

ENGAGING PRACTICE

ENGAGING YOUNG CITIZENS FROM
DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

THINKING
DIFFERENTLY

LISTENING
HARDER

BROADENING
OPPORTUNITIES

MAKING IT
POSSIBLE

REWARDING
EXPERIENCES

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FOREWORD

Involving young people in service design and provision has changed from being something that government organisations strived to do, in order to meet set targets, to now being the law. That's why it's more important now than ever before to make sure that young people are engaged with every aspect of their lives, in shaping their communities through joint decision making or volunteering; making a vital contribution to their neighbourhoods. Already, it's those aged between 16 and 24 who have the highest take up rate of volunteering opportunities (with 50% of 16-19 year olds reported to volunteer at least once a month). That's something that doesn't often get the recognition it deserves among the rush to involve and engage young people; it's something we should celebrate and build on, but that can only be done if young people are engaged effectively. This is what Engaging Practice strives to facilitate.

At Young Advisors, the charity which I chair, at least half of our Board of Trustees are under 25 years old. We were the first charity in the UK to obtain permission from the Charity Commission to have board members under 18, and have celebrated the achievement of having the youngest charity chair in the UK since. We believe it's imperative that young people are involved at every level of an organization, from the top through to the bottom, "consultation" end.

The Big Society seemingly has a lot of time for the engagement of young people, but unfortunately not a lot of money for it. Over the coming years there will be challenges to overcome and achievements to celebrate and it's really important that we share those with each other so that we can all benefit. There are a lot of barriers to engaging young people; they often go beyond simply money or time and they're hard to break down without sharing knowledge with each other. Through 5 key components of civic action this guide helps to identify and find solutions to some of them. The rest, I believe, is down to us.

In the last four years I've experienced services whose engagement practices have been excellent, but I've also experienced services whose engagement practices have been poor. My work as a Young Advisor in many cases has been to work with organisations to develop their abilities to engage with young people and wider communities. In 2007, the Young Advisors charity and the Department for Communities and Local Government ran a series of "How to engage young people" seminars and conferences for councillors. These were a huge success and the feedback was unanimously positive; councillors and workers were glad to have the opportunity to share their experiences and practices with each other, and that's what we all need to be doing.

So I'm proud to be introducing the Engaging Practice Guide; it's taken a dedicated team almost two years to put together and is a testament to the great work already being done to engage young people (and for young people to engage adults!).

Sean O'Halloran
Chair, Young Advisors



**This good practice
guide has been
developed for anyone
interested in engaging
young people in
opportunities for
civic action.**

ENGAGING PRACTICE

The guide particularly focuses on engaging young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities. It shows how such young people are typically under-represented in activities that are commonly perceived to be civic action and it gives a variety of reasons why this might be the case.

Based on research evidence this guide offers five fundamentals of good practice for organisations wishing to successfully engage young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities in civic action. By including these five fundamentals in their practice, practitioners can support young people to learn skills and knowledge that will help them be, and become, active citizens.

THE ENGAGED PROJECT

This guide is the result of a two year research project conducted by the Universities of Cambridge and Leicester alongside the volunteering charity Community Service Volunteers (CSV). The research was funded by the Society for Educational Studies (SES).

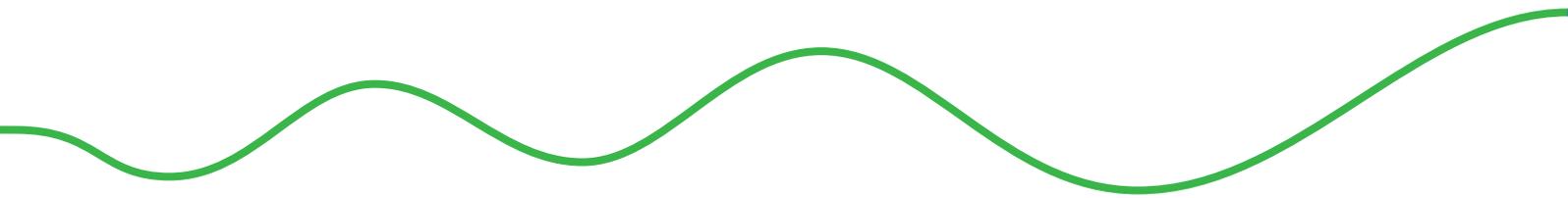
CSV, which is the UK's largest volunteering and training organisation, helps over 850,000 people a year to engage with their communities through civic action and learning. Both Cambridge University Faculty of Education and Leicester University School of Education have a long tradition of research in the area of Citizenship Education, Student Voice, and Social and Educational Inclusion. In collaboration we worked alongside young people in a variety of settings including schools, community organisations, sports clubs and volunteering groups. We worked with young people living in a range of circumstances including young offenders, homeless young people and looked-after children. This guide is the result of what we have learnt from these young people, and from others who have carried out related research both nationally and internationally.

OUR RESEARCH

The EngagED project involved four inter-linked phases:

- 1) A systematic review of existing studies of young people and their civic action with a specific focus on young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities.
- 2) Collection of primary data using a mixed methods approach and including:
 - Organisations' survey completed by 175 organisations of which 144 were deemed relevant (31 respondents either did not work with young people between the ages of 14-25 or alternatively did not work with any young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities).
 - Young people's survey completed by 977 young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities and between the ages of 14 and 25. 46% of respondents were male and 54% female.
 - 22 focus groups with young people conducted in 12 settings located in areas of socio-economic disadvantage (including schools, college, youth action teams, young offenders, looked-after young people, and those working with youth led organisations). In total 163 young people participated in these focus groups (105 female and 58 male). The young people were aged between 11 and 21.
 - Completion of civic action projects in schools and community settings.
 - Dissemination activities including an invited seminar series, presentations at international conferences and an end of project event for adults and young people.

