**Improving And Encouraging Youth Membership**

Ever since they were established, many Community Councils have struggled to attract and sustain the involvement of young people. The Model Scheme of Establishment now allows for young people aged over 16 to become full community councillors, with full voting rights, which has gone some way towards addressing the difficulties in attracting young people to the role. Community Councils may also allow young people under the age of 16 to become associate members, but this should be done by working with local schools to ensure child protection issues are adhered to.

Article 12 in the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child states that young people who are capable of forming their views, should have the right to express these views freely. We shall refer to this legislation as UNCRC throughout the rest of this audio clip.

The Scottish Parliament passed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill in 2020, with the aim of enshrining UNCRC principles into Scots law. However, the UK Supreme Court ruled that certain aspects of the UNCRC Bill were outwith the powers of the Scottish Parliament, which means that the Scottish Government has to find a way to bring the UNCRC Bill within their powers so it can become law in Scotland.

There are a number of organisations in Scotland which can provide help and guidance to Community Councils who want to increase youth involvement, as well as contacting local schools and the local authority. These organisations include Youth Scotland, Youthlink Scotland, Scottish Youth Parliament, Young Scot, Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland, Children’s Parliament, and the Scottish Alliance for Children’s Rights.

Community Councils can stimulate young people's interest by promoting their elections amongst youth groups, pupil councils and student associations all of which are likely to have young people who may be interested in getting involved in the local democratic process. Local authorities are responsible for promoting active citizenship as part of the school curriculum and this should be linked to the Community Council election process.

Community Councils may also want to consider appointing young people as associate members without voting rights, for the specific purpose of representing young people's views.

Community Councils also need to consider how they will ascertain and represent the views of young people. If this cannot be achieved in the direct ways described above, then Community Councils can work in partnership with the local authority and other agencies that have direct contact with young people to gather their opinions.