
Democracy Matters is an alliance of civil society organisations and education providers founded in 2009 to promote learning for democracy and practical politics. This submission supports our objectives and may not represent views of all members, who may make their own submissions.

**Summary**

Citizenship *with* civic engagement matter because they give people

1) A shared identity and values, making society more cohesive and resilient;
2) A constitutional framework (even if unwritten) for resolving conflicts by peaceful means;
3) Opportunities to tackle social problems and improve society.

Effective citizenship is created by 1) legal rights, 2) social conditions and 3) personal capabilities of confidence, skills, knowledge and contacts. Personal capabilities and social conditions are necessary for formal rights to be effective.

These three areas are part of the “social capital” which largely determine people’s life chances. They include the UK’s privileged position in the world, which gives citizens many benefits and makes it an attractive destination for people who fear persecution or destitution elsewhere. Differences in citizenship rights between countries therefore matters for our own wellbeing.

UK citizenship is being changed at all levels:

a) Devolved assemblies and city mayors create unequal citizenship rights across the UK;
b) Diffusion of accountability in many public services makes it difficult for citizens to know who is responsible for what and how to have a say;
c) Leaving the EU will create a complex hierarchy of citizenship rights among residents, and give employers, landlords and public services more responsibility for policing citizenship;
d) Powerful online tools enable some people to have a stronger voice and influence.

These changes are increasing inequality of influence between well-connected minorities and the majority, thus widening the participation gap. To address this, we need better education and support for citizens to learn how the system works and how to have an effective say.

**Q2:** A sense of citizenship and belonging begins within families, communities and school, so the state should create civic signposts and support at significant times in life.

Schools should become the constitutional foundations of a learning democracy.

Promoting “Britishness” is counter-productive, but national pride comes from achievement.
Q3: Serious consideration should be given to compulsory voting; to giving citizens an annual statement on what their taxes pay for, as well as national assets and liabilities; and to creating a national recognition scheme for civic contributions to public life.

Q4: Current laws, policy and social attitudes discourage civic and political engagement, particularly the Lobbying Act, for which there is substantial evidence.

I favour lowering the voting age to 16 and providing better political education in schools.

Q5: The UK should use the Council of Europe’s Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture to inform provision of education for democracy.

Democracy Matters has called for a new Speakers’ Commission on Learning for Democracy. We are holding a consultation on this with St Georges House at Windsor Castle and would like to make a more substantial contribution on this question following this event in October.

Q6: Constant changes in government support for community development and citizenship engagement has undermined trust in government-sponsored initiatives. We need a cross-party commitment to sustained investment and support for effective citizenship engagement.

Q7: We should learn from Germany’s Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb) and create an arms-length agency for political education, possibly modelled on the BBC and British Council, funded through the license fee.

The BBC is not very good at supporting participation by the majority in the democratic process and should urgently be reviewed, while those interested in politics are well served.

Local Government should set up impartial “democracy hubs” to support civic engagement.

Q8: The biggest threats to our core values are

a. people feeling that their voice is not heard so there is no point in taking part;

b. a political culture which turns many people off from politics;

c. a partisan press willing to distort information to support its editorial line. : a robust independent press is a vital part of democracy, but respect for evidence and pluralism within newspapers is as important as between papers, and should not detract from a strong and distinct editorial view.

Q10: Well-managed diversity strengthens social cohesion and Britain’s role in the world.

Q12: Members of Democracy Matters will provide many examples from the St George’s House consultation in October, but to mention just four major initiatives here:

a) Family learning, Sure Start and neighbourhood family centres like Pen Green in Corby

b) The national Community Champions Programme from 2001 to 2007;

c) Cooperative schools, of which there are over 400;

d) UCL’s annual Global Citizenship programme to explore global challenges and develop skills.
Full response to questions

1. **What does citizenship and civic engagement mean in the 21st century? Why does it matter, and how does it relate to questions of identity?**

   1. Citizenship *with* civic engagement matter because they give people
      1) A shared identity and values, making society more cohesive and resilient;
      2) A constitutional framework (even if unwritten) for resolving conflicts by peaceful means;
      3) Opportunities to tackle social problems and improve society.

2. Civic engagement is prior to formal citizenship, since citizenship rights are often created by people taking action, such as the women’s suffrage movement and Chartists in the UK, the civil rights movement in the United States, and the world-wide movements for democracy.

3. Formal citizenship rights are not enough to make citizenship meaningful or effective: the conflict in Northern Ireland and inner-city riots of 1981 and 2011 showed what can happen when people feel they do not belong and cannot resolve matters by peaceful means. The votes for Scottish independence, Sinn Fein and Brexit show how many people think our current political framework does not give them an effective voice or identity as citizens of the UK and EU. It is unlikely that leaving the EU will resolve many of the reasons why people voted to leave the EU, unless there is a massive increase in support for effective engagement.

4. When people are engaged in their community, they show their sense of identity through mutual aid and community activities. Engagement strengthens their identity with a specific place, faith, football club, ethnic group and other associations in which they are engaged. Community engagement and identity are often formed in adversity, when times are hard and people feel their backs are against the wall or others are against them. For young people engagement and identity can be expressed through youth movements like mods, rockers, hippies, punks, grunge, etc.; organisations like the Boys Brigade, Scouts and Woodcraft Folk; or gangs. Cooperatives, trades unions, evangelical churches, community organising and many other social movements are more sustained responses to adversity, creating identity through engagement. They also created political organisations and parties which still give people a voice in local and national government.

5. On the other side of the social divide, public schools, elite universities and social networks also create opportunities for engagement and access to the political process.

