



# COP26

A guide for Youth Workers and Young People

**YouthLink**  
**S c o t l a n d**  
The national agency for youth work



Welcome to this guide to COP26, which has been created especially for youth workers and young people by YouthLink Scotland to help you get your heads around what's happening at COP26 in November! Take your time to read through as it's a lot of information to take in, but we hope it makes the jargon and bureaucracy around COP a little less overwhelming.

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# YOUNG PEOPLE'S CLIMATE ACTION

Young people have always been at the **forefront of social movements** through history, and the climate movement is no different. Ever since **Greta Thunberg** first started to sit outside the Swedish Parliament building in protest to her country's inadequate climate policy one Friday in **2018**, the **youth movement for climate** has gone from strength to strength, gaining momentum and attention all the time.

Of course, Greta wasn't the first young person to ever strike for climate justice; she's the first to point out that young **people of colour** and from **indigenous communities** have been living the reality of the climate crisis and protesting against it for decades without the global attention of the **Fridays for Future** movement. This is just another symptom of the deeply **unjust root causes** of the climate crisis, proving once again that the situation we see today was born of a deep-rooted **white supremacist** (racist), **capitalist** (classist) and **heteropatriarchal** (sexist and homophobic) system.

Nevertheless, ever since the youth movement for climate justice started to gain global attention, nations, corporations and individuals alike have started to sit up and pay attention (at least slightly more) to the **urgency and seriousness** of the crisis we are facing. The Scottish Government declared a **Climate Emergency** in April 2019, shortly followed by the UK Government, and over **230 local authorities** up and down the UK.

There's no doubt that the climate crisis is one of **intergenerational injustice**. Young people did not cause this crisis, yet they are the generation who will experience the worst impacts of climate change. Studies show that **Generation Z** will experience 3 times more extreme weather events than their grandparents did in their lifetimes. Governments' targets of **Net Zero by 2045** and emissions peaking in 2030 also seem a lot more real to people who will still have decades left to live after those dates. This is why young people all over the world are **taking back control** of the narrative and creating their own movements that are some of the most diverse, inclusive, and visionary we've ever seen.



# THE YOUTH WORK SKILLS FRAMEWORK

The **youth work skills framework** and the youth movement for climate justice were made for each other. There's no better place to develop your skills in **problem solving, decision making, organisation and planning** than in a movement that's fighting for something you believe in and that will affect you for the rest of your life. And the community of young people worldwide that are involved in the climate movement is the perfect environment

for fostering **communication, teamwork and leadership** skills, all while building healthy and supportive **relationships** that will stand you in good stead for years to come, providing a safety net in hard times and a way to **look after yourself**. Add to that the **confidence** and **resilience** that young people gain from creating change on a local, national and global scale, and it's easy to see how much the youth work sector and the youth climate movement can learn from each other.



## WHY SHOULD I BE INTERESTED

### IN COP26?

COP26 is a **unique opportunity** for young people in Scotland to engage with the climate crisis on a global scale. With global political and business leaders descending on **Glasgow** for the conference, all eyes will be on Scotland and the UK to set an example of the kind of **leadership and action** we need in order to keep warming to **below 1.5°C**.

Young people will be able to gain a **global perspective** on the climate crisis through watching the negotiations happen, as well as learning from the young activists coming to Glasgow from all over the world. There are also amazing opportunities for young people to get involved in the decision-making process, for example by submitting a youth statement to the **Conference of Youth**, taking part in the **School Strikes** or visiting the **Green Zone**.

# BACKGROUND & JARGON BUSTING

What is COP26?

COP stands for **Conference of Parties**, and COP26 is the **United Nations'** 26th annual conference on climate change. COPs are hosted by a different nation every year, which rotates between the five UN regions of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe, and Western Europe and Others.

When is it happening?

COP26 was supposed to take place in **Glasgow** in November 2020, but it was postponed due to Covid-19 until the **1st -12th November 2021**. **196 countries** are due to take part in the negotiations this year, which will mostly take place in the **Scottish Events Campus**, while civil society groups and activists gather in the **Green Zone** in the **Glasgow Science Centre**.



