

YOUNG WOMEN LEAD SINCE 2017

Feedback was collated from journals, evaluation forms, a survey, interviews and case studies, about the impact and value of the Young Women Lead (YWL) programme since its inception in 2017.

WHAT IS YOUNG WOMEN LEAD?

Young Women Lead (YWL) began in 2017 as a leadership programme for women and non-binary people aged 16-30 years old. It provides participants with a unique and exciting safe space to share their experiences and work together to create real tangible change. Initially operating on a national level within Scottish Parliament, it has evolved over time into regional programmes, across Scotland. There have been 127 'Young Women Leaders' (YWLers) since 2017. This evaluation looks at young women's experiences across all YWL cohorts in order to develop the programme for future participants.



Young Women Lead participants benefitted most from:

- Network/friendship building;
- Skills development;
- Feeling empowered to make change;
- Broadening their perspectives;
- Intergenerational work.

When asked which single part of the programme was most impactful to them, survey participants chose:

- 50% making connection/friends;
- 31.8% developing the project;
- 18.2% working with The Young Women's Movement (YWM) team.



Key recommendations for future YWL programmes:

- Expectation setting before people even apply, then again at the beginning of the sessions – of participants, of the project, and of the YWM;
- Continue to have set time to work in-person to enable the group to get to know each other;
- Work in safe and brave spaces – working somewhere like Kairos as a safe space, and the Scottish Parliament as a brave, developmental space;
- Maintain a wide age range to enable young people to learn from each other;
- Set aside time at the beginning of the programme for feminist leadership specific training and skills development, making it clear how these skills will help them to conduct and deliver their YWL project;
- Allow young women to choose a project that matters to them, but narrow down the subject options (ideally to link in with Parliamentary Committees) and be sure to maintain structure to make sure the project feels manageable;
- Ensure the output is developed by the young women, in the format they want, to allow them to feel ownership of it;
- Keep participants up-to-date with where their findings and output goes;
- Better evaluation and impact monitoring, including check-ins with key stakeholders to keep them accountable;
- Develop a YWL Alumni Network and arrange regular meetups (even if this is once a year) to enable mentorship, networking and socialising.

Participants told us how the Young Women Lead programme helped them build and expand their professional and personal development skills.

- *"I am now in a leadership position and I know I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the skills, self-esteem and network YWL gave me. It gave me a belief in myself I didn't know possible." [survey respondent]*
- *"I have gained job opportunities as a result of joining the programme" [survey participant]*
- *"loneliness and isolation is a huge issue and this project does help a specific demographic find people which is probably unintended but really really great" [interview 2, Fife]*
- *"we were all given the support around us to enable us to lead in the best way that we could" [interview 3, 17/18]*
- *"being treated like an expert/someone with valuable insights for the first time as a young woman of colour" [survey participant]*
- *"I would choose to participate on this again in a heartbeat." [YWL Participant]*

- *“potentially being able to help other people who are coming through and doing it would be a nice opportunity for people [...] a way to build your own leadership” “legacy” [interview 3, 17/18]*
- *“I was no longer the crazy one, blowing everything out of proportion but part of a larger movement” [survey participant]*
- *“Parliament is unfortunately still massively inaccessible to a lot of people, especially young women [...] the programme taking place within the building was really beneficial because it opened up that space but it also broke down barriers which then led onto me realising that politics isn't such a scary space [...] I suddenly had a better understanding of and better knowledge of and more confidence taking up space in there as well, so realising that the parliament building was somewhere where I could be and that I could belong there as well” [interview 4, YWL 18/19]*



Prior to joining the organisation as our CEO in 2022, Jenni Snell participated in the Young Women Lead 2018/19 programme.

Jenni told us:

- *"I never saw myself as a leader at that point so the programme for me was really transformational because it enabled me to build my confidence [and] lots of different skills development that are really crucial to being a leader" [YWM CEO, YWL 18/19]*
- *"I think, fundamentally, I wouldn't be in the position where I am today without Young Women Lead and the experiences and connections and friendships and the skills that it offered me, and the opportunity to engage with The Young Women's Movement and to then later become the CEO, so the Young Women Lead programme for me has been [...] hugely impactful" [YWM CEO, YWL 18/19]*



