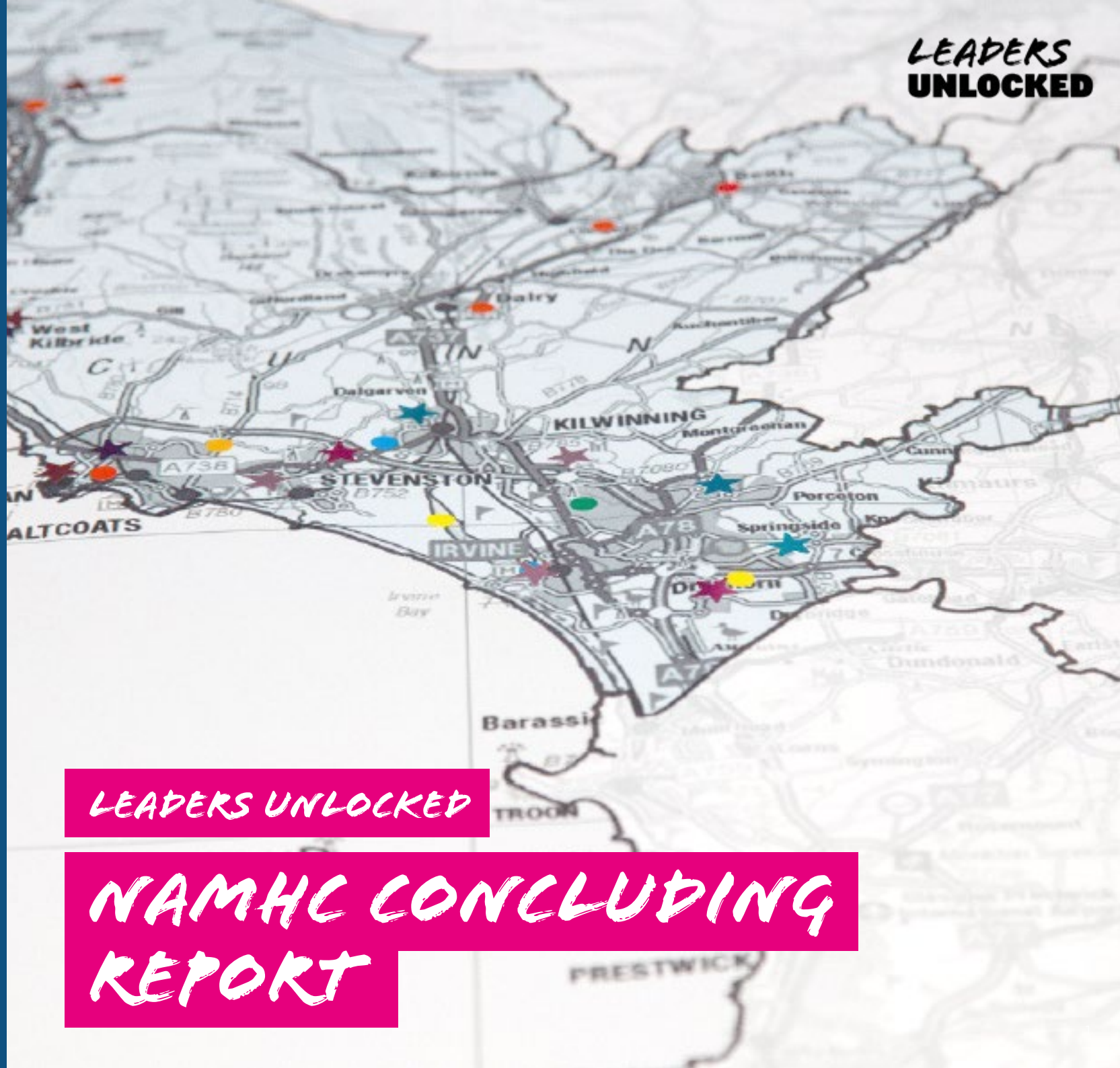


**LEADERS  
UNLOCKED**



**LEADERS UNLOCKED**

**NAMHC CONCLUDING  
REPORT**



NAIRN MCDONALD  
PROJECT LEAD

It is my privilege to welcome you to the concluding report of the North Ayrshire Mental Health Commission.

