish Youth Parliament

The Scottish Youth Parliament is a non-profit youth led organisation.

“We are a young people’s parliament, designed by young people, led by young people and for the benefit of young people. The SYP is totally youth-led and all of our Trustees are 25 and under. We listen to and recognise the issues that are most important to young people, and ensure that by representing them at a national level their voices are heard by government and formal decision makers.”⁶⁸

“We don’t shy away from being critical of Scottish Government. They fund us to get the direct views of children and young people. Very often we don’t agree with Scottish Government. We frequently push for amendments in legislation.”⁶⁹

The Scottish Youth Parliament is governed by a Board of Trustees who meets 6 times per annum and is made up of 7 MSYPs including the Chair and Vice-Chair and up to 4 external members who act as professional advisors to the Trustees. All members of the Board are aged between 16 and 25 years of age. An MSYP, who can demonstrate their commitment to the organisation at a strategic level, can apply to become a Trustee. Trustees are elected by MSYPs at their annual AGM held each June.

To support the work of their MSYPs, the Scottish Youth Parliament employs a staff team based in its Edinburgh office, although MSYPs also receive support from local youth workers. The SYP staff team in Edinburgh provides support when MSYPs represent the SYP in any media activity, national projects, groups and/or events. The central staff team comprises: a Chief Executive, a Projects Team (Events Officer, Projects Officer, Finance Executive); a Youth Engagement Team (Youth Engagement Co-ordinator, Youth Engagement Workers X2); a Public Affairs Team (Public Affairs Co-ordinator (Policy and Research), Parliamentary and Campaigns Officer, Communications Officer). As the SYP Elections Commission notes,

“SYP’s primary support network at a local level remains the Community Learning and Development departments in Scotland’s local authorities; in practice, the organisation has built up a network of ‘Local Co-ordinators’ in each local authority area. Local Co-ordinators are responsible for running SYP elections in their area, including providing training and support to individual candidates, and for supporting, including acting as in loco parentis, their local MSYPs at Sittings of the Parliament and other meetings they may attend. Internal SYP research with those who support Members of the SYP indicates that a typical Local Co-ordinator spends between 2-5 hours a week undertaking work relating to the Parliament.

The SYP does not provide funding to the local authorities for performing these services, relying on local youth services within local authorities to recognise the benefits to the young people in their area of participating in the work of the SYP. The natural consequence of this is that the level and quality of support – and even

⁶⁸ <http://www.syp.org.uk/who-we-are-W21page-66->

⁶⁹ Interview with SYP staff member.

*participation at all - vary greatly from area to area. Currently three of Scotland's 32 local authorities do not send and support representatives to the SYP. Only one local authority has never done so.'*⁷⁰

The Scottish Youth Parliament receives core funding from Scottish Government approximately £320, 000 which equates to two thirds of their total funding. This funds eight members of staff, all national sittings, the work of all staff teams, campaigns materials, external communications and publications, travel for staff and young people and rent for head quarters. Other funding from grants supports project work and commissions for specific pieces of work. The SYP submits a business plan every project cycle to the Scottish Government 'Rights and Participation' Team and is accountable in a number of ways, as a SYP spokesperson explains,.

*"Ultimately the Scottish Youth Parliament is accountable to the young people of Scotland. Our board of trustees are responsible for the organisation and the work that we do. For quality assurance and impact measurement we are accountable to our funders and are inspected by Education Scotland (similarly to schools and community learning and developments). Education Scotland is currently reviewing the framework that we are assessed against and a new framework called "How Good is Our Third Sector Organisation" will be released later in the year."*⁷¹

The Scottish Youth Parliament also has a strong working relationship with the Scottish Children and Young People's Commissioner (SCCYP) meeting with SCCYP colleagues once a week to join up respective policy development and advocacy work. Historically Funky Dragon worked collaboratively with the Children's Commissioner for Wales and other Commissioners. This is also the case with the Finnish Children's Parliament.

Evidence from this study suggests that support and partnerships from key decision making bodies such as Children's Commissioners, other Commissioner's, non-governmental organisations, parliamentary or governmental bodies, youth councils are critical to the success of youth parliaments. The wider literature on participation suggests that policy change and influence over decision-making is more likely to be achieved if youth forums can count on adult support and facilitation.⁷²

⁷⁰ SYP Elections Commission "Young choices: the future of elections to the Scottish Youth Parliament" Final Report – August 2012

<http://www.syp.org.uk/img/ElectionsCommission/SYP%20Elections%20Commission%20Report.pdf>

⁷¹ E-mail communication with SYP staff member.

⁷² Crowley, A. (2015) Is anyone listening? The impact of children's participation on public policy. *International Journal of Children's Rights* 23(3):571-590.

Shier, H et al (2014) How children and young people influence policy makers: lessons from Nicaragua. *Children and Society*. 28: 1-4.

4.9 Influencing national policy making, speaking out collectively on issues chosen by young people and working with Members of Parliament

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is clear that children's views must not only be listened to, but also considered and acted upon, and feedback provided on the outcomes and impact of their contribution.⁷³ A study by the University of Colorado found that youth participation organisations in the UK needed to '*tackle the unintentional practice of tokenism.*' The paper concluded that '*failing to act upon [young people's] opinions or take them very seriously*' once they are identified is often a cause of frustration amongst participants.⁷⁴ Funky Dragon shared this frustration as only a limited number of their evidence based recommendations from the research project "*Our Rights: Our Story*" reported to the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child in 2008 and reflected in the UN Committee's Concluding Observations to the UK State party, were addressed or acted upon.⁷⁵

The Former Chief Executive of Funky Dragon and International Children's Rights Advocate commented,

*"to have an impact over policy there needs to be a Minister keen to listen and to implement change and officials motivated to deliver who understand the importance of children's voice."*⁷⁶

A UK Youth Parliament staff member expressed a similar view,

*"Influencing national policy making, our success depends very much on the issue and the government that is in at the time. If it doesn't fit with the political party agenda it is difficult to get the change."*⁷⁷

It is clear that some youth parliaments fail to fulfil the central function of transferring youth voice into the political arena and consequently fail to have an impact on national policy and legislation.⁷⁸ However, this study found exceptions to this rule with examples where young people's voices have been heard and acted upon. These examples illustrate how youth parliaments can be a vehicle for change. What seems absolutely critical to the success of a youth parliament is that it plays a legislative and policy impacting role and not just a symbolic one.

There are many different strategies that youth parliaments use to influence national policy and legislation, from manifestos, evidence-based surveys, responding to government consultations, annual sittings that are held in national chambers, draft

⁷³ CRC GC No.12, The right of the child to be heard, CRC/C/GC/12, July 2009

⁷⁴ (Middleton, Emily (2006). Youth Participation in the UK: Bureaucratic Disaster of triumph for child rights. *Children, Youth and Environments* 16(2): 11.

⁷⁵ The work across several portfolios is reported in Funky Dragon's annual report 2012 – 13, in which a limited number of impacts are noted, for example on drawing up a code of behaviour for public transport. http://www.funkydragon.org/files/1313/9324/6882/Funky_Dragon_Annual_Report_2013.pdf

⁷⁶ Interview with Former Chief Executive and International Children's Rights Advocate and Consultant, May 2015

⁷⁷ Interview with staff member of British Youth Council who supports the work of the UK Youth Parliament

⁷⁸ Shepherd & Patrikios (2012) Making democracy work by Early Formal Engagement? A comparative exploration of Youth Parliaments in Europe. *Parliamentary Affairs* 2012

Bills and resolutions communicated to national parliaments/government ministries, policy based committees mirroring parliamentary committees, key relationships between adult members of parliament and members of youth parliaments, key relationships with other important stakeholders such as Ombudsmen and Children's Commissioners. Consideration below is given to youth parliaments that have had some success in influencing national policy and legislation.

Australia

In Australia there is a YMCA sponsored youth model parliament programme.⁷⁹ There is a YMCA youth parliament in every Australian state and territory. The first Australian Youth Parliament was held in Brisbane in 1963, based on the American "YMCA Youth and Government" concept. Young people generally represent their local member of Parliament or Member of the Legislative Council and meet during a weekend long training camp where they learn the workings of the Legislative Assembly, how to create a Bill, conduct debates in Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council and amend and vote on Bills and general motions.⁸⁰ Key to having successful impact on national policy and legislation is seen to be that the mock Bills that pass through the youth parliaments then get passed onto the actual parliament for their review and consideration.⁸¹

For example the Victoria Youth Parliament which is run by YMCA Victoria in conjunction with the Victorian Government is led by a volunteer taskforce of past participants and has twenty teams of six participants who receive training in public speaking and leadership at residential camps and research issues that they're passionate about. From this research they develop a mock Bill, which they debate in the Victorian Parliament over three days in July. The program provides a personal and professional development opportunity, and the mock Bills, which are handed to the relevant government minister, provide the government with insight into what issues are important to young Victorians.⁸² Significantly, the Youth Parliament, supported by the Victoria Government, have seen more than 20 of their Bills passed into law, including alcohol, bike and nightclub safety measures.⁸³ For the first time in 2014, YMCA Victoria established its own news room and press gallery to provide complete coverage of the Youth Parliament.⁸⁴

La Conseil de la Jeunesse⁸⁵

The Belgian French Speaking Youth Council has achieved a number of impacts over national policy and legislation, including: the withdrawal of security measures

⁷⁹ <http://ymca.org.au/Pages/Home.aspx>

⁸⁰ <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/youth-specific/youth-parliament>

⁸¹ <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/youth-specific/youth-parliament>

⁸² <http://www.vicyouth.ymca.org.au/programs/youth-parliament.html>

⁸³ <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/youth-specific/youth-parliament>

⁸⁴ A recommendation made by the SYP Electoral Commission was that the Scottish Youth Parliament should give consideration to increasing public access to its Sittings and other events. The use of digital technologies, including live or recorded web-streaming of some or all of some Sittings, should be explored.

⁸⁵ Case study drawn from ⁸⁵ <http://www.conseildelajeunesse.be/qui-sommes-nous/youth-council/>

targeting young people (mosquito, curfew, boot camp, etc.); the limitation of discriminatory measures against young people regarding employment and unemployment; the introduction of lessons about sexual life in school programmes; the integration of programmes of education to the media on the waves of RTBF (Belgian television and radio). The main tool that the Youth Council uses to get young people's voices heard is the issuing of official notices. The Youth Council has certainly no decisional power but it has a real lobbying role influencing decision makers.

The Youth Council of the French-Speaking Community develops commissions and working groups to carry out thematic projects. These "bodies" regularly feed the General Assembly to allow them to take positions on different issues. Moreover, the Youth Council frequently organises consultations and local forums to gather the opinion of young people on a specific topic.

Cypriot Children's Parliament⁸⁶

The Cypriot Children's Parliament is divided into five districts, in the same way as the national (adult) parliament. Each district is allocated a topic agreed in the plenary session. The district meetings then prepare a resolution on the topic and arguments to support the resolution, which is voted on in the plenary session. The Cypriot Children's Parliament meets every two months. The district meetings take place once or twice a month depending on the subject to be discussed. At the same time, children meeting in the districts are divided into groups, such as groups for raising awareness on children's rights; the events committee; the cultural committee. The districts are responsible for these groups.

Resolutions are adopted when the majority of the Children's Parliament is in favour. Adopted resolutions automatically go to the national (adult) parliament, and the PCCWPC works to ensure that the most important resolutions are put on the agenda. For example, the call for a children's ombudsperson came from the children and when the first children's ombudsperson was appointed in Cyprus this was seen as a big success for the children's parliament. They also saw a change in policy from the Ministry of Education after they gave their input on the issue of punishment in schools.

However, the children were disappointed by the level of feedback on their resolutions:

*"The Pancyprian Committee informs us on what happens in the National Parliament, but we would like the people who are going to take the decisions to give us feedback on what they do with our resolutions".*⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Example drawn from Eurochild (2010) Valuing Children's Potential: How children's participation contributes to fighting poverty and social exclusion. Edited by Mieke Schuurman.

http://old.eurochild.eu/fileadmin/ThematicPriorities/Participation/Eurochild/ValuingChildren_sPotential.pdf

p.47

⁸⁷ Ibid

Irish Youth Parliament

Supported and funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) the model supports a national executive of young people, made up of 31 young people elected from the 31 youth councils in Ireland. The national executive meets monthly and follows up on the recommendations made by the national parliament of 200 young people who meet biennially. The role of the national executive is:

- to identify key areas of work from the top three recommendations agreed at the national youth parliament;
- to conduct research into the issues identified;
- to meet with relevant Ministers, TDs, Government officials, policy makers and other stakeholders to seek their support in making changes for young people on the issues identified;
- to feed back to their local youth council on the work of the national executive ;
- to represent national executive at conferences and other events.