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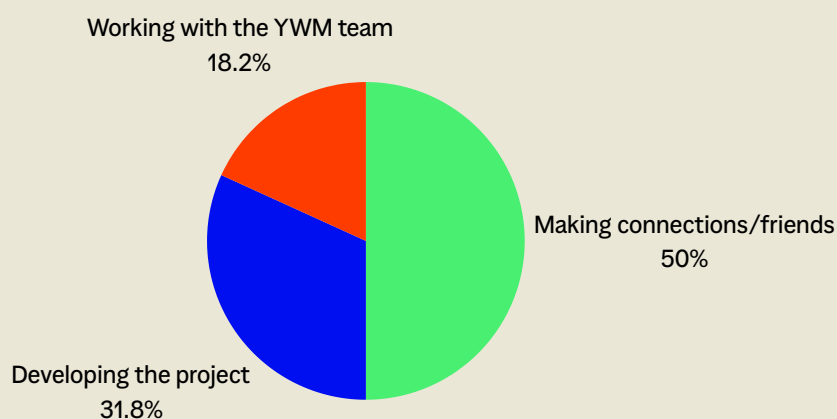
The Young Women's Movement sent out a survey at the end of 2023 for previous Young Women Lead (YWL) participants, asking about their experiences of YWL (22 respondents). Survey respondents largely felt that YWL was very valuable in their lives, for:

- Expanding their network;
- Getting more involved in their communities;
- Better understanding political systems in Scotland;
- Gaining leadership skills & confidence.

On average, survey participants rated the overall value of taking part in YWL as 4.4/5.

When asked which single part of the programme was most impactful to them, survey participants chose:

- 50% making connection/friends
- 31.8% developing the project
- 18.2% working with The Young Women's Movement team



When asked what being a YWL participant has helped them with, survey respondents answered:

- 85% professional development;
- 60% applying for a job;
- 55% campaigning/social justice work;
- 30% further study;
- 30% volunteering.

"I am now in a leadership position and I know I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the skills, self-esteem and network YWL gave me. It gave me a belief in myself I didn't know possible." [survey respondent]

The diverse careers of 'Young Women Leaders' (YWLers) responding to our survey included:

- Working for the YWM: current CEO and Partnership & Events Lead;
- Publishing;
- Marketing;
- Education, including university admissions;
- Small business owner;
- Civil service;
- Research/data analysis, including international affairs at the Canadian Space Agency;
- Third sector;
- Scottish Government, including Community Engagement work for MSPs;
- European Youth Parliament;
- Community improvement;
- Youth work.

"I currently work as a marketer at a women's rights organisation in Scotland. I can't imagine having picked this career if I hadn't been fortunate enough to be part of YWL!" [survey participant]

"YWL basically changed the course of my life. It set me up with invaluable connections in the third and public sector which I still use today" [survey participant]

Multiple participants are in education, as well as their paid and volunteer working roles, including (from our survey):

- Part-time PhD looking at women in politics' experiences on Twitter;
- Marketing;
- Social science;
- International relations.

At work, participants took on more responsibilities, such as leading on projects, feeling confident to take on management roles, and two YWL graduates told us that they became charity CEOs after completing the programme.

"I would never have had the courage to advocate for change or take up such a responsibility before the programme." [survey participant]

Where are they now?

Many participants became leaders in volunteer capacities, such as GirlGuiding, political engagement, local community groups, activism, and sitting on third sector Executive Committees.

"YWL has given me many practical skills that have helped me in this position, as well as confidence to know that I am able to, and should, take up positions of power." [survey participant]

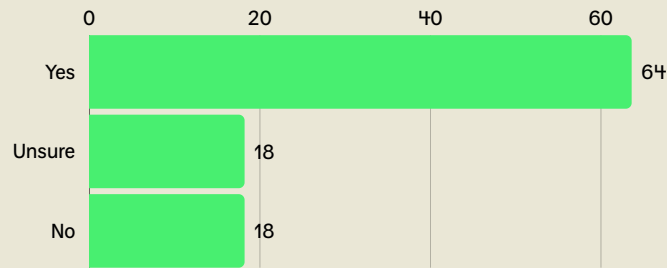
Multiple graduates expressed a sense of pride and achievement for being a YWL graduate, mentioning a sense of "tangible change" that it brings.

"[being a YWL graduate] means I'm listened to, valued, included, respected, and invited to actively participate in creating a more feminist society in Scotland." [survey participant]



'Do you feel like a part of the YWM community after taking part in YWL?'

- 63.6% 'yes'
- 18.2% 'unsure'
- 18.2% 'no'.



Largely, the network and ability to keep in contact with people via social media enabled people to feel part of the community. People also continued engagement with the YWM through the Advisory Collective – a group of around 30 women under 30 who contribute to our overall strategy and operations, and some even gained employment with the YWM.