As the Project Leader for this ground-breaking project, **I have had the immense joy of watching our young people develop, grow, and learn over the last year. They are a credit to our project and our wider area.**

I want to say some special thanks to Chris Kelly, our amazing local facilitator, and Suzanne Kay – our senior manager – without whom this project wouldn't have been anywhere near as successful as it has been.

I also want to thank Leaders Unlocked CEO Rose Dowling for her support, guidance, encouragement, and trust in me to lead this project.

**I have had the immense joy of watching our young people develop, grow, and learn over the last year. They are a credit to our project and our wider area**

This project was born out of a passion to help young people with their mental health and this report clearly shows **that we have so much to be proud of and a lot more work to do.**

Throughout North Ayrshire we have engaged with hundreds of young people, listened to their concerns, hopes and aspirations and brought them together into one guiding document.

**We are now honoured to publish this report and hope it will be a document decision makers will use to help make young people's lives better in North Ayrshire.**

I will end with a quote from the late, great Shirley Chisholm:

"We must reject not only the stereotypes that others have of us but also those that we have of ourselves."

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CHRIS KELLY  
LOCAL FACILITATOR

Since the inception of this project, the team here at NAMHC/Leaders Unlocked have had clear aims of supporting the young people of North Ayrshire, particularly those who have not previously had a voice. North Ayrshire was the perfect location for this pilot project as it is a microcosm of Scotland, containing some of the most socioeconomic disadvantaged areas in Scotland, as well as some of the most affluent. It contains rural and urban communities, alongside Island communities, which has allowed us to view the issue of mental health from numerous perspectives. It is our hope that the young people involved can continue to be involved in their communities, taking this work forward professionally, as they are now, without a doubt,

“It has been a privilege to work with these young people so closely over the course of the project”

experts in the field. It is also our hope that they reap the benefits socially, and that true change comes from the suggestions detailed within this report.

**One of the successes of this project was the diversity of the young people involved.** With North Ayrshire being almost entirely populated with individuals who identify as “White British”. To have 3 “New Scots,” involved with the project was excellent in terms of seeing the perspectives of underrepresented minority communities. Alongside this, having a balance of males and females was fantastic, as we know young men in North Ayrshire tend to be harder to engage with projects such as this due to a plethora of factors. However, to have one non-binary individual and two gender-fluid individuals actively involved was also invaluable in understanding issues from a perspective that will hopefully become more recognised and accepted in future projects.

We also had representation from a variety of ages from 11-23 years old. Giving us a huge scope of what issues are imperative to tackle for each age group and allowed us to see common themes across the board, as well as promote healthy debate amongst the group. In this was our biggest success. At no point throughout this project were any decisions made on a whim. **Our young people were methodical, passionate and fully**

Gender



- 12 Female
- 1 Non-binary
- 7 Male
- 2 Gender fluid

Locality count

- |                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Three Towns    | • • • • • • • • |
| Irvine         | • • • •         |
| Garnock Valley | • • • • • • •   |
| North Coast    | •               |
| Arran          | • • • • • •     |
| Kilwinning     | • •             |

Age

- |    |           |
|----|-----------|
| 11 | •         |
| 12 | •         |
| 13 | • •       |
| 14 | • • • • • |
| 15 | • •       |
| 16 | • • • •   |
| 17 | •         |
| 18 | •         |
| 19 | • •       |
| 20 |           |
| 21 | •         |
| 22 | •         |
| 23 | •         |

**committed to every event they attended**, sharing their opinions, values and perspectives, without putting down those who disagreed or did not fully understand yet, which is why the project has been a success.

We engaged with individuals from every locality across North Ayrshire, which was integral to our ideology before even beginning engagement. We engaged with 1367 young people throughout the year. **Over 10% of the youth population of North Ayrshire**, which is not a small achievement, and is something we are immensely proud of, and our Citizen Researcher's should also be proud of, as they spearheaded the engagement through designing surveys, attending workshops and being incredibly active in their communities. Giving up their Saturday mornings and Thursday evenings to passionately inform others about the work they've been doing and what they hope to achieve.

It has been a privilege to work with these young people so closely over the course of the project, and an experience that I hope every young person involved looks back with as much fondness as those behind the scenes, which is the greatest testament I can give to this fabulous group. The future of North Ayrshire is very bright if young people such as them are at the forefront of their communities for years to come.