6. These networks of civic engagement, at all levels, are vital parts of our ‘social capital’ and more important for our collective well-being and prosperity than many realise. Herbert Simon, a Nobel-prize winning economist, observed that differences in average incomes between rich and poor nations ‘are due to differences in social capital that takes primarily the form of stored knowledge (e.g. technology, and especially organizational and governmental skills).’: When we compare the poorest with the
richest nations, it is hard to conclude that social capital can produce less than about 90 per cent of income in wealthy societies’ (Simon, 2000; see also Van Parijs, 2000). Thus, people in the UK are more productive and earn seven times more than people in Nigeria (in purchasing power; 18 times more in cash terms) because our social, political, legal and other institutions made possible the industrial revolution, trade, mass education and public services, not because we work harder.

7. The contrast between North and South Korea is the most dramatic illustration of the difference social capital makes to well-being and prosperity, but well-documented differences in life chances, health and mortality rates between rich and poor in UK also reflect wide disparities in social capital among British citizens.

8. Effective engagement and voice matters for the whole of society, because citizens’ action drives social improvement. No one would have been killed in Grenfell Tower if authorities had listened to residents’ concerns about fire safety. Like the Hillsborough families, Mid-Staffs Hospital action group and survivors of historic sexual abuse, their voices were not heard and people suffered as a result.

9. Effective citizenship is created by 1) a set of legal rights, 2) social conditions and 3) personal capabilities, which largely determine an individual’s opportunities and their sense of belonging in society (see Annex 1 for more detail). Each of these three areas make a distinct contribution to citizenship. 

   **Legal conditions for citizenship include:**
   
   • Political and human rights, enshrined in domestic and international law.
   • Accessible, impartial rule of law and means of judicial redress equally available to all.

   **Social and economic conditions for effective citizenship include:**
   
   • Freedom from fear of destitution, exploitation and persecution, which in turn depend on enforcement of rights as well as social provision and protection.
   • Civic associations through which people are involved in society, get support and express their voice, such as business associations, faith communities, pressure groups and trades unions.
   • Economic opportunities and freedoms to find work, create enterprises, trade.
   • Tolerance and mutual respect which enables people to be themselves.
   • Opportunities to learn about the political system, rights and responsibilities.

   **Personal capabilities include** a sense of personal power, confidence knowledge and skills needed to take part effectively.

10. If people lack one or more of these conditions it is difficult, if not impossible, to be a full and equal citizen. The relationship between these conditions is complex. People may lack legal rights of citizenship, like Nelson Mandela in apartheid South Africa, but he had the courage, knowledge and association to campaign for equal citizenship rights. Many people in the UK have legal rights but lack the confidence and knowledge to use them. Some people have the confidence to campaign, but lack the knowledge or
skill to be effective, and conclude that they are powerless to influence society or take action which is counter-productive.

11. Differences in citizenship rights between countries matters as much to our peace and prosperity as differences between people in the UK, and between its nations and regions. When people fear persecution or destitution, they will risk their lives to find safety and opportunity, becoming refugees or migrants.

12. Nationality creates a hierarchy of citizenship among the world’s people, so that UK citizens can visit 173 territories without a visa (out of 218), near the top of the table. At the bottom, citizens of Pakistan can travel visa-free to only 28 countries, Iraqis to 27, and Afghans to 24, (Henley & Partners Visa Restrictions Index 2017). Below them are least ten million are stateless people.

13. So long as the gap in global citizenship rights and opportunities is so wide, the UK will be a magnet for people seeking safety and greater equality of opportunity, following Norman Tebbit’s injunction to “get on their bike” to find work. As one of the most privileged, and wealthy countries of the world, the UK has a choice about whether to enforce a form of global apartheid or to seek greater equality in conditions for citizenship worldwide.

14. When we were a colonial power, residents of colonies and dominions were subjects of the Crown and Britain drew up the national borders for many countries. British nationality and citizenship has evolved over centuries in response to globalisation and domestic political pressures. Decisions about UK citizenship must be made in relation to the rest of the world or we increase the risk of conflict within Britain and the UK.

15. British citizens belong to a small minority of countries which have the most extensive rights and freedoms in the world, including permanent representation in the UN Security Council, NATO, Bretton Woods Institutions and Council of Europe, as well as visa-free access to 80 percent of countries. But low levels of engagement and political literacy means that most citizens are not aware of their rights and privileges, or how these are being changed under the biggest ever constitutional reform of the UK now underway.

16. **UK citizenship is being changed** at many levels:

   a) Devolved assemblies and city mayors give some citizens more access to decision-making, alongside changes in funding for local government, thus creating even unequal citizenship rights across the UK.

   b) Diffusion of accountability for public services in an unstable institutional landscape makes it almost impossible for citizens to know who is responsible for what or how to have a say in many policy areas: School Commissioners, the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Ofsted, Local Economic Partnerships, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Health & Wellbeing Boards, Housing Associations, Tennant Management Organisations, and other bodies allocate a large proportion of taxpayers’ money and exercise power without direct political oversight.
c) Leaving the EU will remove European citizenship from people who do not have an EU connection (e.g. Irish ancestry) and create a complex hierarchy of citizenship rights and identities among UK residents. Employers, landlords and public service providers will have more responsibility for policing citizenship. The UK is also likely to fall in world visa rankings (it has fallen from first to fourth tier since 2014; Germany is now at the top) and lose influence in international decision-making forums (which may not be a bad thing, but will affect on life in the UK).