"It's hard to make friends as an adult, and this was such a safe and wonderful space to be able to meet people who share similar values and interests and develop real true lasting friendships." [survey participant]

Participants felt that the YWM team worked to make a welcoming and inclusive environment.

"I feel like the YWL team worked to make us feel a part of the community, through regular updates, being involved in decision making for our project & being friendly, inclusive, and personable." [survey participant]

A key part of the programme for most participants was the community of “like-minded intersectional feminists” [survey participant] it builds. This network enabled many transformative relationships that supported participants in their careers:

“meeting this network of wonderful people across Fife made Fife feel a lot smaller” [YWL Participant]

However, there were a small proportion of participants who reported not feeling like part of the Movement after completing YWL. The reasons for this included accessibility issues, with so much of the work being online, as well as losing touch with the YWM community after the programme finished, as there are no reunion meet-ups or alumni network to join afterwards. Despite this, a Scottish Parliament stakeholder who supported the programme whilst it was delivered in the Parliament, talked about the “extended community that has been created as a result of YWL” which seems to transcend the cohorts.

Building a network was valuable for many participants, who reported feeling part of a community after working on YWL. Some survey participants reported feeling encouraged to get more involved in other community groups and projects in their area as a direct consequence of their work with YWL. They reported being able to learn from each other and that YWL gave them a space to talk and feel heard.

“Being around people who encourage you, both the participants, but also The Young Women’s Movement, that can help you to believe in yourself” [interview 3, 17/18]

YWL 2021 graduate Holly Bruce became a Local Councillor after being on the YWL programme. She also reported that, in addition to feeling part of a local community, she felt part of the women's movement community in Scotland after working with YWL. She told us that this had not previously felt easy to access locally, but that after being part of YWL, she now feels that she could approach this community for support.

YWM staff also reported that they felt the most beneficial part of YWL is "the connections that women make with each other" through coming together in a "shared safe space." Staff emphasised that giving young women and girls this safe space to get to know each other and discuss things that are important to them is "at the absolute heart of the programme."



YWL supported participants to develop a variety of skills, including:

- Growth in confidence in themselves and to take on opportunities;
- Conducting research;
- Leadership;
- Time-management;
- Teamwork;
- Report writing.

They were able to develop team-working skills, including how to collaborate with others but also when and how to take on a leadership role themselves.

"It allowed me to step into a leadership role and take control of various situations, despite this not being completely natural to me." [YWL Participant]

"I have started canvassing for my campaign next year [...] using the skills that I learnt" [YWL Participant]

"Negotiating big groups of different people, it gave me skills in that which I've then been able to apply throughout my life" [interview 1, 2018/19]

There were also different elements of the work itself that survey participants wanted to highlight the value of, including the public speaking training one cohort got the chance to participate in.

One interviewee was keen that YWL should continue providing:

“authentic leadership opportunities where you really are empowered [taking a project from conception] [...] that’s really worth keeping because I think that’s the thing that really helps build belief in yourself as a leader”
[interview 3, 17/18]



"I really benefitted from demystifying of how Parliament works, how politics works, and now I'm a lot less intimidated about interacting with politics off the back of that" [interview 3, 17/18]

Having YWL in the physical space of the Scottish Parliament was greatly valued, both by participants and parliamentary stakeholders. Being physically present and being seen taking up space in Parliament was really important for making the young women in those cohorts feel empowered to make political change, during the project and beyond.

"having the opportunity to be part of a committee and to speak in a committee space [...] was really beneficial as well, it just built my confidence and really supported some of the imposter syndrome I had as a young woman in a leadership space" [YWM CEO, YWL 18/19]

"[YWL] made me feel more empowered as a young woman in Scotland and about how our political systems work and influence my life" [survey participant]

This created personal empowerment for participants' confidence in themselves as individuals and "empowerment to be more active citizens" both collectively and individually [Scottish Parliament Stakeholder]. It also allowed them to feel ownership of the parliamentary space.

"areas I think should continue would be having access to Scottish Parliament or spaces in which decision-making and traditional levers of power are still held [...] also because of the outputs and where the outputs of the programme can go next, so having that direct access, for example,

in Scottish Parliament [to committees] [...] they were able to use our findings straight away and we were able to influence in a much more direct way [by being in those spaces]" [Interview 4, 18/19]

Working with the Scottish Parliament as a partner helped to broaden the perspectives of those working in Parliament, as well as the YWLMers themselves.

