



ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Young People's Experiences of Poverty and Equality in Highland

Produced by Clair Wallace,
Youth Highland

COMPANION REPORT FOR THE HIGHLAND POVERTY AND EQUALITY COMMISSION



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Report for the Highland Poverty and Equality
Commission

May 2026

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Consultation boxes enabled young people to provide anonymous feedback at focus groups

Executive Summary

Youth Highland carried out a consultation using a variety of methods throughout May 2026 on behalf of the Poverty and Equality Commission.

236 young people took part in an online survey. 214 different young people took part in interactive in person focus groups in youth club settings across the region. Most respondents were between the ages of 12 and 25. 29 young people participated in an event to pull together findings and created call to action statements on six themes: Access, Education, Cash, Power, Housing and Jobs.

The evidence presents a consistent picture. Young people in Highland are ambitious, optimistic about their own abilities, and hopeful about their futures. However, they are significantly less confident that the social, economic and civic conditions around them will enable them to realise their potential.

The findings suggest that poverty and inequality are experienced by young people not only through income and material deprivation, but also through unequal access to housing, transport, services, opportunities, influence and participation.

Key conclusions which have been corroborated throughout the process are:

1. Rural inequality significantly shapes young people's opportunities and life chances in Highland.
2. Housing affordability and housing insecurity are major concerns affecting young people's hopes for their futures.
3. Young people are very anxious about their future financial security and prospects.
4. Many young people feel that decisions affecting their lives are made without their meaningful involvement.

Findings suggest that the main challenge facing young people in Highland is not a lack of aspiration, but unequal access to the opportunities and resources which will enable them to achieve their hopes and aspirations.

We are witnessing a growing number of young people engaging in anti-social or extreme activities and ideologies as a result of the inequalities they feel in their lives.

Addressing structural inequalities will be critical to reducing poverty and enabling all young people to build successful and hopeful futures. Meeting the potential of young people is essential to enable Highland communities to thrive in the future.

Introduction

This report explores how young people experience poverty and inequality in Highland and seeks to identify what actions would make a positive difference to young people’s experience and lives.

The findings combine quantitative survey data and qualitative consultation feedback and provide insight into the attitudes and lived experiences of young people. The resulting evidence shows that disadvantage amongst young people in Highland extends beyond income and includes unequal access to opportunities, services, housing, participation and social capital.



Young people helped collate the findings from focus groups at an event on 30th May

What we did

Survey

We created an online survey with 13 questions. The survey was shared widely in schools and youth clubs, and the Voluntary Youth network was encouraged to support young people to take part.

Focus Groups

We visited young people in youth centres and youth work settings and carried out focus group sessions using a range of consultation methods.

Run around!

To warm up, we read out 9 statements and got young people to run to different parts of the room to indicate 'yes', 'no' and 'don't know'.

UNCRC Articles

We took 12 UNCRC articles and got young people to vote on the ones that they felt were most important to them.

Feedback Boxes

We encouraged young people to add their own ideas, experiences or opinions on the 6 themes by posting anonymous feedback in 6 issue-based boxes.

A call to action: Statements for change

We worked with 29 young volunteers to collate the feedback from their peers.

Young people identified the key themes under each Poverty Equalities Commission thematic heading, identified the challenges that young people are facing and their needs under those themes and then came up with action statements for change.

Each of the 6 themes now has a set of action statements that have been developed by young people in response to the feedback from the focus groups.

Key Findings



Young people are aspirational and hopeful for their future but don't know if they will be able to stay in Highland to live

Young people were very hopeful and aspirational about their futures. Young people have confidence in themselves.

Many young people have an idea of what they want to do when they are adults and have some idea of appropriate pathways to employment.

Many young people already have jobs and work in their spare time. Some young people are holding down quite responsible jobs including cheffing, managing money and running shops. However, many young people reported feeling badly treated or poorly paid at work. Some young people reported not receiving pay or feeling bullied at work. Some young people have zero hours contracts so do not have regular work.

Young people recognise that the money they earn at work is essential to ensure that they have a fulfilled life. Even if they don't enjoy their job, they know that the money they earn helps them to have fun and socialise. Young people old enough to drive told us that the money they earn allows them to run a car and gain their own freedom and independence.

Young people told us they are worried about the long-term cost implications of going to university and would possibly consider another route into employment. But, with a lack of obvious entry level employment, trainee positions and apprenticeships young people feel their only option is to leave the Highlands.

Implications

The evidence challenges narratives suggesting that young people lack ambition or motivation. Instead, young people can be seen to be highly motivated and future focused.

It is important that work is done to build on the aspirations of young people to ensure that they can meet their potential.

Intervention and planning are required to ensure that there is a connected approach between education, business and communities to improve employment opportunities and pathways and to encourage and incentivise young people to stay and work in Highland.

Systems and structures need to be reviewed to enable young people to realise their ambitions and dreams.



Rurality Limits Opportunities and Exacerbates Inequalities

Young people identified a lack of things to do, money to do things with and transport to access new opportunities and experiences as key barriers to participation and access.

Rural isolation leading to inequality was a recurring theme which made accessing groups and clubs, activities and new opportunities very difficult for young people living in Highland.

Young people told us that public transport is limited, unreliable and not always young person friendly. Young people gave examples of their experiences including waiting for buses that never came in rurally remote places and being spoken to unkindly by bus drivers which made them feel unsafe. There were also incidences when bus drivers have driven past young people and refused to give them a ride.

Young people felt that there is a lack of social opportunities and things to do. Many young people feel isolated and lack a friendship group or a sense of 'belonging'.

Living in small rural communities can reduce the number of activities available for young people and many told us that they feel their local community caters better for the elderly than it does for them. Where there are activities available for young people there is often a cost which exacerbates inequalities and means young people from more privileged families participate in a broader range of activities and past times than other young people. Some young people were aware of the impact of funding for voluntary and community-based groups and closure of youth clubs as a result.

Young people know that if they lived in a more densely populated area or a city there would be more choices and opportunities for them to participate in groups and clubs and activities.

They are worried that they are disadvantaged because of their lack of experience and the impact this will have on the rest of their lives.

Implications

Young people know that where they live determines their access to opportunities. Young people's feedback shows that rural poverty extends beyond income and includes exclusion from opportunities available to others because of rural isolation.

As a result, young people who live in rural communities know that they experience reduced access to education, employment, leisure, support services and a rich social life.

