

'Can of Worms' to take to Holyrood

In December 2008, 8 young participants in the "Are we there yet?" project agreed to come down with Highland Children's Forum to Holyrood to meet with MSP's. Before meeting MSP's, a 'can of worms' activity was used to break the ice and prompt discussion; a worm bearing a provocative statement was pulled out by each young person and everyone had their say. Statements included:

"School is about learning for exams not life."

"You can't listen to someone who can't speak."

"Kids don't vote so MSP's don't need to listen to them."

"A few bad young people give us all a bad name."

"Lots of young people suffer from depression."

"There is nothing you can do about vandalism."

"It is different to be young in the Highlands than being young in the city."

"Transport is more difficult for young people."

The discussion prompted by these statements led on to the following issues being raised.

There needs to be more help in school about bullying and self-harm and such issues. There is a need to know more about health problems – things like AIDS.

The healthy eating message is coming through but the healthy options are sometimes too expensive.

Some villages need to be cleaned up and made safer. People might not vandalise if things were nice in the first place. There should be more activities on offer to young people. Speeding in villages is a dangerous problem.

If there are after school activities on there should be transport on afterwards, public or school transport, so people are not excluded because they can't get a lift home.

There needs to be more choice in subjects at school and in the way you can learn. Some people learn better with practical subjects.

Inclusion is difficult. Some people still suffer bullying because of race or disability. You should be able to learn more about disability and culture in school. There should be the right support for people who need it in school, but sometimes it seems unfair if people who find it hard to behave in school get to go out on treats and things.