OVERVIEW







**SUZANNE KAY**  
**SENIOR MANAGER**

The links between being in nature and creativity and improved mental health are well documented. The World Wildlife Fund, the Mental Health Foundation, and medical practitioners globally advocate spending time in green spaces. Engaging in creative behaviour is also known to improve mental health and well-being, decrease stress and reduce feelings of anxiety.

With this in mind, in July, four of my colleagues from Leaders Unlocked and I took fourteen young people to Arran on a five day creative residency. During our time on the island, our Citizen Researchers engaged in a range of activities outside, **helping these young people to push themselves both physically and creatively.**

**This sensitively beautiful visual art further demonstrated the talent that can be unlocked when we come together to be creative.**

From very muddy gorge walking to paddleboarding on the mirror flat sea off the Holy Isle, our Citizen Researchers approached each physical challenge with the spirit of adventure. They encouraged and supported each other to try new things, on occasion taking massive leaps of faith and quite literally throwing themselves into the unknown. **The importance of being together in person after the challenges of Covid-19 was not lost on any of us.**

The group engaged in a series of creative writing exercises, sensitively and deftly mentored through this process by the wonderful Romaine Murchison and Daniel Knag. They gained trust in each other and themselves as they wrote and developed uncensored and unfiltered stories that were important for each young person to tell. The confidence they gained in using and owning their own voices was inspiring to witness.

Alongside the written word, our Citizen Researchers made a series of cyanotypes and drawings, which reacted to the surroundings they were made in and that talked eloquently of place. This sensitively beautiful visual art further demonstrated the talent that can be unlocked when we come together to be creative.

The work produced will be on display at the Harbour Arts Centre in Irvine and available in a digital publication from December 2022. We hope to secure funding in the coming month to allow us to roll out further creative activities and residencies in 2023 and beyond.







**In the end, we ended up over subscribed with applications closer to £100,000 than the initial budget of £80,000.**

**Applications for close to £100,000**

**Successfully awarded over £77,000**

**Groups from across North Ayrshire including Arran**

**Over 900 votes cast**

One of the unexpected developments from the commission was the development of a partnership with the National Lottery Improving Lives and Awards for All teams in the facilitation of a Participatory Budgeting project which ran alongside the commission.

Our young people helped promote the PB and helped to encourage applicants from within the communities they live in.

**In the end, we ended up over subscribed with applications closer to £100,000 than the initial budget of £80,000.**

Our Citizen Researchers took part in a long-listing event with Stewart from the National Lottery which ended up being a wonderful event with one of our citizen researchers describing the process as **"a democratic and involved process that solicited the as much expertise and experience as possible when evaluating the use of these funds."**

The successful applicants at this stage then went to a North Ayrshire wide vote which engaged young people throughout schools and saw several worthwhile projects getting funded.

We want to thank the National Lottery, Young Scot and North Ayrshire Connected Communities for their support and guidance through this PB journey.

**NAMHC PB**







## NORTH AYKSHIRE WIDE





## NORTH AYRSHIRE RESULTS

### CHARLEIGH

#### CITIZEN RESEARCHER

My name is Charleigh. I live in Stevenston, and I am passionate about improving the mental health and wellbeing of people in North Ayrshire. I wanted to directly be part of a conversation surrounding the importance of mental health awareness. I feel that not enough has been done in this area to help those who are struggling. Young people, especially those from poorer communities, are rarely taken seriously when discussing issues around their mental health. I wanted to help elevate the voices that are so often ignored.

Being part of the NAMHC gave me a new lease of life regarding my career goals. It has shown me this is what I want to work at. I feel like I took responsibility,

I have learned how important networking is, how we came together to work alongside people that may have different views / opinions and can still find common ground.

gained leadership skills and a sense of solidarity and community. The Arran trip gave me a sense of peace, contentedness, confidence and love for myself, the area I live in and this kind of work.

I particularly enjoyed how kind and helpful everyone has been and getting to work with other young people in North Ayrshire that also care about improving the mental health of those in our community. Being able to work with Leaders Unlocked, on a project that I am so passionate about, has given me the opportunity to do what I have always wanted to – be involved in an important project that seeks to empower people and heal our communities.