# THE CONFERENCE OF YOUTH

Although the Climate Change COPs are probably the most well known, there are also annual COPs for biodiversity and youth. The **16th Conference of Youth (COY16)** will be taking place in Glasgow on the **28th-31st October** this year, with youth delegates from over **140 countries** taking part. COY16 is a great opportunity for young people in Scotland to see youth decision-making in action, as the aim of the Conference of Youth is to come up

with a **youth policy document** to present to the delegates at COP26 the following week. Statements from individual young people, youth groups and educational institutions are collated into **national youth statements**, which are then considered at the Conference of Youth and incorporated into the youth policy document. **Any young person or youth group can submit a statement on the [COY16 website](#).**



# WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT THIS COP?

Although COPs happen every year, **COP26** is a particularly important one for global climate action. This is not only because the climate crisis is becoming more and more urgent, but also because it marks five years (plus one Covid year) since the **Paris Agreement** was signed at **COP21** in 2015. As part of this agreement, nations came up with **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** which dictated how emissions were to be reduced in each country. These were to be **reviewed every five years**, and tightened if necessary.

At COP26, these **NDCs** will be held up to scrutiny to see if they are enough to keep warming to the “**well below 2°C**” stipulated in the Paris Agreement. So far, the NDCs put forward by nations since the Paris Agreement haven't been nearly strong enough and have set us on a trajectory for **3°C of warming**.



## WHAT DOES COP26 HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

This COP has **four main goals** that it hopes to achieve through negotiation between the 196 member states. Nations are expected to review their **Nationally Determined Contributions** to reflect these goals, which were set by the UK as the **hosts and presidents** of the COP26 negotiations. The goals are relevant to everyone on the planet, but especially so for **young people**, whose futures hang in the balance, depending on whether these goals are achieved. These goals are:

# 1

## SECURE GLOBAL NET-ZERO BY MID-CENTURY AND KEEP 1.5 DEGREES WITHIN REACH

**Net-Zero** is a word often used in conversations about climate solutions. It refers to a state where the CO<sub>2</sub> (and other greenhouse gas) emissions being produced by human activity are equal to (or ideally less than) what can be absorbed by the Earth's natural **carbon sinks**, for example forests and peatlands. Net-Zero does not mean that no CO<sub>2</sub> is emitted, but it does require a **drastic slashing** of emissions, along with capacity building of the world's carbon sinks. Currently, plans for Net-Zero rely heavily on technology called **Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)** which will artificially suck CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere and store it. However, these technologies do not yet exist at the scale we need them to in order to reach Net-Zero by 2050, meaning that targets for emissions reductions are **not yet strong enough** to account for this.

Limiting warming to **1.5 degrees** is in the interests of all people on Earth, but especially so for young people, as every fraction of a degree of warming will have tangible effects on their lives for decades to come. For example, at 1.5 degrees warming, about **14% of the Earth's population** will be exposed to severe heatwaves at least once every five years, whereas at 2 degrees of warming, the upper limit specified in the Paris Agreement, **that number is 37%**. Therefore, the eyes of young people across the world will be on the delegates at COP26 to ensure they keep their promises to limit warming to 1.5 degrees.



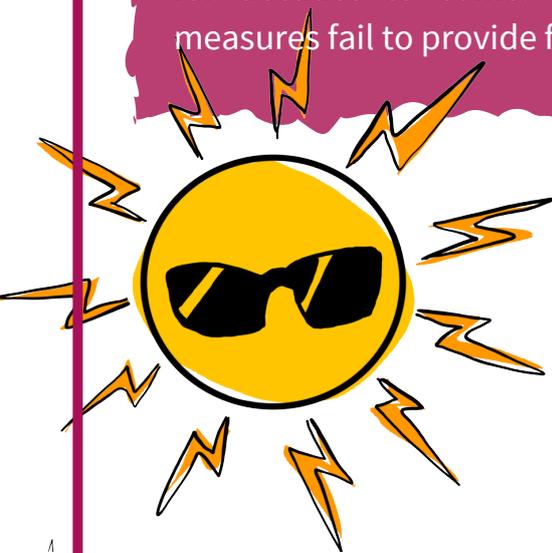
# 2

## ADAPT TO PROTECT COMMUNITIES AND NATURAL HABITATS

Even if we do manage to limit warming to 1.5 degrees, some impacts of climate change are already **baked in and irreversible**, for example increased frequency of **storms** and **heatwaves**. This means it's essential that we adapt to these impacts by improving warning systems, infrastructure and recovery processes that are inclusive to everyone and don't leave people behind.

