



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Join In
Gabh Pàirt

25th Anniversary Regional Day Latha Roinneil 25mh Ceann-Bliadhna

A community conversation

Hosted by Stella's Voice

Monday 4 November 2024

Faith Acres, Peterhead



Introduction

As part of our activities to mark the Parliament's 25th anniversary, we visited the North East region to meet with local people to chat about what the Parliament means to them. We were keen to get a good understanding of what their expectations are for the future and how we can better engage with local people. That's what the Parliament is here for - to improve the lives of people in Scotland. It's important that we hear from people directly.

During the event hosted by Stella's Voice at the Faith Acres in Peterhead we had good discussions about issues like education, inclusion, environment, health and housing. We had really good, lively conversations.

The meetings have given us a much better understanding of what people expect and how we can carry these conversations on in the future to make sure the Parliament is delivering all it can for people. My thanks to everyone who took part.



Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP
Presiding Officer



Credit: Jenny Capon, More than Minutes

Scottish Parliament 25th Anniversary Regional Programme

The Presiding Officer is leading a regional programme of visits to each of the eight Scottish Parliamentary regions to mark the 25th anniversary of the Scottish Parliament. This was the fourth visit of eight. The Scottish Parliament's Participation & Communities Team is developing a programme of community engagement in collaboration with communities. The approach is to involve communities in the development of activities and to hear from people in ways that suit them best. For the fourth regional day, we worked in partnership with the Grampian Regional Equality Council, Stella's Voice and Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action to hold events which were friendly and inclusive and involved people who may not usually engage with the Scottish Parliament. We know that not everyone can easily engage with Parliament. We're exploring ways to connect with more people, so that they can have their say in the work we do.

This report outlines the event in Peterhead with Stella's Voice supported by the Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action.

Attendees

Presiding Officer: Rt Hon Alison Johnstone

Members of the Scottish Parliament: Karen Adam, Maggie Chapman, Michael Marra.

Stella's Voice: Mark Morgan

Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action: Alasdair Ross

Scottish Parliament Staff: Mark Brough, Sarah Campbell, Ishani Erasmus, Vikki Little, Tom Malone, Ewan Masson, Sophia Simpson.

Graphic Notetaker: Jenny Capon from More Than Minutes

Participants: 20 people took part. These were participants, staff, volunteers and close working partners, including: the local food bank, Men United – a mental health and suicide prevention charity, RNLI, Coastguard and The Salvation Army.

Stella's Voice

Stella's Voice is a registered charity that exists to support vulnerable people and help alleviate poverty. They run several large-scale reuse projects, helping divert hundreds of tonnes from landfill every year and use those items to directly help people in situations such as a victim of domestic abuse having to be emergency housed and in need of things such as a bed, microwave or anything else. They also sell items at affordable prices helping those who are not in a position to go out and buy new things. Any funds generated

from the sale of items goes towards helping keep the charity running and enabling them to respond to calls for help and support. They have an extensive partner network that they also help support - mainly other charities and groups that are helping to deliver support to vulnerable people.

They offer placements for training, employability and volunteers. This can be anything from prisoners coming up for release and need to get some real-world experience for getting back into society and work to someone who has suffered trauma or tragedy and needs to rebuild themselves and their confidence, etc.



Format of the Event

- Tour of facilities and introduction to projects.
- Stella's Voice, the Presiding Officer and MSPs gave introductions.
- The event was marketplace style with stalls with questions and interactive activities.
- A Graphic Notetaker captured what people said.



You can [view a short video](#) from the day on X

What we Heard

Participants were asked to name one word they think of in relation to the Scottish Parliament.

edinburgh-centric
elusive sensible essential
power
distant
parochial

What we asked

What has the Parliament done in the last 25 years that means something to you?

- Smoking Ban
- Climate Change Plan – Important especially for future generations.
- British Sign Language Act – a family Member uses BSL.
- Pardon for Witches – coverage throughout the UK and Ireland.
- Scottish Income Tax and Scottish Social Security.

What would you like to see in the future?

- Social Work and Health services to take more responsibility instead of blaming and putting pressure on Education.
- Ending child poverty.
- Protect and improve biodiversity in Scotland.
- Changes to Universal Credit for working people.
- NHS waiting times.
- Seed funding for small local organisations.