This good practice guide is based on the findings arising from all of these activities.



OUR RESEARCH

WHAT DOES CIVIC ACTION MEAN?

We have broadly defined ‘Civic Action’ as an active concern for the common good. It is generally taken as an individual’s participation in their communities. Participation ranges from concerned interest and informal volunteering through to politicised direct action. As we will demonstrate throughout this guide, traditional definitions of civic action need to be broadened to include a wider range of activities undertaken out of concern for the common good in order to better reflect the preferences of all young people, especially those from socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

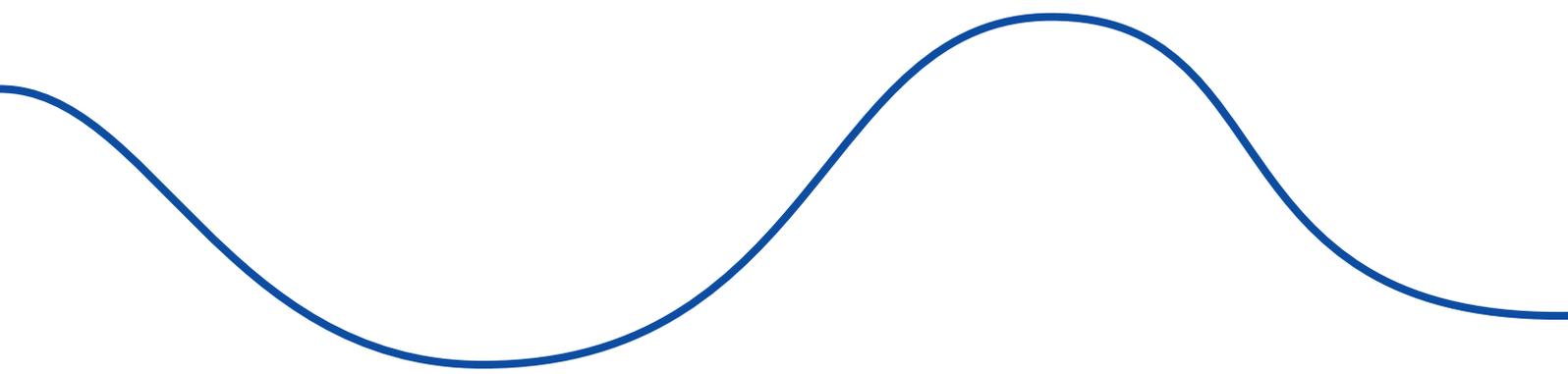
WHY YOUNG PEOPLE FROM SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES?

The number of young people living in poverty in Britain continues to be a key political issue, with recent government statistics revealing that 2.8 million children were living in relative poverty in 2009. However, the term ‘socio-economic disadvantage’ is one that is much broader than the term poverty, which prioritises fiscal inequalities. Socio-economic disadvantage reflects the fact that people who experience poverty are also likely to face a variety of other challenges in their lives.

‘Poverty in Britain is inextricably intertwined with disadvantages in health, housing, education and other aspects of life.

It is hard for people who lack resources to take advantage of the opportunities available to the rest of society.’

(Darton et al., 2003: 9)



KEY FINDINGS

Many young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities are civically engaged;

These young people gain benefits from being civically engaged;

There are, however, many barriers to being civically engaged;

It is imperative that all young people have the opportunity to be civically engaged.

MANY YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES ARE CIVICALLY ENGAGED

'You know, for me it's becoming a canoeing instructor, that was it for me, and I finally found something that I was good at and I no longer cared about that group of friends that had been insulting me for five years, or whatever. Because actually I found something I was good at, where I fitted in and people would say "Actually, do you know what, well done."'

Female, Derbyshire

'I have been babysitting for my mum since I was five years old.'

Female, Greater London

'I painted my dad's living room really nice blue man... You never seen no blue like it. God that is gorgeous.... Me and my dad we don't get on at all... Me and him we always argue... But it is like... Take your anger out on your loved ones apparently.'

Male, Norfolk

'We're the ones that are in care, and it's like we're the ones that people are gonna turn to if they've got a problem. Like we... can say look, this person has got this problem, what can we do about it? And then everyone else can say well, we could do this, we could do that... to help them sort the situation.... It's like... it's like we're, I don't know, listeners for them.'

Male, Derbyshire

'I have got a lot to say man... I just say it in my lyrics like, because I make music.... Rapping... Lyrics.... They are angry and sometimes they are positive but... it is just whatever you think at the time like.... When I make music I would like to make a CD and go round the streets, say listen to this, if you like it tell me. Just give them a little demo for free and that, and then sell it online....'

Male, Norfolk

SCHOOL BASED FOCUS GROUP

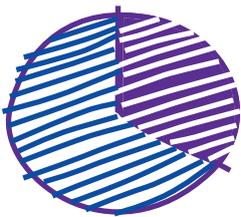
- '... I am part of the British Heart Foundation'
- 'I work with WRVS, the Women's Royal Voluntary Service at the hospital'
- 'I've applied for like... er to work with children who have come out of the domestic violence situation'
- 'Erm... We did a presentation on water... er water poverty around the world'

A SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY COMMUNITIES ARE

Respondents to the young people's survey were asked what activities they were involved with which helped other people. The list of activities was broad and included: Fundraising, advocacy, charity work, community and enterprise challenges, supporting school events such as open evenings, helping primary children to learn and with sports, peer mentoring and school council. Some young people were sports volunteers and others felt that playing sport and taking part was a form of volunteering and helping others. Other young people suggested pro-social behaviours such as 'being helpful' and 'being a friend' were activities they did to help other people.