These disadvantages are particularly acute for people who live in households with other poverty or inequality indicators including low-income households; young people with disabilities; young carers; care-experienced young people; families with no access to private transport. Young people who have protected characteristics also feel these disadvantages more acutely and might feel more isolated; LGBTQ+ young people and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Findings show that young people know and can perceive indicators of inequality and that they compare themselves to one another from a young age.

Findings also show that young people from Highland want to gain new experiences and (with support) are keen to participate and lead activities for young people in their local communities.



Young people are concerned about securing adequate housing in Highland in the future

Young people can see and understand the consequences of housing inequality.

Young people expressed concerns regarding affordability of housing; the quality of housing; their future access to housing and the impact of visible inequalities in housing conditions in their communities.

Some young people are happy with their current housing and are not worried about their future housing situation, whereas others were distressed about their current living arrangements and extremely concerned about finding housing in the future.

We heard from young people living in overcrowded houses and sleeping on the sofa, young people living in houses without heating and houses with mould and other issues which could impact on the health and wellbeing of inhabitants.

Many respondents talked about the state of the economy and doubted their ability to secure affordable housing in the future.

Implications

Young people associate housing with safety and security; independence; positive futures; belonging / family and fairness.

Young people recognise the differences between their own housing circumstances and those of their peers. Housing is symbolic and an important indicator of status, success and safety.

The findings suggest that young people are worried that they may not be able to remain in Highland because of a lack of appropriate or affordable housing.

Without intervention, housing availability and affordability risks contributing to further youth outmigration and widening inequality.



Young people are anxious about their relationship with money

Young people are aware of financial pressures and of the inequalities that can manifest because of lack of money and resources. Some young people said they were 'scared of money' possibly because having money is viewed as an indicator of success. There is stigma and shame around issues of inequality or poverty amongst young people.

Young people are acutely aware of the cost of everyday things and very concerned about the affordability of their future life.

Young people feel undervalued and many talked about poor wage levels and the fact that they do not earn enough. Some young people told us that they were carrying out jobs with huge responsibility but being paid very poorly because of their age.

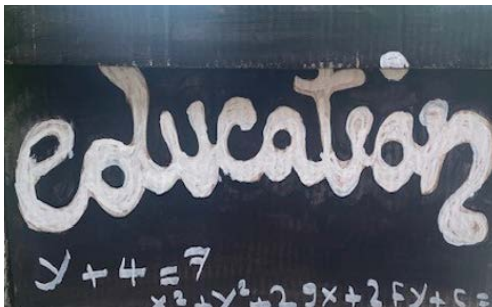
Many respondents expressed uncertainty about their future financial prospects despite feeling reasonably confident about managing money.

Implications

The findings indicate that economic insecurity is influencing young people's hopes and expectations. Young people are aware of financial differences in their communities and understand how those differences influence participation and opportunity.

Young people are very concerned about the affordability of things and concerned about how they present and compare with peers. This causes competition and division amongst some groups of young people (especially in areas experiencing poverty and deprivation).

This reflects the wider impacts of poverty beyond income alone.



Education systems and structures are not working for all young people

Attitudes towards education were mixed but most young people expressed frustration about their experiences at school.

Young people have confidence in themselves but less confidence in the education system.

Where there was positive feedback about education, it focused on individual teachers and trusting relationships; personal support and encouragement and clear opportunities and support for personal progression.

Young people from all groups identified a need for the education system to change and a desire to be involved in shaping new ways of working that identify and respond to the needs of young people in a changing world.

Implications

Young people's experiences are influenced by relationships and support rather than by educational structures.

Young people would like to see significant changes in the education system.

Young people want to be included in shaping and designing an education system that works for everyone and is based on more equal partnership between pupils and staff.

There is a need to develop more inclusive educational environments which offer personalised support and learning programmes, wellbeing provision; and work with individual young people to identify personalized pathways into employment and further education.

Educational inequalities are exacerbated where support needs are not adequately recognised or addressed.

Young people reported a rise in incidences of bullying, racism, misogyny and hate in school and in their communities. It is important that young people help to develop effective responses to these problems to ensure a future where Highland people value, enable and celebrate equality, inclusion and diversity.



Young People Feel They Lack Influence and Power

Young people feel removed from power and decision making in Highland.

Despite recognising that they can vote in Scottish elections, young people do not feel empowered or included in decision making processes. Neither do they feel informed about decision making processes – so, democracy feels removed from their everyday experiences.

Many young people told us that they do not feel listened to and that they feel their contributions are dismissed by adults. They told us that they would like to be involved and want to make a positive difference in their communities and in the world, but that they are not taken seriously or shown how to participate meaningfully in decision making processes.