The DCYA aims to ensure that the young people get the opportunity to engage with appropriate government ministers, policy-makers, parliamentary committees and other decision-makers and supports them to feed into national consultations on a regular basis. An evaluation of this model has shown that the use of evidence based research and campaigns has had some impact on national policy-making. For example,

- Influenced the Minister for Health and Children’s decision to commence the cervical cancer vaccine programme for 12-year-old girls (2010).
- Attained a commitment that questions on sexual behaviour not previously included would be asked in the Health Behaviour of School-aged Children (HBSC) Survey in Ireland in future years (2010).⁸⁸

Ireland is the first country in Europe to have developed a cross-Government *National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making (2015-2020)* which was launched in June 2015.⁸⁹

Finnish Children’s Parliament

A key element for child participation in the Finnish Children’s Parliament is seen to be contact with and support of decision-makers in the Finnish society, especially the Parliament of Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish Ombudsman for Children. With their support children’s initiatives and concerns are being heard in legislation and policy forming work. The Finnish Members of the European Parliament have met with the representatives of the Finnish Children’s

⁸⁸ Briefing on the work of the Citizen Participation, Play, Recreation and Culture Unit Department of Children and Youth Affairs, August 2008

⁸⁹ Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015) *National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making (2015-2020)*. Dublin. available at: <http://dcya.gov.ie/docs/national-strategy-on-children-and-young-people-s-participation-in-decision-making/3456.htm>

Parliament for a dialogue with children having the opportunity to bring their messages to the European level.

Online and offline meetings with children and decision-makers are both seen as essential for child participation at the Finnish Children's Parliament. During the past years children have the opportunity to speak at seminars and conferences as child experts and thereby get their messages across to a larger audience.⁹⁰

Yemeni Children's Parliament

The children's parliament meets regularly with the Government and NGOs working in Yemen at the children's parliamentary sessions where they call on government and NGOs to raise issues related to children rights. Every year, the children's parliament advocate on children's rights issues related to the situation of children in Yemen through awareness campaigns, meetings with the government and NGOs, mass media and field visits to different areas in Yemen where children are facing serious violation of their rights. For example, in 2010, the Parliament was supported in carrying out a national campaign on the dangers of early marriage to the life and health of girls. Similarly Yemeni parliamentarians visited the camp for internally displaced people (IDP) in Sa'ada, Amran, and Haradh to learn about the issues that IDP children are facing in the northern governorates.

During 2010, the main focus of the children's parliament was on inclusive education, a specific session on this issue was discussed with decisions makers and related stakeholders. The session recommendations put forward by the Children's Parliament on inclusive education were endorsed by the President of Yemen, who has issued directives to the Ministry of Education to take these into action to allow children from minorities and disadvantaged sections to attend government run schools.⁹¹

Bolivian Child and Adolescent Parliament

The process of organising, training and mobilising the adult National Parliament to work together with children and adolescents is described as a completely participative process, from the planning stages to the forming of each committee.

In recent years, the National (adult) Parliament has taken on greater responsibility in terms of training and developing the Child and Adolescent Parliament, and has helped to consolidate ways in which children and young people can participate in and influence policymaking, for example, the children drafting laws and proposals and submitting them to the adult congressmen and women for consideration.

The National Child and Adolescent Parliament is moving towards permanency and the senators aged 13 to 17, have passed a Pre-draft Law on the "Permanent Institutional Status of the Child and Adolescent Parliament", which consists of 5

⁹⁰ Finnish Children's Parliament Foundation Response to the Consultation on a European Commission's Communication on the Rights of the Child (2011-2014)

⁹¹ <http://www.yementimes.com/en/1653/report/2047/Children%E2%80%99s-Parliament-where-are-they-now.htm>

articles detailing its aims, makeup, election processes, workings, resources and means of sustainability.⁹²

Scottish Youth Parliament

National sittings and meetings

The Scottish Youth Parliament meets at least three times a year, at national sittings. Additional events, activities and meetings run throughout the year giving MSYPs further opportunities to come together.

*“In Scotland, the two day meeting in the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood facilitates the realisation of a broader range of activities that include debates on topical issues; campaign activities; questions with ministers and other decision makers; meeting of the Young People’s ten subject committees, workshops on topical issues, giving evidence to the Scottish Parliament Committees and election of the Young People’s Board and other office bearers”.*⁹³

SYP Subject Committees

There are 10 Subject Committees: Culture and Media; Education and Lifelong Learning; Jobs and Economy; Equalities; External Affairs; Health and Wellbeing; Justice; Social Justice; Sport and Leisure; and Transport, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Conveners Group

The Conveners Group is intended to co-ordinate and manages the workload of the Subject Committees. The membership is made up of the 10 Subject Committee Conveners. The SYP vice Chair is also a non-voting member of the Group and facilitates its meetings. The Conveners Group also decides on which consultations SYP should respond to and contributes to the development of SYP’s campaigns.

SYP Manifesto

The Scottish Youth Parliament has a wide range of policy positions on the issues young people want to see represented. These are drawn from their Manifesto, *Change the Picture*⁹⁴ from SYP sittings, and from the SYP Conveners Group. The Scottish Youth Parliament’s 2011 *Change the Picture* manifesto was published following a nationwide consultation that received 42,804 responses from young people. As a spokesperson from SYP explains,

“Manifesto is our road map, if we get approached by the media we tell them that we cannot talk about issues that are not in our manifesto or a motion that has been put forward by an MSYP. This protects our credibility and gives us our mandate that we are basing all of our communications on the issues that the young people have chosen to campaign on. Everything has to explain where the evidence has come from, how we have got to this stand point, that it is genuinely the views of children

⁹² Case study drawn from http://www.unicef.org/bolivia/protection_participation_8685.htm

⁹³ Shepherd & Patrikios (2012) Making democracy work by Early Formal Engagement? A comparative exploration of Youth Parliaments in Europe. *Parliamentary Affairs 2012*

⁹⁴ Change the Picture SYP Manifesto accessed here <http://www.syp.org.uk/our-manifesto-W21page-82->

*and young people. We ensure that things are correct from a research basis, statistically viable, all our statistics stand up to scrutiny.*⁹⁵

Campaigns

Over the past few years the SYP have successfully lobbied the Government of Scotland with campaigns on Equal Marriage, a National Living Wage Recognition Scheme and Votes at 16. In January 2015 SYP launched *Care.Fair.Share*, a campaign to ensure that young carers are treated fairly by society and government policies. Their *Love Equally Campaign* won Campaign of the Year at the Scottish Charity of the Year Awards, and contributed to the Scottish Government's historic decision to legalise same-sex marriage when the Bill was debated at stage 3 in the Scottish Parliament on February 4th 2014. All of the campaigns are drawn from the Manifesto. The successes of these campaigns the SYP spokesperson suggested is predicated on the strength of the relationships between the MSYP and the MSPs,

*“Links between MSYP and MSPs are so important. In some constituencies they hold joint surgeries. By and large there is a good relationship. The MSPs for the most part support their MSYPs. The campaign success often depends on the relationship between the MSYP and MSPs. MSPs will support the MSYPs with asking questions in plenary, writing letters etc to Ministers. The success on the Young Carers campaign was very much down to the fact there was a positive relationship between an MSYP and the MSP who was a Government Minister. Engagement with MSPs has paid off in terms of our policy impact and we have more and more mentions in the chamber.*⁹⁶

Not all of SYP policy work is drawn from their manifesto. They have a policy log⁹⁷ which provides guidance to SYP when responding to a wide range of issues - allowing them to represent the issues young people care about in Scotland.

“We frequently push for amendments in legislation. We are always able to get a meeting with an official. We have increased our media presence and Scottish Government directorates are speaking with us more and more directly prior to publishing public policy. They see the benefit of having buy-in from SYP and value our input. They encourage it as early in the process of policy development as possible, so it is about the co-production of consultations instead of consulting on a policy that has been pretty much finalised.”

The SYP respond regularly to consultations. SYP submitted 16 consultation responses in the last term engaging over 6,384 young people directly in policy.

In a recent review of youth parliaments in Europe, Shepherd and Patrikios (2012) report that *“the SYP stands out as an exceptional case. It has been quite proactive and arguably quite successful on several policy fronts in recent years.”*⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Interview with SYP staff member

⁹⁶ Interview with SYP Staff member

⁹⁷ The Policy Log can be found there

[https://www.syp.org.uk/img/Policy%20Log/Policy_Log_\(December_2014\).pdf](https://www.syp.org.uk/img/Policy%20Log/Policy_Log_(December_2014).pdf)

⁹⁸ Shepherd & Patrikios (2012) Making democracy work by Early Formal Engagement? A comparative exploration of Youth Parliaments in Europe. *Parliamentary Affairs* 2012p.14

There are number of lessons to be learned from above examples, the importance of relationships between the youth parliament and key decision makers such as Members of Parliament and Government officials, Ombudsman etc. ensuring close access to young people to the corridors of power; focussed campaigning and the importance of linkages between the national and the local in order to exert maximum influence; being credible and evidence based through demonstrating that policy is based on engagement with children and young people nation wide and having a systematic approach to policy advocacy that includes monitoring and follow up.

4.10 Monitoring the implementation of the UNCRC and reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

“It is recommended that measures be taken by governments, for example by providing children with meaningful opportunities to contribute to the State party’s [Government’s] report, and by NGOs and UN agencies, for example by actively involving children in the production of their alternative reports and/or encouraging them to produce their own reports [to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child].”⁹⁹

Wales, Scotland, Yemen, Slovenia and Ireland demonstrated that they contribute to monitoring the implementation of the UNCRC. Funky Dragon carried out a globally pioneering piece of work between 2007-2008 that culminated in the submission of reports researched and written by children and young people about the children and young people of Wales and more recently in a follow on exercise, named ‘FUNC +’,¹⁰⁰ which has gathered evidence for a young people’s report to the UN Committee for the 2015 reporting period.¹⁰¹ A local authority youth assembly, in Wales has launched an innovative way to hold their local authority to account by using the UN Committee style reporting process. This model is considered further on page 37. The Yemeni Children’s Parliament supported by Save the Children produced a children’s report and their own methodology for gathering evidence is also outlined below.

In Slovenia in 2014 as part of the celebrations surrounding the 25th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a round-table discussion was organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Friends of Youth Association, where participants of the 24th National Children’s Parliament shared their views on the implementation of the Convention, and their recommendations for improving the enforcement of particular rights in Slovenia as well as worldwide.¹⁰²

Similarly in Ireland, a major national event was hosted to celebrate 25 years of the

⁹⁹ Doek, J. E (2011) The CRC: Dynamics and Directions of Monitoring its Implementation, In, Invernizzi A and Williams J (eds) The Human Rights of Children from Visions to Implementation. Ashgate.

¹⁰⁰ Children and Young People’s Assembly for Wales (2015) FUNC+ Report: A Young People’s report on the UNCRC.

¹⁰¹ Funky Dragon Annual Report 2012-13

http://www.funkydragon.org/files/1313/9324/6882/Funky_Dragon_Annual_Report_2013.pdf

¹⁰² Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs press-release
<http://www.mzz.gov.si/nc/en/newsroom/news/article//34305/>

UNCRC, with the attendance of 500 young delegates from the 31 local youth councils from across the country, with the Minister for Children and Members of Parliament in attendance. The young people discussed the opportunities and challenges they experience in having a say in decisions on issues that affect their lives.¹⁰³ In Ireland the non-governmental organisation the Children's Rights Alliance is funded by the Department for Children and Youth Affairs to produce a children's report, submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. As part of the process of gathering evidence, the 31 local youth councils are consulted.¹⁰⁴

The Scottish Youth Parliament fed into the Scottish Children and Young People's Commissioner's alternative report and the NGO report, using the information they collated on children through a survey conducted with 1000 young people about how they perceive access to their rights in the context of poverty. They also hosted the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Task force visit to Scotland in September 2015 on behalf of the Scottish Children and Young People's Commissioner and supported children and young people to attend the pre-sessional meeting with the UN Committee in Geneva October 2015.

For further detail on the Funky Dagon, Pembrokeshire local authority and Yemeni examples please see below:

Wales, Funky Dragon, Our Rights: Our Story

Our Rights Our Story was a report which was written by a steering group on behalf of the Funky Dragon Grand Council. It was to inform the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child Committee how the rights of children in Wales were being met or not met.

In February 2006 Funky Dragon received funding to carry out a large scale piece of research into the views of young people in Wales. The project was steered by a sub-committee of Grand Council members from Funky Dragon who were involved in developing the questions and activities, recruiting staff and analysing the results of the work.

The views of over 12,000 young people were gathered through a national survey, workshops and interviews with special interest groups, and additional funding was received to carry out extra research into the views of over 2,500 children aged 7–10 (a separate report, *Why do people's ages go up not down?* was produced).