What are the key issues in your area that you feel should be addressed/prioritised?

Education

- Educating young people on Parliament in a way that helps them get involved.
- 16/17 year olds' voice.
- Cuts.

Inclusion

- ADHD/AuDHD referral process – particularly for women and girls.
- Funding to provide training for ASN/ASL.

Environment

- Protecting the environment and climate change implications.
- Biodiversity enhancement.

Health

- Closure of Peterhead MIU.
- Lack of mental healthcare.
- Hospital bed blocking.

Housing

- Affordable housing – a new approach is urgently needed.
- Homelessness.

Other issues

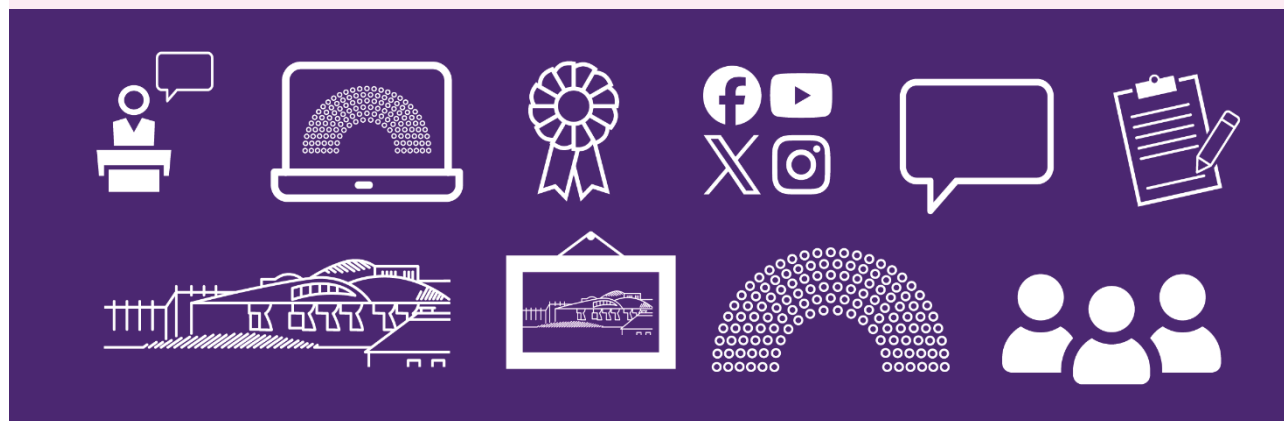
- Cost of Living.
- WASPI – change in retirement age for women.
- Reduction and closure of local services and businesses.
- Social care provision.
- Tax levels.

What are the obstacles/barriers to getting involved?

- Geography - poor transport links and the cost of travelling.
- Two hands not magic wands – no time.
- No coverage to make folk aware.
- Folk in temporary accommodation.
- Not aware where to look.
- ASN, ASL, EAL (Additional Support Needs, Additional Support Learning, English as an Additional Language)
- Not seeing the point – Engaging with the Parliament isn't the first thing I'd think about. I'm more focussed on getting involved with issues at grass roots.
- Feeling like our voice won't make a difference.
- Reserved culture in the North East.

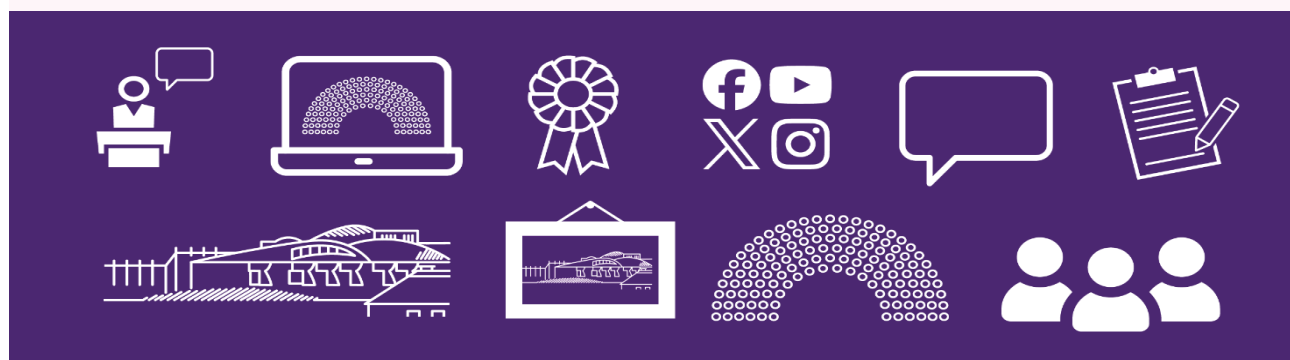
Have you ever been involved in the Scottish Parliament?

