

Edinburgh councillor blogs – Cllr Alison Dickie

Cllr Alison Dickie says it's time to get really serious about young people. Cllr Dickie represents the Southside/Newington Ward for the SNP and is the Vice-Convener for Education, Children and Families.



Alison Dickie Vice-Convener of Education
Children and Families

She writes : “It’s the Year of Young People...and it’s more than nice!

“Before Christmas, I spoke in support of a motion to welcome this Year of Young People, but with the caveat that it shouldn’t be some kind of fluffy tick box exercise with the ‘Aw, that’s nice’ response too often associated with anything that involves young people.

“Our young people deserve better, and I was delighted, with that mindset, to launch Edinburgh’s own Year of Young People programme last week. Fitting with the themes of the national event, it will celebrate their talents and seriously involve them in the decisions that affect their lives.

‘Yeah, you can be the greatest, you can be the best, you can be King Kong, banging on his (her) chest. You can be the hero, you can get gold, breaking all the records, they never thought could be broke.’

“Not too long ago, on a visit to Woodlands School, I recited these lyrics from The Script’s ‘Hall of Fame’. The school had just achieved their Gold SportScotland Award, and we spoke about how we can often limit the potential of our diverse young people through our low expectations of them, when, taken

seriously and equally valued, they can all be King Kong banging on their chest, and celebrating their best.

“This year we need to have great expectations for all our young people.

“In 2018, we should expect to be inspired by the breadth of talent that exists. The political battles over who does education best have tarnished the amazing achievements that take place on a daily basis across our schools, colleges and universities, youth groups and beyond.

“This is a refreshing opportunity to showcase that amazingness, and to work with young people to build confidence and identify new diverse pathways to support all in achieving their full potential.

“For policy makers, it’s time to step back and expect change. This is not about tokenistic opportunities but a serious trust in the ability of our young people to shape tangible new policies that make a difference to lives here in Edinburgh.

“It’s an ability I’ve seen in practice, such as the young people at Broughton High School, who created their own social enterprise, BRO Enterprise, to involve the wider community and tackle the heart-breaking social isolation of our day. This, and the many policy conversations I’ve had with other young people on mental health, exam pressures, homes, jobs and more.

“Maybe it’s my teaching background that makes it easier for me to expect great things. In my own classrooms, I’ve been inspired by the outcomes when young people have taken the lead.

“And it’s in this same spirit of expectation, that we’ll very soon be inviting a looked after young person to co-chair the Corporate Parenting Group with me, and the Young People in Care Council to shape the forward agenda too. In new ways that fit with them!

“So, onwards then... and let’s seriously expect a ‘Braw’ year!”