17. At the same time, the internet offers citizens a growing number of powerful tools for engagement for those who know how to use them, including

- Official websites like Parliament.UK, GOV.UK and data.gov.uk;
- Petition sites like Change.org and 38 Degrees,
- TheyWorkforYou, WhatDoTheyKnow, WritetoThem, and Democracy Club,
- Mobilising tools such as Meetup.org, Campaign Partner, Citizen Space, D-Cent, Ecanvasser, NationalField, NationBuilder and many more.
- Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and other social media.

18. This changing constitutional landscape increases inequality of influence. It makes it easier for lobbyists, think tanks, professional campaigners, pressure groups and activists to get information, mobilise support and target decision-makers. At the same, most people do not know how the system works and get lost in institutional labyrinths. Politicians themselves are often powerless to act on behalf of citizens grappling with officials following rigid procedures and appeals processes designed to protect them. People who know how to use the system are empowered by new rights while the majority are excluded by invisible barriers, thus widening the participation gap.

19. To address this, we need to increase education and support for all citizens to learn how the system works and how to have an effective say, as proposed in response to the following questions.

2. **Citizenship is partly about membership and belonging. Are there ways we could strengthen people’s identity as citizens, whether they are citizens by birth or naturalisation? Could citizenship ceremonies or events throughout the educational process play a role? Should pride in being or becoming British be encouraged?**

   1. Research shows that the sense of citizenship and belonging begins within families, communities and school, so we need to prioritize activities which support a sense of belonging through families, communities and school.

   2. Most people do not feel the state and public services ‘belong’ to them, and that this is often their biggest area of expenditure after housing. Voting and civic engagement are how we collectively decide what the state and public services should do. The state should therefore empower people as citizens by creating “civic signposts” at significant moments in life, such as:

      a) At birth, every parent could be given a ‘welcome bag’ with their Personal Child Health Record (or ‘red book’), a summary of entitlements, support from the NHS and their NHS number and recognition as a new member of the community.
Parents often get a ‘goody bag’ of commercial baby products and free books from Bookstart before school to help families read together, which should include information about the UK and meaning of citizenship.

b) When they start school, every child and their parent could be welcomed into their learning community, introducing parents to the ‘civic structure’ of education, from class meetings and the governing body, to the education authority or Multi-Agency Trust, Schools’ Commissioner, ESFA, Ofsted and DfE.

c) Before every election voters should get a factual summary of the powers, responsibilities and budgets their representative will make decisions about (council, assembly or parliament), and information about independent voter information sites, such as Votematch, Vote for Policies, etc.

d) When young people reach 18 they should get a letter and/or email from the Speaker, with an outline of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, the powers and responsibilities of Parliament, the name of their MP (about 700, - 800,000 per year) and an online guide to the role of their MP and Parliament, tax and spending.

e) Every school, college, university and apprenticeship provider should work with their local authority to organise high-profile “citizenship ceremonies” for young people reaching voting age, to celebrate and inspire democratic citizenship.

f) Every citizen should get an annual statement on what their taxes pay for, as my local authority does; national assets and liabilities; and where to get more information, making it clear that decisions are the responsibility of politicians elected by them, as citizens.

3. Schools should become the constitutional foundations of a learning democracy, enabling people to develop confidence, skills and knowledge through participation in the school community, as proposed in Citizenship Schools (summary in Annex 2).

4. Promoting “Britishness” and “British” Values is counter-productive, since it:
   - alienates citizens who do not identify with Britain for any reason;
   - promotes a sense of ‘them’ and ‘us’ between the UK and all other nations;
   - inhibits evolution in values and social attitudes: if adopted in 1986 it would have prohibited discussion of homosexuality in schools, while today schools are encouraged to prevent homophobia.

5. People have multiple identities and can feel pride in them all. Pride in being British comes from actions by British citizens, in sport, arts or even international affairs. It also arises when the country does things well, or people take part something bigger than themselves, such as the Olympics or an election.

6. It is ironic that young people are taught that democracy is a “British Value”, but often do not develop the confidence, skills and knowledge to take part in democracy, and have very few opportunities for democratic participation in education.
3. **Civic engagement can be seen as both a responsibility and a right of citizenship.** Beyond the existing legal framework, should citizens have additional formal rights and responsibilities? How do you see the relationship between the two? Should they have the force of law individually or be presented as reciprocal duties between citizen and state? How should they be monitored and/or enforced?

1. Serious consideration should be given to compulsory voting, as a civic duty to share responsibility for our collective affairs, with the option of 12 hours community service rather than a fine for people who do not vote without good reason.

2. Paying taxes is a reciprocal duty of citizenship and this should be made clear with tax statements, as proposed in 4.2.f above.

3. We should create a national recognition scheme for civic contributions to public life, including volunteering; serving on a Parent Teacher Association, Governing Body or magistrates bench; and membership of a political party.

4. **Do current laws encourage active political engagement?** What are your views on changes to the franchise for national or local elections, including lowering the voting age? Should changes be made to the voting process or the voting registration process?

1. Current laws and policy as well as social attitudes actively discourage civic and political engagement. There is substantial evidence that the Lobbying Act has a negative effect.

2. I personally favour lowering the voting age to 16. The experience of Scotland shows that young people do engage, and it will give schools a greater incentive to provide meaningful, impartial political education.

5. **What should be the role of education in teaching and encouraging good citizenship?** At what stages, from primary school through to university, should it be (a) available, and (b) compulsory? Should there be any exemptions? Should there be more emphasis on political participation, both inside and outside classes? How effective is current teaching? Do the curriculum and the qualifications that are currently offered need amending?