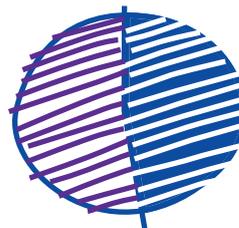
In common with other research our project revealed a more complex picture through the qualitative findings and challenges the survey findings which indicate that only half of the young people considered themselves to be civically engaged. Almost all of the young people that we spoke to in the focus groups could be considered to be civically engaged at some level. Not all would count some of their actions to help others as civic engagement, but we would argue that some young people who are struggling with disadvantage at different levels are making significant contributions to their families and communities at significant cost to themselves.

Do you regularly spend time volunteering or helping others?



Twice as many young people stated that they don't regularly spend time volunteering or helping others as those who do.

In school have you/were you involved in any volunteering or other activities where you have helped other people?



Just over half of the young people stated that they had not been involved in volunteering or helping others through school.

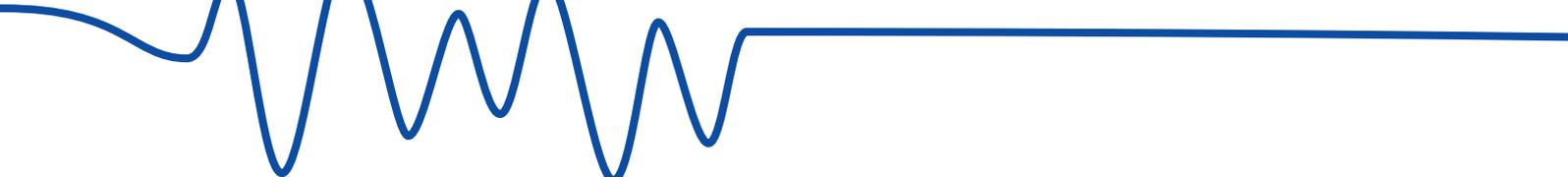
WHAT OTHERS STUDIES HAVE FOUND...

Contrary to popular ideas about a civic deficit amongst the young, there is much evidence that shows young people are civically engaged. Roker et al. (1999) for example, found that, of 1,160 14-16 year olds surveyed, 89 per cent had given money to charity, 70 per cent had signed petitions and 59 per cent had boycotted something because of where, or how, it was made.

The Evangelical Society claims that young people who volunteer give on average 3.57 hours a month, and that if these volunteers were on the minimum wage, it would cost the UK £210 million a year for their time (Clark & Thacker, 2009).

The volunteering organisation V surveyed nearly 2,000 16-25 year olds and found that 41 per cent of young people were engaged in formal volunteering (for example, helping with fundraising through an organisation) and 57 per cent with informal volunteering (Pye et al., 2009).

THESE YOUNG PEOPLE GAIN BENEFITS FROM BEING



‘You get to feel good because you have changed something that you wanted to change.’

Male, Greater London

‘...like when I told people I was volunteering at the library, everyone was like “Oh, ha ha, you’re going to the library. You’re sad”, and things like that. And like now you’re the sad one, because you’re sat on your own doing nothing. I’m actually going out and helping people, and if you think that’s sad then go and sit in the corner.’

Female, Derbyshire

‘I think I will find volunteering in a residential home really rewarding, so I can look after my Nan, because my Nan is disabled. I don’t know.....rewarding, and I can develop myself....’

Female, Norfolk

‘...because I got caught up in all of the stuff, but I really got bored with it. I wanted to do something with my life, rather than just sitting there and doing nothing. I wanted to get out.’

Male, Derbyshire

COMMUNITY BASED FOCUS GROUP

- ‘For my service project for Duke of Edinburgh I did First Aid and I’ve learnt everything... every part of it, and now I’m teaching lessons and getting people onto courses. Like it helps a lot, it does help a lot and you just have a wider view of things, your mind is not so narrow. And just, yeah, learn about all different types of people.’
- ‘It’s just the sense of achievement you get at the end of it really. And you just know that you’re helping to build a better picture of young people, and like get them out of the stereotype that they’re apparently in. But, to be honest, a lot of people do it for their CV.’
- ‘Most of the things that young people do to make a difference is often because of their CV. Like when I joined [Envision] I thought ‘Let me throw it on my CV’, and I actually got a lot more from doing it, but I only started coming because of the CV thing.’

‘Involved Derbyshire offers a chance for young people to try out something new, and gain skills and experiences to take them into paid employment or continuing education. We also see a great ripple effect from peer to peer when a positive has come from volunteering. This also helps what we do to become more socially acceptable not just “doing something for nothing!”’

Jen Walsh, Involved, Derbyshire

CIVICALLY ENGAGED

According to our survey of organisations who work to support young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities in their civic engagement, there are many potential benefits for young people arising from their civic actions. These include:

- **Educational and employment opportunities** through accreditation, learning basic skills, networking, obtaining references, learning how to deal with ‘the system’;
- **Developing soft skills** including confidence, independent living skills, developing friendships, teamwork, self-discipline, developing maturity and tolerance;
- **Being valued** through having a ‘voice’ and having a sense of achievement;
- **Making a difference** to their own lives and to their communities;
- **Greater social cohesion** through meeting new people and challenging prior conceptions.

Helen Deakin, from the British Youth Council, said that the young people they work with have, ‘The chance to have their say and be heard, and learn skills and confidence to get involved in things they care about.’ Ellen Roberts from Centre 33 said that her project, ‘supports the self-development and empowerment of young people involved, and also aims to increase confidence and raise aspirations.’ Young people work towards tangible awards and can receive job references. The project also aims to improve young people’s social networks and social capital, and to promote inclusion and diversity within the community. Mike Senkins said that at Chester University their project, ‘breaks down barriers, reduces segregation, allows people from different backgrounds to mix.’ Magnus Monahan from Highland Council said that his project leads to an ‘increase in confidence, social skills and general self development, as well the chance to influence decisions affecting peers.’

WHAT OTHERS STUDIES HAVE FOUND...