A Scottish Parliament Stakeholder talked about the impact of building a relationship with YWM in the long-term, building a solid foundation for work and "critical friend" conversations. They noted that the recent example of the Young Women Know girls giving evidence to the Education, Children and Young People Committee (2023) shows the value for everyone of this relationship as it helps the Parliament build a network of young women who are more politically involved "who are able to challenge and change things going forward."

She also talked about the level of respect and credibility that is given to the project due to the involvement of the Deputy Presiding Officer. This credibility was both outward, giving it "status" as being "something of national importance" through being run in Parliament, but it also meant that Parliament themselves saw more value both in the project and in seeing young women's authority in this space.

"demonstrates to us [Parliament] what is possible when you [...] hand a bit of that power over and exploring what can happen when you do was of real benefit to parliament" [Scottish Parliament Stakeholder]

Though it's important for the young women to lead the project themselves and for the output to be guided by their interests and passions, staff members and stakeholders recommended restricting the topics participants are able to choose from, in order to support managing expectations, as well "forward planning in terms of resource for each programme" [Staff member]. Participants also mentioned their expectations from the programme coming from comparisons with previous YWL years, as they all come under the 'YWL' umbrella but are vastly different (e.g. some are hosted in Parliament, some locally).

Some participants come in with clear expectations e.g. research focus or policy work, and it can be difficult to meet these, which can have an impact on participation.

"we have found that young women are more likely to over-commit themselves to additional opportunities, and can then resulting in them dropping out of programmes." [YWM staff]

A Scottish Parliament Stakeholder mentioned that Parliamentary Committees have quite specific areas of influence, and therefore it would be good to manage the YWLe's expectations by having realistic outcomes and clarity on how these will be measured. She noted that the more local projects have had more success in influencing change; how could this be learnt from if it were to return to Parliament?

One interviewee also talked about the value of everyone having to commit to in-person sessions, both to establish commitment to the project and for group bonding. She also mentioned how the group would spend time together in-person after their sessions to decompress, socialise, and network:

“for this sort of project, so much of the value comes from physically being in a space with people” [interview 1, 2018/19]

“I definitely think the kind of face-to-face, funded part of it [having lunch, pens, paper, the space provided] is really really valuable” [interview 2, Fife]

“one of the real benefits [...] the sessions were all in-person [...] structured in advance, you we knew the dates [...] travel costs being covered and childcare costs being covered, the building was accessible” [Interview 4, 18/19]

Participants talked a lot about the actual output of their projects, how manageable this was, how up-to-date they were kept with its impacts, and their expectations of what it would be. There were vast experiences of the project itself across cohorts. Feedback from YWL Fife, which ran in 2023 suggested that this felt not only like a manageable project for the group and timescale, but that they had real ownership of the project, and were updated about where it went afterwards by YWM staff.

“it felt like one [a project] you could dip in and out of [...] we inputted into the design [...] divvied up different pages based on our experiences and expertise” [interview 2, Fife]

Many YWL participants also appreciated the opportunity to design a project themselves, to help raise awareness of or resolve an issue in their local community that mattered to them all. They felt that the project was truly young women led and existed to enable them to actively make change themselves.

“the programme was really led by us [...] that participatory, lived experience approach was really powerful and should continue with future programmes” [interview 4, YWL 18/19]

“It was clear there wasn't another agenda from someone high up saying we needed to focus on certain issues that fit their narrative, we truly had the space to design this together, and it was refreshing to know this was a space where we were the ones making the change” [YWL Participant]

In general, feeling ownership of the project was of important to participants:

“being able to take part in a project that you have ownership of and can really lead yourself from beginning to end is quite unique sometimes when you're younger in your career, you might not have had a chance to be empowered to do that” [interview 3, 17/18]

This is distinctly different to one participant's feedback from YWL 18/19; a participant fed-back that they did not have input on writing the report, that the project was not a topic that all participants related to, and that they did not know where the project went after YWL finished.

Empowerment to Make Change & Broadening Perspectives

Participants also reported YWL fostered a newfound feeling of empowerment to make change.

