

Tours for General Election Candidates June 2024

Tours and discussions lead by Jamie Wright and young people at The Usual Place

General Election Candidates Visits to The Usual Place



Young people with additional support needs invited all local candidates standing in the forthcoming General Election to visit The Usual Place during June 2024.



Each major party visited independently and was given a tour by Jamie Wright, who was keen to ensure they were all well-informed of the work of Inspired Community Enterprise Trust and to give them a personal understanding of the importance of training and working settings like The Usual Place.



Groups of young people also met with many of the candidates for discussions and Q&A sessions. The young people had read the party manifestos and prepared questions to probe more deeply into issues and to ensure candidates heard their opinions, priorities and concerns.



The young people also plan to now have their own reflective group session to debrief following the visits where they can share their thoughts and any changes in perspective prior to casting their votes.

The Candidates who visited

- SNP Tracey Little & First Minister, John Swinney MSP
- CON John Cooper
- LAB James Wallace
- LibDem Ian McDonald
- Green Lauren Moodie
- ReformUK Charles Anthony Keal

Order based on dates of visits

Reflections

from Jamie Wright

I feel as though during the tours of The Usual Place all of the candidates from the major political parties to their credit were kind, interested and seemed to take on board what I was trying to impress upon them.

I explained how vital the work that The Usual Place does and how exactly we conduct that work, the procedures and systems that are in place to allow people with additional support needs to show what they are fully capable of.

I also explained to each candidate how much The Usual Place has done for me personally and the positive change I have seen in myself after only just over a year of being here.



For most of the candidates after the tour there was a Q & A of sorts where staff members and young people were able to ask any questions they had about that candidate's party policies or their views on other significant topics, whether these were more personal such as issues with public transport or wider such as Scottish independence or the proposed mandatory national service bill.

I felt as if some candidates were slightly more prepared than others.

This was due to them perhaps even unconsciously underestimating the questions that we would ask and the research that we would do, or it may have been down to them simply not being aware of the exact nature of the meetings.

It was also very important for me that when giving the tours they had to be consistent regardless of political affiliation, as in that time I was representing The Usual Place, and every candidate absolutely deserves to be shown the same level of respect and kindness.



There was a bit more freedom during the subsequent meetings for myself and everyone else to express more of ourselves whilst obviously still being as respectful as possible.

It was important as well for each person to feel as if they could ask any question that they wanted even if it concerned heavy or controversial topics and I feel as if that was indeed the case.

Everyone present did extremely well in not being afraid to question and challenge the candidates on topics and issues they felt passionate about.

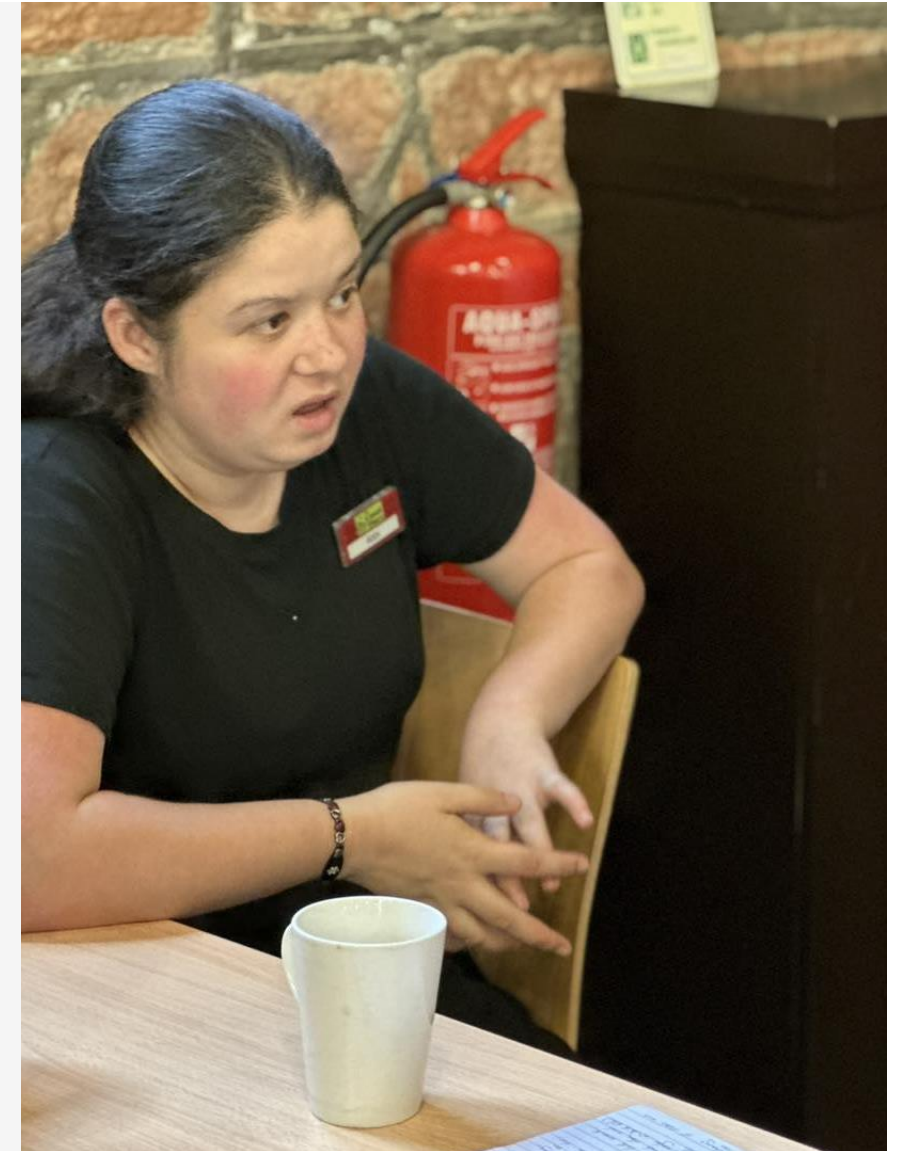
For the most part each candidate answered each question to the best of their ability, although I found when talking to politicians, they have this ability to answer a question without really answering it.



I also got the impression that whilst some may have wanted to help neurodivergent people it did not seem to be a priority for certain parties and as a result, they did not seem to have an answer to certain questions.

Despite this, I believe each person seemed to take at least some of what I was saying on board during the tour and so perhaps these meetings could just be the start of them beginning to be more conscious of issues that neurodivergent people face.

Many times these issues will not be exclusive to neurodivergent people, such as public transport or difficulties with the process of finding a job, rather it is just that they need to be approached in a slightly different way and from a slightly different perspective.



The overall goal of these tours and meetings was to get these candidates, one of which will be the parliamentary representative of the constituency after Thursday the 4th, to not only see the good work that The Usual Place is doing and become more familiar with the premises itself, but to impart on them that regardless of any difficulties faced or additional support needed:

Everyone deserves a voice and can play an important role in broader society.

To these ends I believe we succeeded. I hope that, regardless of which party comes out on top, they will remember us and more importantly stand by our values that:

- **Everyone is of equal worth**
- **Everyone can contribute to their community**
- **Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect**