The Young Volunteer Challenge specifically recruited volunteers from more diverse backgrounds, including young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities. The evaluation study showed that feedback from the volunteers about the impact of the programme was overwhelmingly positive. For example, 92% of leavers said that they would take part in YVC if they had their time again and 95% that they would recommend it to friends (GHK Consulting Ltd, 2006:3). The evaluation also found that young people who took part were more likely to progress into education and employment.

THERE ARE, HOWEVER, MANY BARRIERS TO BEING CIVICALLY ENGAGED

'In the Youth Panel we are just pushed aside.'

Female, Greater London

'That is the thing with me. Yeah. People don't understand. I am the man. I am mental. I am crazy. I just come out with random stuff like words you have never heard of. Really I am not... I am not a difficult teenager. I am like a weird teenager.'

Male, Norfolk

'Today at school there is a police... police officers come in and that and they wanted to talk to me about this. So I talked to the hand. I just walked away. I go "Sorry I can't talk to you." He goes "Why can't you talk to me?" I goes "Because you are police officer. I don't like talking to people who have got body armour on and that." Do you know what I mean? I ain't really happy with that. A man has just come up to me with a big body armour and that. I ain't got a gun. I ain't gonna shoot him or nothin' do you know what I mean. What has he got that on for? It is not right.'

Female, Norfolk

'Volunteering? Hard work with no money. Work without the money like. You don't get money for the work. That's what it is.'

Male, Norfolk

'Like there is certain voluntary work that you can go abroad for and stuff and it is like... You might even just love it. We looked at doing that and we looked at like... The cheapest at... aged 17, I don't know if it is like this particular company and they are a bit expensive, but we looked at doing that. And for two weeks like the cheapest for accommodation and food, not even flights or anything else it is like £800.'

Female, Greater London

LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE FOCUS GROUP

- 'I don't know, having lived here for so long. I know I keep going on about it, but it's awful. And like the people there, like they're all in the same mindset, it's like 'All I'm gonna do today is get out, go and get my giro and then go and get pissed'. It is refreshing to meet people with a different mind set.'
- 'People with the money control what goes on.'
- 'But I know like 99% of the population probably just sit there and think like 'I've got no idea what they're talking about. This is my country and yet I've got no idea like who's running it or what they're doing.'

As the young people testify in their own voices, barriers to civic action and volunteering in socio-economically disadvantaged communities are wide-ranging and complex. They include barriers to do with lack of time and money, but they also include more indirect barriers, such as poor health at an individual level, lack of strong citizenship education opportunities or good role models at the local level, mistrust at a national political level, and conflict and economic factors at a global level.

One particularly concerning barrier that was highlighted in some of the focus groups is the way that young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities can be framed as ‘failed citizens’ by the adults in their communities. For some young people barriers come from mistrust amongst older people in the community, and for others they come from poor relationships with public servants such as teachers or the police. Although some young people were clearly very grateful to various community workers, including community police officers, who had supported them and kept them out of trouble, others were resentful about being regularly stopped and searched and issued with ‘blue slips’ denoting anti-social behaviour such as congregating as part of a large group and dropping litter—activities that young people from more affluent communities do without incurring these penalties.

The respondents to our organisational survey also highlighted a range of barriers to the recruitment and retention of young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities. These included:

- A lack of time - due to work and family commitments;
- A lack of money – having to work rather than volunteer;
- A feeling that ‘it is not for us’ / peer pressure;
- Issues with transport – costs and lack of availability;
- A lack of awareness of available opportunities, and the benefits of participation;
- A lack of confidence and skills for participation;
- Pressures of schoolwork;
- Poor prior experiences of participation.

Other barriers come from within the organisations themselves. These included:

- Youth workers lacking the appropriate skills;
- Poor attitudes towards young people;
- Poor communication of the opportunities available;
- Lack of funding to encourage young people to take part;
- Lack of adult volunteers to work with young people;
- Stigma of organisations being associated only with ‘deprived’ young people;
- Lack of links with the targeted communities;
- An inability to provide ‘attractive’ opportunities;
- An inability to build trust and credibility with young people;
- Negative perceptions of the organisations (e.g. church, university);
- Time lag between signing up and actually doing something.

‘One of the biggest issues is about young people having a wide range of pressures on their time, for example having pressure to look after siblings while parents go out to work, or having to go out to work themselves. In addition, in rural areas transportation to activities is limited, for example buses may not run at the times that will get people to and from activities on time. Young people can’t part with money for activities, so the cost of the activities can often be a barrier. Also the way activities are communicated to young people isn’t always meaningful for them or their families, so communicating opportunities in activities needs to be done in a certain way.’

Anna Day, Berkshire Association of Clubs For Young People

IT IS IMPERATIVE

‘Often young people from deprived areas have a chaotic lifestyle and minimal parental support which can mean that attendance is sporadic, leading to poor attendance and ultimately projects closing.’ Lady Kitt, Northumbria Students’ Union

‘These young people often have experience of being repeatedly let down by society, and so motivation to become involved can be very low. Also, many of these young people are not engaged in education, work, training or other mainstream groups, and so can be hard to reach through conventional means as they are “off the radar”. Unless you are an organisation who works directly with this group, recruiting them for young people’s initiatives can be nearly impossible.’ Selina Barlet, Reading Single Homeless Project

