

AMAZING

Advocates

Q&A



Katie & Hannah-Ruth

One of our many goals at Girlguiding Ulster is to give girls and women a voice, whether that be encouraging the youngest Rainbow to say her promise out loud in front of friends, or helping the shyest Brownie talk to the other girls in her six. Sometimes it might be getting a quiet Guide to tell you about her badge work, or an anxious Ranger to share her ideas. It could even be a self-doubting leader, too scared to speak up when she needs to.

No matter what age you are, or what position you hold, we will always support and champion giving girls and women a voice.

Two GGU members most definitely using their voices are Katie Russell and Hannah-Ruth Mullen.

Katie and Hannah-Ruth are Girlguiding UK Advocates, and their aim is to seek change to improve all girls' lives. The advocate panel gives girls a platform to use their voices and seek change at the highest levels. They talk to MPs and other politicians, act as media spokespeople for Girlguiding, and speak at many types of events.

They discuss issues that matter to them and their peers, focussing on body confidence, the representation of girls and women in media and politics, education, violence against women and girls, and young people's mental health. That's quite a list!

We caught up with Katie and Hannah-Ruth to hear a little bit about their passions, their experiences as an advocate, and using their voice!

What made you apply to be an advocate?

KATIE I have loved Girlguiding since I was 4 years old. When I heard about the amazing things the advocate panel did to help empower girls and young women, I knew it was something I wanted to do. It opens a door to change how girls are perceived, and I get to give back to the brilliant organisation I grew up in.

“I wanted to give back to the brilliant organisation I've grown up in”

HANNAH-RUTH I applied because I wanted a new challenge. I had just come back from the 25th World Scout Jamboree and had seen how capable young people are able to change the world. Being surrounded by like-minded young people fuelled a new passion for change-making on a bigger level.

My friend had been an advocate, and she also inspired me to apply. It was just a great chance to give back to the organisation that has given me so many opportunities, and I wanted to play a part in making sure girls for generations to come are able to have the same (and even more!) incredible opportunities.

What causes are you most passionate about, that you want to champion as an advocate?

KATIE There are two main reasons I wanted to join the advocate panel - firstly I wanted a new experience within Girlguiding, and secondly being an advocate is the best way to share your ideas and to influence change. I am super passionate about championing safety for girls and women, which has become a really prevalent issue.

Breaking the stigma around period poverty is also a cause I care a lot about, and I hope to work on this as an advocate.

Climate change and our natural environment are also big topics that I enjoy discussing with the other young women on the panel.

HANNAH-RUTH

I am determined to increase mental health awareness, particularly around exam season for girls in education. I want to work towards a future where girls feel strong enough to admit that they need help and where we can support one another.

I also care about keeping girls in sport beyond the age of 12, due to the positive effects this has on mental health, as well as the friendships that are formed through sport and teamwork.



Overall, I want to advocate for girls and young women to become the best, strongest, healthiest versions of themselves whether that be in education, sports, politics, performance or in Girlguiding.

Tell us a little bit about what it's like to be an advocate, and what you get up to.

KATIE

This year I've met politicians, gone to party conferences and met girls from across the UK. Being an advocate definitely pushes you out of your



comfort zone, and allows you to explore new skills and learn to adapt to situations you never thought you'd experience. Recently I was interviewed on Magic Radio about period poverty and had an article published in Closer magazine, which is just madness! Being an advocate is challenging, but so worthwhile.

HANNAH-RUTH

Being an advocate is incredible, but it's not easy. I've had the opportunity to sit on interview panels for positions in Girlguiding - I interviewed the new Chair of the Board of Trustees! I've spoken on BBC Radio about our Girls' Attitude Survey which was an amazing experience. I've learned so many new skills, but I think most importantly I've made lots of new friends who inspire and push me not only to be a better advocate, but to be a better person. I've learned to always think

“ I've joined a generation of women who put themselves at the forefront of the fight for a better future for girls ”

of the bigger picture, and that small actions often lead to bigger change.

Tell us a little bit about your guiding life to date.

KATIE

As well as being an advocate I'm a Ranger with 7th Bangor, and I love it. For me, it's so important to spend time relaxing and doing something you enjoy outside of a school environment. Girlguiding is my favourite way to make friends and blow off steam. I've been a Rainbow, Brownie and Guide as well, and love spending time at Lorne, our activity centre. I got a job there this summer as a camp assistant, and I absolutely love it - one of the best decisions I ever made! I'm so excited to see what else Girlguiding has to offer me over the next few years.

HANNAH-RUTH

I joined Rainbows in 2010, and I've been in guiding ever since! I've done my bronze, silver and gold Duke of Ed, and went to the 25th World Scout Jamboree. Meeting guides and scouts from across the world highlighted that Girlguiding is not just a club I attend on a Wednesday night, it is so much more.

When my term as advocate is up, I will return to my role as a Girlguiding representative on the UK Youth Shaped Team for the 26th World Scout Jamboree in Poland - another role which I absolutely love.