Our Rights, Our Story focused on specific areas of children's rights, Education, Health, Information, Participation, Special Interest Groups and was submitted to the UN Committee in June 2008, alongside the Welsh Government report and the alternative NGO report, *Stop, look, listen*. In response to the quality of this work, together with the presentation the children and young people made at the pre-sessional meeting of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva, Funky

¹⁰³ Briefing on the work of the Citizen Participation, Play, Recreation and Culture Unit Department of Children and Youth Affairs, August 2008

¹⁰⁴ Children's Rights Alliance Ireland <http://www.childrensrighs.ie/>

Dragon is now cited as an example of good practice by both the Committee, and in the international guidance to NGOs on how to involve children and young people in reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.¹⁰⁵

The report made 66 recommendations, 33 of these recommendations were reflected in the UN Committee's Concluding Observations to the UK State party. However Welsh Government since 2008 has only progressed a limited number of policy changes related to the 33 recommendations.¹⁰⁶ Demonstrating that the views of this representative sample of young people were not duly taken into consideration and thus the due weight of Article 12 has not been satisfied.

Wales, Pembrokeshire Local Authority Youth Assembly PUNC Project

Pembrokeshire Local Authority has established a 'UN-style' reporting process, with a representative body of children and young people playing the role of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In September 2014, children and young people from the Pembrokeshire Youth Assembly signed up to be involved in the "PUNC" sub-committee. They received two full training sessions one on the UNCRC and the UNCRC reporting process and the second on the process they would be contributing towards. The Pembrokeshire Local Authority Children's Rights Officer met with the Wales Observatory for the Human Rights of Children and Young People who advised them to collate their information according to priority themes rather than try to address all of the Convention at one go. The Head of Performance and Community chose the theme of education and the decision was made to concentrate on the local authority's Estyn self-evaluation.

From January 2015 the young people met weekly to examine the report and to come up with a list of questions. They did aim to do the questions under the articles of the Convention but this was challenging and it was easier to develop questions that corresponded to the different sections of the Estyn report.

A public hearing was then organised with the local authority's Director of Education and the Head of Performance and Community and the Cabinet Member for Education and Safeguarding. The 10 young people acted as the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and asked questions of these senior managers and the elected member (who acted as the State party) in front of an audience of 50 delegates.

The audience wanted to ask questions but this was the opportunity for the young people to ask questions, and it was made clear to the audience that they were observers similar to those invited to observe the examination of the UK State party at the UN in Geneva. The Children's Rights Officer informed the audience that they would organise an additional question and answer event at a later point.

¹⁰⁵ My Pocket Guide to CRC Reporting, NGO Group for the CRC, 2011, Geneva

¹⁰⁶ The work across several portfolios is reported in Funky Dragon's annual report 2012 – 13, in which a limited number of impacts are noted, for example on drawing up a code of behaviour for public transport.
http://www.funkydragon.org/files/1313/9324/6882/Funky_Dragon_Annual_Report_2013.pdf

A week after the public hearing the young people and the Children's Rights Officer met to formalise their report and to develop their own 'Concluding Observations'. They linked all of the Concluding Observations to the relevant articles of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and came up with 30 recommendations for the local authority to deliver on. The observations were both nuanced and detailed hitting right to the heart of issues such as the links between educational attainment and poverty. The officers were impressed both with the quality and the sophistication of the recommendations. Some of the recommendations could be achieved straight away and others would take longer to implement.

At the time of interview in connection with this review, the recommendations had been sent to the local authority and the youth assembly were awaiting their response. All young people of the sub-committee have agreed to sign up again to the "PUNC" project next year which will be looking at the thematic area of health. The Children's Rights Officer considered the model to be challenging but very helpful at supporting young people to give recommendations directly to senior officers and elected members of the local authority from both a young person's and children's rights perspective.¹⁰⁷

Yemen Children's Parliament report to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

In 2008, Save the Children supported the Children's Parliament to develop a children's alternative report to be submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Report preparation methodology

The preparation of this report went through the following phases:

- Selection of subjects through discussions at Children's Parliament sessions.
- Determining groups or agencies to visit and setting up appointments, choosing information collection methods such as interviews, observation, and questionnaires, selecting documentation methods such as using still cameras or video cameras, as well as making the decision to utilize these visits for awareness- raising and distributing posters related to child rights and the subjects under study.
- Selection of field observation groups and coordination with the Democracy School and its coordinators in the governorates and some government agencies.
- Training of observation groups in report- writing.
- Execution of field visits.
- Conduct interviews with government officials and specialists in light of results of the visits and generate recommendations.

Difficulties faced in preparing the report:

The main difficulties and obstacles faced in preparing the report include:

¹⁰⁷ Pembrokeshire UN Style reporting example based on an interview with the Children's Rights Officer of Pembrokeshire Local Authority.

- Lack of statistics and comprehensive studies concerning these phenomena in the past, since most of them are recent. This made it difficult to obtain a detailed assessment of the issues and information on the extent of prevalence.
- Absence of an independent information centre specialising in children's issues. Such a centre would conduct studies on the conditions of children in Yemen which would facilitate access to accurate, clear, and reliable information. Also, the existence of conflicting data and statistics presented by various government agencies and NGOs presented another obstacle.
- Poor cooperation by some agencies, officials, and specialists with the young researchers involved in field visits, as well as during the interviews with the House of Representatives.¹⁰⁸

5. Analysis and recommendations

The examination of this wide range of youth parliaments has highlighted a great deal of good practice and lessons for us in Wales to learn and take into account when developing a proposal for a new *Youth Assembly for Wales*. This final section of the report provides further analysis of the evidence gathered and makes a series of recommendations regarding the best elements for a national youth parliament model for Wales.

Protected by law

In a survey undertaken by the National Assembly for Wales, 70% of young people think that having a group of young people from across Wales who regularly speak on behalf of other young people is a good idea.¹⁰⁹ Young Wales recently reported that;

“Children and young people overwhelmingly believe that they should have their own permanent democratic voice to access both the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales, to enable them to participate in shaping government policy on subjects they have an opinion on.”¹¹⁰

Given past experience and learning within the Welsh context it is recommended that a *Youth Assembly for Wales* in the future becomes protected by statute and is a national, democratically elected independent body of young people that is a critical part of the institutional fabric of democratic and children's human rights promoting institutions of Wales.¹¹¹ As Parkes comments,

¹⁰⁸ Text taken directly from the Yemeni Children's Parliament alternative report.

<http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/library/first-report-childrens-parliament-conditions-children-yemen-2008>

¹⁰⁹ National Assembly for Wales (2014) Your Assembly, Your Say, Your Way. <http://www.yourassembly.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/YOUTH-ENGAGEMENT-REPORT-E-smaller.pdf>

¹¹⁰ Young Wales (2015) Report to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. P.30

¹¹¹ It is worth giving further consideration to the Belgian Flemish case study and the Slovenian case study, who have given some protection to youth parliamentary structures within statute.

“In order to make child participation a reality at the local, national and international level, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child must encourage state parties to put the most successful democratic mechanisms currently in place on a statutory footing. This may be realised through legal reform or through the introduction of formal permanent mechanisms so that the gains over the past decade in terms of giving children an active voice will not be lost.”^{112 113}

The 122nd Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly adopted a Resolution in 2010 by consensus (166 members of which one of them is the UK) which,

Requests parliaments to provide political and financial support, notably adequate operating budgets, to form strong youth parliaments, youth councils or equivalent bodies and to strengthen existing ones, thus providing further opportunities for more young people to become active in decision-making and in shaping their societies...¹¹⁴

Recommendation:

- The new *Youth Assembly for Wales* should be protected by law and be a national, democratically elected independent body of young people.

Age range

The age range of the young people elected representatives across the 17 youth parliaments was largely concentrated on the teenage age group. The evidence is mixed regarding what is the optimum upper age criterion for a national youth parliament (see page 7-10).

- The current legal basis of the Vlaamse Jeugdraad is Article 7 of the Decree of 2012 which foresees the ‘establishment of a Youth Council’ and provides the current criteria for its functioning. Its objectives are “to provide advice on all matters affecting youth, on its own initiative, on request of the Flemish Government or on request of the Flemish Parliament, and to represent youth”.

- In Slovenia under the Primary School Act, each school must dedicate half an hour weekly to a children’s parliament as part of the curriculum. All school children’s parliaments must be held twice yearly this spans outwards to the regional and national levels.

- Yang recently proposed that there should be a permanent chamber for children’s matters created in the national parliament of each country. Yang (2015) *Women's and Children's Chambers of Parliament: 1) Girls Survive on the Boyfriend Economy, Mothers on the Sweat Economy; 2) Democratizing Representation Centuries After Aristotle*. Author House.

¹¹² Aisling (2013) *Children and International Human Rights Law: The Right of the Child to be heard*. Routledge p. 207

¹¹³ See also Crowley, A (2013) In, *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in Wales* (eds) Williams, J “Currently Funky Dragon is core-funded by the Welsh Government, and unlike the Children’s Commissioner has no statute to protect its existence in the event that future governments might not want to hear its messages. It is important, therefore, that the Welsh Government finds legislative opportunity to put the children and young people’s assembly onto a statutory footing.

¹¹⁴ The IPU Assembly (formerly known as the Inter-Parliamentary Conference) is the principal statutory body that expresses the views of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on political issues. There are 166 members and 10 associate members. It brings together parliamentarians to study international problems and make recommendations for action.

Recommendations:

- A new *Youth Assembly* needs to be established to be truly representative of the entirety of the age category it seeks to represent and a full assessment needs to be made of the resource required to effectively achieve this.
- Further consideration should be given to the upper age criterion of 25 years.

Term of office

The term of office across the sample of youth parliaments ranged from a number of days, to a number of months to three years, however as the UK Youth Parliament accurately point out it is incredibly difficult for young people to achieve a positive change for the young people they are elected to represent in less than two years (see page 10)

Recommendation:

- The term of office of each elected representative should be two years.

Number of young elected representatives by country

The number of young elected representatives in most of youth parliaments reviewed, closely mirrors the number of adult members of parliament in the lower or main legislative chamber. It would seem logical for a new *Youth Assembly* to mirror the number of Assembly Members in the National Assembly for Wales.

Recommendation:

- 60 young people should be elected to represent the new *Youth Assembly for Wales* mirroring the number of elected representatives in the National Assembly for Wales.

Election/selection of the young people to the youth parliament

Like the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Trustees' criteria states that representatives must be democratically elected by their peers, evidence from the this study suggests that election should happen according to Assembly Member constituency because this encourages joint working between young people and adult elected representatives and greatly improves young people's impact over national policy and legislative development (See Influencing national policy making page 45).

A national youth assembly elected according to Assembly Member constituencies would support a democratically elected representative body that mirrors the National Assembly for Wales with 40 members, one for each Assembly constituency

elected by the ‘first past the post system’ and 20 members elected to represent minority groups.

Elections should support young people to be elected directly in the local constituency. Elected by a ballot in which all young people should be able to participate. This will help to encourage political participation amongst young people and the representativeness of the *Youth Assembly* can not be called into question if the elected young members have been selected via an open and democratic process. Clear guidance should be given to each local authority on how a *Youth Assembly for Wales* election should be conducted; this guidance should be drawn up with the help of experts in electoral administration.

Young people should be made aware of the candidates extensively via canvassing in schools, youth clubs, and young people organisations, social media and through local hustings. Young people should be able to vote for their peers by an e-vote or if unable to access the internet, via paper ballot supported by their local authority.

Recommendations:

- Representatives should be democratically elected by their peers directly in their constituencies from across all of Wales.
- The national *Youth Assembly* should be a democratically elected representative body that mirrors the National Assembly for Wales with 60 elected representatives elected as recommended below:
 - *40 young people should be elected per each National Assembly constituency by their peers by the “first past the post system” directly in their local constituency.*
 - *20 young people should be elected who represent minority groups by voluntary organisations that support minority groups.*
- Young people should be made aware of the youth candidates extensively via canvassing in schools, youth clubs, and young people organisations, social media and through local hustings.
- Young people should be able to vote for their peers by an e-vote or if unable to access the internet, via paper ballot supported by their local authority.

Representation of the most vulnerable and marginalised young people

Many youth parliaments had processes whereby they reserved places for the most marginalised and vulnerable young people. The evidence suggests that in order to truly support the representation of marginalised young people it is important to

reserve places and to designate additional support and resources to be able to effectively integrate these young people into the workings of the youth parliament and to ensure their voice is heard. It is the recommendation of this study that to ensure that the most marginalised and vulnerable young people are elected that 20 posts are reserved for young people who are elected to represent voluntary organisations that support the most marginalised. Learning should be gained from the Scottish Youth Parliament with regards to ensuring an internal election is held amongst the membership of each voluntary organisation in accordance with rules agreed with the new Children and *Young People's Assembly for Wales*.