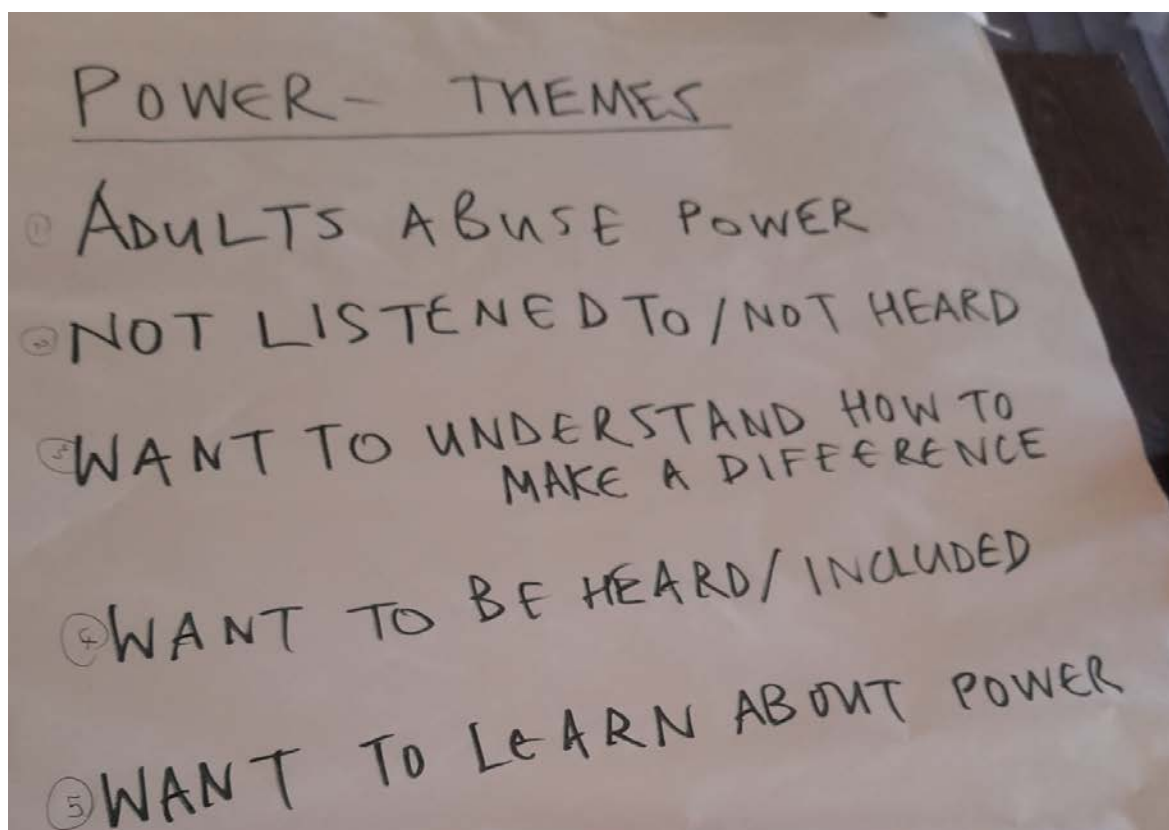
Implications

There is a significant gap between young people's desire to engage and their active participation in decision making.

Young people are not disengaged from civic life. Rather, many feel excluded from meaningful decision-making processes.

This represents an equality issue because influence and participation are important social resources.

Young people feel unable to shape decisions. Their trust in institutions has weakened and there is a risk that their engagement with institutions and existing systems may further decline. As a result of this lack of trust in existing systems young people may engage in anti-social or extreme behaviours and ideologies which could further increase inequality in communities. During focus groups we heard from young people about their concerns about the rise in misogyny, racism and extreme right-wing ideology and the impact of this in young people's lives. It is essential that tackling these ideas amongst young people should be viewed as a priority and that young people should be involved in developing a response to stop inequalities from rising further.



Cross-Cutting Themes

The findings suggest that poverty and inequality are experienced through several interconnected dimensions:

Economic Inequality

Young people are aware of financial differences between households and are concerned about their personal future wealth.

Housing Inequality

Young people recognise housing affordability and housing quality as sources of disadvantage.

Inequality of Place

Rurality influences access to social and support opportunities, services, and employment.

Participation Inequality

Many young people feel they have limited influence over decisions affecting their lives. Systems need to include them more meaningfully in decision making processes.

Opportunity Inequality

There is a perceived gap between aspirations and available opportunities within Highland.



Conclusions

Young people in Highland are ambitious, resilient and hopeful about their futures. However, they are also acutely aware of the barriers that poverty and inequality create for them and in their day to day lives.

These barriers are exacerbated by rurality and many young people believe that they would have more opportunities in cities or in less rurally isolated places.

The most significant concerns relate to housing affordability; financial security; transport and connectivity; access to opportunities; influence over decision-making.

The findings suggest that young people do not view poverty solely as a lack of money. Instead, they experience poverty and inequality as limitations on choice, opportunity, participation and their prospects.

The main conclusion is that the challenge is not one of aspiration but of opportunity. Young people believe in their own potential but the systems, services and economic conditions around them do not allow them to realise their potential.



Young people attend an event to help collate the findings from focus groups on 30th May

Recommendations for the Commission

Young people have come up with the following action statements for change which are based on UNCRC human rights, identified needs and actions:

Housing

- We have the right to life and to be supported to meet our potential. Young people in Highland are worried about homelessness and about the affordability of houses and access to council houses. We need to increase equality to enable all people to access appropriate housing. We need to make sure that young people are paid enough to be able to afford a home.
- We have a right to express ourselves creatively and the right to have our views taken seriously. Young people have told us that houses are dirty, not fit for purpose and falling apart. Communities should have an allowance and support to buy essentials to keep houses, communities and schemes clean and fit for purpose.
- We have the right to feel safe and a right to life. Young people told us that they are not confident that they will afford a house. Increase the number of jobs that come with housing for young people in Highland.

Cash

- We have the right to safety. Young people have told us that they cannot afford basic needs because they are not paid enough. Increase the minimum wage for under 16's and under 18's.
- We have the right to relax, play and take part in fun activities. We have the right to be part of groups. Young people cannot afford to take part in leisure activities because of rising costs, Activities for young people need to be cheap or free. Young people need to be paid more to enable them to take part and have an active social life.
- Everyone has the same rights whatever their background. Young people in Highland believe there are inequalities and they don't have the same opportunities as others. This might be because they live in an isolated community, because of poverty or because of other factors and lived experiences. Young people want to work with

people in power to help plan and design the services which affect them and be involved in decision making processes.

Education

- We have the right to education and the right to be safe. Young people don't feel safe in school because of bullying, a lack of support and systemic abuse of power. Young people want to redesign the education system to ensure it meets the needs of young people today.
- We have the right to education and the right to feel safe. Young people do not feel safe in school because of bullying. We want young people to help review bullying policies in schools. This needs to include responding to bullying or power dynamics between staff and pupils as well as bullying between young people.
- We have the right to have a voice and be taken seriously and the right to access support. Young people feel a lack of support in school (mental, emotional, learning, social). We want schools to understand young peoples lived experience and individual needs and enable young people to feel control of their own learning experiences.
- We have a right to education, information and support. Young people say power dynamics in school do not make them feel safe. Teachers need training to ensure equity in the classroom and to enable everyone to meet their full potential. Young people need to know how to hold adults to account if they abuse their power.
- We have the right to be healthy. School causes a lot of anxiety and stress for young people. School does not help young people deal with anxiety or stress. We want dedicated people who specialize in offering support to young people using a person centred approach.
- Young people have a right to life and a right to support if they have suffered abuse. School does not teach young people skills for life. Exams do not measure things that matter in life. We want teachers to use a range of teaching styles to meet different needs. We want to learn using interactive methods. We want to be involved in designing and controlling our own learning.

Access

- We have the right to feel safe, the right to life and to meet our potential, the right to leisure and the right to take part in groups. Young people don't have enough money to do the things they want to do. Young people need more money.

- We have the right to feel safe, to take part in groups to think and believe what we want. There is limited access to safe spaces for young people in Highland. We need more safe spaces and activities that are easy to access for all young people.
- We have the right to life and to meet our potential, to leisure, play and relaxation and to support. Although bus travel is free there is a lack of transport and sometimes public transport does not feel safe for them. Transport links need to be regular, reliable and safe for young people.