1. How we encourage citizenship starts at birth: the only question is whether we want to foster active, informed and effective citizens who shape their future together, as advocated in this response; or whether we want people to stay in the dark and get lost in the complex maze of modern life. The UK should use the Council of Europe’s Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture to inform provision.

2. Democracy Matters has called for a new Speakers’ Commission on Learning for Democracy and is holding a consultation on this with St Georges House at Windsor Castle at the end of October, so we would like to make a more substantial contribution on this question following this event (Annex 2)

6. **Do voluntary citizenship programmes such as the National Citizen Service do a good job of creating active citizens?** Are they the right length? Should they be compulsory, and
if so, when? Should they include a greater political element? Should they lead to a more public citizenship ceremony? Are they good value for money? What other routes exist for creating active citizens?

1. Constant changes in government support for community development and citizenship engagement, from the Community Development Projects (CDP) programme (1969-76) through Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC) and Take Part to the Big Society and community organising from 2010 undermines trust in government-sponsored initiatives – for which I can provide evidence. We need a cross-party commitment to sustained investment in support for effective citizenship and community engagement. We need to encourage the spectrum of activity from volunteering to standing for office and taking part in governance at all levels of society.

7. **How can society support civic engagement?** What responsibility should central government, devolved and local governments, third sector organisations and the individual have for encouraging civic engagement? What can the Government and Parliament do to support civil society initiatives to increase civic engagement?

1. We can learn a lot from the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb), which actively promotes political literacy for adults and in schools. The UK should aim to create an equivalent arms-length agency to provide political education, on the model of the BBC and British Council, possibly as a joint project. Joe Michell of Democracy Club has suggested that the BBC license fee could be used to fund it.

2. The BBC provides excellent current affairs news coverage, but its role in “Sustaining citizenship and civil society” was reduced in the last Charter review. Its purposes still include providing information and analysis so that audiences can “participate in the democratic process, at all levels, as active and informed citizens.” While people interested in politics are well served by the BBC, it has never done this well for the majority. A major review of the BBC’s role in supporting participation in the democratic process is long overdue.

3. Local Government should be encouraged to set up impartial “democracy hubs” to inform and support civic and political engagement: there are a few examples of prototypes (see outline in Annex 4).

8. **What are the values that all of us who live in Britain should share and support?** Can you identify any threats to these values, which affect the citizenship of, for instance, women or various minority groups? If so, how can their citizenship be strengthened?

1. The biggest threats to our core values are
   a. people feeling that their voice is not heard and nothing they say or do can make any difference, so there is no point in taking part;
b. a tribal political culture which creates a perception of opposing gangs and turns many people off from politics;

c. a partisan press willing to distort information to support its editorial line: a robust independent press is a vital part of democracy, but respect for evidence and pluralism within newspapers is as important as between papers, and should not detract from a strong and distinct editorial view.

9. Why do so many communities and groups feel “left behind”? Are there any specific factors which act as barriers to active citizenship faced by different communities or groups - white, BME, young, old, rural, urban? How might these barriers be overcome?

No space to discuss this, but I hope some of these factors are addressed in the analysis above.

10. How do you see the relationship between citizenship and civic engagement on the one hand and social cohesion and integration on the other? What effect does the level of diversity in schools and workplaces have on integration in society as a whole? How can diversity and integration be increased concurrently?

No space to discuss this, but I hope some of these factors are addressed in the analysis above. When managed well, diversity strengthens social cohesion and integration, and benefits Britain’s role in the world, from arts and sports to security and trade.

11. How important are levels of English proficiency for first and second generation immigrants and what could be done to increase them, including through support for ESOL classes? Are there particular barriers faced by newcomers to Britain? Could the naturalisation process, including the citizenship test, be improved and if so, how?

12. Can you give examples of initiatives and role models that have helped promote a positive vision of British Citizenship within a tolerant and cohesive society?

1. There are many examples from all areas, which we will include in our report from the St George’s House consultation, but to mention just four major initiatives:

a) Family learning, Sure Start and neighbourhood family centres like Pen Green in Corby
b) The national Community Champions Programme from 2001 to 2007;

c) Cooperative schools, of which there are over 400;

d) UCL Global Citizenship brings together students from across UCL for two weeks in June to explore our biggest global challenges and develop skills, from negotiation to presentation, photography and film-editing, through workshops, placements and projects;
Annex 1

Definitions of Citizenship

“The proprietor of stock is properly a citizen of the world, and is not necessarily attached to any particular country,” Adam Smith, 1776.

Citizenship can be defined in terms of nine distinct but interdependent elements:

Legal
1. **A constitution**, written and unwritten rules governing the place of citizens in society.
2. **Political and human rights** including enshrined in law and UN Conventions
3. **Membership** of a state, society and the world
4. **Democratic values**, eg freedom, fairness, social justice, respect for democracy and diversity.
5. **Civic involvement and responsibility** (‘active citizenship’). Rights create obligations on others and ‘duties to the community’ are part of the Universal Declaration (Article 29).
6. **Accountability** means those responsible for decisions are answerable for their actions.
7. **Participation in democratic decision-making**
8. A **sense of personal power**, self-esteem and confidence to take part.
9. **Knowledge and skills** needed to take part

[From Titus Alexander, *Citizenship Schools*, UNICEF-UK/Campaign for Learning, 2001]

“Citizenship requires both legal rights and the ability to exercise those rights in practice. In international law there is no ‘world citizenship’, only citizens of sovereign states. In this respect, individuals are recognised only in terms of their group identity. As in South Africa, there is a hierarchy of group rights:

1. citizens of the USA, UK and France, with veto powers in the Security Council, NATO and IMF, World Bank and global economic regimes;
2. OECD and Western Alliance, who have the vote, access to courts and Western solidarity;
3. other independent states represented on a regional basis and party to human rights conventions
4. independent states which do not adhere to human rights conventions;
5. occupied territories and peoples without states;
6. refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless person.