Recommendation:

- 20 places should be reserved for minority groups. Like the Scottish Youth Parliament, these young people should be elected in internal elections by the young members of voluntary organisations in accordance with the rules agreed by the new *Youth Assembly for Wales*.

Oversight and funding

The majority of youth parliaments are funded by government and some are also part-funded by non-governmental organisations. Some youth parliaments are managed or overseen by parliamentary bodies and governmental bodies, others are joint initiatives between government and non-governmental bodies and a small minority are autonomous charitable youth led organisations. Evidence from the study suggests that support and partnerships from key decision making bodies such as Children's Commissioners, other Commissioner's, non-governmental organisations, parliamentary or governmental bodies, and youth councils are critical to the success of youth parliaments. The wider literature on participation supports this by saying that a body can still be youth led but to achieve effective empowerment and policy influencing capabilities it should be able to count on adult support and facilitation.

As per the Trustees' criteria the *Youth Assembly* should be lead by young people and the Board of Trustees should continue to be a mix of elected young people and professional advisors. A Procedures Group made up of young people elected representatives like in the UK Youth Parliament should be established to support the programming and strategic direction of the organisation.

The new *Youth Assembly* must be independent but should develop partnerships with all of the key decision making bodies in Wales. A diversified funding strategy with funding coming from a mix of charitable donors, Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales would support an independent *Youth Assembly for Wales* and one that is first and foremost accountable to the young people of Wales and secondly it's funders.

It would be beneficial if the National Assembly for Wales could provide in-kind desk space for the officers of the *Youth Assembly for Wales*. This would give visibility and credibility to the new *Youth Assembly*, would further support joint working and information exchange between the National Assembly Members and the Young People Assembly Members and increase access and opportunity for the young people to influence the corridors of power.

The young people elected representatives are likely to be most successful in influencing the key decision makers through a constructive and shared dialogue. The key duty bearing organisations should be made better aware of their accountability towards the young elected representatives as rights holders, with memorandums of understanding established that reiterate that as duty bearers they must give due weight to the issues, concerns and recommendations presented to them by the young people.

Linking to other democratic and children's human rights institutions of Wales, it is suggested that the new *Youth Assembly* be scrutinised by a sub-committee of the National Assembly of Wales and the Children's Commissioner for Wales. New Zealand has a working model that could be effectively utilised by the *Youth Assembly for Wales*. The Youth Parliament in New Zealand is scrutinised by a multi-party parliamentary steering committee.¹¹⁵ A representative from each party represented in Parliament is invited to join the committee. The aim is to ensure non-partisan organisation of the Youth Parliament as well as active participation by all parties.

Recommendations:

- Diversified funding i.e. part funding from National Assembly for Wales, Welsh Government and charitable donors.
- A multi-party sub-Committee of the National Assembly for Wales attended by the Children's Commissioner for Wales should review the *Youth Assembly* on an annual basis. The Youth Assembly should lay an annual report before the National Assembly for Wales.
- Consideration should be given to exploring the possibility of basing the staff of the *Youth Assembly for Wales* with the National Assembly for Wales Commission and National Assembly for Wales Regional Offices.

Influencing national policy making, speaking out collectively on issues chosen by young people and working with Members of Parliament

Evidence suggests that the election of young people according to Scottish Parliamentary constituencies has enabled the SYP to meet the Trustees of CYPAW's criterion of: a) young elected representatives working effectively with Assembly

¹¹⁵ <http://www.myd.govt.nz/documents/youth-parliament-/hansard-youth-parliament-17-july-2013.pdf>

Members to further children's issues and b) having an overall impact on national policy making, Likewise, other youth parliaments in this sample that have the opportunity to work closely with members of parliament demonstrated a greater impact over policy and legislation. It is therefore a recommendation of this study that full consideration is given to the election of young people to the *Youth Assembly for Wales* to be according to Assembly Member constituency, to encourage joint working between young people and adult elected representatives to enhance and maximise young people's impact over policy and legislative development. This analysis will have to be set against the learning and the concerns of Professor John Curtice's Independent Scottish Youth Parliament Election's Commission (see page 16). Additionally if the decision was to continue representation down local authority lines consideration would have to be given to the Welsh Government's future plans to reform local government and merge local authorities, reducing them from 22 to 8/9 local authorities.¹¹⁶

To support increased impact over national policy making and working with Assembly Members, the young people elected representatives should be elected on to policy subject committees that closely mirror the National Assembly for Wales' own committees. To encourage coordination of the scrutiny of national policy-making, from a young person's perspective, a 'Chairs Group' should be established to coordinate the work of the Youth Assembly's policy subject committees.

To ensure that the *Youth Assembly for Wales* represents the views of as wide a range of young people as possible, a 'Make your Mark' type annual ballot should be adopted. The ballot should canvas the views of young people on a *Manifesto for Change* and inform the selection of campaign issue(s) that are subsequently voted for in a plenary debate with all 60 young people representatives. In Scotland, this model is seen as adding credibility and authority to the SYP and young people's independent collective voice. Selecting focussed campaign issues to work on collectively across all constituencies as well as at a national level has proven to be a successful approach in the Scottish context and is also seen as a positive way forward in the UK context.

The development of mock Bills by youth parliaments in Canada, New Zealand and Australia have been demonstrated to have a positive impact over the development of national legislation and also in the skills and personal development of the young people who have been engaged in the Bill's development. The relevant ministries who receive the final mock Bills have benefited from having an insight into the views of young people and many have passed into actual legislation. An sub committee of the *Youth Assembly for Wales* could be charged with the development of one mock Bill per annum to be debated in plenary and then communicated to the relevant government ministry.

To ensure the effective delivery of this model there needs to be at least four meetings of the *Youth Assembly* per year and committee meetings scheduled

¹¹⁶ Please see the Welsh Government White Paper, *Devolution, Democracy and Delivery White Paper - Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People*

between the main meetings. With regards to the concerns of cost, support required by the young people to attend each meeting and travel implications, the virtual meetings of the Finnish Children's Parliament are worth further evaluation and consideration. Webinars are certainly an option which could also encourage a wider audience of young people than solely the elected young people to witness the discussion. Consideration should be given to public access to the new *Youth Assembly's* 'Sittings' and other events. The use of digital technologies, including live or recorded web-streaming of the Sittings, should be explored. The New Zealand Youth Parliament and some of the youth parliaments in Australia now have public galleries and news rooms.

For the new *Youth Assembly* to be a success it is critical that effective links and support mechanisms are in place between the local and the national level.

*"The building blocks of children's participation should be laid much lower down, closer to their own communities, where they have sustained access to local 'decision makers', and where they are recognised as 'individuals' and not just another representative sample. When their base is set firmly in the spaces closest to them, only then will children be able to engage with decision makers at the higher levels from a position of strength because then they will have an unquestionable mandate, unified purpose and a high degree of accountability to the children that they represent."*¹¹⁷

The study has highlighted how national youth parliaments that had systems in place that successfully linked the local to the national were more effective in articulating young people's collective voice, supporting rigorous election processes and influencing both local and national decision-making.

Young people representatives should be supported by paid *Youth Assembly* staff and local authority officers to work proactively in their local constituencies. This should include: joint surgeries with Assembly Members; delivery of national campaigns locally; through representation on local youth councils where relevant; through communicating children's human rights messages to schools, youth clubs and other young people institutions and organisations across Wales; and through the gathering of evidence relating to children's experience of their access to rights.

The links between schools and other educational settings and the new Youth Assembly is essential to the *Youth Assembly's* overall success (the Slovenian case study should be explored further) and can also become a supportive vehicle to progress the aim of the Donaldson Review for the children and young people of Wales to become ethical informed citizens of the world,

"Engaged citizenship requires the kind of understanding of democracy, human rights, interdependence, sustainability and social justice that should inform their personal views and sense of commitment. Children and young

¹¹⁷ Ratna, K. (2011) Children's Impact on State Governance: Overarching Issues. In Thukral, E.G. (ed.). *Every Right for Every Child: Governance and Accountability*. India: Routledge.

*people need an ability to deal with difficult contested issues such as those that can arise from developments in science and digital technologies. Active citizenship requires the confidence and resilience that underpin the ability to exert influence and participate in vigorous debate. That confidence should be built upon a strong base of knowledge and respect for evidence”.*¹¹⁸

If the upper age criterion of 25 years is maintained, the *Youth Assembly* should not simply be promoted in schools. It should also be promoted, *inter alia*, in further and higher education establishments and amongst employers, including not least within the workplaces of local authorities.

Recommendations:

- Young people should be elected per each National Assembly constituency to support joint working between Young Assembly Members and National Assembly Members. The young people elected representatives should then be elected to policy subject committees that closely mirror the National Assembly for Wales’ own committees.
- To encourage coordination of the scrutiny of national policy making from a young person’s perspective, a ‘Chairs Group’ should be established to coordinate the work of the policy subject committees.
- To ensure that the *Youth Assembly for Wales* represents the views of as many young people as possible, a ‘*Make your Mark*’ type ballot should be adopted to canvas the views of young people on a *Manifesto for Change* and inform the selection of campaign issue(s) that are subsequently voted for in a plenary debate with all 60 young people representatives of the *Youth Assembly*.
- To achieve maximum influence, focussed campaign issues should be chosen annually to work on collectively across all constituencies on a national basis.
- The *Youth Assembly* should seek representation on national forums that support implementation of the *Youth Assembly’s* Manifesto and campaigns.
- A sub-committee should be tasked with the development of one mock Bill per annum (like in Australia, New Zealand and Canada) to be debated in plenary and then communicated to the relevant Ministry.
- A Policy Log based on the Scottish Youth Parliament model should be developed to support systematic and grounded policy advocacy, monitoring and follow up.
- There should be four plenary meetings per annum with one held in the *Senedd*.

¹¹⁸ Donaldson (2015) Successful futures: Independent Review of the Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales. <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150317-successful-futures-en.pdf>

- The use of social media and digital technologies, including live or recorded web-streaming of the Sitings, should be explored.
- Effective links and support mechanisms should be established between the local and the national level. The links between schools and other educational settings and the new *Youth Assembly* will be essential to the *Youth Assembly's* overall success.

Monitoring the implementation of the UNCRC and reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

To support children and young people to report directly to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and work with key partners in monitoring the implementation of the UNCRC, the Funky Dragon model of training, evidence gathering and reporting to the UN Committee should be built upon as well as the learning from the pilot project of the UN style reporting model by Pembrokeshire Youth Assembly. *Youth Assembly* representatives should be trained to become young people researchers and children's human rights advocates, who are able to train and inform other young people to understand their human rights, to be aware that they are rights holders capable of influencing adult-dominated decision-making spaces, as well as gather evidence on the progress of children's human rights from across Wales.

Evidence gathered by the young researchers and advocates should be collated to produce a young people's 'alternative' perspective on children's human rights in Wales. The findings should then be fed into the policy subject committees. A sub-committee of the *Youth Assembly* should sit as a 'UN Committee on the Rights of the Child' once every two years, conducting a public examination of the Welsh Government's progress on implementing the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and compliance with the *Rights of Children and Young Person's (Wales) Measure 2011*.

Recommendations:

- A sub-committee of the *Youth Assembly* should be trained to become young people researchers and children's human rights experts, who are able to train other young people to understand their human rights as well as gather evidence on the progress of children's human rights from across Wales. Evidence is collated and turned into a young people's alternative perspective on children's human rights.
- The same sub-committee of the *Youth Assembly* should act as a 'UN Committee on the Rights of the Child' and conduct a public hearing once every two years, to examine the Welsh Government's progress on

implementing the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and compliance with the *Rights of Children and Young Person's (Wales) Measure 2011*.

These recommendations support the development of a model that has its roots in a parliamentary, youth-led structure with young people elected by their peers according to the existing Assembly constituencies. This model would best support the delivery of the *Children and Young People Assembly for Wales* Trustees' criteria, supporting children and young people to learn about and engage with democracy and the political system and ensuring that children and young people's views and experiences are taken into account in policy-making in Wales.