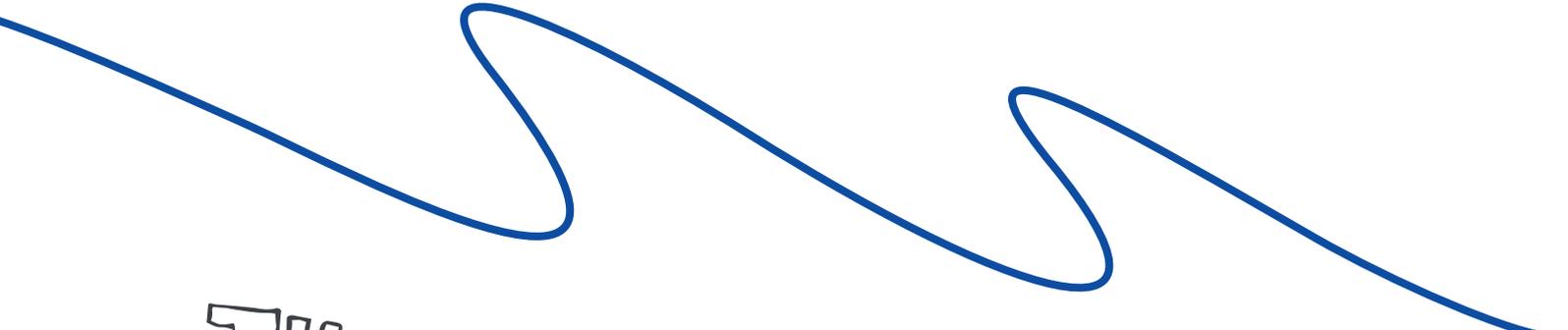
WHAT OTHERS STUDIES HAVE FOUND...

The Young People’s Social Attitudes Survey (2003) found that young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities are less likely than other young people to be engaged in mainstream politics. Socio-economic status was more important than other factors in predicting the types of activities young people engaged in.

A survey by the national youth volunteering charity V found that many young people, particularly from socially excluded backgrounds; do not consider themselves as the sort of person who volunteers. Volunteers were seen as hippies, affluent or old people (Pye, 2009). As we enter a period of fiscal difficulties, it is important to bear in mind, as the Home Office itself pointed out in 2004, ‘Those who suffer the greatest from short term funding are already most vulnerable to social exclusion and least likely to become active citizens in any context’ (Home Office, 2004).

‘We are the future, give us the opportunity to help ourselves’

Female, Leicester



THAT ALL YOUNG
PEOPLE HAVE THE
OPPORTUNITY TO BE
CIVICALLY ENGAGED

This project has shown that there is much good work going on by many voluntary and charitable organisations despite many of these organisations facing uncertain futures due to economic constraints.

It has shown that some young people living in areas of socio-economic disadvantage are already engaged in activities that contribute to the common good of their communities in both formal and informal ways, in public and in private.

It has also revealed, however, that many more young people living in areas of socio-economic disadvantage are not civically engaged. This is problematic because of missed opportunities for intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for both them and their communities.

The remainder of this guide offers five fundamentals of good practice which are intended to support practitioners to successfully engage young people living in areas of socio-economic disadvantage in civic action. There are three case studies from the EngagED project that illustrate these fundamentals.

'I have changed now. I have grown up like... I am nearly sixteen now but... I want to live my life, do you know what I mean, I don't want to be in the cemetery or something. Victim of the streets and that. I want to be living my life real like... I want to be making money. I want to be doing all that stuff. I don't want to be in a coffin and that.'

Male, Norfolk, 2010.

'Three-quarters of employers agree or strongly agree with that volunteering can have a positive effect on an individual's career progression.'

V Employers survey, 2009.

'Non-market reciprocity can harness the latent capacities of citizens and communities, and build public services that draw on the hidden wealth of reciprocity, relationships, and trust.'

David Halpern, 2010.

'Local partners should be able to adjust the system locally to ensure that opportunities become more attractive by... placing more weight on volunteering and community service as a route into work and formal training, developing local initiatives for young people who give their time to the community.'

Hidden Talents Report, 2010.

'The Big Society is about a huge culture change, where people, in their everyday lives, in their homes, in their neighbourhoods, in their workplace, don't always turn to officials, local authorities or central government for answers to the problems they face, but instead feel both free and powerful enough to help themselves and their own communities.'

David Cameron, 2010.

'The cuts that are being imposed on local government and the health service are taking place now. So there are a lot of very worthwhile programmes - for example volunteers working in child protection as promoted by the Minister for Children - which are now under threat of closure.'

Dame Elizabeth Hoodless, 2011.

There is a clear synergy between the voices of young people, experts in the field, scholars and politicians at this current time that points towards the importance of us finding new, apt, vibrant and engaging ways to recognize and support the civic engagement of all young people.

FIVE FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD PRACTICE

We suggest five fundamentals of good practice that facilitators, and particularly those working with young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities, may wish to reflect on.



Civic action undertaken by young people can take place in a wide range of spaces. It can take place in the home, in schools, in the local community or indeed in cyber space. It can be initiated by young people themselves, or by an educator, community worker or anyone with the passion, initiative and vision to establish an environment fertile for civic action.

This guide aims to inspire anyone who is facilitating civic action, regardless of their age, to critically reflect on their current practice. If we are to rise to the challenge of supporting the civic action, voice and learning of young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities, then it is important as practitioners that we stop, think and reflect critically on our current practice. We should also have the courage to be innovators and to think and act differently in our pursuit of seeking to support the civic engagement of all young people.

FACILITATORS:

Facilitators are people, young or old, who seek to set up learning environments that aid the progress of others. They use their expertise and social networks to encourage others to carry out activities within this learning space. A facilitator encourages full participation, promotes mutual understanding and cultivates shared responsibility.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE:

Reflective practice requires facilitators to have courage. It requires them to stop and think about who they are, what they are doing and if they are making a difference. It requires them to be bold, to innovate, be open to new ideas and to make changes to their practice if required.

‘It’s like we’ve been branded with this name of jobs and riff raff, and we’re not all jobs.

We’re all individual at the end of the day, and it’s not fair to be branded with this name.

And it’s not... it’s... we’re all entitled to be different.’

Male, Derbyshire



! THINKING

RECOMMENDATIONS...