Although not explicitly classified by race, this hierarchy is banded by colour. ... Nationality laws of most countries, and the European Union, explicitly enshrine this ‘classification’.”

Annex 2

Citizenship Schools:

Learning democracy, raising attainment, building community

By Titus Alexander, Convener, Democracy Matters,
author of Citizenship Schools, Campaign for Learning, 2001

Every school is a community and political entity, through which people learn how to behave and take part in society. The school’s ethos and ‘hidden curriculum’ has as much influence on pupils as the content of lessons. What most pupils and parents learn is that they must do what they are told, their voice doesn’t count except when asked and they give the right answer, and management decides. However, many schools encourage some participation. These areas of participation could be developed to make schools the foundations of a democratic society.

Citizenship education should be more than a subject on the curriculum. It could enable all members of the school community to learn how to take part as active citizens, in the life of the school, the local community and wider society. An active school could enable local people to lead the democratic renewal of their area from the bottom up.

This article summarises the case for encouraging schools to put active participation and democratic citizenship at the core of their ethos, as described in my book of the same name\(^1\).

Citizenship and the cooperative schools’ movement

In recent years there has been a rapid growth of co-operative schools which put democratic governance at the heart of schools and develop active participatory skills needed to build civil society, personal development and wellbeing. By 1 June 2013 there were 444 co-operative trust schools with about 100 more in the consultation stage. A unique characteristic of the co-operative model is that it enables key stakeholder groups to become members. This kind of bottom-up movement with national support from an independent, democratic agency is more likely to lead to sustain improvement in schools and their local areas than the top-down initiatives of the past 25 years.

Why citizenship schools?

When people lose their sense of civic duty and engagement, societies become vulnerable to extremism, as happened in ancient Rome, Weimar Germany and many other countries. Today the sense of powerlessness and disillusionment with politics is one of the greatest threats to our future as a society. But if we can inspire teachers and young people to recover their sense of power over their own lives, we can unleash creativity and innovation to transform our economy and society for the better.

Although the national curriculum requirement to teach citizenship comes from central government, schools have considerable freedom to decide how it will be taught. This makes citizenship a way of improving schools and their community from the bottom-up.

Politicians on all sides of the political spectrum call for participation, empowerment and civic renewal. Local schools and colleges have the potential to play a major role in empowering people to take an active part in renewing society. Schools are one of the few institutions which can connect a large part of local communities, reaching people through children and their

\(^1\) Citizenship Schools: a practical guide to education for citizenship and personal development, Titus Alexander, Campaign for Learning, 2001
families. Extended schools connect even more services are through local schools. This gives schools the opportunity to become foundations of a democratic learning society, through which young people learn how to take part in decision-making and develop a real sense of civic responsibility.

Increasing participation in school also increases attainment and motivation. A study for CSV by Derry Hannan found that “in terms of low exclusions, good attendance, staff and student assessment and exam results” schools with high levels of student participation “performed better than might have been expected” by comparison with schools with a similar intake.

Citizenship is about enabling people to develop the abilities, knowledge, and understanding to take an effective part in society. The citizenship curriculum explicitly aims to make pupils “more self-confident and responsible both in and beyond the classroom. It encourages pupils to play a helpful part in the life of their schools, neighbourhoods, communities and the wider world. It also teaches them about our economy and democratic institutions and values; encourages respect for different national, religious and ethnic identities; and develops pupils' ability to reflect on issues and take part in discussions.” It would be a mistake, therefore, to see the citizenship as simply another subject to be squeezed into the timetable.

**Citizenship is an active discipline**

Citizenship must be practised as well as taught. You would never teach football by getting people to study the rules and history or analysing games. You take them onto the pitch to train and play matches against other teams. So too with citizenship. The curriculum offers schools many opportunities to involve staff, pupils and parents in the life of the school and its community in response to our rapidly changing world.

Participation and democracy in school is not a soft option. It requires reflection, planning, training and implementation to ensure that all members of the school community are involved. They must experience it as a benefit, not a burden. To be effective, people must experience it as a way of making life better for themselves, the school and the local area.

Citizenship requires a shared vision, values and commitment based on fairness, mutual respect, democratic participation, human rights, social justice and diversity. These are values to which the nation aspires in signing the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. But they are much easier to agree than to live them in practice.

Every school is a political entity. Charles Handy compared schools with city-states (Handy, 1987), with every form of governance from dictatorship to the radical democracy of Summerhill.

Institutional change and school improvement require political skills to engage and persuade people to do things differently. The citizenship curriculum should give all members of the school community an active part in continuous and democratic school improvement.

**What is a citizenship school?**

Any school in which citizenship is practiced as well as taught could be called a “citizenship school”. A central aim of citizenship is to give young people the knowledge, skills and understanding to play an effective role in society. It aims to make pupils “more self-confident and responsible both in and beyond the classroom. It encourages pupils to play a helpful part in the life of their schools, neighbourhoods, communities and the wider world. It also teaches

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them about our economy and democratic institutions and values; encourages respect for different national, religious and ethnic identities; and develops pupils' ability to reflect on issues and take part in discussions.” If done well, it will equip young people to thrive in a world of constant change—starting with the introduction of the citizenship curriculum itself. It would be a mistake, therefore, to treat citizenship as simply another subject to be squeezed into the timetable.