Activity	Number of people
Watched a debate or committee at Holyrood or on TV/online.	5
Visited the Scottish Parliament website.	3
Visited the Scottish Parliament.	3
Followed the Scottish Parliament on social media.	2
Spoken to or contacted one of their MSPs.	4
Signed a petition.	2
Has a family member who attended an education session at Holyrood or in school.	2
Given views to a committee.	1
Attended an exhibition or event at the Parliament.	2
Attended a Scottish Parliament event in my Community.	3



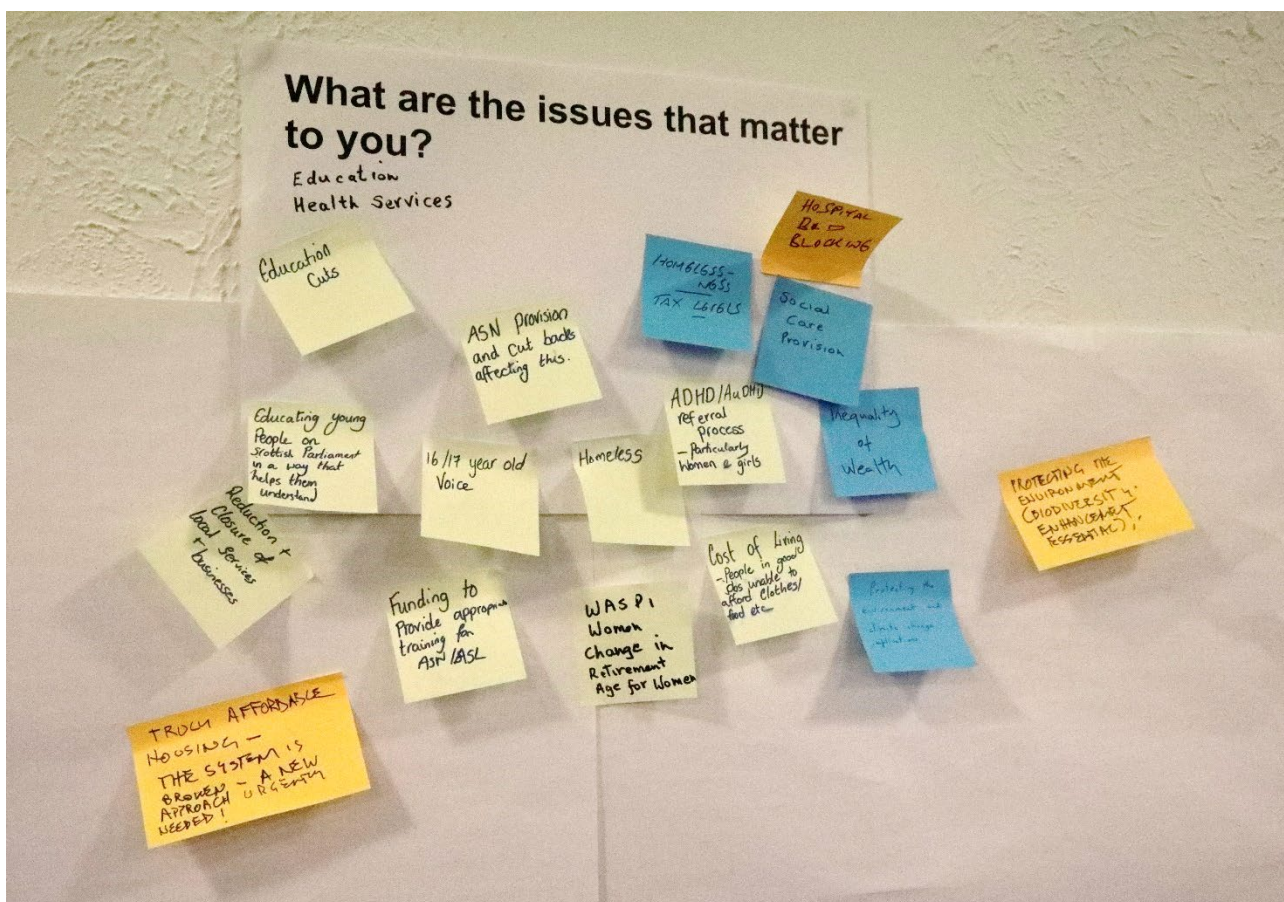
How would you like to get involved and raise the issues that matter to you with the Parliament?