“Collectively we have tackled and effectively managed issues that I thought previously were outwith our grasps.” [YWL Participant]

YWL enabled multiple participants to feel politically active and that making change in Scotland is something that they were able to access:

“not only that my voice as a young woman in Scotland matters, but that it can - and should - be used to create positive change” [YWL Participant]

The visibility of the programme also supported participants to feel proud of the scale of what they were doing:

“what I was doing was really interesting and was, to an extent, quite an impressive thing that I was doing when I was 18” [interview 1, 2018/19]

Participants felt that their discussions supported them to broaden their perspectives, from the freedom to explore what issues felt important to them personally, to learning from others of varied ages and varied backgrounds “without judgement or hierarchy” [YWL Participant].

Empowerment to Make Change & Broadening Perspectives

A stakeholder, Kairos, a community-led women's space for all women and non-binary people across Renfrewshire and beyond, who provided a space for a YWL cohort within their offices, told us that, after YWL enabled the participants to feel comfortable in their space:

"there were a couple of women attending to our space to your sessions and they ended up coming back to Kairos. At least one of them is actively taking part in different things in Kairos and another one was recently invited to the development team. There were good consequences out of this, creating those connections." [Kairos, 2024]

Lastly, where the programme was national, as opposed to regional, it enabled participants to broaden their circles to people from different areas of Scotland and different backgrounds:

"one of the things I benefited from was meeting people from all over Scotland" [interview 3, 17/18]

However, some participants also appreciated the more localised project:

"having a network in your local area makes such a difference, instead of it being a national thing." [YWL Participant]

Intergenerational work was hugely beneficial to participants' learning, who felt that working with those from different age brackets broadened their perspectives. There was a sense from some participants that those at the younger end were more optimistic regarding change-making than older participants, but that this optimism was something they wanted to take on themselves, after working with younger women. There seemed to be initial concern from some about the vast age range, though this was often combatted the more they worked together.

"It was interesting to see the women on the younger side of the age demographic feel very strongly that they could change a VERY big issue, versus those on the other end of the spectrum who seemed to be more wary of trying to make a HUGE community change" [YWL Participant]

One interviewee talked about how keeping the age bracket so broad "worked really well" because it enabled them to meet people they "would probably have not met [...] but you know that you've got something in common" [interview 2, Fife]. She also talked about the impact the vast age range could have had on the YWM practitioners, noting that:

"communication throughout was great, never felt patronised or not looked after which is a delicate balance to get when you're working with people from 18 to 30" [interview 2, Fife]

Another participant mentioned that, though people often developed friendships initially within their own age brackets, this did not prevent them being able to learn from each other's different perspectives and interests.

Nonetheless, one participant, who was at the younger end of the age range when they participated, told us that they felt too young to take part in the programme:

"I would say that I was too young - I don't think I benefitted as much at 14 as I could at 17/18+. I still got a lot out, [...] but I did feel lost a lot of the time and not entirely sure what I was meant to be doing." [survey participant]



Project Structure

Some participants wanted the project to either have more frequent meetings, or to last longer overall. There was a mixed response on preference of online or in-person meetings; different people got different things from each session. Therefore, an even mixture seems to be the best option, to enable the widest possible inclusion, including a mixture of session lengths – half-days, weekends, evenings, etc., due to the group's different contexts and commitments.

Various participants discussed the need for a reduction in, or more clarity on, the workload outside of the designated sessions. One participant mentioned the value of reducing hours of work outside of the official sessions to support those with time management conflicts and other commitments.

"maybe wasn't explained as fully upfront that there was gonna be such a requirement outside of those six days to do additional work [...] I was working full-time at the time and having that additional requirement was a bit of a challenge [...] either be very explicit about the commitment upfront or be very mindful of group dynamics and weighting of responsibility within group dynamics" [Interview 4, 18/19]

"having the number of hours, number of sessions, what people can expect and a bit about the background of the programme is probably really useful for people" [interview 2, Fife]

However, some participants felt that YWL was well timed and structured as it is:

"The timing, location and workload etc.. is manageable and highly motivated by team leaders who are extremely energetic, empathetic and supportive." [YWL Participant]

Some participants suggested having tiered options for engagement, so that people are able to participate at different levels, depending on their outside commitments, such as "getting more people in to watch the committee sessions, as a way of involving people who are still interested, but unable to commit." [survey participant]

There was a call for improved accessibility, e.g. not always having meetings online and arranging meetings further in advance. Additionally, some participants wanted to be provided with more training initially, including leadership-specific training.

"one of my incentives for signing up was because it was a leadership programme [...] that aspect was missing slightly [...] it sort of felt like that was an add-on a bit" [interview 1, 2018/19]

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics were important to participants, and a few noted the need to manage these well to ensure that the workload is not being taken on wholly by a small number of participants.

