



AINYA TAYLOR

The Highland Youth Convener

April 2013 – August 2014



A message from the Youth Convener

Before I took up post as The Highland Youth Convener I was elected as a Scottish Youth Parliament rep for Inverness and Nairn in 2011. I joined Highland Youth Voice that year and attended Executive Committee meetings; I was elected as HYV Chair in August 2012.

My years of experience in Highland Youth Voice gave me the confidence and ability to take on the role of Highland Youth Convener.

The Youth Convener has the vote on a local Government committee and the chance to raise your concerns over issues which are affecting young people on a day to day basis, which is unique to the role. Knowing you can make change at the heart of local government and have a platform to convey the views of young people is such an incredible opportunity and really does make this role one of a kind.

Throughout my term in office I have learned many things, particularly about the vast range of issues affecting young people across the Highlands. One of my key priorities was to get out and meet people from across the highlands, to hear what they had to say and how I could make changes to improve their quality of lives.

The highlights of my year include; working with a diverse range of young people and getting to know their stories and their communities, working in the most remote parts of the Highlands and learning about the issues which affect young people living there and working alongside young people, their families and organisations to make change.

Networking is a vital part of the role of Youth Convener. The role includes meeting with politicians and key figures and decision makers to inform them of young people's issues and work together to address them.

Overall my term in office has been very interesting and informative. I have absolutely loved the work with young people. I would recommend the role to anyone who is passionate about speaking out and fighting for change. I have had a great experience as Youth Convener and I look forward to using the skills and contacts I have made to develop my future career.

Highland Youth Convener Action Plan

The following report sets out the role, priorities and action plan for the year of the Highland Youth Convener, Ainya Taylor, 2013-2014.

1. Role

The Role of the Youth Convener as set out in the Contract Specification is as follows:

- To assist in ensuring that young people's views in Highland are being voiced in partnership with The Highland Council and Community planning partners.
- To act as a representative for young people and Highland Youth Voice in various council and public meetings discussing issues, policies and developments which have an impact on young people.
- To contribute towards making the Highlands the best place in Scotland to be young.
- To work for a good quality of life for young people and maximum availability of services for young people's personal, social and educational development.

2. Personal Priorities for the Year 2013-2014

- **To continue to raise the profile of Highland Youth Voice, Scottish Youth Parliament and local Youth Forums.**

I plan to raise the profile of various youth organisations by working with young people to create a presentation pack of information. The pack will explain the roles of these organisations, list contact details as well as use various formats such as podcasts or videos. This pack will be promoted Highland-wide by young people and will inform others of what is available to them and also how they can get involved.

- **To educate young people on their rights within employment and the support that is out there for them and to inform those looking for employment of the contacts, skills and experience which could be helpful.**

One of my main focuses in regards to employment is educating young people about their rights within employment and also what support is available. I shall look into part-time and 'zero-hour' contracts which are commonly given to young people and also try to find a simple, easy way for young people both in employment and looking for employment to get access to support and guidance.

- **To explore issues relating to health for young people, particularly in regards to mental health and the issues surrounding underage drink/drugs misuse.**

In my time as Youth Convener I hope to promote health and wellbeing issues, in particular issues surrounding mental health and also underage drink/drugs misuse in Highland. I hope to engage with young people and inform them of support agencies they can receive help from. I would like to continue work previously started by John Erskine with HUG and expand links with the Highland Drink and Drugs Partnership who recently consulted with HYV Executive Committee over issues in Highland.

- **To raise issues over transport provision in Highland and reliability/cost of public transport for young people.**

The geography of the Highlands means many young people rely on public transport to get to school, work and extra-curricular activities. Looking at timetabling buses to times which may work better with local facilities and services is something which many young people have suggested, along with the issue of travelling to employment and the cost implications involved in that.

- **To get involved in the promotion of voting, increasing young people's interest and awareness of voting and to encourage debate amongst young people in Highland about the forthcoming referendum.**

The Highland Council elections commission and Highland Youth Voice have begun discussions based around holding a 'mock poll station election' to teach young people about voting. As the vote is being extended to 16 and 17 year olds for the referendum I see it is a matter of prime importance that young people are made aware of issues regarding voting. Issues such as to how to get their name on the electoral register, how to vote and also to explain to them how important it is that they do vote. I would aim to continue to work with the elections commission and with young people to discover how best to implement this.