Jobs

- We have the right to an education. Young people are aspirational about jobs and their futures but also worried that they won't be able to learn skills that will help them get a job. We want young people to have access to vocational and work skills to help them get a good job in the future. We want to see more apprenticeships and entry level jobs for young people in the Highlands. We want young people to be supported into hood work.
- We have the right to have a voice heard and taken seriously. Young people told us they don't feel well treated or valued in workplaces. Young people need to be heard and valued as essential team members in workplaces.
- Young people have the right to be safe. Young people do not always feel safe in the workplace, All young people should know their rights and have support if they need help negotiating better work conditions / safety at work / professional development opportunities.

Power

- We have the right to information that they can understand and that is true and not harmful. Young people want to learn about power and want to understand how to make a difference. Make information more accessible and show young people how to use their rights to make a positive difference in their lives, communities and in the world.
- We have the right to be safe and protected. Young people have told us that adults abuse their power, and this makes young people anxious and unable to thrive. Adults should respect and include all young people and enable them to meet their potential. We want all agencies and organisations with power to value the opinions of young people and take action in partnership- with young people.

- We have the right to join groups and clubs and feel included. Young people can feel excluded and often feel unheard. Create more opportunities for young people to engage in social experiences.
- We have the right to life and to meet our potential and the right to have our voices heard and taken seriously. Young people told us they don't feel included or heard. We would like adults to value young people's opinions and support young people to take action.

Policy Considerations

To ensure young people's voices are heard and responded to the following key policy priorities should be considered:

1. Prioritise affordable housing solutions for young people and young adults.
2. Address transport and connectivity barriers for young people in rural communities.
3. Strengthen pathways into quality employment, apprenticeships and further education.
4. Improve access to youth activities, social infrastructure and community spaces.
5. Embed meaningful youth participation within all local decision-making structures.
6. Develop targeted approaches to reducing rural and place based inequalities.
7. Increase support for financial resilience and economic inclusion among young people.
8. Ensure all anti-poverty strategies explicitly consider young people's experiences and perspectives.
9. Include young people in the development and delivery of equalities learning programmes (including to tackle racism and misogyny) in schools and in community settings.
10. There needs to be clear training and CPD routes to improve the confidence and competence of professionals with responsibility for working with young people to help them meet their potential.

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Appendix 1

Survey Questions

All questions could be answered strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. Except for Q13 which listed all 9 CP areas and 'don't know'

1. There are lots of things to do for young people living in my community
2. It is easy to access information about services, activities and opportunities for young people in my community
3. The housing in my community fulfils the needs of the people living here
4. I am confident that I will be able to find adequate housing in my future in Highland
5. I enjoy/ed my experience at school
6. I feel that the education system meets and responds to my needs
7. I am confident I will do well and meet my potential through education
8. I am confident that I will find a job that I enjoy
9. I am clear about the pathways I need to take to achieve my future potential
10. I am confident at managing my finances
11. I feel that my future financial position will be good if I stay in Highland
12. I feel like I have the power to make a difference in my community
13. Whereabouts in Highland do you live?

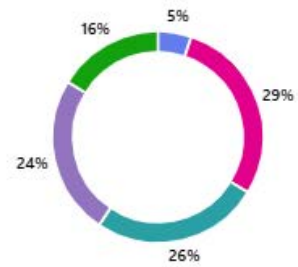
Appendix 2

Survey Results

236 young people responded to the survey which was available online between 14th May - 2nd June 2026

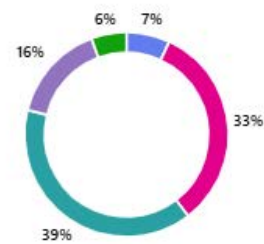
1. There are lots of things to do for young people living in my community (0 point)

● Strongly Agree	12
● Agree	67
● Neutral	60
● Disagree	57
● Strongly disagree	38



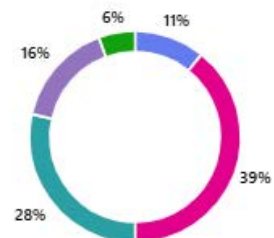
2. It is easy to access information about services, activities and opportunities for young people in ,my community (0 point)

● Strongly Agree	16
● Agree	76
● Neutral	91
● Disagree	36
● Strongly disagree	13



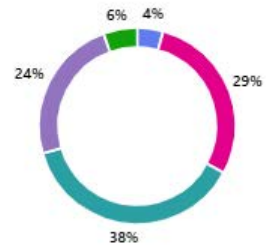
3. The housing in my community fulfils the needs of the people living here (0 point)

● Strongly Agtree	25
● Agree	91
● Neutral	66
● Disagree	37
● Strongly Disagree	13



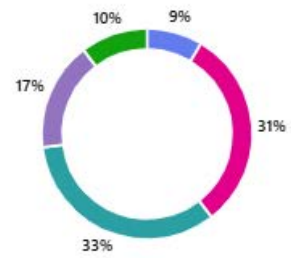
4. I am confident that I will be able to find adequate housing in Highland in my future (0 point)

● Strongly Agree	10
● Agree	67
● Neutral	88
● Disagree	56
● Strongly Disagree	13



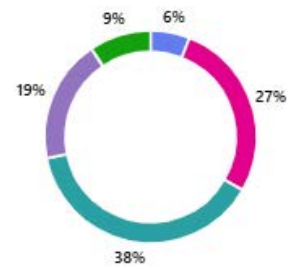
5. I enjoy/ed my experience at school (0 point)

● Strongly Agree	20
● Agree	72
● Neutral	78
● Disagree	39
● Strongly Disagree	24



6. I feel that the education system meets and responds to my needs (0 point)

● Strongly Agree	14
● Agree	64
● Neutral	90
● Disagree	44
● Strongly disagree	22



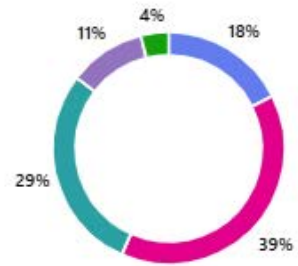
7. I am confident I will do well and meet my potential through education (0 point)

● Strongly Agree	27
● Agree	99
● Neutral	73
● Disagree	24
● Strongly Disagree	11



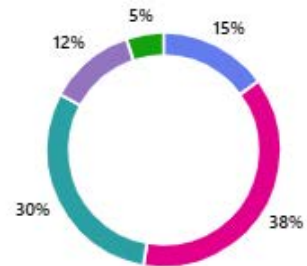
8. I am confident that I will find a job that I enjoy (0 point)