- Begin with young people’s starting points based on their current situation and avoid making assumptions about young people, or simplifying their lives, motivations and challenges;
- Where possible, encourage young people to design their own community action projects with support recognizing that this is much more resource intensive and far less predictable;
- Assess the specific issues that may impact on the likely success of the project and what, if any, adult input is required to support young people;
- Encourage young people and the adults involved in community actions to be reflective and critical about their civic action experiences.

Many civic action projects involving young people traditionally offer participants the opportunity to become involved in adult-initiated activities that offer little opportunity for young people to influence and lead. This research project has found that young people have unique perspectives about what matters and about how things could be changed for the better. The challenge for facilitators is then to support opportunities for young people to be involved in participatory projects that respond to their unique skills and experiences whilst also creating opportunities for learning.

DIFFERENTLY

CHANGE 4 ME

In 2009, 20 young people were trained as young researchers by The Children's Society. These researchers were involved in a project initiated and supported by a Leading Edge Project Worker on a project that they decided should focus on researching how young people new to the UK felt about London, education and bullying. They chose a number of aims for their project including:

- To do something for refugees now and in the future;
- To share different views and ideas with others and to know what others think;
- To share our knowledge with others.

A copy of the report 'Change 4 Me- making a difference to new Londoners' is available from The Children's Society at www.childrenssociety.org.uk

INSPIRATION

Open Space for Dialogue and Enquiry

www.osdemethodology.org.uk

The OSDE methodology offers a set of procedures and ground rules to structure safe spaces for dialogue and enquiry.

Young Advisors

www.youngadvisors.org.uk

Young Advisors are young people aged between 15 and 21, who stimulate social action by showing community leaders and decision makers how to engage young people in community life, local decision making and improving services.

Learning Futures

www.learningfutures.org.uk

The learning futures programme has taken a creative approach to identifying the problem of student dis-engagement and exploring the principles behind how to effectively support young people's 'deep engagement'. Most recently it has explored the vision of an engaging school that embodies approaches such as enquiry-based learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS...

- Create opportunities for young people to share their ideas and views about things that matter to them;
- Adopt methods that allow all young people a voice, not just those who are articulate and confident to share their views;
- Ensure that young people actually have an opportunity to influence the decisions that follow so that their input is genuine and is not seen as tokenistic.

Young people have increasingly been encouraged to be involved in decisions that affect their lives, partly in response to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1999). Despite many laudable efforts to elicit the voices of young people recent research shows that this has not always led to young people actually affecting the decisions they have been asked to be involved in. Ensuring that all voices are heard and that these ideas and views actually have influence requires inclusive, innovative and engaging methods to be adopted in eliciting voices. It also requires young people to see and believe that their contribution has made a difference.

2

LISTENING

TAKEOVER DAY

The Children's Commissioner for England hailed Takeover Day as a key example of the invaluable contribution children and young people make to society when given the opportunity to exercise their right to participate as defined by Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Speaking at the North of England Education Conference in Blackpool, the Children's Commissioner for England, Dr Maggie Atkinson, said:

'In 2010, we held our most successful Takeover Day ever. This was thanks to schools and teachers up and down the country taking the opportunity to involve thousands of pupils in decisions and activities, both in the classroom and beyond. I am delighted to report that many young people experienced being the head or teaching for the day. This was thanks to hundreds of schools and thousands of pupils and students up and down the country involving children and young people in decision making and activities.'

For more information visit: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/takeover_day

'I think school should like ask people like what do you care about, and then they should arrange for them to help out with things they actually want to do.'

Female, Greater London

HARDER

INSPIRATION

PhotoVoice

www.photovoice.org

PhotoVoice is a registered charity with a mission to build skills within disadvantaged and marginalised communities using innovative participatory photography and digital storytelling methods so that they have the opportunity to represent themselves and create tools for advocacy and communications to achieve positive social change.

Participation Works

www.participationworks.org.uk

Participation Works is an online gateway for children and young people's participation. It is a hub for information, resources, news and networking on the involvement of young people in dialogue, decision making and influence across a wide range of settings.

National Council for Voluntary Youth Services

www.ncvys.org.uk

NCVYS provides support for organisations so that they can engage with young people on an equal basis and develop quality youth participation practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS...

- Be open to going beyond volunteering. Recognise that many young people are civically active but don't always receive the recognition that a formal volunteer might;
- Acknowledge that young people can be dissuaded from civic action by the use of language and ideas that do not reflect their identity and how they would like to be perceived by others;
- Formalise and structure opportunities for civic action that suit all young people. Recognize that some young people may benefit from more flexible opportunities or from gaining recognition for activities they already do to contribute to the common good but which would not qualify for formal accreditation;
- Understand that participation in extended family duties may represent a significant form of civic action for some young people and that their civic engagement can be encouraged when this type of activity is given recognition.

3 BROADENING

‘A lot of people would think it’s... once you’ve... you know – retired. That’s the thing you do to fill in your time... Even at the volunteer centre I’ve hardly ever come across that many people that are at the retirement age volunteering.’

Male, Derbyshire

Whilst many young people have positive attitudes to volunteering and civic action there are others who do not feel that volunteering is for them because they perceive volunteering to be done by people who are very different to themselves. Young people with negative views about volunteering and civic action are unlikely to actively seek to become engaged in such pursuits or to be successfully recruited by those taking a pro-active stance unless those young people can be convinced that their experiences will be rewarding - either intrinsically or extrinsically.

ENVISION

Envision is an organisation that was formed in 2000 by four young people who aimed to challenge negative stereotypes about young people. Envision programmes help young people to design their own local community projects tackling issues ranging from street crime to climate change. These programmes seek to provide individuals with a powerful and rewarding experience of making a positive difference. Hopefully inspired by their experience, these people will be both willing and able to continue acting as effective role models for their communities.

For more information visit www.envision.org.uk

OPPORTUNITIES

INSPIRATION

Youth4U Programme: British Youth Council

www.byc.org.uk

Youth 4U works with local organisations across England to give disadvantaged and marginalised young people greater influence over services in their areas.