I have learned how important networking is, how we came together to work alongside people that may have different views/opinions and can still find common ground. The importance of mindfulness has become clear to me, and I can see how beneficial

it can be to our wellbeing to be involved in writing projects like the one I took part in on Arran this summer.

I would love to run my own project in the future, one that offers similar opportunities for people that may not have had these chances before. The NAMHC has helped me to know that I am valuable in the work that I do, that people can trust me, and I can be a support to others in various ways. I have a new sense of independence and purpose – my role in the NAMHC was more than I ever hoped for.

# 674

## NORTH AYRSHIRE WIDE RESULTS

### Total Votes

### Top 3 Issues

Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, transphobia and other prejudices in communities.

Lack of mental health support in schools

Lack of social events for young people

### NA Wide Solution

More Mental Health Counsellors in Education

Parents/Guardians/Carers Mental Health Training

Retraining CAMHS Staff to better work with YP

I would like to see better mental health support in schools and in Irvine as I know people who feel lost and they would like to have mental health support to get a better understanding of themselves, but they are put on long waiting lists and are left without hearing from them or make promises to keep in touch, but they are not heard from again.

More recognition of things such as racism, homophobia, sexism, ableism

More young people involvement in the council, councillors who listen to young people and take us seriously.

These issues and solutions have been identified and voted on by young people in those localities



IRVINE





IRVINE RESULTS

PYPER

CITIZEN RESEARCHER

My name is Pyper and I come from Irvine. The North Ayrshire Mental Health Commission is a large project to try and solve some of the key issues of mental health, such as sharing questionnaires to schools for pupils to complete to try to pinpoint the bigger issues of mental health and to provide us with feedback on how we can help.

The reason I joined the North Ayrshire Mental Health Commission was due to **my passion for wanting to help the young people in my community**. It was also recommended to me through my time in the Scottish Youth Parliament. I always knew



**The reason I joined the North Ayrshire Mental Health Commission was due to my passion for wanting to help the young people in my community**

mental health was something that had a lot of negative stigma surrounding it; that stigma has a devastating impact. I wanted to help erase that. **I wanted to let young people know there are people who want to help.**

We also took part in a project in the summer of 2022 where we worked with young people. This included staying in the Arran Outdoor Residential Centre and participating in numerous fantastic and intriguing activities and workshops, such as, paddle boarding, gorge walking, cliff jumping, an art workshop, a writing workshop, a photography workshop, and rock climbing - **each and every one unforgettable and wonderful.**

The writing workshop inspired the young people we had been working with to create some truly poetic work. The outdoor activities let us connect with nature but also kept us active. We all made

some ever-lasting friendships and a deeper understanding of mental health in the end.

**It was one of the best experiences of my life and I would go back in a heartbeat.**

I wanted to bring change for the better. That's why I joined the Commission.

171

Total Votes

Top 3 Issues

Racism / sexism /  
homophobia /  
transphobia /  
sectarianism or  
other prejudices in your  
community

Long waiting times for  
mental health support  
services

Lack of mental  
health support  
in schools



**To offer more support systems for the community and counselling to attend for those struggling with mental health. The more people interact with others and learn their stories, the more they can improve their mental health.**

Top 3 Solutions

Improving mental health  
support in schools

Investing in more  
counsellors/mental health  
practitioners

Educating young people  
on the effects of racism /  
sexism / homophobia /  
transphobia sectarianism

Are you satisfied with the mental health support available to young people in your community?

YES – 25% NO – 55% UNSURE – 20%

Do you think more can be done to decrease waiting times for mental health support services, both through the NHS and in schools throughout Irvine?

YES – 92% NO – 0% UNSURE – 8%



**Maybe more counsellors and psychologists so we can find mental health issues earlier on and give young people the support they require before it gets worse.**

IRVINE RESULTS

These issues and solutions have been identified and voted on by young people in those localities





## THREE TOWNS





## THREE TOWNS RESULTS LOGAN

### CITIZEN RESEARCHER

My name is Logan and I am a MSYP for Cunninghame North. I joined the North Ayrshire Mental Health Commission as I have an interest in mental health. I am studying Counselling at College and have lived experience of mental health and discrimination.