6. A new a Youth Assembly for Wales: a recommended model

A new Youth Assembly for Wales: a recommended model	
Legal basis	Enshrined in statute
Age range	11-25 years (upper age criterion to be given further consideration)
Term of office	2 years
Number of elected members	60 elected representatives (mirroring the NAfW)
Election process	<p>1 young person elected representative (by first past the post system) per each National Assembly constituency (i.e. 40) supported by their relevant local authority and Youth Assembly Young People Engagement Officer.</p> <p>20 representatives elected to represent marginalised or minority groups and are supported and elected by relevant voluntary organisations.</p> <p>Elections to take place in the first two weeks of March, every second year.</p> <p>E-vote Paper ballot for those who have no internet access</p>
Ensuring the most marginalised are represented	20 representatives elected to represent marginalised or minority groups and are supported and elected by relevant voluntary organisations.
Number of meetings and where	4 plenary meetings per annum with one held in the Senedd. Committee meetings to take place between plenary meetings: virtual meetings to be explored.
Overall structure	<p>-Youth led and independent,</p> <p>Board of Trustees (mix of elected young people and professional advisors as per Funky Dragon model),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 60 elected representatives mirroring arrangements of NAfW, - Procedures Group (young elected members elected to lead on decisions regarding the development and progression of the organisation is undertaken by the Procedures Group) - Chairs Group (young elected members elected to co-ordinate and manage the workload of the Policy Subject Committees) - Policy Subject Committees of young elected members mirroring NAfW Subject Committees, - UNCRC Committee of young elected members. - Paid staff team E.g. CEO, Policy, Research and Public Affairs Manager, Young People Engagement Manager, 3 x Young People Engagement Officers, South, Mid and North Wales, Communications & Online Engagement Officer, Finance Administrator.
Funding	Diversified funding i.e. part funding from WG, NAfW and charitable donors.
Physical home	NAfW Assembly Commission, desk space Cardiff Bay & NAfW

	regional offices for the Young People Engagement Officers
Accountability	To the young people of Wales and funders of the Children and Young People Assembly.
Scrutiny of Children and Young People Assembly	A Multi- Party NAFW Committee attended by the Children's Commissioner for Wales will review the <i>Youth Assembly</i> on an annual basis. Youth Assembly to lay an annual report before NAFW.
Able to work with Members of Parliament to further children's issues	Elected young people representatives elected per each National Assembly constituency to support joint working between Young Assembly Members and National Assembly Members, policy-subject committees of <i>Youth Assembly</i> set up to mirror NAFW Subject Committees to feed in evidence when relevant, Ministers/AMs invited to plenary debate.
Enable children and young people to influence national policy making and to speak out collectively on issues of their choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Make your Mark Ballot' per annum - Manifesto every 2 years - Development of 1 mock Assembly Bill/Sub-ordinate legislation per annum by a sub- committee communicated to the relevant Ministry for their consideration and feed back. - Campaigns based, on 'Make your Mark' ballot and vote at Youth Assembly plenary debate. - Policy-subject committees mirroring NAFW Committees supported by young people's Chairs Group. - Policy log based on Scottish model to support systematic and grounded policy advocacy, monitoring and follow up. - Clear working relationship established with Children's Commissioner for Wales and other Commissioners. - Representation of young people elected representatives on national fora that support implementation of the Youth Assembly's <i>Manifesto for Change</i> and campaigns.
Support children and young people to report directly to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and work with key partners in monitoring the implementation of the UNCRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sub-committee are trained to become young people researchers and children's human rights experts, who are able to train other young people to understand their human rights as well as gather evidence on the progress of children's human rights from across Wales. Evidence is collated and turned into a young people's alternative perspective on children's human rights. - The sub-committee acts as a 'UN Committee on the Rights of the Child' sitting once every two years to conduct a public hearing to examine the Welsh Government's progress on implementing the UNCRC and compliance with the <i>Rights of Children and Young Person's Wales Measure (2011)</i>.
Working at the local level	Joint surgeries with AMs; delivery of national campaigns

	locally; representation on local youth councils; communicating campaign and children's human rights messages to schools, youth clubs and other young people institutions and organisations across Wales; and gathering of evidence relating to children's experience of their access to rights.
Public Press Gallery/Live web streaming/On-line engagement	<p>- For the annual sitting in the Senedd so that young people across Wales can witness the debate on Senedd TV.</p> <p>Webinars recording committee meetings so wider audience can witness these discussions.</p> <p>Interactive webinars so that children and young people from school councils, local youth councils, youth organisations can be involved in debates relating e.g. to Government Consultations, Policy Thematic issues of concern, Manifesto, etc.</p> <p>On-line surveys</p> <p>Social media used as part of campaigning.</p> <p>Social media used as part of ongoing sharing of information with young people elected representatives.</p> <p>E-voting.</p>

Appendix 1

Funky Dragon Model	
Legal basis	Not enshrined in statute
Age range	11-25 years
Duration of service	2 years
Number of elected members	Up to 100
Election process	4 from each of the 22 unitary authorities in Wales and 12 co-option seats for other organizations. The co-option seats available for election at Funky Dragon's <u>annual general meeting</u> , usually held in July. The seats detailed as follows. Statutory Sector: 22 places. Voluntary Sector: 22 places, School Councils: 22 places, Equality: 22 places.
Ensuring the most marginalised are represented	1 equality place per each local authority
Number of meetings and where	<p>4 meetings per annum including an annual meeting, residential based.</p> <p>(In the early days of the Funky Dragon, the AGM happened once a year in the National Assembly building, Ty Hywel in Cardiff Bay)</p> <p>Group of young people elected to prepare each residential a month before each residential weekend.</p>
Overall structure	<p>-Youth led, Board of Trustees (4 professional advisors, 4 young people under 18 and 4 young people over 18) and professionals),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - approx 100 elected representatives - Committees based on Welsh Government Ministerial Portfolios. - UNCRC Committee of young elected members charged with developing a young people's report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. - Core paid staff team consisting of CEO, Deputy CEO, Communications Manager, Logistics and Infrastructure Manager, 3 x Development workers (managing 7-8 local authorities each)
Funding	Core funding from Welsh Government, project funding from variety of charitable donors and ESF funding.
Physical home	Rented office
Accountability	To the young people of Wales and to funders.
Scrutiny of Children and Young People Assembly	Two independent evaluations were carried out during the 10 year period.
Able to work with Members of Parliament to further children's	<p>Ministers invited to Funky Dragon Annual General Meeting.</p> <p>Meetings with Welsh Government Ministers to question them</p>

<p>issues</p>	<p>on issues that are affecting young people across Wales. During the meetings, the young people had opportunity to follow up on any issues talked of in previous meetings and use the time to get to know the Ministers better.</p> <p>The questions/issues were decided by the Grand Council, youth forums, specific interest groups and any other groups of young people wishing to ask a question and get an answer from Ministers.</p>
<p>Enable children and young people to influence national policy making and to speak out collectively on issues of their choice</p>	<p><i>Evidence on young people's views</i> Evidence gathering on children and young people access to their rights e.g. survey of 12, 000 young people on views regarding access to their rights. Recommendations developed from this evidence base.</p> <p>Annual report – includes evidence based policy recommendations on issues gathered as part of children's rights reporting.</p> <p><i>Sub-committees of Grand Council</i> based on the Welsh Government Ministerial Portfolios.</p> <p><i>Representation on national fora:</i> Grand Council members engaged in political processes and influenced national policy via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation on Ministerial Advisory Groups. • Meeting with Elected Members to raise young people's issues. • Representation on National Issue based Fora, such as Mental Health or Older people. • Engagement in Welsh Government events. • Engagement in Welsh Government Consultations. <p><i>Collaborations with Wales' Commissioners</i> Collaboration and joint working should happen with the Children's Commissioner for Wales, as well as joint working relationships with other Commissioners.</p> <p>Policy advocacy <i>ad hoc</i> and not systematic.</p>
<p>Support children and young people to report directly to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and work with key partners in monitoring the implementation of the UNCRC</p>	<p>Sub-committee of Grand Council elected to steer UNCRC research. Evidence gathering from children and young people from across Wales on how they are accessing their rights as well as training on children's human rights to these children and young people.</p> <p>Report developed with detailed recommendations to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.</p>

Working at local level	Work with local authority youth forums, school councils and other youth organisations across Wales collating information on issues of concern and raising awareness of children's rights.
Public Press Gallery/Live web streaming/On-line engagement	No public press gallery. On-line surveys conducted on an <i>ad hoc</i> basis with young people from across Wales and as part of children's rights reporting.

Appendix 2: Context in Northern Ireland

There is currently no Northern Ireland Youth Assembly but young people are elected from the 18 parliamentary constituencies to the UK Youth Parliament. This process is managed by the Northern Ireland Youth Forum,¹¹⁹ which is a youth led membership organisation – this means that any young person living in Northern Ireland can become a member of the youth forum as long as they are aged between 11 and 25 years. An Executive Committee of 17 young people manages the Youth Forum. The Executive set the priorities for the Youth Forum and they employ a staff team to carry out this work. The Youth Forum was set up in 1979 by the Department of Education to represent the views of young people to government and other decision makers and has been funded since this time via the Northern Ireland Youth Council.

With regards to the development of a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly, a detailed report was carried out in 2011¹²⁰ by a youth panel brought together by the Northern Ireland Assembly outlining a proposal for the creation of a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly. This report is useful when giving consideration to what a model for a youth assembly could look like in Wales. In the online survey there was strong support for the establishment of a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly, with 89.8% of all respondents, 89.2% of individuals and 98.1% of organisations agreeing that there should be a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly.¹²¹

In 2014, Chairperson Martin McAuley of the Executive Committee of the Northern Ireland Youth Forum outlined how young people have called for a Youth Assembly to be established and are hoping that a Youth Congress will help pave the way towards a young person's version of the region's democratic structure.

The Northern Ireland Youth Forum at this time called on young people aged between 11 and 25, to come forward to sit on a Youth Congress which will be led by young people themselves and will act as a pilot for a Youth Assembly.¹²² In January 2015 it was confirmed that the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission would not be establishing a NI Assembly in the immediate future.¹²³

¹¹⁹ <http://www.niyf.org/about-niyf/>

¹²⁰ <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/visit-and-learning/youth-assembly/youth-panel-report/>

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² <http://www.niyf.org/youth-congress/>

¹²³ Report of the UK Children's Commissioners: UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Examination of the Fifth Periodic Report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 2015. p.13

Appendix 4: List of Youth Parliament websites

Country	Youth Parliament Website
Australia	http://ymca.org.au/Pages/Home.aspx New South Wales https://www.ymcansw.org.au/centres/youth-government/ymca-nsw-youth-parliament Queensland http://www.ymcaqyp.org/ Northern Territory http://www.ymcaypnt.org/ Tasmania http://www.youthparliament.org.au/ Victoria http://www.vicyouth.ymca.org.au/programs/youth-parliament.html Western Australia https://sites.google.com/a/youthparlwa.com/western-australian-youth-parliament-2-/Home National Indigenous Youth Parliament http://www.aec.gov.au/indigenous/niyp/
Belgium (Flemish)	https://vlaamsejeugdraad.be/
Belgium (French)	http://www.conseildela jeunesse.be/qui-sommes-nous/youth-council/
Bolivia	For further information see http://www.unicef.org/bolivia/protection_participation_8685.htm
Canada	Parliament of Alberta http://www.tuxis.org/ Saskatchewan Youth Parliament https://www.facebook.com/saskatchewanyp?fref=ts Youth Parliament of Manitoba http://www.ypmanitoba.ca/ Ontario Youth Parliament http://www.oyp.on.ca/who-we-are/ Parlement Jeunesse de Qubec http://pjq.qc.ca/ Alberta http://www.youngalbertans.com/ Newfoundland and Labrador http://www.nlyp.ca/
Cyprus	http://www.pccpwc.org/en/Children%20Parliament.html
Finland	http://www.lastenparlamentti.fi/in_english

Greece	http://foundation.parliament.gr/central.aspx?sId=1081334191413231442369
Ireland	http://www.comhairlenanog.ie/
Montenegro	http://www.skupstina.me/index.php/en/gradjani/djeciji-parlament/item/3052-predsednik-skupstine-crne-gore-otvorice-u-ponedeljak-vi-zasijedanje-decijeg-parlamenta
New Zealand	http://www.myd.govt.nz/young-people/youth-parliament/index.html
Pakistan	http://www.youthparliament.pk/
Scotland	http://www.syp.org.uk/
Slovenia	http://www.vlada.si/en/media_room/future_events/future_events/article/session_of_national_childrens_parliament_52436/
UK	http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/
Wales	http://www.funkydragon.org/en/
Yemen	No website
Zimbabwe	http://zimbabweyouthcouncil.org/new/?page_id=2

ANNEX 3

CONTRIBUTORS

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7. **Education Authority** - Stephen Dallas
8. **Forám na nÓg** - Aoife Nic Colaim, Director
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ASSEMBLY CONFIDENTIAL

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Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

21 December 2018

Robert Barry

Youth Parliaments

1 Introduction

In a recent survey conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), youth parliaments were found to exist in half of the 128 countries surveyed. Some had formal ties to the national parliament, but most were co-ordinated by non-governmental organisations, government ministries, schools or local authorities.¹

Most youth parliaments meet once a year, typically in the parliament building. Target groups vary enormously, with ages ranging from 8 to 35, although the IPU recommends that the focus should be on young people below the voting age, to avoid becoming an alternative to national parliaments.

The IPU identifies three broad objectives of youth parliaments:

- To listen to young people and give them a chance to express their points of view, and to create ongoing connections among youth and between young people and parliamentary and government officials.
- To raise awareness and to confer knowledge about parliamentary work.

¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016), 'Youth participation in national parliaments' - <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2016-08/youth-in-parliaments-2015>

- To provide young people with the experience of participatory democracy and encourage the development of debating and other leadership skills to increase active citizenship and arouse interest in public affairs.

So, it's not just about giving young people a chance to influence legislation and policy.

2 A Comparative Analysis of European Youth Parliaments

A recent comparative analysis of European youth parliaments was undertaken by academics, Mark Shephard and Stratos Patrikios.²

The researchers analysed data for youth parliaments in a number of European countries including Austria; Belgium (French); Belgium (Flemish); Cyprus; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Ireland; Italy; Netherlands; Portugal; Scotland; Sweden and the UK.

The most common source of organisation and oversight of youth parliaments was found to be government or parliamentary bodies (for example, Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland and Italy). In some cases, non-governmental organisations were involved (for example, in Belgium-Flanders, Scotland and the UK), with funding typically provided by the government.

The number of days spent meeting was found to vary from one day per year (for example, Austria, Denmark and France) to more regular meetings (for example, in Cyprus they meet every 2 months). The vast majority of these meetings take place in the national parliament.

Procedures were found to be either plenary based (for example, Finland and the UK), or more typically committee based but with some plenary activities (for example, Austria, Belgium—both Flemish and French, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece and Portugal). In Finland, the main highlighted activity was a question hour in which questions can be raised with government ministers.

Outputs varied and included reports (Austria, Finland and Ireland), draft bills (Cyprus, Denmark, Germany and Italy), resolutions and recommendations (Belgium), manifestos (UK every couple of years and Scotland every four years), campaigns and press releases (Belgium, Ireland, Finland, Scotland and UK) and responses to government consultations (Scotland and the UK).

Direct evidence of impact on policy was found to be limited. While the results of youth parliament proceedings are widely mediated in the press and on TV, and youth parliament bills are often sent to MPs and/or government ministers as

² Shephard, M. & Patrikios, S. 'Making Democracy Work by Early Formal Engagement? A Comparative Exploration of Youth Parliaments in the EU'. *Parliamentary Affairs*, Volume 66, Issue 4, 1 October 2013 - <https://academic.oup.com/pa/article/66/4/752/1400765>

recommendations (e.g. Portugal, Finland, Estonia, Cyprus, Belgium, Austria), it was noted that they are rarely implemented in the public policy domain.

On the basis of this comparative analysis, the authors conclude that:³

“The evidence presented in this paper shows that in a relatively short space of time, the YP has become an omnipresent institution in European democracies. Our overview of YP structures suggests that YPs appear to fulfill Article 12.1 of the UN convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires governments to give children the right to make their voice heard in matters that affect them (legal function). The description of the functioning of YPs in Europe also indicates that most of them successfully and closely simulate the procedures of the adult parliament in each country (parliamentary function). However, while the structures and resources are in place, and one would also add that the media attention is also there, institutions rarely translate youth preferences and grievances into tangible and applicable policy outcomes. So, on the whole YPs do not fulfill their potential as direct channels that aggregate youth voice and transfer it to policy-makers (democratic function). Instead, activities are invariably focused upon socialising adolescents and young adults in the workings of a democratic polity (civic education).”

The results of the analysis are summarised in the following table:

³ Shephard, M. & Patrikios, S. 'Making Democracy Work by Early Formal Engagement? A Comparative Exploration of Youth Parliaments in the EU'. Parliamentary Affairs, Volume 66, Issue 4, 1 October 2013 - <https://academic.oup.com/pa/article/66/4/752/1400765>

Feature	Usually	Exceptionally
Organized by	National Parliament Ministry of Education Other government	Charity Non-profit organisation
Target age group	Secondary education	Primary education or young adults
Selection	Schools and Youth Clubs	Local Authority Level Elections Essay-based competition
Size	Simulates national assembly	Demand based
Tenure	1–4 days or 9–12 months	>1 year (only two YPs)
Partisanship	Absent	Parties only present in three YPs
Representation	Schools and clubs or fictitious constituencies	Real constituencies
Preparation	In advance in schools, clubs and workshops	On the day in the Parliament
Location of main meeting	National Parliament	Venue other than National Parliament
Proceedings	Committee-based and/or plenary session	
Issues	Youth focused (e.g. education, jobs, crime, health, equality, environment, transport, youth voting)	
Contact with MPs	Briefly during activities in national parliament	Shadowing politicians over time joint activities in the real world
Outputs	Draft bills/reports/recommendations/campaigns/press releases	Manifestos (UK and Scotland)
Impact	Indirect: media/agenda setting	Indicative: decisions communicated to government/parliament as recommendations/petitions Direct: bill passed as law by national assembly (Italy 1997)

3 Scotland

The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) was established on 30 June 1999. It is a registered charity, funded mostly by the Scottish Government (£362,740 in 2018 with an additional £61,437 of funding from other sources, including voluntary organisations).

It describes itself as a fundamentally rights-based organisation, with its mission, vision, and values grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In particular, its purpose embodies Article 12: that young people have the right to express their views freely and have their opinions listened to in all matters affecting them.

Elections are held every two years, in which young people from all across Scotland stand as candidates to become Members (MSYPs).

MSYPs range in age from 14 to 25 and represent constituencies in all 32 local authorities throughout the country, and several national voluntary organisations.

MSYPs meet once a year for two days in the Scottish Parliament, holding debates and workshops on topical issues. They also give evidence to Scottish Parliament Committees and have a question and answer session with Ministers and other decision-makers.

4 Wales

In 2014, funding was withdrawn from Funky Dagon, the previous Young Person's Assembly for Wales. Since then, following consultation, a new Welsh Youth Parliament has been established with 60 Members aged between 11 and 18.

During Plenary at the Senedd on 23 May 2018, the Llywydd of the National Assembly for Wales, Elin Jones AM, announced that the voter registration drive for the inaugural election would start on 31 May 2018, with an electronic election over a three-week period in November 2018.

Of the 60 Welsh Youth Parliament Members, 40 were elected in November 2018 from each of the 40 electoral constituencies in Wales, and 20 were returned by partner organisations to ensure the representation of diverse groups of young people.

The intention is for the Youth Parliament to meet on 3 occasions during its 2 year term, in the Chamber in Cardiff Bay. There will also be a number of regional meetings.

In the inaugural year, the budget is set at £65,000 which will cover the online election (£15,000), and around 3 meetings of the Welsh Youth Parliament (one residential and two regional meetings this financial year). The budget for next year, a non-election year is currently set at £50,000. These costings exclude staff costs.

It is anticipated that once the first year is completed, and lessons have been learnt and evaluated, these costs will change.

5 UK Youth Parliament

The UK Youth Parliament has over 280 seats for elected Members (MYPs) aged 11-18. MYPs are usually elected in annual youth elections throughout the UK. Any young person aged 11-18 can stand or vote. In the past two years one million young people have voted in UK Youth Parliament elections.

Elected MYPs organise events and projects, run campaigns and attempt to influence decision makers on the issues which matter most to young people. They meet annually to take part in workshops, debate, create and change national manifesto policy, and network. This annual conference takes place on a university campus over three days. The event includes keynote speeches from political figures, followed by question and answer sessions.

In addition to the annual conference, they have an annual sitting in the House of Commons, which involves committee and plenary sessions. This normally takes place around November and marks the start of UK Parliament Week, a programme of events and activities that aims to connect people with the UK Parliament.⁴

6 Ireland

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs funds each of the 31 City and County Development Boards to a maximum of 20,000 Euro per year to establish and run *Comhairle na nÓg (Youth Council)*, which gives children and young people (12 to 17), a voice in the development of local services and policies.

New members join through the local Comhairle na nÓg Annual General Meetings which are held in September/October of each year. Young people are invited from local schools and youth groups. The aim is to have as broad a representation of the young people of the area as possible. At the AGMs, a large number of local young people come together to discuss the issues that are of importance to them. In most cases, new members for Comhairle are selected/elected during the AGM. Comhairle meetings, generally take place every three to four weeks, where members research their topic and work to influence local decision makers.

In addition, the Department funds a biennial event, *Dáil na nÓg*, the most recent of which was held in December 2017 in Croke Park. At this meeting, delegates from each of the Comhairle na nÓg gather to discuss issues of importance to children and young adults as identified through the Youth Councils. Delegates then attend various

⁴ See House of Commons Library Briefing Paper CBP8411 - <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8411>

Oireachtas Committees to present the results of these discussions, and represent the views of young people.

7 Northern Ireland

The Assembly Commission has been considering the establishment of a Youth Assembly since 2009. The 2009-13 Engagement Strategy identified engagement with young people as a priority and committed the Assembly to considering the establishment of a youth forum.

In 2010, the Commission recruited a Youth Panel of 30 young people aged 16-18 years to research other youth parliaments, consult young people and other stakeholders and develop proposals for a Youth Assembly. Following a year of research and evidence gathering, the Youth Panel developed draft proposals and presented them to the Assembly Commission in March 2011. The Commission approved, in principle, the establishment of a pilot youth assembly and a public consultation on the proposals. Responses indicated strong support for a Youth Assembly and led to some modifications to the original proposals.

A report on the consultation with details of the amended model was presented to the Commission in March 2013. The Commission approved the setting up of a two-and-a-half-year pilot youth assembly, at an estimated cost of £517.5k, subject to the availability of funding. It agreed that the Assembly should seek partnership funding from the Executive. It also approved the recommendation to tender out the contract for managing the operation of a youth assembly to a youth organisation.

The estimated cost for the project was based on the costs of other similar youth assemblies, including the Scottish Youth Parliament and Funky Dragon in Wales. It covered the cost of contracting out delivery of the project to a youth organisation, which was the Commission's preference, following the advice of officials.

Assembly officials initially met with officials from OFMdfM to discuss the possibility of securing Executive funding for the project. Signs were initially positive and it was suggested that a pilot youth assembly could become a signature project under the Executive's new Delivering Social Change Strategy, subject to Ministerial approval.

The Speaker and Assembly officials then met with OFMdfM Junior Ministers, Jonathan Bell and Jennifer McCann in summer 2013 when it was agreed that, given the significant investment involved in a challenging economic climate, costs of the pilot project would be reviewed to see if savings could be made to ensure best possible value for money while retaining the integrity of the project. A revised, 'silver' model reduced the cost of the pilot project to £417,000, while protecting the model developed by the Youth Panel and the decision to contract out delivery. Savings were achieved by reducing the cost of set-up and launch, and online and promotional activities; removing the allocation for dedicated savings; and reducing the number of meetings.

A sum of £100,000 was initially set aside in the Assembly's budget for 2014-15 in the hope that partnership funding would become available to allow the project to progress. However, because of financial constraints and no financial support from the Executive, the project was put on hold and consideration given to other ways of engaging with young people. This centred around the work of the Education Service, including:

- continued delivery of the Assembly's education programme – which informs young people about how the Assembly works, its relevance to them and how to have their voices heard in the decision-making process;
- collaborating with Assembly Committees to consult young people on inquiry issues and legislation. Through focus groups and surveys, the views of young people have been gathered on the following: the Road Traffic Bill (Environment Committee); Anti-bullying legislation, Shared and Integrated Education and School Inspections (Education Committee) and the Together Building a United Community Strategy (TBUC);
- the 'Let's Talk' series of events, bringing young people together with MLAs and other local representatives;
- delivery of special projects, including:
 - o the EU funded, Erasmus + 'Connections' Project (February 2015 - January 2016) which promotes dialogue between MLAs and young people. This has involved 36 young people identifying mental health as a priority issue, carrying out a mini inquiry into the issue and presenting findings to Assembly Committees; and
 - o the 'Reel Politics' project in partnership with Cinemagic (film education organisation) and Belfast City Council, involving 24 young women who made short films on the issues of social media, domestic abuse and the lack of female representation in STEAM sectors (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths).

At present, the economic climate and the political climate both remain challenging. The Speaker had previously expressed a preference for what was at that time the Welsh Assembly model of 'mainstreaming' youth engagement through the work of Assembly Committees. A public consultation in Wales had shown preference for this, rather than a youth assembly (the Welsh Executive withdrew funding for 'Funky Dragon' in July 2014, although a new Welsh Youth Parliament has been established this year). Prior to the collapse of the Executive and the Committees, the Assembly's Education Service were therefore working with committees on an ad-hoc basis to consult young people.

8 Canada

Youth Parliaments are popular across Canada with provincial Youth Parliaments meeting annually in the provincial legislatures of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia.

In Quebec, for example, three different Model Youth Parliaments meet every year in the National Assembly. The first (in January), le [Forum étudiant](#), is for university and college students (18-25 years old) and lasts a week. The second (in January), le [Parlement des jeunes](#), is for secondary school students (14-15 years old) and lasts 3 days. The third (in May), le [Parlement écolier](#), is for primary school students (11 years old) and lasts one day.