Citizens UK

www.citizensuk.org

Citizens UK is the national home of community organising. The goal of the organization is to build the power of communities to work together for the common good.

Envision

www.envision.org.uk

Envision works with teams of young people based in schools and colleges. Starting with the question, "What do you want to change?" teams are supported to investigate issues relevant to their lives as local and global citizens.

Plings

www.plings.net

Plings provides opportunities for teenagers aged 13-19 to realise diverse ambitions, unexpected interests and share lifestyle-changing experiences. Plings also helps local organisations and venues to promote positive activities, encourage untapped potential and inspire young people.

‘I have not volunteered because I don’t know how to go about it’

Female, London

RECOMMENDATIONS...

- Recognise the range of specific barriers that young people face, particularly those from socio-economically disadvantaged communities, including lack of resources, lack of civic capital, lack of appropriate role models and lack of visible and appropriate opportunities to become engaged;
- Find ways to maximise young people’s chances of becoming engaged by attempting to address specific issues and barriers that discourage young people.

4

MAKING IT

Whilst some young people face very specific barriers that make them less likely to be civically engaged, there are others that have never even considered getting involved due to a lack of awareness or absence of invitation. Organisations wishing to mobilise young people who face significant barriers or who have never even considered becoming civically engaged need to ascertain which barriers are most relevant in their context and identify apt and creative responses to overcoming these barriers.

STREET TALK

Street Talk works with young people aged 11 to 19 living in deprived communities in the West Midlands. It delivers a range of work from detached youth work on the streets with gangs on Friday and Saturday nights to informal education projects in schools.

Exploring issues around identity, belonging and purpose, it helps young people to become both peer mentors and role models by engaging them in civic action projects that raise the profile of how young people can make a positive contribution and difference.

One example is DNA (Differences Never Apply) which promotes social inclusion, youth participation and citizenship. It currently runs at the International School and Community College East Birmingham in Shard End and North Birmingham Academy in Kingstanding.

Young people involved in DNA have formed their own Board of Directors, vision and mission statements and pioneered a number of local social action initiatives such as 'Fair or Foul' (addressing the problem of dog fouling), the rise of cannabis factories, tackling teenage smoking and preventing violent extremism.

For more information visit: www.streettalkltd.co.uk



POSSIBLE

INSPIRATION

LUSU Involve, Lancaster University

www.involve.lusu.co.uk/enterprise

LUSU Involve encourages young people, helped by student volunteers, to set up their own businesses, aiming to make a real difference to their communities.

North East Lincolnshire

www.nellink.org.uk

The Local Involvement Network set up a young people's group last year to produce a DVD around health and social care issues faced by young people in North East Lincolnshire.

The Youth of Today

www.theyouthoftoday.org

The Youth of Today was created to help young people be leaders of change in an increasingly complex world.

The Prince's Trust

www.princes-trust.org.uk

The Prince's Trust is a UK charity that helps young people overcome barriers and get their lives working. Through practical support including training, mentoring and financial assistance, they help 14-30 year olds realise their potential and transform their lives.

‘It’s inspired me
to do a lot more work
now that I’ve seen what
actually happens, because I just...
I literally did it for my CV
and then when I got involved I was like
“Oh, this is actually really fun and it’s
something you can do.”’

Male, London

RECOMMENDATIONS...

- Ensure that young people are able to reflect on what they have gained from their civic engagement (for example enjoyment, experience, qualifications) as this will enhance feelings of self-efficacy;
- Ensure that the potential benefits arising from young people’s involvement are publicised and celebrated in order to challenge stereotypes about young people and to encourage new participants in civic action.

5

REWARDING

Successfully engaging young people in civic action is important because of the positive opportunities it presents for both individuals and their communities and yet often these benefits remain obscured. If young people do not feel they will gain in any way from becoming civically engaged they are unlikely to take that first step and if they cannot see any gains being made whilst they are involved they are unlikely to sustain their involvement. Common gains from participating include learning, accreditation, enjoyment or satisfaction derived from having ‘made a difference’. In order to recruit and retain young people, these potential gains need to be made explicit and celebrated.

THE YOUNG ACHIEVERS

The Young Achievers believe that the most successful way to inspire young volunteers, campaigners and social entrepreneurs is through action based volunteering, which is led by young people and provides inspiration to others. They believe in putting young people at the heart of our organisation and supporting those around us to harness creativity and energy to develop our peers and be the change in the world we want to see.

The Young Achievers Awards are delivered by the Young Achievers Trust, a vibrant and dynamic youth-led organisation. They involve over 100 young volunteers each year in every aspect of our work including photography, branding, fundraising, marketing, journalism and judging. The Trust is unique in being led by a Trustee Board of 12 young people.

The Board is backed by a team of advisors, who support the Trustee's in their decision making. The Young Achievers Trust believes they can have the greatest impact by working in partnership and current partners include the RSA, YouthNet and UnLtd.

For more information visit www.youngachieversawards.org

INSPIRATION

UK Youth

www.ukyouth.org

UK Youth is the leading national youth work charity, supporting over 750,000 young people, helping them to raise their aspirations, realise their potential and have their achievements recognised via non-formal, accredited education programmes and activities.

Big Society Awards

www.number10.gov.uk/bigsocietyawards

The Big Society Award has been created to recognize individuals, groups or organisations that are demonstrating the Big Society in their work or activities.

vInspired awards

vinspired.com/rewards/awards

The vInspired awards recognize the time young people commit, the skills they develop and the difference they make through volunteering.

Philip Lawrence Awards Network

www.philiplawrenceawards.net/about

Awards for young people who do extraordinary things for their communities.

EXPERIENCES

As part of the EngagED project and in partnership with young people to demonstrate the five fundamentals of good practice... in action...