"being more aware of group dynamics and how responsibility is distributed and keeping more accountability of that as the facilitators would've been really helpful" [Interview 4, 18/19]

One participant mentioned boundaries in the dynamic between participants and facilitators, noting that there needs to be more care taken where there are existing friendships, to prevent these relationships influencing decisions or causing unequal treatment of participants. They also noted that clearer professional boundaries enable better safeguarding and protection for participants, both in-person and on social media.

A Scottish Parliament Stakeholder discussed the merit in having a smaller group who do more in-depth work with greater individual commitments, as well as payment for participation to denote the value of participation. Similarly to participants, they also suggested having clearer terms of reference and aims in the first instance. One participant suggested a safe space/channel as a way of communicating with each other and feeding back about each other's level of contribution to the project, to support accountability.

Managing Expectations

Some participants mentioned the desire to set goals at an earlier stage and make these more achievable and structured. Initially, some participants were uncertain about what the project would entail, so setting this structure would enable people to manage their expectations of the programme, as some participants expected, for example, more immediate governmental change as a result of their project.

"Would have been valuable to understand what the purpose of the research was that we produced. Feel like we wrote a report and it didn't really go anywhere." [survey participant]

One interviewee discussed expecting a more direct, structured, skills-based feminist leadership training. The title 'Young Women Lead' meant they expected training looking in-depth at what it means to be a young woman in a leadership position, thinking about systemic barriers and providing practical tools and methodologies around feminist leadership:

"leading with a bit of toolbox around that very practical training"
[Interview 4, 18/19]

They went on to talk about how the programme did support them to build the skills and competencies of being a leader, but through a softer, more implicit than explicit approach, through practically conducting the project, and that there was no concluding reflection on the skills they developed along the way. They told us that it felt more like "a programme that enabled women to lead change" as opposed to feminist leadership training [Interview 4, YWL 18/19]. They said that, because of this lack of reflection about what specific skills have been learnt and can be taken forward into

Managing Expectations

leadership positions, a more structured approach would've been helpful:

"[in future] maybe a longer programme or a more intense programme or something around having, like, two full days of feminist leadership skills building, understanding feminism, understanding leadership [...] and then going into leading change in a practical way would've been really helpful [...] it was really left up to the individual to reflect on the feminist leadership aspect of the programme" [Interview 4, 18/19]

In terms of project development, a Scottish Parliament Stakeholder suggested YWL links in better with the work of Parliamentary Committees. She suggested keeping the choice of project young women led, but "within a bit more of a current policy landscape framework" to enable maximum impact. There were suggestions to limit the subject options for young women to choose from to enable this, whilst letting them decide on and develop the actual project themselves.

However, participants noted that it was essential that they felt ownership of the project and the need to:

"build something that everybody can at least buy into, even if everyone's not an expert on it" [interview 1, 2018/19]

Conducting the Project

One interviewee also mentioned that participants in her cohort weren't heavily involved in the writing of their report, and therefore she felt that "it was a document I had no connection to at all" [interview 1, 2018/19].

Furthermore, a Scottish Parliament Stakeholder noted that, when in Parliament, the young women took a more traditional approach to how they worked together (like a Parliamentary Committee). She suggested that they could, in future, take a more creative approach, if that best suits them, to ensure they do not feel like they have to take this more formal model, just because of the formal setting.

Staff mentioned the differences transitioning from the parliamentary setting into the community. Though this enabled increased flexibility in terms of project theme, it meant that it could be difficult to fairly condense everyone's ideas down into one feasible project.



Project Output

The outputs themselves have had various impacts and have been used in various settings:

- YWL 17/18 report into sexual harassment in Scottish schools fed into the Scottish Government's Personal and Social Education review;
- YWL 18/19 report into young women's participation in sport was used as evidence in the Health and Sport Committee review on young women in sport. YWM staff were then called to provide evidence on the report regarding barriers to young women in sport in April 2022;
- YWL 19/20 report into the transition from education to employment for ethnic minority young women fed into the Young People's Guarantee and the Gender Commission's work on apprenticeships;
- Glasgow YWL report (2021) fed into Cllr Holly Bruce's feminist town planning motion at Glasgow City Council.

"after the committee and the programme ended I think it has been used and it has been beneficial, maybe not as much as it could have been but it definitely has been cited in Scottish Parliament, for example" [Interview 4, 18/19]

However, not all participants felt that they were kept updated about how their outputs were used. A Scottish Parliament Stakeholder mentioned that it can be difficult to identify exactly how outputs have been used to enact change because of a lack of tracking/monitoring of where outputs have gone. She suggested tracking influence by having regular check-ins with the Scottish Government to ask for updates and hold them accountable.