How we adapt to the impacts of climate change will make a huge difference to the lives of young people for decades to come. If adaptation measures fail to provide for

disadvantaged or marginalized communities, young people will suffer the most and this will have knock-on effects for the rest of their lives. Climate change is what's known as a **threat multiplier**, as it takes existing forms of oppression and makes them even more stark, for example, the impacts of severe weather are harsher for poorer communities where people may not be able to afford extra air conditioning or flood defenses, and infrastructure becoming more unstable will affect many people with disabilities who rely on public services like a steady electricity supply, or transport links.





# 3

## MOBILISE FINANCE

The success of the first two goals depends on richer countries in the Global North being able to provide **financial aid** to the countries in the Global South who are currently experiencing the worst of the impacts of climate change. The whole economy needs to shift to a **greener, fairer model** in order for this to happen, according to **Mark Carney**, the Prime Minister's Finance Advisor for COP26. As part of the **Paris Agreement**, developed countries pledged to raise at least **\$100 billion every year** in climate finance to support developing countries' adaptation to climate change, and young people all over the world are holding their governments to account on this.

Other ways individuals can get involved with the **mobilisation of climate funds** is to make sure that your own bank accounts and pensions aren't investing in fossil fuels and funding the climate crisis. You can find this out through **Bank Green**, which also lists the banks with the best climate credentials. You can check whether **pension funds** are investing their money in the fossil fuel industry through **Make My Money Matter**. Divesting pensions from fossil fuels has **21x more carbon savings** than going vegetarian, giving up flying, and switching to renewable electricity combined, so it's a great thing to campaign for.

# 4

## WORK TOGETHER TO DELIVER

Real action on climate isn't going to be possible unless we all work together towards a better future. This means governments coming to **global agreements** at COP26, but it also means coming together at the **community level** to take action and support each other. It shouldn't be a one-way system with older generations relying on younger generations for hope and action, or expertise and funding flowing one-way from Global North to Global South. Everyone has a unique perspective

and **intersecting identities** to bring to the table, and if we ignore any of these in coming up with solutions to the climate crisis, we will all be losing out. Youth work can be a great way to open up space for **collective action** on climate which is responsive to the needs of young people, and builds on existing relationships and trust between young people and youth workers. There are loads of ways for young people and youth groups to get involved in the climate movement both in the lead up to COP26 and beyond.

## THEMES OF THE CONFERENCE

Each day of the negotiations is based around a different theme, which are set by the UK as Presidents of COP26. The themes are also reflected in the Green Zone activities for the day as well as activists' mobilisations.

WEEK ONE						
SUNDAY OCTOBER 31ST	MONDAY NOVEMBER 1ST	TUESDAY NOVEMBER 2ND	WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 3RD	THURSDAY NOVEMBER 4TH	FRIDAY NOVEMBER 5TH	SATURDAY NOVEMBER 6TH
<b>PROCEDURAL OPENING OF NEGOTIATIONS</b>	<b>WORLD LEADERS SUMMIT</b> Welcoming world leaders to COP to put forward high level ambition and action towards securing global net zero and keeping 1.5 degrees in reach; adapting to protect communities and natural habitats; and mobilising finance.	<b>FINANCE</b> Mobilising public and private finance flows at scale for mitigation and adaptation.	<b>ENERGY</b> Accelerating the global transition to clean energy.	<b>YOUTH AND PUBLIC EMPOWERMENT</b> Elevating the voice of young people and demonstrating the critical role of public empowerment and education in climate action.	<b>NATURE</b> Ensuring the importance of nature and sustainable land use are part of global action on climate change and a clean, green recovery.	
WEEK TWO						
SUNDAY NOVEMBER 7TH	MONDAY NOVEMBER 8TH	TUESDAY NOVEMBER 9TH	WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 10TH	THURSDAY NOVEMBER 11TH	FRIDAY NOVEMBER 12TH	SATURDAY NOVEMBER 13TH
<b>REST DAY AHEAD OF THE SECOND WEEK OF NEGOTIATIONS</b>	<b>ADAPTATION, LOSS AND DAMAGE</b> Delivering the practical solutions needed to adapt to climate impacts and address loss and damage.	<b>GENDER</b> Progressing gender equality and the full and meaningful participation of women and girls in climate action.  <b>SCIENCE AND INNOVATION</b> Demonstrating that science and innovation can deliver climate solutions to meet, and accelerate, increased ambition.	<b>TRANSPORT</b> Driving the global transition to zero emission transport.	<b>CITIES, REGIONS &amp; BUILT ENVIRONMENT</b> Advancing action in the places we live, from communities, through to cities and regions.	<b>CLOSURE OF NEGOTIATIONS</b>	