3. Communication

Communication will be key if my term as Youth Convener is to be a success. I aim to provide regular, clear and succinct updates in a range of formats in order to engage with as many young people as possible. Due to the vast size of the Highlands I think social networking and email will be very important in order to keep people updated. I plan to meet face-to-face with as many young people as possible and hear their views and opinions in person. In order to do this I shall visit schools, youth forums and youth groups across the Highlands as well as attending Highland Youth Voice and meet with MSYPs. I plan to write a regular newsletter or blog with quick updates about what I've been up to as well as different services available to young people. I hope to bridge a gap between young people and Council and Planning Partners, forming an open, 2-way flow of information and respect.

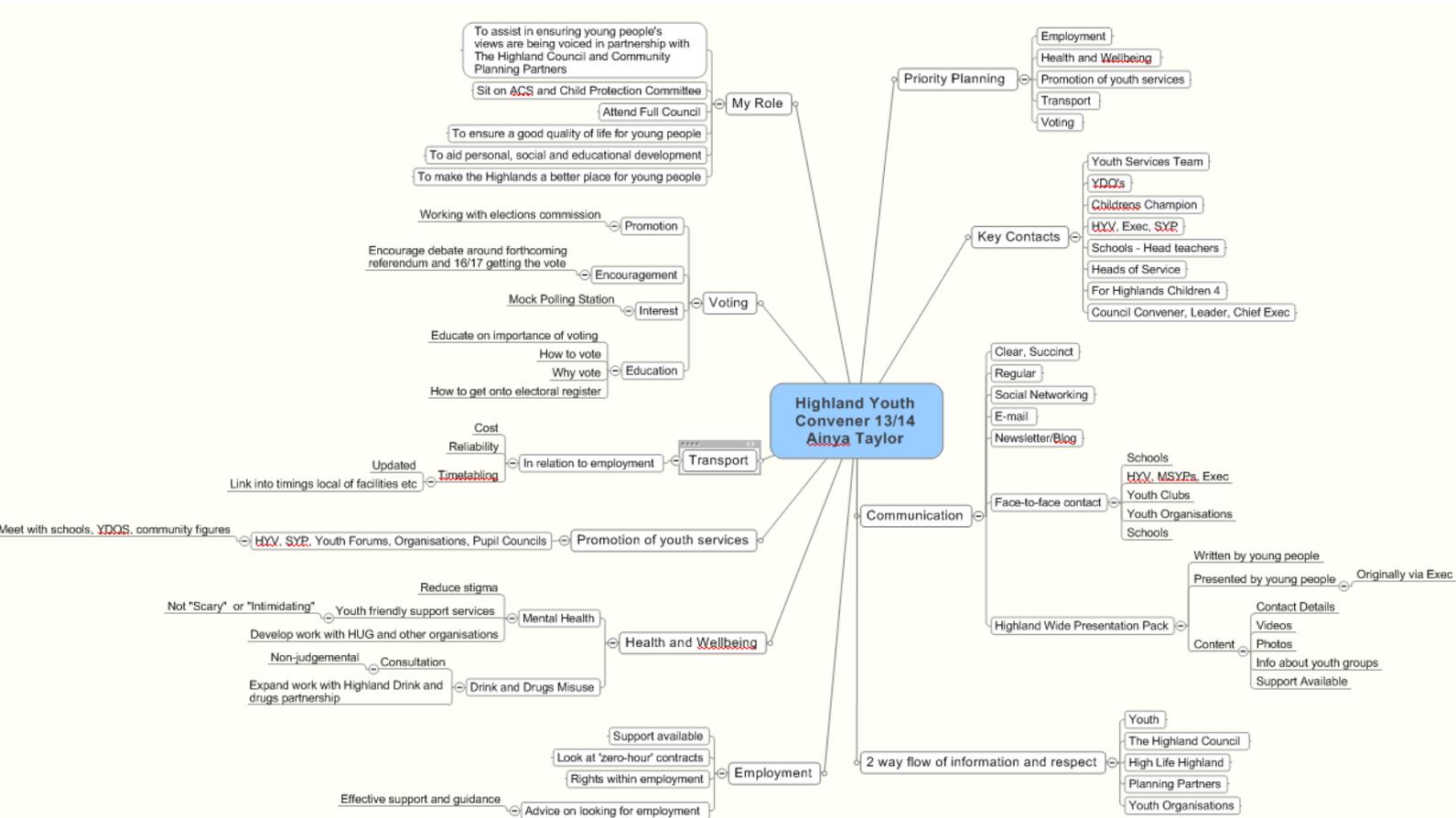
I have come up with four areas for action for my year; promoting, including, sharing and engaging. I shall look at ways of engaging with as many young people as possible and encouraging as many as I can to get involved in youth groups and