● Strongly Agree	41
● Agree	91
● Neutral	67
● Disagree	25
● Strongly Disagree	9



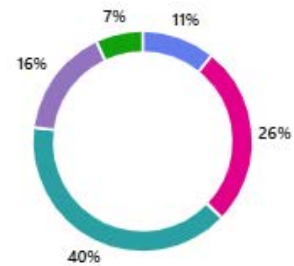
9. I am clear about the pathways I need to take to achieve my future potential (0 point)

● Strongly Agree	35
● Agree	88
● Neutral	70
● Disagree	28
● Strongly Disagree	12



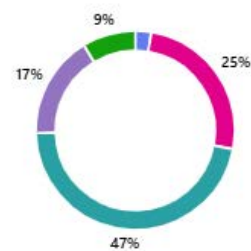
10. I am confident at managing my finances (0 point)

● Strongly Agree	25
● Agree	61
● Neutral	92
● Disagree	37
● Strongly Disagree	16



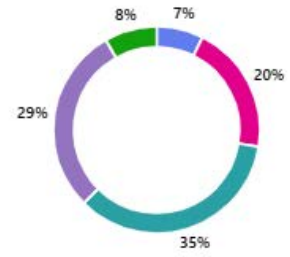
11. I feel that my future financial position will be good if I stay in Highland (0 point)

● Strongly Agree	6
● Agree	59
● Neutral	108
● Disagree	39
● Strongly disagree	20



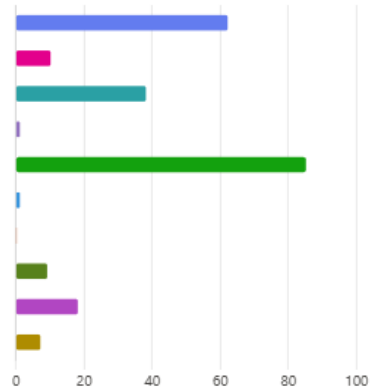
12. I feel like I have the power to make a difference in my community (0 point)

Strongly Agree	17
Agree	47
Neutral	81
Disagree	68
Strongly Disagree	19



13. Whereabouts in Highland do you live? (0 point)

Caithness	62
Sutherland	10
East Ross	38
Mid Ross	1
Inverness	85
Lochaber	1
Skye and Lochalsh	0
Badenoch and Strathspey	9
Nairn and Ardesier	18
Don't know	7



Appendix 3

Focus Group Session Plan

Session Plan	
Session Name	<p>Poverty Commission consultation</p> <p>Local session – in youth clubs</p>
Session Date	
Name of Staff	Clair
<p style="text-align: center;">Session Outcomes</p> <p>Outline the outcomes for young people</p> <p>Refer to National Youth Work Outcomes or specific project Outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create and apply learning and describe skills and achievements · Participate safely in groups · Active citizens, express voice and enable change · Broaden perspectives through new experiences and thinking
<p style="text-align: center;">Activities and Youth Work Methods to be used</p> <p>Outline the main activities and methods you will use in your session. Include rough timings</p>	<p>Young people will be encouraged to participate in conversations as part of the Poverty and Equality commissions consultation process.</p> <p>We will visit a wide range of groups in different geographical areas and groups of young people with different lived experiences.</p> <p>We will explore the following themes:</p>

- Access
- Housing
- Education
- Fair work / pathways to work
- Financial security
- Culture

Arriving at each youth club, we will ask who is interested and wants to be involved in the session. This will be a choice, but there will be an incentive (£20 gift voucher)

1. Ice breaker / name game

2. Who am I? Why am I here? What is going to happen with the information they give me?

3. Run around – agree, don't know, disagree : Statements about community / life in Highland that link to the themes

- I enjoy living in Highland
- There is lots for teenagers to do in my community
- I feel safe living here
- There are lots of opportunities for my future
- Education provision in Highland is good and meets the learning needs of young people
- I have hobbies and take part in leisure activities
- If I have a problem I know where to go to get help
- There are problems in Highland that I think need sorting out
- I think young people can help make positive change happen in Highland

3. UNCRC – what's important to you cards / Shanarri

Vote on UNCRC articles that they think are most important to them.

RIGHTS - Everyone has rights whoever they are and whatever their background

LIFE – Everyone has the right to life and to be supported to meet their potential

VOICE - Every child has the right to express their views and to have them taken seriously.

THOUGHT – Every child has the right to think and believe what they choose.

GROUPS – Every child has the right to join groups and clubs that they are interested in.

PRIVACY – Everyone has the right to privacy.

INFORMATION – Everyone has the right to information that they can understand and that is true and not harmful.

SAFE – Everyone has the right to feel safe and protected.

HEALTHY – Everyone has the right to be healthy

EDUCATION – Everyone has the right to learn

LEISURE – Everyone has the right to relax, play and take part in fun activities

SUPPORT – Everyone who has experienced abuse or trauma should be able to access support to help them recover

4. Anonymous feedback boxes – with questions relating to key themes

Introduce all boxes to the group and ask them to add their thoughts on slips of paper provided. Reiterate all feedback is anonymous.

Listen as young people add their thoughts to the boxes – ask for more information if young people are comfortable to enter into discussion. Add any extra details using young peoples words that you hear on additional slips of paper.

Access – Tell us about all the different activities and opportunities that you have to choose from? What is there for you to do in your community? How do you access information and services that you need?

Housing – Tell us about housing in your community. What could be done to improve housing?

Education – Tell us about your experience of school and education. Do you enjoy school? What would make education and learning better for you?

Work – What are your hopes for the future? What job would you like to do? Do you have a clear pathway to work?

Finances – Tell us your thoughts about money and finances. How important is money to you and why? What do you need to know about money and managing finances?

Youth Power – Do you feel like you have power and agency? Can you make change happen? Does your voice make a difference in the world? Can you influence change?

5. What next?

Thank the group for their honesty and participation.

Invite anyone who wants to come to the consultation event on 30th May – take names.

Let them know their feedback will be shared with the commission who will include it in their findings which will be going to the Highland Council and people with power.

Invite them to join YH youth board.