For all of these Model Parliaments, students take on the roles of real MPs. They debate on bills that they have written with their classmates prior to the activity, they use the same rooms as the MPs and they are helped by employees that usually work with the MPs.⁵

In contrast, the British Columbia Youth Parliament meets annually in Victoria to debate world issues and also to organize fundraising for the next year to pay for initiatives like Camp Phoenix which is a summer camp for under-privileged students.

9 New Zealand

The New Zealand Youth Parliament meets every three years in the New Zealand Parliament in Wellington. Youth MPs are selected by current MPs to represent them and to take on the role of a Member of Parliament as much as possible. There is also a Youth Press Gallery.

At the last Youth Parliament meeting in 2016, members grappled with ten real issues affecting young New Zealanders, in much the same way as Parliament's own select committees.

The next Youth Parliament meeting is scheduled to be held on 16 and 17 July 2019.

10 Switzerland

In Switzerland there are 66 youth parliaments at the local and cantonal (regional) level. Although they are organised differently, they have a common denominator: engagement by young people for young people on political themes and for causes that are of concern to the young.⁶

⁵ See <http://www.paricilademocratie.com/4-participer> for more information.

⁶ https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/directdemocracy/opinion_will-switzerland-get-a-parliament-for-young-people/42351486

At the national level, the Swiss Youth Parliament takes place once a year in the federal parliament building. Over a four-day period, 200 young people occupy the seats of the federal parliamentarians, discussing political issues and formulating non-binding motions that are submitted to their “elder peers”.⁷

The Youth Parliament has existed since 1991, but it is not elected. The 200 participants, ranging from the ages of 14 to 21, are all volunteers, chosen by the Swiss Council for Youth Activities (CSAJ) according to a quota system.

Factors for selection include gender, education level, and origin (it is not necessary to hold a Swiss passport). Swiss living abroad also take part, as do unaccompanied minors arrived through the asylum system.

The Swiss Youth Parliament, backed up by experts and national politicians, debates real issues according to a daily agenda prepared by the participants themselves.

At the end of four days of debate, the accepted ideas are sent up to the “adult” parliament, where CSAJ members push for the recognition of the youths’ suggestions by lobbying parliamentarians and national and regional organisations. Parliament, however, ultimately rejects the majority of the petitions.⁸

11 Conclusion

Youth Parliaments appear to be popular throughout the world. Target age groups and structures vary, but they seem to have the same general aims and similar formats.

While their influence on legislation and policy is clearly limited, they give young people a chance to express their points of view, and to create connections between young people and parliamentary and government officials. They also raise awareness of issues of concern to young people and provide them with the experience of participatory democracy.

Meeting at least once a year and taking on the role of parliamentarians in committee and plenary sessions in the main parliament building would appear to be an important part of the process.

⁷ https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/directdemocracy/opinion_will-switzerland-get-a-parliament-for-young-people/42351486

⁸ <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/multimedia/youth-parliament/43671804>

**Comparative Analysis of Neighbouring Jurisdictions’
Youth Representation Models
(From the previous ‘options’ paper)**

1. For the purposes of this paper, the key comparative focus has been on local examples, with the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP), the Welsh Youth Parliament, the UK Youth Parliament, and the Dail na nÓg being the most relevant. As the Welsh Youth Parliament is the most recently established body, its journey from development to operation is, perhaps, the easiest to access. There are also a number of clear lessons to be drawn from experiences in neighbouring jurisdictions, and a range of pitfalls that would be best avoided. The attached research papers at Annexes 4 and 6 provide more detail on these models.

Wales: Welsh Youth Parliament (WYP)

2. As part of the process to develop proposals for a Welsh representative youth body, an external steering group was established including the Welsh Children and Young People’s Commissioner and youth sector organisations, which had to include young people as representatives. The inclusion of young people was to ensure a co-design process that reflected their views. Additionally, the group contained the trustees of the Funky Dragon, the previous, government-funded representative youth assembly in Wales, which ended in 2014. There was also an important internal steering group comprising representatives from a range of functions in the National Assembly for Wales (NAfW).
3. The external steering group created a consultation document from its discussions that focused on a model that had been pinned down and costed. The responses to the consultation document were analysed by external consultants and a paper was prepared with a youth parliament proposal for the NAfW Commission. This received cross-party support, but it applied very tight timescales.
4. The consultation made it clear that young people wanted representatives to the youth parliament to be elected and that there should be 60 members to mirror the representation in the NAfW. As with the NAfW itself, 40 of the members would be elected to represent specific constituencies, while a further 20 would come from “communities of interest” through partner organisations, rather than from lists like the NAfW. None of those 20 are allowed to belong to an existing democratic forum.
5. The official launch of the WYP occurred in May 2018, when voter registration opened. Voter registration closed in mid-November 2018. The nomination of candidates took place from 3rd to 30th September 2018, with voting itself from 5th to 25th November. Mi-Voice electoral services ran the election. They have experience in running elections involving young people and have software that helps to prevent multiple votes being exercised by individuals etc.
6. The election saw 500 candidates stand on a platform of three issues each, drawn from a wider list of issues that came from a survey of young people undertaken in May 2018 at the launch of the WYP. This list of issues was then grouped into 20

Assembly Restricted

themes, which were consulted on and supported. The election was public and each candidate was featured on the NAFW website. However, this kind of public exposure of candidates raises a wide range of safeguarding and other issues. There is already a review of the election process under way.

7. With regard to the eligible electorate, there are approximately 200,000 11 to 18 year-olds in Wales. However, without any data it was difficult for the NAFW to estimate how many of those would register to vote and then actually vote. The only available comparative statistics were for university student council elections, which suggested a turnout of around 5%. Therefore, the target for voter registration was set at 10,000 (5% of the age cohort), with 25,000 registering to vote, and 9,000 actually voting. With 500 candidates involved it meant that successful candidates did not require a large vote to be elected.
8. The WYP's first two-year term will see three all-representative plenaries, with each of them being conducted as a residential over a weekend in February and October 2019, and November 2020. Those dates were advertised prior to the elections to the WYP to help candidates, and their parents and guardians, to understand the level of commitment required and to allow them to plan. As the WYP plenaries do not attract privilege, the sessions cannot be broadcast live, but an edited version can be broadcast subsequently.
9. In addition to the plenaries, representatives in each of the four Welsh regions will meet every six to eight weeks, supported by NAFW (two staff members for each region) and partner organisation staff. There will also be three events in each region during the two-year term of the WYP to allow representatives to engage with other young people in their area. These smaller meetings are less intimidating for the representatives and allow them to engage locally. Issues such as the GCSE and A-level exam seasons must be considered when scheduling the plenaries and other meetings. Meetings of the WYP are not termed plenaries as this raises a level of expectation, they are referred to simply as "meetings". There has not been any consideration yet as to whether there should be elected officers of the WYP as this discussion would be time consuming and other business has been given priority.
10. WYP representatives have been given guidance on the use of social media. However, there are no dedicated WYP representative social media profiles, or email addresses. This is seen as essential to protect the representatives. The representatives were not supplied with IT equipment either. The NAFW has also stressed to representatives the dangers of lone-working and advised against it – the NAFW will not take responsibility if representatives choose to do this.

Ireland: Dail na nÓg

11. Dail na nÓg is the national youth parliament for 12 to 17 year-olds in Ireland. It is a biennial event, to which 200 representatives from the 31 Comhairle na nÓg (local youth councils) are elected by their youth council peers to become delegates. The Department for Children and Youth Affairs funds and oversees Dáil na nÓg, which is hosted by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The Department funds each of the 31 City and County Development Boards to a maximum of €20K per year to establish and run a Comhairle na nÓg, which gives

Assembly Restricted

children and young people a voice in the development of local services and policies.

12. New members join through the 31 Comhairle na nÓg AGMs, which are held in September/October of each year. Young people are invited from local schools and youth groups. The aim is to have as broad a representation of the young people of the area as possible. At the AGMs, a large number of local young people come together to discuss the issues that are of importance to them. In most cases, new members for Comhairle are selected/elected during the AGM. Comhairle meetings, generally take place every three to four weeks, where members research their topic and work to influence local decision makers.
13. The topics discussed at Dáil na nÓg are chosen by young people themselves in the 31 Comhairle na nÓg. Recommendations from Dail na nÓg are followed-up by the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, which consists of 31 young people elected for two years by their peers of the Comhairle na nÓg youth councils, The National Executive meets monthly and supported by a steering group of national experts and policymakers.
14. The role of the National Executive is to:
 - Identify key areas of work from the top three recommendations agreed at the national youth parliament;
 - Conduct research into the issues identified;
 - Meet with relevant Ministers, TDs, government officials, policymakers and other stakeholders to seek their support in making changes for young people on the issues identified;
 - Feed back to their local youth council on the work of the national executive; and
 - Represent National Executive at conferences and other events.
15. At the time of writing, the most recent Dáil na nÓg was held in December 2017 in Croke Park. At that meeting, delegates from each of the Comhairle na nÓg discussed issues of importance to children and young adults as identified through the Youth Councils. Delegates then attended various Oireachtas Committees to present the results of their discussions and represent the views of young people.

Scotland: Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)

16. The SYP is a charitable, youth-led organisation governed by a Board of Trustees which meets six times annually and comprises seven members of the SYP (MSYP), including the Chair and Vice-Chair, and up to four external members who act as professional advisers to the Trustees. All members of the Board are aged between 16 and 25 years of age. Any MSYP can apply to become a Trustee and Trustees are elected by MSYPs at their AGM held each June.
17. The SYP describes itself as a fundamentally rights-based organisation, with its mission, vision and values grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In particular, its purpose embodies Article 12: that young people have the right to express their views freely and have their opinions listened to in all matters affecting them. Elections are held every two years, in

Assembly Restricted

which young people from across Scotland stand as candidates to become MSYPs who range in age from 14 to 25.

18. The SYP employs a staff team based in its Edinburgh office, including a chief executive, although MSYPs also receive support from local youth workers. This staff team in Edinburgh provides support when MSYPs represent the SYP in any media activity, national projects, groups and/or events. As the SYP Elections Commission notes:

“SYP’s primary support network at a local level remains the Community Learning and Development departments in Scotland’s local authorities; in practice, the organisation has built up a network of ‘Local Co-ordinators’ in each local authority area. Local Co-ordinators are responsible for running SYP elections in their area, including providing training and support to individual candidates, and for supporting, including acting as in loco parentis, their local MSYPs at Sittings of the Parliament and other meetings they may attend.”

19. The SYP does not provide funding to the local authorities for performing these services, relying instead on local youth services recognising the benefits to the young people in their area of participating in the work of the SYP. Three local authorities do not currently send representatives to the SYP, with one of them never having done so. The SYP also has a strong working relationship with the Scottish Children and Young People’s Commissioner (SCYCP), meeting with SCYCP colleagues once a week to join up respective policy development and advocacy work.
20. The SYP meets at least three times a year at national sittings. Additional events, activities and meetings run throughout the year giving MSYPs further opportunities to come together. The national sittings include debates on topical issues; campaign activities; questions with Ministers and other decision makers; meetings of the SYP’s 10 Subject Committees; workshops on topical issues; giving evidence to the Scottish Parliament Committees; and electing the SYP representatives to the Board of Trustees and other office bearers.
21. There are 10 SYP Subject Committees, each chaired by a Convener, namely: Culture and Media; Education and Lifelong Learning; Jobs and Economy; Equalities; External Affairs; Health and Wellbeing; Justice; Social Justice; Sport and Leisure; and Transport, Environment and Rural Affairs. The Conveners Group is intended to coordinate and manage the workload of the Subject Committees. The SYP Vice-Chair is also a non-voting member of the Group and facilitates its meetings. The Conveners Group also decides on which consultations the SYP should respond to and contributes to the development of SYP’s campaigns.
22. The SYP has a wide range of policy positions on the issues young people want to see represented. These are drawn from the SYP manifesto, SYP sittings, and from the Conveners Group.