Activity	Number of people
Giving their views to a Committee either verbally or in writing.	0
Visiting the Scottish Parliament.	4
Attending a Scottish Parliament event in their community.	5
Attending an event or an exhibition in Parliament.	0
Watching a debate or committee at Holyrood or on TV/online.	0
Visiting the Scottish Parliament website.	0
Speaking to or contacting on of their MSPs.	2
Follow the Scottish Parliament on Social Media.	0
Sign or submit a petition	1



As an organisation, how do you involve and engage people?

- Make it clear how they can be involved and what can be achieved.
- Offer tea, coffee, biscuits.
- Opportunities to meet other people in similar circumstances.
- Be open and welcoming – we never turn anyone away.
- Food pantry, clothing swap, and in lunch warm space.
- Social media.
- Provide a safe space.
- Opportunities to make new friends.
- Listening and going to where they are.
- Offering volunteering opportunities to local communities.
- Assemblies.
- Big breakfast.



Going Forward

The learning from the programme will be used to improve how the Parliament involves people.

We will do this by:

- Reviewing the issues raised and the outcomes from the programme at the Participation and Communities Team Communities Conference in spring 2025/2026.
- Producing a Community Engagement Strategy by autumn 2025.
- Feeding into the review of the Scottish Parliament Public Engagement Strategy in 2025/26.

The Graphic Notes produced at each of the events will be displayed in the Parliament in 2025.

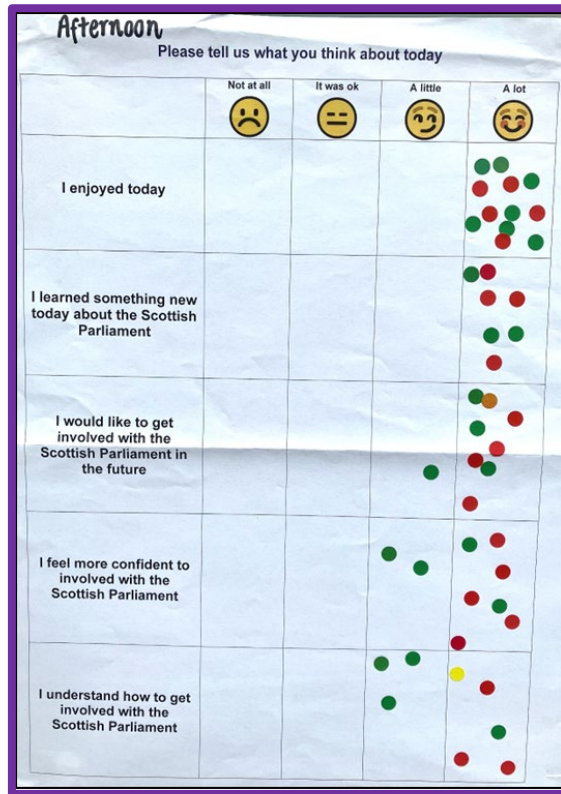
The reports, videos, graphic notes and resources from the programme can be viewed on the [Participation and Communities Team page on the Scottish Parliament website](#).

For further information please contact PACT@parliament.scot



Feedback

Feedback was taken in person at the end of the event with 12 people out of the 20 who attended completing a sticky dot evaluation.



- 11** enjoyed the event.
- 7** learned something new about the Parliament.
- 9** would like to get involved with the Parliament in the future.
- 8** feel more confident to get involved with the Parliament.
- 8** better understand how to to get involved with the Parliament.