activities and to get their voices heard. I would like to promote youth organisations and make sure that young people have access to all the helpful, updated information they need.

This plan will be adapted throughout my term as and when new opportunities and issues arise.

4. Comment from the Youth Convener

I am very excited about my upcoming term; I look forward to meeting with young people and hearing their views and making change in Highlands. I am grateful for this fantastic opportunity and cannot wait to get stuck in, I hope to make the most of my time and look forward to what the next 17 months bring.



What did I do?

To continue to raise the profile of Highland Youth Voice (HYV), Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) and local Youth Forums (YF).

As a young person who had attended HYV, SYP and my local forum I had seen first-hand the benefits it can bring. I wanted to raise the profile of these organisations and make them accessible to all young people from a variety of backgrounds.

Within the first few weeks of starting my role I developed two presentations for use in schools, the first being a general overview of HYV, SYP, YF's and why young people should get involved and the second being about democracy and voting (I shall touch on this later). I also prepared display boards and hand-outs. I, along with other members of Highland Youth Voice, attended schools, the UHI Freshers Fayre, a stall in Eastgate Shopping Centre (alongside Police Scotland CAG Group), Youth forums/groups and Youth Organisations. We gave presentations to the Education, Childrens and Adult Services Committee in the Highland Council and to Highland Council Members at a FHC4 Seminar.

These materials are available to all HYV members and Youth Development Officers and have been adapted and used by many in their own local areas. After discussions it was decided that individual forums would adapt and add area specific information to this material, some youth forums are looking to make videos to be used in schools to encourage people to join these groups.



To educate young people on their rights within employment and the support that is out there for them and to inform those looking for employment of the contacts, skills and experience which could be helpful.

In the current economic climate employment is a key issue. The 16-25 age range has a high level of unemployment but also a lack of awareness of employment rights. I worked with Job Centre Plus and learnt information about Universal Credit which would help when directing young people to the right support. I also was part of a group 'Y.O.B.S' (Youth Opportunities in Badenoch and Strathspey) which looked at the issues specific to that area, such as seasonal work.

When working in schools and youth groups I asked at the start of the session delivery if they thought they knew their employment rights, most young people said they did. After the info session to educate them on their rights, the majority said they realised they hadn't know their rights properly. I directed groups to online websites such as CAB which are youth friendly and succinct.

I also used social media platforms to post updates.

In addition I worked with The Highland Council on their Employment Action Plan and with young people from the Calman Trust.



To raise issues over transport provision in Highland and reliability/cost of public transport for young people.

Due to the vast and diverse geography of the Highlands, transport is always features as a top priority for young people. It was clear from my consultations with young people that transport was key issue and it had to be addressed. At the HYV Conference in November 2013 transport was the main theme. We examined all the issues young people faced and had a Q&A with key transport decision makers in Highland before a workshop on community transport and green transport. After this consultation a transport focus group was set up within the Highland Council consisting of key decision makers and young people to try to tackle some of the issues and improve current provision.

As a spin off development the link established at the conference with the Highland Council's Carbon Clever Team, led to a Highland wide campaign where we asked young people, their families, businesses and The Highland Council and High Life Highland to encourage each other to wear a '#chunkyjumper' for the day and turn down the heating. This was all with the aim of raising awareness of the need to be green as well as to save energy, money and the planet! We had lots of people take part across Highland and we ran a very successful social media campaign.