Project Follow-up & Evaluation

Participants mentioned the need for follow-up after the programme, particularly to demonstrate whether their output had any impact. Structured follow-on support would “help the end product feel more tangible” [YWL Participant]. Some participants were interested in the idea of learning how to build a campaign.

“Some more support to help us continue projects (especially if they are long term) after the 6 month deadline would be really beneficial as well because I felt our project sort of tailed off (even though it didn't feel 'done') when we no longer had the programme structure” [YWL Participant]

“Maybe it'd be worthwhile maybe making it 12 months and then doing the aftermath of the report and building up that campaign” [YWL Participant]

“Built-in longevity/legacy planning for reports and their recommended actions, consequences and media or political engagement to ensure the work does make an impact” [survey participant]

Journaling as a feedback form was mentioned a few times by participants; some found it useful for digesting their own feelings, but others wanted alternative ways to do this.

A Scottish Parliament Stakeholder suggested implementing a better evaluation and impact framework from the beginning to measure success, participant experience and impact on policy/legislation. They mentioned the need to continually measure and track short and longer-term outcomes of the outputs, as well as the project itself.

YWL Alumni Engagement

Participants expressed interest in continued engagement after the programme ends, including through networking and mentorship opportunities:

“having a conference or a get-together with all the groups that have happened so far would be really nice from a social point of view and to celebrate some of the things that have come up well or kind of opportunities to reconnect [...] network of graduates to keep in touch if people are happy to be reached out of or lean on each other” [interview 2, Fife]

“there could be more done [with the output] maybe as part of an alumni group or maybe as part of the programme to use the outputs to have more influence” [Interview 4, 18/19]

One participant talked about how the network could be used to support younger women develop their skills and get work experience, given that YWL alumni span various careers and sectors that people may not otherwise be exposed to:

“[in her job] I could so easily have someone come and shadow or skill share” [interview 2, Fife]

YWL Alumni Engagement

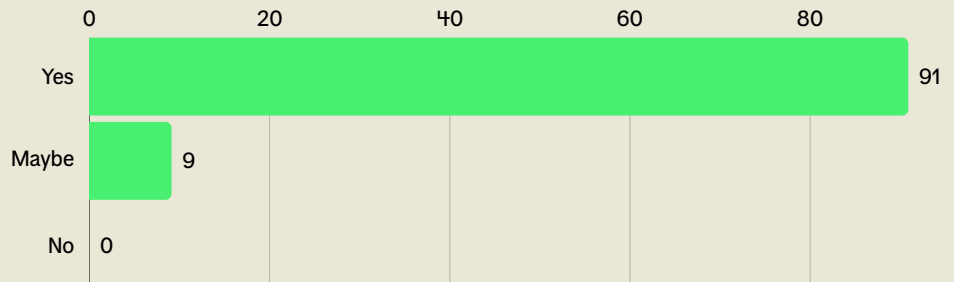
The YWM CEO herself was part of the YWL programme in 2018/19. After enjoying working with YWM through YWL, she joined the YWM Advisory Panel, and then became the CEO, crediting YWL as having helped to build her leadership skills and confidence along the way:

"three years later all those skills have mounted up and I'm in the really lucky and fortunate position now that I've brought my youth work experience, my leadership experience from Young Women Lead and my passion for feminism and I'm now the CEO of The Young Women's Movement, so it's been huge and I've gained a lot" [YWM CEO, YWL 18/19]



From our 2023 alumni survey: Having been part of YWL, would you recommend the programme to other young women and people of marginalised genders?

- 90.9% 'Yes'
- 9.1% 'Maybe'
- 0% 'no'



Participants were very keen to express their appreciation for the team they worked with at YWM:

"we participants don't say it enough but we're so grateful to have been a part of YWL! ❤️" [survey participant]

"it's such a valuable programme [...] the fact that it's going 6 years after its conception is really great and I've recommended other people to apply for it [...] please keep doing it!" [interview 1, 2018/19]

"YWL is so valuable and I still talk about my time on the programme today, 5 years later. Long may it continue to develop as a community-focused, participant-led programme for young women to explore new avenues to activism and community." [survey participant]

"I hope other people get the opportunity to experience it" [interview 3, 17/18]

A Scottish Parliament Stakeholder talked about the value in the longer-term partnership approach, and the involvement of key Parliamentary figures and work from across parliamentary teams being vital.