<p>Resources / Materials</p>	<p>Sweets</p> <p>Yes, No, Don't know signs</p> <p>Feedback boxes</p> <p>Slips of paper</p> <p>UNCRC posters</p> <p>Voting stickers</p> <p>Post it notes</p> <p>Pens and pencils</p>
<p>Risk Assessment</p> <p>Include a relevant risk assessment for this session, identify the potential risk, who might be harmed and how and the measures you would put in place to control these risks.</p> <p>You can write this here or attach in different format.</p> <p>Record a summary of your risk assessment here</p>	<p>Risks for this session include:</p> <p>Trips and falls – during run around game</p> <p>Allergies – to sweets</p> <p>Behavioural issues</p> <p>Trauma</p> <p>A separate risk assessment has been prepared for this session</p>

<p>Health and Safety and other legal Considerations</p>	
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Outline what evaluation technique/s you are planning to use.</p>	<p>The whole session is focused on youth voice and consultation</p> <p>At the end of the session we will ask young people to write on a post it note 3 words that describe how they feel about the session</p>

Appendix 4

Focus group visits schedule and data

Poverty and Equalities Commission					
Name group	Main contact	Date	Time	Place	Number yp
Golspie Youth Action Project	Claire	29-May	8 - 10pm	GYAP YMCA	20
Brora Youth Room	Jean	20-May	6.30 - 8.30pm	Brora Youth Room	10
Tain YMCA	Graham	18-May	6.30 - 8pm	Tain YMCA - P7's / Girls Group	44
Tain YMCA					

Tain YMCA	Graham	13.5.26	3.30 - 4.30	YMCA youth committee	8
The Place	Janette	20-May	6.30 - 9.30	The Field	25
Balintore	Coral / Isla			Scout Hut	10
Grantown YMCA	Rachel	12-May	6 -8pm	YMCA	44
ABAN	Kate / Johannes	21st May	7pm - 7.30pm	Alladale outdoor centre	25
ABAN	Kate / Johannes	25th May	7pm - 7.45pm	ABAN D of E group	10
ABAN	Kate / Johannes	27th May	7pm - 7.30pm	Alladale outdoor centre	18
TOTAL					214

Appendix 5

‘which UNCRC article matters most to you?’

SUPPORT: Everyone who has experience abuse or trauma has the right to support to help them recover	4
LEISURE: Everyone has the right to relax, play and take part in fun activities	11
GROUPS: Everyone has the right to join groups and clubs that they are interested in	12
HEALTH: Everyone has the right to be healthy	10
SAFETY: Everyone has the right to be safe and protected	31
EVERYONES RIGHTS: Everyone has rights whoever they are and whatever their background	16
VOICE: Everyone has the right to express their views and for them to be taken seriously	9
EDUCATION: Everyone has the right to learn	5
INFORMATION: Everyone has the right to information that they can understand and that is true and not harmful	5

LIFE: Everyone has the right to life and to be supported to make the most of their life	26
PRIVACY: Everyone has the right to privacy	22

Appendix 6

Collation Day session plan

Session Plan	
Session Name	Poverty Commission consultation Final session – The Field, Alness
Session Date	Saturday 30 May 2026 11am – 3.30pm
Name of Staff	Clair, Rhiannon, Coral, Bronwyn, Steph Janette, Anna Briony Clair will lead the session and move between groups to ensure everyone is getting on OK 2 youth workers should support each working group – so a total of 6 youth workers supporting groups
Session Outcomes Outline the outcomes for young people Refer to National Youth Work Outcomes or specific project Outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Active citizens, express voice and enable change · Broaden perspectives through new experiences and thinking

<p>Activities and Youth Work Methods to be used</p> <p>Outline the main activities and methods you will use in your session. Include rough timings</p>	<p>Young people will help collate information from the consultations that have taken place with young people and develop statements identifying priority actions for improvement to be included in the end report as actions for change.</p> <p>We are expecting between 15 – 40 young people</p> <p>The session will run from 11am – 3.30pm (it may end a bit early depending on size of the group)</p> <p>Key themes that we have been looking at for the Poverty and Equalities Commission (in the boxes) are:</p>
<p>CONTEXT</p> <p>Key themes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Access · Housing · Education · Fair work / pathways to work · Financial security · Culture <p>11 – 11.15am – arrivals and welcome, tour of the Field</p> <p>11.15 – midday – Drum Fun workshop with Steve</p> <p>Midday Explain what we are doing. What is it for? What is the process? How important their voices and engagement are in this process. Hope for change.</p> <p>12.10 - 12.30 – First Workshop</p> <p>Split into small groups (ideally 3 groups)</p> <p>Each group will find a quiet space with a table.</p> <p>They will be provided with one of the themed boxes with all the post it notes that have come out of the consultation from that themed box.</p> <p>They will also be provided with a number of pieces of paper with themes that have been identified within that box (for</p>

<p>Maslow Hierarchy of Needs</p>	<p>example – housing might have ‘poor housing conditions’ or ‘expense of houses’)</p> <p>The groups will work together to place the post it notes into themed piles.</p> <p>The groups should add any new themes that they can see that have not already been identified.</p> <p>Feedback findings from each group before moving on</p> <p>12.30 – 12.45 – Second workshop</p> <p>Get back into groups – return to workspaces</p> <p>Groups should now look at Maslow Hierarchy of Needs and place key themes on the triangle under the different levels of need (so for example poor housing conditions would come under ‘safety’)</p> <p>Feedback findings from each group before moving on</p> <p>12.45 – 1pm- Third workshop</p> <p>Get back into groups – return to workspaces</p> <p>Each group will be provided with UNCRC articles to consider</p> <p>Groups should identify which UNCRC articles they think relate to the issues that have come up in their boxes</p> <p>Feedback findings from each group before moving on</p> <p>1pm- LUNCH</p> <p>We have 2 dairy free and 2 vegetarians needing catered for</p> <p>1.30 – 2pm – Fourth workshop</p> <p>Get back into groups – return to workspaces</p>
<p>UNCRC articles</p>	<p>Each group should come up with key statements as a result of the information that they have collated. Ideally between 2 and 5 statements per box (some will have more than others)</p> <p>These statements should start with a UNCRC right (for example ‘We know we have a right to be safe’) then a need (for example</p>