To get involved in the promotion of voting, increasing young people's interest and awareness of voting and to encourage debate amongst young people in Highland about the forthcoming referendum.

Politics influences everything in our lives and I think it is very important to educate young people the importance of democracy and of voting. I worked alongside the Highland Councils Elections Team to help run 'mock referendums' in a number of schools across Highlands. Discussions have also begun about having a 'Democracy Ambassador' in every Secondary School to champion democracy and raise awareness of its importance.

I developed a workshop which I delivered in schools and youth groups across Highland. At the start of the workshop I asked the groups their views on politics then I explained the impact of politics on everyday objects, such as their mobile phone, clothes shops and their school, discussing the political decisions which affect these. This was followed by a round of quick-fire debates to get the group thinking. This workshop was designed to show young people that politics does affect them and also to show that young people do already know a lot about politics. At the end of each group I asked for a show of hands and overwhelmingly 100% of young people over the 18 months said they would now vote when first legally able to.

With 16/17 year olds getting the vote for the first time in the Referendum I believe it is very important to encourage young people to register to vote and to teach them how to actually vote. This was successfully done in many schools through the workshop and also through the mock referendums. During these groups it was clear that young people wanted the voting age in all elections to be lowered to 16. In March 2014 I took forward a motion to the full Highland Council asking for their support on this, the motion was passed unanimously. (2hrs 55m in to webcast)

"The Highland Council believes that 16 and 17 year olds should be eligible to vote and endorses Highland Youth Voice's 'Votes @ 16' Campaign to that effect".

http://www.highland.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/117690

I worked in conjunction with Culloden Youth Forum to develop a 'Pupil Council Guidance Pack' which will be used in schools across Highland to tackle issues about lack of consistency across areas. The pack has been designed to allow it to be adapted by every school as we recognised that there would be different needs in both urban and rural schools.

HYV held its own referendum debate in June which was webcast and the link shared through schools and youth groups to give info to young people about both sides of the debate.

http://www.highland.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/136587



Other Work

- Development of school health contacts poster
- FHC4 Poster (For Highlands Children 4)
- HCF Disability Awareness Pack (Highland Children's Forum)
- Highland Council Children's Services Inspection
- National Links with SYP's 'Care. Fair. Share' campaign and UKYP's 'Votes @ 16 campaign'

How can the role progress?

The role of the Highland Youth convener has progressed so much in the last seven years; it has now developed to the point where the role and HYV are both part of the councils operational plans.

I would like my successor to continue to work with existing partners who strong links have been made with for example: High Life Highland, Highland Council, Police Scotland and NHS Highland. However I would also like to see a strong link between the new contacts I made for the post: HUG, SPEAK Job Centre Plus, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, FIXERS and Advocacy Highland.

All of these organisations and partners are vital in the future success of the role. This year I took a particular interest in mental health and I would like to see the relationships I have developed with organisations strengthen as this issue is so key to the wellbeing of young people.

Working with hard to reach young people is another area I am keen to see progress. Continuing to work with external providers such as Highland Children's Forum, Barnardos and Connecting Carers is key in order to do this. I have worked to try to ensure ALL young people have equal opportunities and to reduce the 'elitist' image of HYV by encouraging young people from all walks of life to get involved.

Finally I would like to see Youth Development officers continue to support the role and ensure the Youth convener is kept up to date with local initiatives and issues.

Thank you!

Thanks to everybody I've worked with over the past 18 months for all their support. I have met many interesting people through this role and have gained skills, experiences and contacts that I know will help me in the future. The support I gained from friends, family and colleagues has been invaluable. I would encourage anybody who is passionate about speaking up for the minority to take on this role. I have particularly enjoyed my face-face work with young people. Meeting with different groups across Highland and hearing their views has opened my eyes to a whole range of issues to be addressed.

I wish all my luck to my successor, I know he will do a great job in representing the views of young people and I look forward to hearing where his journey takes him.

The role of The Highland Youth Convener is quite an adventure and I am honoured to have been chosen to be the voice of young people over the past 18 months.

Thanks again to everybody I've met along the way! I look forward to seeing you again soon.

Ainya