But the timetable has a vital role in developing citizenship in schools. First of all, subject status is enshrined in the timetable. Citizenship has to be there, alongside maths, English and the rest. Second, the timetable tells pupils and parents that citizenship matters. Third, citizenship requires specialist skills and knowledge which need to be developed with a skilled teacher who knows the subject and how to teach it. This means setting aside time for teaching. Citizenship can enrich other subjects on the curriculum. At least 20% of the strands in citizenship can be developed through other subjects and a citizenship specialist can also provide issues, concepts and activities that enhance understanding of other subjects. In addition, citizenship has an important place in moral, pastoral, social and extra-curricular activities, such as form-time, assembly, behaviour policies and community links.

The concept of ‘citizenship school’ aims to bring these different aspects together into a whole school approach. It is drawn from schools across the country which give pupils, parents, staff and local communities an active role in school life. It is a practical embodiment of the citizenship curriculum, enabling pupils to “play a helpful part in the life of their schools, neighbourhoods, communities and the wider world.” A citizenship school aims to give every pupil an apprenticeship in active citizenship, by learning how the system works and taking part effectively. For this to happen, schools need to ensure that every member of the school community can be heard, have a say in decisions and influence school life.

A ‘citizenship school’ offers a sophisticated model of democracy, involving activities such as circle time, peer mediation, pupil responsibilities and parents’ councils. But the essential starting point is a commitment to use the citizenship curriculum to transform the way school is run by giving all young people direct experience of decision-making and the issues they face in growing up. These must be real decisions, with real consequences, in which young people have to seek compromise and consensus among themselves as well as with adults.

To be credible, the citizenship curriculum has to pervade all aspects of school life, including its culture and ethos; its approach to learning and teaching; and its decision-making processes. Teaching young people about the structures and processes of democracy without giving them an effective say in the life of their own school is a lesson in cynicism and powerlessness.

Citizenship schools could unleash greater creativity and commitment to learning in schools and their communities. As Derry Hannam’s research shows, involvement in participatory activities enhances learning across the curriculum, leading to higher than expected levels of attendance and attainment at GCSE.

**Elements of a citizenship school**

The following outline describes the essential elements of a citizenship school, based on current practices in schools today. They are based on co-operative vision and values, the Rights of the Child and the citizenship curriculum.

1. **Create a democratic constitution and ethos**
Every cooperative trust school has a constitutional framework which consists of its legal status and obligations; its aims, policies and development plan; and is embedded through the norms, values and decision-making structures that govern the lives of its members while they are at school. The articles of association for co-operative schools include an ethos based on the globally shared co-operative values of self help, self responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity and the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

In making its constitution explicit, a co-operative citizenship school aims to:

- recognise all members of the school community as learning citizens, with explicit rights and responsibilities;
- build a shared commitment to a democratic vision and values;
- involve everyone in creating fair rules or boundaries consistent with those values;
- involve pupils in maintaining peace through peer mediation and conflict resolution;
- develop meaningful responsibilities for all pupils.

2. Create an empowering curriculum,

A co-operative citizenship school applies co-operative values and co-operative learning and citizenship across the curriculum. This means enabling all members of the school community to develop the ability to take responsibility for their own learning, which includes:

- Active development of a sense of self as a person, learner and agent in the world.
- Equal partnership with parents as a child’s first educator.
- Shared responsibility for learning with pupils.
- Exploration of values and purpose in all subjects.
- Emotional literacy.
- Thinking skills, applied to real as well as hypothetical and historical problems.
- Learning to learn.
- Enquiry skills, including listening, researching, writing and discussing.
- Co-operative and collaborative learning skills
- Peer education and mentoring.
- Skills of participation and action, including negotiating, decision-making and planning.
- Participating in a campaign or project for change.
- Co-operative enterprise
- Political understanding, sustainable development, consumer education and financial literacy.
- Self-assessment and evaluating the work of others.
For a rapidly changing society, in which the total amount of knowledge is growing exponentially, it is particularly important that young people learn how to take responsibility for their own learning.

3. Develop active participation in decision-making, based on cooperative models
Citizenship has to be experienced as well as taught. For pupils this means:

- Learning partners and teams to develop mutual support and confidence.
- Circle time to develop empathy, relationships and values as well as resolve problems.
- A pupil council with elected representatives from each class and a meaningful role in all decision-making.
- Pupil representatives on the trust members forum and on the governing body.
- Co-operative enterprise
- Local and national representation by young people in decision-making.

4. For parents, participation takes place through

- Class meetings (or associations) of all parents of children in each class, meeting two or three times a year to discuss the curriculum, concerns about the class and issues affecting the school, as well as to socialise and support the class;
- Parents’ councils consisting of elected representatives from each class;
- Parent representatives on the trust members forum, the governing body and a whole school council;

5. The co-operative community school
The school’s co-operative Trust will demonstrate a commitment to citizenship through its engagement with the wider local community - for example, provision of facilities for youth activities and adult learning, active involvement with local issues, regular review of the way in which the school is responding to local needs.

Staff are involved through staff meetings, joint working groups with pupils, parents and community representatives, the governing body and school meeting or council. For youth and community groups using the school premises, citizenship schools could create a community association or council to run facilities and activities.

Each of these elements takes time and skill to develop, because it is important that they are done well. But however well one prepares, they involve an element of risk, because real learning and real democracy is never risk free. Most of the time, creativity and innovation are stimulated, bringing about greater enjoyment and improvement in their wake. The Campaign for Learning, UNICEF UK and the Gulbenkian Foundation have published a practical guide by me on how schools can transform themselves into “citizenship schools”, drawing on the experience of schools across the country. Sometimes, however, it is best to start small.