I got involved because I want to improve Young People in North Ayrshire's mental health. **There is a lack of Mental Health help for young people and a lack of things to do in our local area.** Nairn, who is a former MSYP & Cllr is known to actually get stuff down and get buy in from NAC and partners.



**I feel like I have made a difference, worked with others to accomplish something meaningful.**

We have surveyed young people at events like Picnic in the Park, raised awareness of the work through social media, identified issues affecting Mental Health i.e drug use, lighting, the ferry. As part of the commission, I helped create a criteria for applications for the PB and helped longlist.

**I feel like I have made a difference, worked with others to accomplish something meaningful.** I also made new friends and learned you don't need a title to make a difference.

I will remember to amazing buy in from NHS, Police, NAC and others, having the opportunity to interview staff for Foxgrove and representing the commission at the Promise Conference.

## THREE TOWNS RESULTS

Unfortunately despite sending the survey out to all schools within the Locality we didn't receive any feedback, so the issues and solutions below and the results of workshops with young people

### Priorities

- Environmental issues including sustainability and climate change
- Lack of mental health support in schools
- Long waiting times for mental health support services
- Lack of social events for young people
- Lack of education from parents / guardians on mental health issues
- Community aesthetically displeasing
- Racism / sexism / homophobia / transphobia / sectarianism and other prejudices in your community

### Solutions

- Improving transport in Ardrossan and between localities
- Tackling environmental issues in Ardrossan
- Improving mental health support in schools
- Investing in more counsellors / mental health practitioners
- Improving social events for young people in Ardrossan
- Educating parents/guardians on mental health issues in young people
- Investing in refurbishing the community to make it more aesthetically pleasing
- Educating young people on the effects of racism / sexism / homophobia/ transphobia / sectarianism

These issues and solutions have been identified and voted on by young people in those localities





GARNOCK VALLEY





**GARNOCK VALLEY  
MAIS  
CITIZEN RESEARCHER**

My name is Mais, I am from the Garnock Valley and I got involved in the North Ayrshire Mental Health Commission because it was recommended which peaked my interest as a **way to get involved in creating change around young people's mental health.**

I learnt that there are a lot of young people struggling with mental health. **I learnt how to help them get through it and who the seek for advice and help.**

We went to the Arran Residential to work with young people in workshops to experience new things and

work how we are getting young people's opinions on mental health. We also spoke about how others feel about mental health and did new experiences outdoors.

**I learnt how to help them get through it and who to seek for advice and help**

**GARNOCK VALLEY RESULTS**

**362**  
**Total Votes**

**We don't get taken seriously and when we try to open up it is always "you don't know what it is like to be an adult"**

**Top 3 Issues**

Transport related issues

Racism / sexism /  
homophobia /transphobia  
/sectarianism and  
other prejudices in your  
community

Environmental issues  
including sustainability  
and climate change

**Top 3 Solutions**

Improving transport in  
Garnock Valley  
and between localities

Educating young people  
on the effects of racism /  
sexism / homophobia /  
transphobia /sectarianism  
and other prejudices

Improving mental health  
support in schools

Do you feel supported in your school/workplace with your mental health?

**YES – 54%    NO – 26%    UNSURE – 20%**

Are you satisfied with the mental health support available to young people in your community?

**YES – 43%    NO – 50%    UNSURE – 7%**

**CAMHS has an awful reputation in my generation and that stops people accessing support**

**A more original method of educating people on discrimination, mental health etc beyond PSHE and Assemblies**

These issues and solutions have been identified and voted on by young people in those localities





AKKAN





ARRAN  
RYAN  
CITIZEN RESEARCHER

My name is Ryan, I initially joined the project out of curiosity. **However, I quickly realised that we could be making a difference to young people, so I decided to stay and keep being involved.** I started off in Arran, with the residential. I met a bunch of people my age and made some good friends. I continued to be involved, attending meetings and workshops and helping with things such as the Participatory Budget, helping review funding applications for other projects, which was cool.