“Collaboration is kind of crucial to making it work” [Scottish Parliament Stakeholder]

She also mentioned the value in bringing in other organisations to diversify recruitment and direct the programme at young women who are truly disconnected from politics and the Scottish Parliament. She also talked about better involving MSPs and how they could help with impact, reach, and continued momentum.

Overall, though some participants felt that the project itself could have had more structure, particularly in terms of initial expectation-setting and them being kept up-to-date about where the output went afterwards, most participants reported feeling proud to have taken part in YWL. They described it developing their confidence and opening up a wider feminist network for them, whether that was professionally or in their local area.

“YWL was transformational. [...] YWL provided me with the resources, learning opportunities, safe space and a network to fully explore my feminism at a deeper level, apply it in my life and embrace myself as a young woman leader. If I could push out my comfort zone to provide evidence in a parliamentary committee, I could surmount any challenge.” [survey participant]

Key Recommendations for Future YWL Programmes

“where are those positions of power, where are those positions where the levers are, where the decision-making are and how are we, through Young Women Lead, enabling women to get into those spaces and to hold space within those spaces and to challenge the more traditional stereotypes around that?” [YWM CEO, YWL 18/19]

- Expectation setting before people even apply, then again at the beginning of the sessions – of participants, of the project, and of the YWM;
- Continue to have set time to work in-person to enable the group to get to know each other;
- Work in safe and brave spaces – working somewhere like Kairos as a safe space, and Parliament as a brave, developmental space;
- Maintain a wide age range to enable young people to learn from each other, ensuring that younger participants feel included and listened to;
- Set aside time at the beginning for feminist leadership specific training and skills development, making it clear how these skills will help them to conduct and deliver their YWL project;
- Allow young women to choose a project that matters to them, but narrow down the subject options (ideally to link in with Parliamentary Committees) and be sure to maintain structure to make sure the project feels manageable;
- Ensure the output is developed by the young women, in the format they want, to allow them to feel ownership of it;
- Keep participants up-to-date with where their output goes;
- Better evaluation and impact monitoring, including check-ins with stakeholders to keep them accountable;
- Develop a YWL Alumni Network and arrange regular meetups (even if this is once a year) to enable mentorship, networking and socialising.

THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who took part in this research, and shared honestly and vulnerably. To our Young Women Leaders, who supported us with our learning and recommendation development. Without you, none of this would be possible.

Thank you also goes to our funders for making the Young Women Lead programme possible over the years, including: Scottish Parliament, Esmee Fairburn Foundation, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Equality & Human Rights Fund (Scottish Government), and Promoting Equality and Cohesion Fund (Scottish Government).



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If you would like more information about the research, or to give feedback about this report, please contact hello@youngwomenscot.org

Previous Participant Anonymous Survey, 2023

- 22 respondents;
- Age when they participated: 45.5% 26-30; 36.4% 22-25; 9.1% 18-21; 9.1% under 18;
- Age now: 27.3% 31+; 50% 26-30; 13.6% 22-25; 4.5% 18-21; 4.5% under 18;
- How valuable has taking part in YWL been for you overall? (1 = not valuable at all to 5 = extremely valuable)
- average 4.4/5 (9.1% 2/5; 4.5% 3/5; 22.7% 4/5; 63.6% 5/5).

YWL Outputs

National:

- [YWL 17/18 - Sexual harassment in schools report](#)
- [YWL 18/19 - Young women and sport report](#)
- [YWL 19/20 - Ethnic minority women in employment report](#)

Regional:

- [YWL Glasgow 2021 – Feminist Town Planning Report](#)
- [YWL Dundee 2022 – Step Up Sex Ed Report](#)
- [YWL Fife 2023 – Safe Spaces Toolkit](#)
- [YWL Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire – Community Spaces Zine](#)

Where have the outputs of YWL have been used to enact change?

- The first YWL report (17/18) into sexual harassment in Scottish schools fed into the PSE review;
- The second YWL report (18/19) into young women's participation in sport was used as evidence in the Health & Sport Committee review on young women in sport and YWM were called to provide evidence on the report re. Barriers to young women in sport in April 22;
- The third YWL report (19/20) into the transition from education to employment for ethnic minority young women fed into the young people's guarantee and the gender commission's work on apprenticeships;
- The Glasgow YWL report (2021) fed into Cllr Holly Bruce's feminist town planning motion at Glasgow City Council.