Conclusion
The creation of citizenship schools could bring about the most important constitutional reform since the achievement of universal adult suffrage. Citizenship schools would give every young person the skills, knowledge, experience and confidence to use the democratic process to improve their lives. It will require, of course, inspired teaching of citizenship in the classroom,
but it must rest on foundations of confidence forged through experience in the corridors of school and community. The creation of “citizenship schools” could herald a bottom-up process of change that will bring about both higher levels of attainment and more confident, capable and responsible citizens.

As active citizens, pupils, parents and members of the local community will also develop the skills and confidence to transform their school and local area, so that they become masters of their own destiny.

References
Handy, Charles, *Understanding Schools as Organisations*, Pelican, 1987


*Cooperative Values Make a Difference in the Curriculum and Governance of Schools* by Mervyn Wilson and Cliff Mills, The Cooperative College

Annex 3

**Skills for Democracy**

**Satellite event for the World Forum**

20 October 2016, House of Commons, UK

This event was hosted by Lord David Blunkett of Brightside and Graham Allen MP, Nottingham North. It aimed to give an overview of the state of education for democracy in the UK and identify priorities. **Speakers**

- David Blunkett, Professor of Politics in Practice at Sheffield University, MP for Brightside & Hillsborough 1987-2015, Education and Employment Secretary, Home Secretary, Work and Pensions Secretary, Leader of Sheffield City Council, 1980 – 87.
- James Weinberg, Research Associate of the Crick Centre, and Chair of the Political Studies, Association Early Career Network, on the state of citizenship and political education in schools;
- David Kerr, Association of Citizenship Teachers (ACT,) and Professor at University of Reading;
- Samira Musa, Bite the Ballot, on engaging young people;
- Ruth Spellman, CEO, Workers Educational Association, on adult education;
- Sue Tibballs, CEO Sheila McKechnie Foundation on campaign training and support for civil society
- Sarah Allen, Involve, on participation for a stronger democracy
- Ashok Viswanathan, Deputy CEO, Operation Black Vote on engaging minorities
- Rosemary Bechler, Editor, openDemocracy about the young reporters at the World Forum
- Dan Gallacher, Parliament’s Education Service;

The government was invited to send a speaker or comment, but has no policies on education for democracy.

**Skills for Democracy survey**
We surveyed participants beforehand and 68% had NOT heard about the World Forum for Democracy. Only 37% had heard of the Council of Europe’s Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship, although almost 60% said their work was about education for advocacy, citizenship, democracy or politics.

**Key points and next step**

The three main messages from the meeting were

1) The need for a movement to promote the right to political literacy, like Make Poverty History.

2) The sorry state of citizenship education and political literacy in schools today; and

3) The wide range of initiatives in adult education and civil society.

**Summary**

The presentations gave a detailed overview of education for democracy, including the following points:

1. Political knowledge and participation is very unequal, particularly among younger, poorer people, but sustained, focused work makes a difference, of which there are many examples;

2. Citizenship education in schools is disappearing, due to being merged with PSHE; the lack of specialist teachers, political support and support from school leaders; and the Progress 8 Indicator for school accountability, in which Citizenship is a third tier option competing with Art and Design, Drama, PE and other subjects. Citizenship ceases to be an A-level subject from 2017, although Politics A level will continue.

3. The government priorities of Prevent, British Values and character education could be addressed through good citizenship education, but they have a much narrower, more functional focus.

4. The National Citizenship Service offers young people aged 15-17 one residential week of adventure, social action and citizenship skills: David Blunkett is on the Board of the NCS Trust and the National Citizenship Service Bill goes to the Lords on 25 Oct (follow progress here).

5. The UK is going through rapid constitutional change without any coherence (the Queen and House of Lords are the most stable parts), which makes the need for political literacy greater than ever.

6. Universities need to revive their historic role of outreach to communities, through extra-mural education and community action.

7. Social movements need to engage with the formal political process to influence power structures.

8. The BBC needs to be bolder in providing political literacy.

9. Social media can engage young people on their own terms.

10. Bite The Ballot showed the importance of engaging young people from the beginning, so they can share their experiences and be part of the process of building the skills for democracy

11. We need automatic voter registration when people turn 18: Lord Roberts of Llanduluno has tabled a Private Members’ Bill for Automatic Electoral Registration (School Students) – get email update here
12. Just 6% of government education spending goes on post-19s, including apprenticeships.

13. School premises should be used for education in evenings and weekends, including political literacy.

14. The Sheila McKechnie Foundation runs campaign training for charities and community activists, and an annual campaigners’ award.

15. There is widespread lack of knowledge about how parliament works, how change happens and how to influence government, even among experienced campaigners.

16. The Lobbying Act has had a chilling effect on campaigning by charities and voluntary organisations.

17. Deliberative democracy promoted by Involve creates more inclusive ways for citizens to have a say in decision-making (see their Participation Compass and People and Participation programme, or the Open Government Network, the Participation Works Partnership, What Works Scotland and the Citizen Participation Network)

18. Operation Black Vote has championed political participation by black and ethnic minorities since 1996 and run an MP shadowing scheme since 1999: former participants include the Mayors of Bristol and London, MPs Clive Lewis and Helen Grant.

19. openDemocracy is organising a youth citizens’ newsroom at WFD2016, where some of the 70 young people from around the world will work cover the World Forum for Democracy in November.