# YOUNG PEOPLE'S HOPES FOR COP26

Many young people believe that governments aren't doing enough to implement solutions to the climate crisis and protect their futures. At the [Youth4Climate: Diving Ambition](#) conference in Milan, which took place on the **28th-30th September** this year, **Greta Thunberg** made one of her trademark [scorching speeches](#). "Build back better. Blah, blah, blah. Green economy. Blah, blah, blah. Net zero by 2050. Blah, blah, blah" she said, reflecting the skepticism of young people of governments' **empty promises** on climate action.

This feeling of frustration and being let down by climate delayers was prominent at the Youth4Climate conference. **Vanessa Nakate**, the Ugandan youth

climate activist, brought up the topic of [loss and damage reparations](#), which are always overshadowed by talk about **adaptation and mitigation**. Although adaptation and mitigation of climate impacts are essential, they are not so helpful to people who have already lost their homes and livelihoods to the effects of climate change. "You cannot adapt to lost cultures, you cannot adapt to lost traditions, you cannot adapt to lost history, you cannot adapt to starvation. You cannot adapt to extinction."

When it comes to COP26, the hopes of young people are simple. They want **climate justice** in the real world, on the ground – not just in empty promises and declarations. It's time for some real action!



# HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

There are loads of ways for young people to get involved in climate action around COP26 whether you're going to be in Glasgow for the conference or not! Check out some of these options:

## IF YOU'RE IN GLASGOW:



### ATTEND GREEN ZONE EVENTS

The **Green Zone** is the part of COP that's **open to the public**, where civil society groups, educators and other stakeholders run various activities such as panel discussions, film screenings and artistic performances to raise awareness of different issues around the climate crisis. Usually, the Green Zone features a much wider variety of people than the main negotiations, and is an opportunity both to showcase examples of **positive climate action**, as well as highlighting where more **urgent action** needs to be taken.

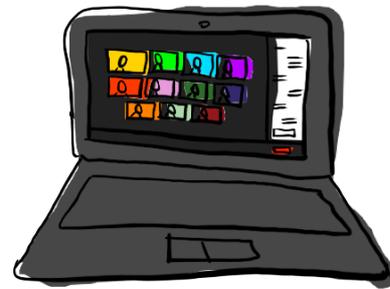
This year, the Green Zone will be held in the **Glasgow Science Centre** and will run for the full 12 days of COP26. There are a huge number of youth-related events planned, from performances from the **Children's Eco Choir** to panel discussions on **meaningful youth leadership**, there's something for everyone and all tickets are free, so check out the [programme of events](#) and sign up!

Throughout COP26 there are various protests and strikes to show solidarity for those who are suffering the most from climate change, and to demonstrate the extent of public concern to the global leaders at the summit. The biggest protests for young people are the [Global School Strikes](#) on **Friday 5th November**, which are happening across the world as well as all over Scotland and in Glasgow, and the [Global Day of Action](#) on **Saturday 6th November**. This involves a protest in Glasgow which is expected to have **50,000 people attending** as well as decentralised protests across the world. It will be led by **Indigenous groups** as well as **migrant justice advocates**, calling for climate justice and equitable action. Young people can get involved in any of these protests whether in Glasgow or in your own local area. If there isn't anything planned where you live, why not plan something yourself to get people engaged and show solidarity?



### ATTEND SCHOOL STRIKES & PROTESTS

## IF YOU'RE NOT IN GLASGOW:



### BECOME A COP26 LOCAL CHAMPION

The **COP26 Scottish Youth Climate Project** is recruiting for a network of **COP26 Local Champions**: ten young people and one youth worker in each local authority area who are passionate about **community climate action** and who want to help raise **awareness** and **engagement** about the climate crisis in their local area. To find out whether your area still needs young people to sign up, drop Naomi an email at [ndixon@youthlinkscotland.org](mailto:ndixon@youthlinkscotland.org)!

