

CASE STUDY: YWCA Scotland: women's leadership leading policy changes

YWCA Scotland model their leadership by undertaking in-depth action research which involves young women, and which leads to policy and legal changes.

They also support young women to respond to national consultations including Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) and Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill, and support them to give evidence at parliamentary committees including the Equalities and Human Rights Committee on issues ranging from funding for arts to civil partnerships



Articulating and amplifying the voices of young women alongside advocacy and campaigns can change the policy context.

In 2020, as part of our political leadership programme, Young Women Lead, YWCA Scotland set up the first parliamentary committee in the history of the Scottish Parliament that comprises solely of young women from ethnic minority backgrounds. Together, we researched barriers BAME young women experience during transition from education to employment and barriers in the workplace. The results of this timely and much needed research are highly relevant for any organisation in the public or private sectors looking to implement innovative minority-led solutions to create an equal, diverse and inclusive culture in which marginalised young women can thrive and progress. Linda Fabiani MSP, The Deputy Presiding Officer for the Scottish Parliament, presented the report to the Scottish Government as “extremely useful information to be considered very seriously”.

In 2019, we launched a campaign to support the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill. We were also the first community group in Scotland to link up with period poverty-busting social enterprise Hey Girls to provide free sanitary products to women and girls accessing our services. We mobilised our movement to share stories, poetry and art to remove stigma around periods and show our support for the bill. In February 2020, the government decided to support the Bill in principle at Stage One. We took young women from our movement to the rally before the Bill was passed, and to the Parliament to watch the debate. In November 2020, Scotland became the first country in the world to enshrine a universal right to free period products in law.

Our parliamentary work through our Young Women Lead programme has already directly contributed to the Scottish Government’s review of Personal and Social Education for Scotland’s young people and formed the basis of a young women-led campaign on peer-to-peer sexual harassment in partnership with NSPCC Scotland and Dundee City Council.