**The project has impacted me greatly and gives me things to look forward to, as well as providing me an outlet to meet new people.**

On the boat to Arran I was really nervous, but before long, I was fine. I quickly became familiar with my roommates, and the other members of the residential and felt very welcomed. We went on walks, did things like paddleboarding, rock climbing, and cyanotypes. Over the course of the week, we also wrote stories which was interesting. I enjoyed some activities more than others. **I took the lead in some activities, being the first one to step forward for things such as cliff jumping and rock climbing, which helped my confidence, and I'm quite proud of.**

**The project has impacted me greatly and gives me things to look forward to, as well as providing me an outlet to meet new people.**

**Having the chance to share our views of real solutions has been refreshing and empowering**

Top 3 Issues

- Transport on and from the island.
- Access to Mental Health Services.
- Isolation and impact of having smaller school sizes.

Top 3 Solutions

- Community transport to allow young people to meet each other.
- Opportunities for young people of similar ages to meet.
- Investment in community based mental health support.

**The ability to have our voices taken seriously is a unique chance I couldn't pass up**

ARRAN RESULTS

- The solutions the NAMHC has researched which would support and improve young people's mental health are:
- Community transport to allow young people to meet each other.
  - Opportunities for young people of similar ages to meet.
  - Investment in community based mental health support.
  - More Mental Health Counsellors in Education
  - Parents/Guardians/Carers Mental Health Training
  - Retraining CAMHS Staff to better work with YP
  - Improving mental health support in schools
  - Improving transport on the Isle of Arran
  - Investing in refurbishing the community to make it more aesthetically pleasing

**Too much of the response to young people's mental health is to compare it to years gone by which is unhelpful and isolating**





KILWINNING





KILWINNING  
EMMELINE  
CITIZEN RESEARCHER

My name is Emmeline, I am from North Ayrshire.

**I decided to get involved with the mental health commission as an attempt to put into practice beliefs I have long held but seldom acted upon for lack of comprehension of how to go about doing so.** This commission has allowed me to contribute in a tangible manner through civil engagement to the advancement of the mental health of my community, a subject that is very dear to me. I believe in the right to well-being, that is the right to live like human beings, not simply in drudgery and sickness. And I wanted to contribute to at least some people being able to utilise that right.

**Working on this commission has allowed me to learn a significant amount about the mechanisms of local government and local action.**

As one of the older members of the commission I felt able to offer a different perspective as well as experience with the more practical requirements of the commission. On top of that **I was able to learn a great deal from the younger members, including how little the school experience has changed.** Their enthusiasm and passion for progress was heartening and helped to provide some optimism in a bleak time.

Working on this commission has allowed me to learn a significant amount about the mechanisms of local government and local action. **It has improved my understanding of how to apply the principles I hold dear and make tangible change within my community.**

It has also inspired me to take this further and increase my civil engagement across a variety of methods and sectors.

227  
Total Votes

Top 3 Issues

Racism /sexism  
/ homophobia /  
transphobia /sectarianism  
and other prejudices in  
your community

Environmental issues  
including sustainability  
and climate change

Lack of mental health  
support in schools



**Educating parents on mental health because a lot of parents don't know what to do and turn to CAMHS for help which isn't great**

Top 3 Solutions

Educating young people  
on the effects of racism /  
sexism / homophobia /  
transphobia /sectarianism

Improving mental health  
support in schools

Investing in refurbishing  
the community to make  
it more aesthetically  
pleasing

KILWINNING RESULTS

Do you think more could be done regarding increased suicide rates and drug addiction in Kilwinning?

YES – 89%    NO – 1%    UNSURE – 10%

Are you satisfied with the mental health support available to young people in your community?

YES – 45%    NO – 40%    UNSURE – 15%

These issues and solutions have been identified and voted on by young people in those localities





*NORTH COAST*





**NORTH COAST**  
**CECE**  
**CITIZEN RESEARCHER**

My name is Cece and I am a Citizen Researcher. I joined the commission because Mental Health is not nearly discussed enough in North Ayrshire, when it is those who aren't affected but it is the ones making all the decisions. It was an opportunity to partake in something meaningful to not only help yourself but others too.

**It was an opportunity to share unfiltered comments and opinions and allow people to share their raw experiences** and how that has shaped them, their views, and opinions.