<p>What next?</p>	<p>‘young people in Hihgland are worried about the cost of housing’) and a statement for action (for example ‘we want young people to be involved in developing plans for affordable living solutions for first time buyers and young tenants’)</p> <p>These statements will be used in the report to the Poverty and Equalities commission – so it is important that they are all developed and formed in the same way.</p> <p>Groups feedback to one another what statements they have come up with.</p> <p>2pm – short break</p> <p>2.15 – 3pm – Fifth workshop</p> <p>Get back into groups – return to workspaces</p> <p>Go through exactly the same process with the remaining boxes – but quicker!</p> <p>Sort post its – identify key themes in each box</p> <p>Position key themes on Maslows hierarchy of needs</p> <p>Identify key UNCRC articles relating to each box</p> <p>Come up with between 2 and 5 statements for each box</p> <p>3pm - Share statements with the whole group</p> <p>Check that all the statements read in a similar format</p> <p>Make sure everyone is happy with what the statements say</p> <p>Identify any important themes that are missing in the statements but need raising in the wider report</p> <p>3.15 -3.30pm – Free time / social time</p> <p>Thankyous! Goodbyes! Hopes and Fears</p> <p>Give out vouchers</p>
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For context, this information might help you as you deliver the session:

Key themes

The Poverty and Equalities Commission have been talking to adults and community groups about 6 main themes, we need to stick to these themes to enable us to present them with relevant information to link with their findings:

- Access
- Housing
- Education
- Fair work / pathways to work
- Financial security
- Culture

Here are some of the prompt questions we asked young people during the consultation:

Access – Tell us about all the different activities and opportunities that you have to choose from? What is there for you to do in your community? How do you access information and services that you need?

Housing – Tell us about housing in your community. What could be done to improve housing?

Education – Tell us about your experience of school and education. Do you enjoy school? What would make education and learning better for you?

Work – What are your hopes for the future? What job would you like to do? Do you have a clear pathway to work?

Finances – Tell us your thoughts about money and finances. How important is money to you and why? What do you need to know about money and managing finances?

Youth Power – Do you feel like you have power and agency? Can you make change happen? Does your voice make a difference in the world? Can you influence change?

We are using Maslow Hierarchy of needs to help us understand where the feedback from young people sits in terms of needs.



We need the statements that are developed by young people to align with UNCRC articles. This will help to ensure that young people know that their feedback to decision makers is underpinned by human rights (in legislation in Scotland). Decision makers NEED to respond to the statements they receive from young people

RIGHTS - Everyone has rights whoever they are and whatever their background

LIFE – Everyone has the right to life and to be supported to meet their potential

VOICE - Every child has the right to express their views and to have them taken seriously.

THOUGHT – Every child has the right to think and believe what they choose.

GROUPS – Every child has the right to join groups and clubs that they are interested in.

PRIVACY – Everyone has the right to privacy.

INFORMATION – Everyone has the right to information that they can understand and that is true and not harmful.

SAFE – Everyone has the right to feel safe and protected.

HEALTHY – Everyone has the right to be healthy

EDUCATION – Everyone has the right to learn

LEISURE – Everyone has the right to relax, play and take part in fun activities

SUPPORT – Everyone who has experienced abuse or trauma should be able to access support to help them recover

What next?

Thank the group for their honesty and participation.

Let them know their feedback will be shared with the commission who will include it in their findings which will be going to the Highland Council and people with power.

Hopefully this work will make a real difference to how decisions are made in the region. Hopefully young people will be more meaningfully included in decision making processes as a result of their work today.

<p>Resources / Materials</p>	<p>Feedback boxes with post its</p> <p>Key themes for each box on A4</p> <p>Maslow triangle (BIG) x 3</p> <p>UNCRC articles x 3 sets</p> <p>Flip chart / paper</p> <p>Pens</p> <p>vouchers</p> <p>Hopes and Fears</p> <p>Drum Fun Steve</p> <p>LUNCH – including some vege / dairy free options</p> <p>Snacks / drinks</p> <p>Events folder</p> <p>Consent forms for all young people</p> <p>List of lifts</p> <p>Risk Assessment</p> <p>At home contact number</p>
<p>Risk Assessment</p> <p>Include a relevant risk assessment for this session, identify the potential risk, who might be harmed and how and the measures you would</p>	<p>A separate risk assessment has been prepared for this session</p> <p>Consent</p> <p>Emergency contacts</p> <p>Allergies – vege / dairy free</p> <p>Medication info held in consent forms</p> <p>Lifts – ensure all under 16’s travel with staff with work insurance on cars</p>

<p>put in place to control these risks.</p> <p>You can write this here or attach in different format.</p> <p>Record a summary of your risk assessment here</p>	<p>Behaviour – staff / young people ratio</p> <p>Trips and falls – The Field has first aid kit</p>
<p>Health and Safety and other legal Considerations</p>	<p>All staff have PVG</p> <p>Car insurance</p> <p>The Field / Youth Highland have public liability insurance</p>
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Outline what evaluation technique/s you are planning to use.</p>	<p>The whole session is focused on youth voice and consultation</p> <p>We will ask young people for feedback at the end of the session</p> <p>Hopes and Fears exercise at the end of the day</p>

Appendix 7

Evidence from collation session



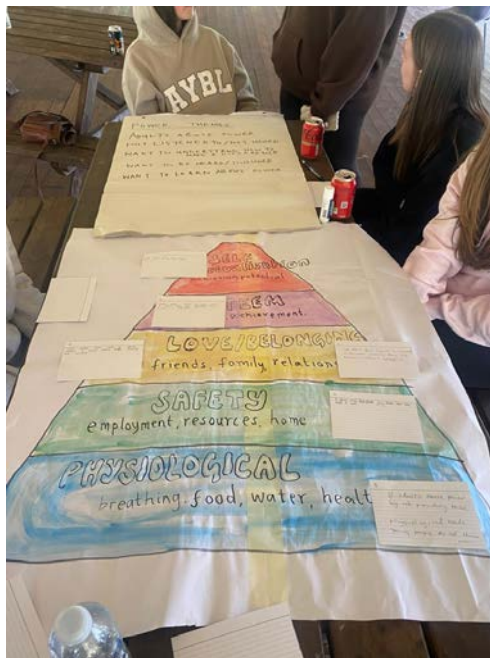
Young people were split into groups and worked together to collate information from the feedback boxes



We used Maslow to understand the needs identified in the feedback in the boxes



We used Maslow to understand the needs identified in the feedback boxes



The groups created statements related to UNCRC articles and the needs identified in the feedback boxes to come up with priority action statements



