

Our future depends on empowering the next generation to become active citizens



Our future depends on young people understanding their role in democracy

Democracy Ambassadors

The Democracy Ambassadors programme was launched in 2018 by Young Citizens to train and empower 13-16 year olds to help other young people understand and become passionate about democracy. Funded by the Democratic Engagement Team at the Cabinet Office, and working in partnership with UK Youth, Democracy Ambassadors aimed to work with 1,000 young people as peer to peer educators, who in turn would engage with 100,000 peers over the lifetime of the programme.

This report contains a summary of the independent evaluation carried out by London School of Economics. A full copy of the report is available on request by emailing info@youngcitizens.org.

“Young people in England simply don’t understand the basics of our specific systems of government, and that’s why so many of them don’t vote.”

Democracy Ambassador, Woking.

Key programme demographics

The programme evaluation used a mixture of pre- and post-engagement surveys completed by young people involved together with a number of face to face focus groups. Overall the findings showed that:

- 1078 13 -16 year olds trained as Democracy Ambassadors between August 2018 – March 2019 (target:1000)
- 56% of the Democracy Ambassadors were female (target: at least 50%)
- 26% of Democracy Ambassadors were from BAME groups (target:15%)
- 11% of Democracy Ambassadors were young people with a disability (target:3%)
- 46%* of delivery centres were based in low socio-economic areas (target:15 - 25% of Democracy Ambassadors.)

*Note this is area data only - it wasn't possible to drill down to individuals as participants did not wish to share postcode data.



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Delivering Democracy Ambassadors

A total of 78 organisations from across England registered to deliver the Democracy Ambassadors programme including youth groups, schools, social action projects, arts organisations and youth councils. Youth leaders were provided with a set of downloadable resources with which to train young people on topics including voting, local and central government responsibilities, the history of democracy in this country, and how and why laws are made. Each training pack also included suggestions as to how Democracy Ambassadors might 'share' their learning with other young people, either formally – for example through structured lessons or assemblies, or informally – such as informal 'chats' with friends and through social media. The peer-to-peer approach allowed opportunities to engage young people who had no previous interest or knowledge of politics which was an overarching aim of the programme.

The variety of different settings in which the Democracy Ambassadors programme was delivered in turn produced a variety of peer-to-peer activities, including developing memes to accompany different points of democratic history, short Youtube videos on what democracy is, a wooden spoon puppet show, Instagram polls and traditional taught sessions.



What did young people think?

Of the young people who responded:

- 85% said that it had helped them feel able to talk to other young people about democracy.
- 85% said that it had increased their own interest in learning about democracy.
- 84% agreed that they had a better understanding of UK democracy and how it works.
- 83% said that taking part made them feel optimistic that young people can get involved and make a difference.
- 81% said that being a Democracy Ambassador had made them care more about politics and the world around them.
- 77% felt that they had learnt leadership skills that would help them to get a job in the future.

“When you debate certain issues (with peers)... they realise that that *is* politics, and then they’re a bit more like ‘oh - this does affect me.’”

Democracy Ambassador, Trafford.

Programme Legacy

As part of the Democracy Ambassadors programme legacy the original materials and training resources were updated and transformed into two resource packs for organisations to deliver to groups of young people. Between their launch in June 2019 and the beginning of Sept 2019 the repurposed resources had been downloaded by 296 organisations, meaning that thousands more young people continue to benefit from the learning contained in this programme. To download your own free a copy of the Democracy Ambassadors resources please visit: <https://www.youngcitizens.org/Pages/Category/free-teaching-resources>