I was able to share my views and greatly step out of my comfort zone to take part in something I cared about

**I was able to share my views and greatly step out of my comfort zone to take part in something I cared about and even ended up enjoying.**

and even ended up enjoying. **Even if at first glance it sounded uncomfortable or unrealistic, nothing changes on its own so why not be that change?**

66

Total Votes

**Top 3 Issues**

Transport related issues

Racism / sexism /  
homophobia /  
transphobia /sectarianism  
and other prejudices in  
your community

Long waiting times for  
mental health support  
services

“

**Something is going wrong with the number of suicides we are seeing, and it just seems to get glossed over**

**Top 3 Solutions**

Improving transport  
in the North Coast and  
between localities

Improving mental health  
support in schools

Educating young people  
on the effects of racism /  
sexism / homophobia /  
transphobia /sectarianism

**NORTH COAST RESULTS**

Do you feel supported in your school/workplace  
with your mental health?

**YES – 35%   NO – 56%   UNSURE – 9%**

Are you satisfied with the mental health support available to young  
people in your community?

**YES – 32%   NO – 59%   UNSURE – 9%**

“

**Support isn't offered until someone is very visibly struggling. More check ups on everyone so that any deterioration is spotted early would have a huge impact**

These issues and solutions have been identified and voted on by young people in those localities



# CONCLUSION

## NAIRN McDONALD

### PROJECT LEAD

This report shows the wide-ranging challenges facing young people around mental health in North Ayrshire **but uniquely it also provides solutions endorsed by young people.**

These are solutions that can be implemented now and would make a difference almost immediately to the lives of young people across our communities.

Our Citizen Researchers have worked hard to make sure this report is representative, engaging, and worthwhile.

We want this to be a living document, one that decision makers refer to, utilise, and embed in their work going forward.

ONWARDS!



**This may be the final report of this stage of the North Ayrshire Mental Health Commission, but this is only the beginning for our work and these amazing young people.**





# TESTIMONIALS

## MALAK & MAKAM

We learned that there is a need for mental health support in the community, especially poorer areas.

We learned how even the older generations had their own struggles when they were younger, making the phrase “a sensitive generation” a lie when they have struggled just as the younger generation does. That phrase also makes it seem that stress and pressure from places are nothing but a facade that makes us want to leave school and skip out on hardships because it’s nothing but being an attention seeker.

This project had also helped us understand **when a person isolates themselves from others close to them, is a sign of struggle and need of help.**

We enjoyed giving our opinions, and now we feel far more respected especially when it comes to our thoughts and feeling on these subjects.

**We can leave our house and comfort zone to discuss things** that are not usually talked about within our area and our opinions weren’t overshadowed by others. Instead, they are taken into consideration.

When it came to an event that was in Saltcoats, we were assessing funding for external groups who had applied for our PB to support local projects that would benefit young people’s mental health in North Ayrshire. **This involved us in something that felt bigger than us, we were given the responsibility of giving groups large sums of money.**

**There was trust that was given, trust that our judgement was right.** Young people such as us are being made to make a difference to others like us, helping them expand their skills.

When we went to the Arran trip, we had this new experience. It was like a holiday away from the stress of our area and the environment we were in with exams, as the trip was in the summer and the final exam was before the summer.

**It set our mind to a different subject matter that didn’t involve a letter on a sheet of paper**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The North Ayrshire Mental would like to thank the members of our Local Advisory Group:

Rhona Arthur – North Ayrshire Council

Angela Morrell – North Ayrshire Council

Donna Anderson – North Ayrshire Council

Eilidh James – North Ayrshire Council

Rachel McKechnie – NHS Ayrshire and Arran

Thelma Bowers – North Ayrshire HSCP

Alison Sutherland – North Ayrshire HSCP

Aaran McDonald – Former MSYP

Sian Hughes – Community Activist

Superintendent Derek Frew – Police Scotland

We would also like to thank our funders for the Commission, PB and Residential – The National Lottery Young Start Fund, Improving Lives Fund and Community Mental Health and Well-Being Fund.

We would also like to thank our Citizen Researchers and Arran Residential Participants:

CeCe, Charleigh, Corey, Emmeline, Fran, Griffen, Jack, Justin, Karrah, Logan G, Logan N, Mais, Malak, Maram, Ollie, Pyper, Ryan, Thomas, Tiegan, Yasmin and the young people of the Arran Youth Foundation





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**LEADERS  
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