There was a lot of data to sort out and collate



Young people enjoyed the process



Appendix 8

Statements from young people - from collation session

Housing

<p>We know we have the right to life.</p> <p>We know we have the right to life.</p>	<p>Young people have told us that they are worried about homelessness, the affordability of houses and access to council houses.</p>	<p>We need to increase equality to enable all people to access appropriate housing.</p> <p>We need to ensure young people are paid enough to afford a home.</p>
<p>We know we have a right to express ourselves creatively.</p> <p>We know we have the right to have our views taken seriously.</p>	<p>Young people have told us that housing is dirty and falling apart.</p>	<p>Communities should have an allowance and support to buy essentials to keep houses, communities and schemes clean.</p>
<p>We know we have the right to feel safe.</p> <p>We know we have the right to life.</p>	<p>Young people told us that they are not confident that they will afford a house.</p>	<p>Increase the number of jobs that come with housing for young people.</p>

Power

<p>We know that young people have the right to information that they can understand and that is true and not harmful.</p>	<p>Young people told us that they want to learn about power and want to be able to understand how to make a difference.</p>	<p>Make information more accessible and show young people how to use their rights to make a positive difference in their lives, communities and in the world.</p>
<p>Young people have the right to feel safe and protected.</p>	<p>Young people have told us that adults abuse their power and this means that young people are anxious and cannot thrive.</p>	<p>Adults should respect and include all young people and enable them to meet their potential.</p>
<p>Young people have the right to join groups and clubs and feel included.</p>	<p>Young people can feel excluded and often feel unheard.</p>	<p>Create more opportunities for young people to engage in social experiences.</p>
<p>We know that young people have the right to life and to be supported to meet their potential.</p> <p>We know that young people have the right to have their voices heard and taken seriously.</p>	<p>Young people told us they do not feel included or heard.</p>	<p>We would like adults to value young peoples opinions and allow young people to take action.</p>
<p>We know we have a right to be heard</p>	<p>We know young people feel ignored</p>	<p>We would like all agencies and organisations in power to value the opinions of</p>

		young people and take action
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Cash

Young people have the right to safety	Young people have told us that they cannot afford basic needs because they are not paid enough to work	Increase the minimum wage for under 16's and under 18's
Young people have the right to relax, play and take part in fun activities. Young people have the right to be part of groups.	Young people have told us that they cannot afford to take part in leisure activities because of rising costs	Activities for young people need to be cheap or free. Young people need to be paid more to enable them to take part and have an active social life.
All young people have rights	Many young people in Highland believe that there are inequalities and that they do not have the same opportunities as others. This might be because of living in a rurally isolated community, because of poverty or other factors and lived experiences.	Young people want to work with people in power to help better plan and design services which affect them and to be involved in decision making processes.

Education

<p>Young people have a right to education .</p> <p>Young people have a right to be safe.</p>	<p>Young people don't feel safe in school because of bullying, a lack of support and power abuse</p>	<p>We want young people to help redesign the education system which we think is outdated and does not meet the needs of young people today</p>
<p>Young people have the right to feel safe.</p> <p>Young people have the right to education.</p>	<p>Young people do not feel safe in school because of bullying.</p>	<p>We want young people to help with a review of bullying in schools – including bullying between young people and of young people by teachers.</p>
<p>Young people have a right to have a voice and be taken seriously.</p> <p>Young people have the right to access support.</p>	<p>Young people feel a lack of support in school (mental, emotional, learning, social)</p>	<p>We want schools to understand students and meet their individual needs so that they can feel control of their own learning experiences.</p>
<p>Young people have a right to education</p> <p>Young people have a right to information</p>	<p>Young people told us teachers enable bad behaviour and bullying</p> <p>Young people told us that teachers abuse their power and bully young people</p>	<p>Teachers need training to ensure equality in the classroom and to enable everyone to meet their full potential.</p> <p>We need adults to be held to account when they abuse their power.</p>

<p>Young people have the right to be healthy</p>	<p>School causes a lot of anxiety and stress for young people.</p> <p>School does not teach young people how to deal with anxiety or stress.</p>	<p>We want dedicated people who specialise in offering support to young people using a person centred approach.</p>
<p>Young people have a right to life</p> <p>Young people have a right to support when they have suffered abuse</p>	<p>School does not teach us what we need to know.</p> <p>Exams do not measure things that matter in real life.</p>	<p>We want teachers to use a range of teaching styles to meet different learning needs.</p> <p>We want to learn using interactive methods.</p> <p>We want to be involved in designing and controlling our own learning.</p>

Access

<p>Young people have the right to feel safe</p> <p>Young people have the right to life and to meet their potential</p> <p>Young people have the right to leisure</p> <p>Young people have the right to take part in groups</p>	<p>Young people don't have enough money to do the things that they want to do</p>	<p>Young people need more money</p>
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<p>Young people have the right to feel safe</p> <p>Young people have the right to take part in groups</p> <p>Young people have the right to think and believe what they want</p>	<p>There are limited access to safe spaces for young people in Highland</p>	<p>We need more safe spaces and activities that are easy to access for all young people</p>
<p>Young people have the right to life and to meet their potential</p> <p>Young people have the right to leisure, play and relaxation</p> <p>Young people have the right to support</p>	<p>Young people told us that although bus travel is free there is a lack of transport and that sometimes transport feels unsafe for them</p>	<p>Transport links need to be regular, reliable and safe and welcoming for young people</p>

Jobs

<p>Young people have the right to learn</p>	<p>Young people are very aspirational about jobs and work in their futures. But they told us they are worried they won't learn skills that will help them to get a job.</p>	<p>We want young people to learn skills that will be enable them to get a job in the future.</p> <p>We want to see more apprenticeships and entry level jobs for young people in the Highlands.</p>
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		We want young people to be supported into good work.
Young people have the right to have their voice heard and taken seriously.	Young people told us they do not feel valued or well treated in work places	Young people need to be heard and valued in the work place
Young people have the right to be safe	Young people told us that they do not always feel safe in their work place	All young people should know their rights and have support if they need help negotiating better work conditions / safety at work / professional development opportunities

Supporting evidence

Safe spaces report [Safe Spaces Consultation Report 2025](#)

Dingwall safe spaces report [Safe Spaces - Dingwall 2025](#)

Associated British Ports report - attached

Where's Your Head At - testimonies from young people during testing times

Projecting Young Voices [Where's Your Head At? Screenings film.](#)

HYP issue based posters - attached



This research and report has been produced for the Poverty and Equality Commission by Youth Highland.

For more information contact Clair Wallace, Chief Officer at clair.wallace@youthhighland.org.uk

Scottish Charity Number SC022712