

## Case study: *young people as Young Placemakers*

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<sup>333</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013). General Comment No. 17 on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art. 31)

Article 31 of the UNCRC outlines the right of all children to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. Children's use of public space for play, recreation and cultural activities can be impeded by the increasing commercialisation of public areas, from which children are sometimes excluded. The UN Committee has underlined the importance of providing opportunities for children to be involved in urban planning and design, with their feedback sought on opportunities to realise their rights under Article 31 to the optimum extent. <sup>333</sup>

Planning Aid Scotland (PAS) is an independent organisation that helps people to understand and engage with the places they live in through advice, training and education.

The planning system is a vital public service in which everyone can participate. Evidence shows that not all ages or groups in society are equally aware of – or confident to – take part in this process. It is vital that children understand the issues and participate in the decision-making about their environment and communities.

Following an initial pilot project with one primary and two secondary schools, PAS has worked with schools to equip children with the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to be more involved in local civic engagement and helping to shape their places.

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and TAYplan (the strategic planning authority for the Perth and Dundee City Region) both committed to proactively engage children in preparation of their new Development Plans in 2014. PAS worked with them to design and deliver an interactive youth engagement programme to enable children's views to inform the decision-making process.

TAYplan is a strategic planning authority that covers a wide geographic area. In a bid to involve children from all the different areas, PAS worked with TAYplan to design and deliver a number of cluster sessions for primary schools, encouraging pupils to think about how places change over time and solicit their ideas for the future. Secondary schools also participated in a youth visioning day that brought schools together from four local authority areas. Capitalising on the enthusiasm from this process, TAYplan has now put in place on-going initiatives.

TAYplan employed the Young Placemaker initiative, launched by PAS last year, to recruit eight 16-25 year olds keen to shape their places. Supported by PAS buddies and TAYplan staff, the Young Placemakers undertook their own research projects on the key issues facing the region and submitted their finished work to planners, councillors – and even presented them to the Scottish Government's Planning Minister. The young people involved particularly highlighted health and transport issues as being important to them, which led TAYplan to raise the importance of these key issues in the development of the new plan.

The commitment by Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and TAYplan to change how we involve children in the big decisions that affect our communities demonstrates that children's participation in planning is no longer an optional extra, but a key part of how to go about making inclusive decisions.