The **Scottish Youth Parliament** is coordinating a series of nation-wide climate meetings between young people and MSPs on Friday 29th October, titled **The Moment**. The aim is to get as many young voices heard as possible and for young people to communicate their expectations and hopes for the future of climate action. You can use the SYP's **Climate Advocacy Action Pack** to organise one of these meetings in your own local area.



### ATTEND THE SCOTTISH YOUTH CLIMATE SUMMIT

Another way to get involved in the decision-making process is to attend the **Scottish Youth Climate Summit** on the **30th of October**. This is taking place online with the aim of producing a **Scottish Youth Declaration**. The summit is an all-day event with ten different working groups writing up different parts of the declaration on themes such as **Energy, Food, Education** and **Jobs**. It's also great experience for future jobs in negotiation or policy making! You can [sign up here](#).

Use our **COP26 Communications Pack** to share young people's voices and showcase local youth climate action projects during the **12 days of COP26**. This includes resources, sample posts, and links to global youth movements.

### USE THE COP26 COMMUNICATIONS PACK

The **Conference of Youth (COY16)** invites **youth statements** from any young person from individuals to youth groups to schools to universities. These get collated into **National Youth Statements** and then incorporated in to the **Youth Policy Document** which is handed to the delegates at COP26. It's easy to submit a statement, you just need to go to the COY16 website and fill in the [Youth Voices Collection form](#), or if you're submitting as part of an organisation there's a toolkit to help you. These statements have a real impact on the decision-making that goes on at both COY16 and COP26.



## SUBMIT A YOUTH STATEMENT

## USE THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY TOOLKIT

The **Climate Emergency Toolkit** was developed by **YouthLink Scotland** and **Keep Scotland Beautiful**, and provides a range of fun activities to get your youth group talking and learning about the different aspects of the climate emergency. From **scavenger hunts** to **climate negotiations**, there's something for everyone, and most activities work both online and in person. [Access the Toolkit here.](#)



**YouthLink Scotland** has been working hard to pull together a wide range of **resources, opportunities** and **inspiration** for youth workers to use to educate both yourself and the young people you work with on the issues around the climate emergency. There are **toolkits, session plans, articles, websites** and much more [available here.](#)

## USE THE COP26 YOUTH WORK RESOURCE HUB

## HOST A MINI-COP

If you've been inspired by the negotiations happening in Glasgow, why not host your own **mini-COP** in your community? Invite **local stakeholders** and other young people, set an agenda of **local environmental issues**, and have a discussion to see what you can do to solve these issues. This works both online and in person and is a great way to start conversations about how climate change is affecting your local area.

# LEGACY OF COP26

Hosting COP26 in Glasgow has been an amazing mobiliser for climate action in Scotland. Having the world coming to our doorstep to discuss climate change has made it seem more real and more urgent than ever, and communities, businesses, youth groups and governments alike have risen to the challenge and stepped up their climate commitments.

But we can't let this engagement end here. We need to **continue taking climate action** in all these settings and more even when COP26 is finished and the excitement is over.

For many people, this will just be the start of their **climate journey** as there are loads of ways to stay involved with the same kinds of actions we've been taking during COP into the future.

Below are some examples of how young people can continue their engagement with climate action beyond COP26, but it's equally important that the **youth work sector** itself works to become more sustainable and fit for a future shaped by climate change. There are loads of resources to help you with this, for example [this one from Eurodesk](#), or [this one from the Council of Europe!](#)

For example, if you enjoyed taking action in your community around COP26, you could join the **COP26 Local Champions Network** to become a climate champion for your local area. This way you can continue to be involved in anything climate-related that's happening in your area, as well as organising your own events and continuing community engagement. Or were you interested in the politics and policy-making aspect of COP26 and COY16? You could join the [Scottish Youth Parliament](#) and have a say in youth decision-making across Scotland!

If you felt empowered by the protests and strikes during COP26 and prefer to work from outside the system, you could join your local branch of [Fridays for Future](#), or if there isn't one, you could gather a group of friends and start your own. If COP26 has shown you that you didn't know enough about climate change, you could get involved in campaigning for better climate education in schools through groups like [Teach the Future.](#)

**Whatever you end up doing, the important thing is that it's something you enjoy and feel passionate about, as this will mean that your actions are sustainable (both for the planet and your mental health).**