ENGAGEMENT WITH ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES 2024 - 2026

The resumption of normal Assembly business in February 2024 marked a turning point for the Youth Assembly (YA) in its second mandate, ushering in a new era of influence, collaboration, and visibility. Youth Assembly Members seized the opportunity to work shoulder-to-shoulder with Assembly Committees, contributing meaningfully to legislative scrutiny, public inquiries, and events that reflect the priorities of young people across Northern Ireland.

Their voices have not just been heard – they have helped shape the conversation. From Bills and Legislative Consent Motions to public inquiries, Youth Assembly Members have informed and influenced decision-making at the highest levels. Their input has been discussed in Assembly debates and influenced Committee recommendations, demonstrating the value of youth participation in legislative scrutiny.

Consulting with the Youth Assembly has become embedded in the practices of the Assembly Committees, ensuring that the perspectives of young people are systematically integrated into consultation processes and policy development. This sustained engagement reflects a broader institutional commitment to embedding youth voices within the democratic process and strengthening participatory governance.

2023-2025 MANDATE

In April 2024, the Committee for Health consulted the YA on the issue of young people's use of tobacco and vapes, as the Committee considered a Legislative Consent Motion for the (UK) Tobacco and Vapes Bill. The Committee for Education consulted it on Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) in schools. Youth Assembly Members met with the Committee for Communities during the Committee stage of the Pensions (Extension of Automatic Enrolment) Bill, which proposed lowering the age of pensions auto-enrolment from 22 to 18. While supportive of the Bill, Youth Assembly Members raised concerns about the lack of financial education, the effect on low-paid workers and families in poverty, and potential implications for small businesses. YA Members also gave their perspectives on careers and skills provision at a joint Committee for Economy and Committee for Education session in May 2024. They were also later invited to share their views directly with the Public Accounts Committee as part of its inquiry into 'Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future'.



In 2025, Youth Assembly Members were commissioned by the Committee for Justice to examine the Justice Bill, focusing on bail, remand, custody of children, and retention of biometric data. On 26 March, Youth Assembly Members met with the Minister of Justice, Naomi Long MLA, to discuss their concerns.



They later gave formal evidence to the Justice Committee, emphasising the importance of children's rights in justice processes and highlighting the lived experiences of young people. In March 2025, Members attended a stakeholder event with the Committee for Education on Outdoor Education. In May 2025, Youth Assembly Members completed a targeted survey to feed into the Committee for Finance's Inquiry into the Northern Ireland Banking and Financial Services Landscape. Their contribution highlighted the importance of financial literacy and the accessibility of banking services for young people. In October 2025, Youth Assembly Members gave evidence to the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on the Dilapidation Bill, which aimed to give councils enhanced powers to deal with neglected, unsafe or derelict buildings and land. Members discussed the impact of such sites on young people and local communities, the balance between property rights and public safety, and the importance of consulting young people about the future use of derelict sites.

The YA also engaged with the Public Accounts Committee. In November 2024, Members attended the launch of the Public Accounts Committee's Report on Child Poverty in Northern Ireland, engaging in panel discussions and questioning MLAs about strategies to address child poverty. In 2025, they gave formal evidence on the Committee's Inquiry on Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future, including on their experiences of careers education. They suggested that the Committee develop an online youth survey to gather a wider range of views and worked with the Committee to create and promote the survey, which was completed by over 500 young people. The Committee Report was launched in May 2025.

Further committee engagement in 2025 included several major presentations of Youth Assembly research and recommendations. On 3 June, Members gave evidence to the Committee for Education on the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill. They supported the principle of school uniforms but called for policies to be more affordable, inclusive and flexible, including fewer branded items, gender-neutral options, reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities and a proportionate approach to minor breaches





In June 2025, the Youth Assembly Education Committee presented its report, ‘A Curriculum Fit for the 21st Century’, to the Committee for Education. The report focused on Learning for Life and Work and drew on the views of more than 1,500 pupils. In July 2025, the Youth Assembly Rights and Equality Committee presented its report, ‘Young Women’s Rights in Schools’, to the Committee for the Executive Office and Junior Minister O’Reilly, calling for schools to take stronger, more consistent action to promote gender equality and inclusion. The Youth Assembly Health Committee presented its report, ‘Mental Health in Schools’, to the Committee for Health and the Minister for Health sharing young people’s experiences and recommendations on stigma, support and what a mentally healthy school should look like.

The Youth Assembly’s own committee reports are available here: https://niyouthassembly.org/committee-reports/



2025-2027 MANDATE (SO FAR!)

During the 2025–2027 Youth Assembly mandate, Members continued to assist Assembly Committees with legislative scrutiny. On 28 January 2026, Members gave evidence to the Committee for Education on its Bill proposal to give all pupils the right to choose trousers as part of their school uniform.



On 11 March, they met the Clerk to the Committee for Infrastructure to examine Graduated Driver Licensing, before giving formal evidence to the Committee on 25 March. Members discussed the proposed six-month minimum learning period, the learner logbook and restrictions on night-time driving and carrying passengers.

On 6 May, Members met officials from the Committee for Finance to scrutinise the Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill and agree a shared position. They gave evidence to the Committee on 17 June, including on the proposal to raise the minimum age for marriage and civil partnership from 16 to 18.



On 24 June, Members gave evidence to the Committee for Education on two Private Members' Bills: the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill and the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill. On 15 September, Members gave evidence to the Ad Hoc Committee on the School Uniform (Trousers) Bill, building on their earlier work with the Committee for Education and ensuring that young people's experiences were reflected in the Committee's scrutiny of the legislation.



For reports and recordings of Youth Assembly evidence sessions from the 2025–2027 mandate, go to: https://niyouthassembly.org/assembly-committee-work/

For further information on the Youth Assembly engagement with Committees go to: https://niyouthassembly.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Legacy-Report-2023-2025.pdf

You can find the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly on Facebook, Instagram and X.