Assembly Restricted

23. Over the past few years, the SYP have successfully lobbied the Government of Scotland with campaigns on equal marriage, a National Living Wage Recognition Scheme and votes at 16. The SYP also responds to consultations.
24. During discussions for this paper, Scottish Parliament colleagues indicated that the Parliament's relationship with the SYP has developed more rapidly in recent years under new direction at the head of the SYP. A new Partnership Agreement has been agreed between the Parliament and the SYP that sets out six objectives, including the SYP helping the Parliament to reach more young people, improving links between Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and MSYPs, and providing development and training for MSYPs. The SYP will also align more of its work to that of the Parliament's committees. Much of this realignment on the part of the SYP is as a result of reviewing its impact, or lack thereof. While being recognised for its campaigns, the SYP has not had as much success in influencing or accessing the policy development or legislative processes. There has been a tendency to engage the already engaged, an issue for many youth assemblies and parliaments, and a pitfall to avoid.
25. Ben McKendrick, Chief Executive of the SYP, has been seen as the driving force behind the closer alignment of the SYP to the work of the Scottish Parliament. The SYP's charitable status means that it has to be wary of engaging in activities that could be seen as party political. This helps to prevent the SYP being used to pursue any particular party political agenda. The SYP also works in close partnership with Scotland's local government authorities (LGAs). Each participating LGA provides funding to support each of the two local representatives that they send to the SYP. This money helps to pay the expenses of the MSYPs. Providing these MSYPs also draws the LGAs into the work of the SYP and gives them a level of responsibility and ownership with respect to the SYP. Ben regards the LGAs as very important partners and the SYP listens to their views. He stressed that they complement each other's activities rather than duplicate them and this is set down through agreements. Additional MSYPs are recruited from hard-to-reach and marginalised groups, as well as minorities etc by other youth-focused partner organisations.
26. Key principles of the SYP are: democracy, diversity and inclusion, rights, and political impartiality. MSYPs operate under a code of conduct. The SYP attaches considerable importance to partner organisations and the need to ensure that the relationships are receptive and flexible.

UK – the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP)

27. The UKYP is a youth-led organisation overseen by the Board of Trustees of the British Youth Council (BYC) - the national youth council of the UK. The BYC is an incorporated charity governed by a memorandum and articles, and a rule book. It's Board of 13 Trustees meets six times annually and they are young people aged 25 and under who are elected annually by BYC members at the Annual Council Meeting each year. They are responsible for guiding the strategic direction of BYC, and the UKYP is one of the projects of the BYC.
28. The UKYP has over 280 seats for elected members (MYPs) aged 11-18. MYPs are usually elected in annual youth elections throughout the UK, and any young

Assembly Restricted

person aged 11-18 can stand or vote. Elected MYPs organise events and projects, run campaigns and attempt to influence decision makers on the issues that matter most to young people. They meet annually to take part in workshops, debate, create and change national manifesto policy, and network. This annual conference takes place on a university campus over three days. The event includes keynote speeches from political figures, followed by question and answer sessions.

29. In addition to the annual conference, they have an annual sitting in the House of Commons, which involves committee and plenary sessions. This normally takes place around November and marks the start of UK Parliament Week, a programme of events and activities that aims to connect people with the UK Parliament.

Representation and Representative Selection

30. The number of representatives to a youth assembly varies, locally and internationally. The most recently established body, the Welsh Youth Parliament has 60 representatives to mirror the number of AMs in the National Assembly for Wales.
31. The majority of contributors to the discussions on options for a youth assembly for NI suggested that it would be appropriate for that youth assembly to mirror the number of MLAs. This total of 90 would allow considerable scope to ensure that representation in a youth assembly covers the whole region and can include representation for particular groups to ensure that Section 75 and equality requirements are met, and that marginalised, disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups are also represented.
32. The previous (2010/11) NI youth assembly proposal envisaged elections to a youth assembly through a constituency-based system. The new Welsh Youth Parliament opted to undertake a system of open, constituency-based elections to the WYP where candidates would highlight their candidacy based on their support for specific issues. These candidates appeared on the NAFW website and were subject to a popular vote.
33. Of the 500 candidates that offered themselves, only 40 were to be elected – one for each of the Welsh constituencies – with 20 seats held for other groups. Unfortunately, this means that 460 of the candidates had very publicly failed to be elected.
34. The Welsh experience would suggest that the use of this form of public, open election has considerable drawbacks, with significant safeguarding, logistical, cost and other implications. Despite the fact that the age range for the WYP is 11 to 18, only one 11-year-old was elected and only a handful of under 15s made it through the process. While the system has ensured that representatives are from all part of Wales, it has not ensured gender or age balance.
35. Instead, it might be more appropriate to use the Scottish or Irish models which see young people drawn from a variety of existing sources/bodies, such as local councils. These bodies both serve as providers of support and information for the

Assembly Restricted

representatives and would be a ready conduit for engagement with their peers. This model would also ensure that the representatives could be balanced in terms of gender and location, as well as other equality factors.

36. A number of places could be reserved for representatives from communities of interest, Section 75, and marginalised, disadvantaged and hard-to-reach communities. These representatives could be drawn from partner organisations with links to those groups and criteria could be applied to ensure that there is a gender balance and that representatives are drawn from across the region.
37. As indicated by the contributors to the discussions for this paper, and reflective of neighbouring youth parliament models, it will be important for a local youth assembly to have a range of partner organisations that can put forward young people from hard-to-reach and Section 75 groups, other communities of interest and marginalised or disadvantaged groups. It is vital that the young people in these communities/groups have a guaranteed voice. Their inclusion would also allow a youth assembly to have an identified group of partner organisations with which it can work.

Cost of Models

38. Below are the general costings for the Welsh, Scottish, Irish and UK representative youth bodies. The costs vary considerably, with the Welsh model representing the lowest cost, partly due to the fact that it is run by the NAFW and, therefore, staff costs are not included in the headline figure. The other three models represent a much greater cost as these are core-funded by Government and, therefore, cover a variable element of staff costs. The options for a Northern Ireland youth assembly later in this paper are generally costed using a “menu” of elements. The development of these generalised costs is at **Annex 8**.

Wales (WYP)

39. The budget for the first year of the WYP is £65K (£15K of this is for the election of representatives) with £50K for the second year. However, the caveat around these costs is that they do not include the staffing cost that the NAFW is contributing. The NAFW Education Service has been repurposed to support the WYP, with communications and other work being undertaken for the WYP from the NAFW’s in-house graphic design, broadcast, print, digital and research units.

Scotland (SYP)

40. The SYP received core funding from Scottish Government of approximately £362,740 in 2018, with an additional £61,437 of funding from other sources, including voluntary organisations. Other funding from grants supports project work and commissions are received for specific pieces of work.

Ireland

41. The Irish Department of Children and Youth affairs funds each of the 31 City and County Development Boards to a maximum of €20K per year (€620K maximum) to establish and run its Comhairle na nÓg. Additionally, the Department funds the biennial meeting of the full Dail na nÓg. A cost for this is not been ascertained.

UK (UKYP)

Assembly Restricted

42. The approximate cost of the UKYP is £700K, with £285K coming from the Cabinet Office with the remainder raised through from trusts and grant-making bodies, European funds, and local authorities.

Age range for Models

43. The WYP and the UKYP use the age range of 11 to 18, while in the Dail na nÓg it is 12 to 17. The age range for the SYP is the widest at 14 to 25. The Northern Ireland national survey on the development of a youth assembly in 2010 was inconclusive on the age range. The Youth Panel debated the issue at length and considered a range of views on the availability and capability of the various age groups. The Panel recommended that the minimum age for an applicant should be 15 and the maximum 20, i.e. 17 to 22 following a two-year term. However, the age range for the proposed pilot youth assembly was eventually set at 14 to 18, meaning representatives would be aged 16 to 20 at the end of their two-year term.
44. Discussions held with stakeholders to inform this paper have brought forward two suggested age ranges: 11 to 18, and 14 to 18. The Children's Commissioner indicated that 18 should be the mainstream cut-off age for election as young people have access to the democratic process after this age. It also marks the cut-off age for most in mainstream education. This would still mean older representatives being 20 following a two-year term, however that mirrors the WYP and the UKYP and is close to the Dail na nÓg.
45. The SYP's upper limit of 25 is more problematic and increases the issues around safeguarding. However, it should be noted that any youth assembly representative over the age of 18 will require an Access NI check. This would suggest that a very high under-age limit for candidates, say over 18, would create considerable bureaucracy and it would be hard to argue that those over the age of 20 have much in common with 11 to 14 year olds. As indicated above in the discussion of the WYP model, only one 11-year-old was elected to the WYP, with only a handful of those under 15 being elected. This could suggest less of an interest in, or understanding of, this kind of activity in under 14s. Teachers who contributed to the discussions for this paper favoured an age range of 14 to 18 for election to a youth assembly and, on balance, this range was favoured by the majority of contributors. However, many suggested that a youth assembly must ensure that it engages with young people under the age of 14.
46. Contributors also highlighted the need to be flexible on an upper age range for young people from marginalised, hard-to-reach and other groups, suggesting that 21 might be a more appropriate upper limit. This might also be applied to representatives from, for example, further education colleges etc.

Costings for an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly

Overview

1. The estimated costs to operate an Assembly Commission-supported Youth Assembly are set out in this paper. The costs fall into two broad categories: staffing costs and operating costs.

Staffing costs

2. It is estimated that a total of three full-time members of staff will be required to support the establishment and operation of the Youth Assembly. However, they would also require ad hoc support and assistance from other members of Assembly Secretariat staff.
3. The three full-time staff needed, and the suggested grading of those staff, is as follows:
 - Youth Worker **AG7**
 - Senior Youth Worker **AG6**
 - Youth Assembly Manager **AG5**
4. In addition to the above full-time staff, it is proposed that an Assembly Clerk (AG4) is made Clerk of the Youth Assembly and that that person fulfils that role (estimated to be 10%) alongside their normal clerking duties.
5. Other staff, mainly from Clerking but also, for example, from Corporate Services, HR, IS Office, Communications, RaISe etc, would be needed to assist with the work of the Youth Assembly in a variety of ways. However, it is anticipated that such assistance would be provided as part of their existing roles as the Youth Assembly becomes mainstreamed within the Assembly's business and processes.
6. To facilitate this structure, it is proposed that two new members of staff are recruited to fill the AG7 and AG6 positions and that the AG5 position is filled from within the existing complement of Education Officers.
7. Assuming that the staff referred to in paragraphs 4 and 5 have on additional incremental cost and that an AG5 Education Officer will fill the position of Youth Assembly Manager (see paragraph 6), the extra resource needed in terms of staff would be 1 X AG7 and 1 X AG6. The whole employment costs those staff can be calculated using a staff cost ready reckoner and are:

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED

Grade	Increase in complement
Assistant Assembly Clerk	1.0
Clerical Supervisor	1.0
Total	2.0
Annualised cost of new posts	£95k

8. The total extra annual staffing cost (recurring) would therefore be c£95K, increasing by 2% per annum.

Operating costs

9. The operating costs are based on the model of a Youth Assembly as set out in the covering paper and are still relatively general estimates.
10. The recruitment and training of Youth Assembly members will be a six-month process, from publicising the recruitment, holding regional information sessions and completing application sifts and interviews. The process would culminate in the first residential of the first year of the Youth Assembly mandate, as outlined above.
11. The costs for each **regional information** session, including venue and refreshments, is estimated at £3K, therefore six sessions will cost £18K. However, it is suggested that a contingency of £2K should be included to cover any additional spending, so the total cost of recruiting Youth Assembly members is estimated at £20K (every other year).
12. The proposal is that the Youth Assembly will have **two residential programmes** each year. These would take place at weekends and/or school holidays, and would cover two overnights and two days (Friday evening through to Sunday late morning/early afternoon). Based on 90 NIYA members and a cost of £100 per person, plus an additional £1K for staff costs, that gives a total £10K per residential, £20K annually for two residencials.
13. With regard to **travel and subsistence**, it is estimated that an annual figure of £100 per Youth Assembly member would be a reasonable estimate to allow them to attend residential programmes, plenary sittings and committee meetings. Based on 90 Youth Assembly members and a cost of £100 per person, plus an additional £1K for staff travel and subsistence, that gives a total £10K per annum.
14. A general annual cost estimate for an **online presence, additional events/meetings, profiling, and other operational costs** is set at a further £25K, although that of course depends on the level of activity.
15. Based on the figures in paragraphs 11 to 14, the total annual operating costs are estimated as follows:

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED

Costs	Year 1 2020-21	Year 2* 2021-22	Year 3 2022-23	Year 4* 2023-24
Recruitment and regional information sessions	£20k	£0	£20k	£0k
Residential programmes	£0	£20k	£20k	£20k
Travel and subsistence	£1k	£10k	£10k	£10k
Other operational costs	£25k	£25k	£25k	£25k
Total	£46k	£55k	£75k	£55k

*Indicates years in which recruitment of members of the Youth Assembly will take place.

Summary

16. As indicated in the covering paper, the pioneer phase of the Youth Assembly will encompass the first recruitment of members and two years of operation. The cost of establishing and operating the Youth Assembly, assuming that the review towards the end of the pioneer phase advocates continued financial support from the Assembly Commission, is as follows:

Costs	Year 1 2020-21	Year 2* 2021-22	Year 3 2022-23	Year 4* 2023-24
		Pioneer Phase		
Staffing costs	£95k	£97k	£99k	£101k
Operational costs	£46k	£55k	£75k	£55k
Total	£141k	£152k	£174k	£156k

*Indicates years in which recruitment of members of the Youth Assembly will take place.