20. Young people can have a voice through organisations like Student Voice, Youth Councils, and the Youth Parliament, for which 11 – 18 year olds elect representatives to debate issues in Parliament chosen by ballot through Make Your Mark, involving 978,216 young people in choosing topics for debate on Friday 11 November.

21. Parliament’s Education and Outreach services are a fantastic resource for schools, universities, adult and community education, providing training and support across the UK as well as in Parliament.

22. Use Your Vote is a new all-party and non-aligned national campaign to build political literacy and enhance democratic engagement and active citizenship across all age groups.

Parliament Week (14 – 20 November) is a programme of activities to connects people with Parliament and democracy across the UK.

Annex 4

What is a Democracy Hub?

A “Democracy hub” is an independent local contact point for advice, information, education and support for people to take part in democratic decision-making, as recommended by the Power Inquiry (www.powerinquiry.org).

A network of local agencies can form a hub by sign-posting support for people to have a say and take part in politics. A hub could be accessed through local agencies, cafes, health centres, libraries, supermarkets and schools, with a resource centre in a volunteer bureau, community venue, adult education centre or shop front.
Members of a local Democracy Hub would:

1. **Encourage people to understand how the system works** and get involved through Citizens’ Days, Democracy Week, Speakers’ Corners, election hustings, festivals and outreach as well as adult, further and higher education courses and workshops.

2. **Promote opportunities** to have a voice, including elections, public forums, campaigns, pressure groups and civic roles of school governor, magistrate, health forum, local councillor, mayor, MP etc.

3. **Show people how to use** democratic tools such as Councillor or MP surgeries, petitions, www.theyworkforyou.com, www.democracymatters.info, Freedom of Information, etc;

4. **Provide independent information, advice and support** for people who want to complain, campaign, stand for election or get involved in a public issue or institution;

5. **Connect agencies** which support participation in politics, including adult and community education providers, campaign training and support services, Civic Societies, community associations, Parliamentary Outreach, trade associations, unions and voluntary sector infrastructure bodies.

Since 2010 a great deal of support for local democracy participation has gone, such as Take Part Pathfinders, Empowerment Partnerships and Community Empowerment Networks. However, community councils, Councils of Voluntary Action and local authority democratic services do some of the things a democracy hub would do. For examples, see end of this document.

At national level Parliamentary Outreach has many of these roles in relation to Parliament.

What we need now is more active cooperation between agencies, greater visibility and much easier access and support for the public to take part.

**Why Democracy Hubs?**
Society benefits when all citizens are involved in the political process, including the poor, disadvantaged and disenfranchised who are under represented in decision-making and formal politics. When people are unable to have an effective voice, they often become apathetic or angry and express themselves through anti-social behaviour or aggression which may be counter-productive.

When people have a voice, they can influence society to take account of their needs and aspirations, and they are more likely to be involved in addressing problems effectively.

**Principles for local democracy hubs**

Democracy hubs would uphold Nolan’s seven principles of public life: accountability, honesty, integrity, leadership, objectivity, openness and selflessness, as well as the principles of practical political education:

1. **pragmatic**: start from where people are and help them achieve what they want;
2. **pluralistic** in funding, forms of provision, content and values
3. **participative** to develop confidence, communication skills and critical thinking
4. **practical**, to include techniques, knowledge and analysis relevant to active politics
5. **peaceful**: violence is a failure of politics
6. **pro-poor**: prioritise provision for individuals and areas who have had the least chances.

**How to set up a Democracy Hub?**

The main steps to set up a hub are:

1. an individual or organisation takes a lead and sounds out local agencies such as adult and community education, WEA, CAB, Civic Society, Youth Council or Parliament, Speakers’ Corner Trust, university politics department, students unions, Take Part Pathfinder, Chamber of Commerce, trade council or unions, Empowerment Partnership, Community Empowerment Network, advocacy services or networks, HealthWatch, CVS, Parliamentary Outreach and local authority democratic services, participation unit, equalities organisations, including people with disabilities and other marginalised or excluded groups to identify what provision exists;

2. recruit a few committed local champions from key agencies to form an action group and draw up a shared vision of a local democracy hub – its purpose, why you want it, what difference you want it to make and what it would do to achieve that;

3. identify what’s already going on to support your vision in whole or part and see who you might work together;

4. identify what’s missing and draw up a plan to make it happen, including easy, low-cost first steps and ways in which you will measure effectiveness;

5. consult and involve local people and agencies, to generate a sense of excitement and shared ownership, as well as improve your plans;

6. make it happen: organise, raise funds, and get the message out.

The hub need not be a formal organisation. A loose network and forum with a written cooperation agreement and strong shared branding and promotion are key.

**Branding**
All agencies involved in a local democracy hub could share a logo and materials to signpost support for active citizenship. We would be very glad to work with local hubs under a “Democracy Matters [your area]” and provide links to local areas through our website.

**Elements of a Democracy Hub**

Many areas had elements of a democracy hub under different names, although they do not do everything suggested here. For example:

- **Southwark Democracy Hub** was a Take Part Pathfinder, which has an excellent series of “how to” guides, which it is willing to make available for other areas to adapt.
- **Sefton Community Empowerment Network (CEN)** is a ‘network of networks’ that brings together voluntary and community organisations that provide services to local communities and enable them and under-represented communities to have a voice in local decision-making.
- **York Democratic Services** provides information on how the city council works, how to influence decisions and where to find out about other local agencies.
- **Thanet Knowledge Hub** provides information on the area, including local democracy.
- **Rural Community Councils** run community-led planning which aims to involve everyone who lives and works in an area to create a vision and action plan for it.