PHOTO VOICE PROJECT

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

This was a cross-curricular photo-voice project which was initiated by the Citizenship Co-ordinator and facilitated by the Art department. Each student was given a disposable camera and asked to take photographs of their local area. Students were encouraged to adopt a balanced approach - to take photographs that showed both the things they were proud of in their local area and also things that they would like to change.

Students were introduced to the project by the EngagED team and also met the photographer Sheba Saeed, who shared her photography from her study and film of 'The Beggars of Lahore'.

LISTENING HARDER

The student project was titled 'Making a Difference' and students were asked to take photographs that captured issues that mattered to them, things they were proud of and things they would like to change about their local area. The students returned the cameras and the pictures were processed, and the prints given back to the students in order for them to decide which photographs they wished to work with.

Students were encouraged to think about the key message(s) they wanted to convey in their individual displays. They then constructed artwork based around the photographs they had selected. Some students created three dimensional models whilst others created posters using a variety of styles and approaches.

A student commented that for her the best thing about the project was: **'Being able to work on my own and show what matters to me.'**



ENGAGED EXAMPLE

we created, a number of civic action projects. These projects sought in real situations... in schools and community settings.

SHIREBROOK ACADEMY, DERBYSHIRE

BROADENING OPPORTUNITIES

As a curriculum based project students were not asked to volunteer their time and were not able to opt out of the project, as the art they produced formed part of the formal assessment of their Art BTEC or GCSE qualification. This said, students took the photographs in their own time and many students returned during their breaks and lunchtimes to finish their work. We were able to access the ideas and views of all 53 students involved.

MAKING IT POSSIBLE

Staff dedicated a block of curriculum time in order to make this project happen. This required genuine commitment from the Art staff who, although apprehensive at first, embraced this new project. They allowed the students freedom to work on their individual pieces and also supported the students to present an assembly to the rest of the school.

In her evaluation one student stated that the best thing about the project was: **'The fact that we could do whatever we wanted to do.'**

REWARDING EXPERIENCES

The art was exhibited at a school assembly and in the school hall for the school community to see. The art was also exhibited at the EngagED final event in the Faculty of Education, Cambridge. The exhibitions were much appreciated by the various audiences.

A student at the school wrote an article about the project, published in her 'School Matters' newspaper, and written for pupils, parents and teachers across Derbyshire. In the article she stated: **'As a student of this course, I loved every day of this project and I am very pleased with myself and what I have achieved.'**



LES OF ACTION

COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECT

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

This project put into action the idea that schools can provide an important learning space for young people to undertake collaborative civic action. Saltley School in Birmingham serves an inner city, socio-economically disadvantaged catchment area and has a national reputation for excellence in Citizenship Education provision. The school was interested in the idea for a collaborative community action learning opportunity to be woven into their GCSE programme. A group of twelve Year 10 students were invited by their teacher Sophia Richards to co-construct their own community action project based upon their own shared community interests. An EngagED team member and the class teacher challenged the more conventional role of adults in the classroom and sought to extend learning relationships within this programme, seeking to work with the students as facilitators and collaborators.

LISTENING HARDER

The programme began with a series of consultation exercises, viewing young people as community experts and inviting them to scope their own community contexts (both local and global) in order to have meaningful conversations about the civic issues that mattered most to them. These discussions were then used for the participants to identify a commonly shared civic issue that they would like to see changed. Participants chose to focus upon the challenges young people and children face growing up in poverty, at both a local and at a global level, in countries such as Pakistan, to which members of the group had strong links.

BROADENING OPPORTUNITIES

A key aim of the programme was to seek to facilitate and support the young people to critically engage with their civic issue of interest, encounter different perspectives, and also to provide the enquiry based learning space to creatively imagine how they might be able to make a difference by collectively leading their own community action. The young people were supported when designing their action response to try and take into consideration the nature of the issue, the institutional context and pragmatic considerations including time, resources, access, and the personal talents and aspirations of the group members. The students were then supported in co-operatively working through the different elements of planning this community action idea, leading and managing its completion and reflecting upon their own learning from these experiences.



SALTLEY SCHOOL AND SPECIALIST SCIENCE COLLEGE, BIRMINGHAM

MAKING IT POSSIBLE

A key aim of the programme was for the EngagED team to work with the expertise of the class teacher as well as draw from the suggestions of the young participants in order to help the group overcome perceived barriers and develop the necessary working relationships and capacities. Consequently the programme in Saltley School involved a number of team building, communication skills and leadership development activities.

The group were introduced to different perspectives on their chosen issue of child poverty and helped to access sources of inspiration in terms of local service providers that were practically involved in trying to make a difference to the issue at hand. This all contributed towards the young people choosing to focus their interest more specifically upon the impact poverty can have on children's and young people's aspirations.

For their community action project they choose to create an interactive workshop to run within their school and for local primary school pupils that would try and raise young people's awareness of the challenges of poverty and also encourage participants with their own visions for the future. Teaching staff served as consultants and supported the participants in the design of these workshops. Following these workshops, the group designed wrist bands with the slogan 'together we can make a difference' that they decided to sell in order to raise funds for the Pakistan floods appeal.

REWARDING EXPERIENCES

This programme sought to engage young people as 'practitioners' creating their own learning opportunities and focus. The programme encouraged young people to act as 'reflective practitioners', with time and space to consider what they felt had been gained from the learning experiences of collaboratively leading their own community action project. They were provided with the opportunity to reflect not only upon the successes but also challenges, setbacks and disappointments they had encountered, and to share their views about how such a civic action and learning opportunity could be improved. Just as importantly they were also provided with the space to recognise and celebrate their collective passion, enthusiasm, creativity and persistence in seeking to bring about positive change where they live.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

The EngagED project was committed to working with young people living in areas of socio-economic disadvantage who were not already known to be civically active in the public domain. Derby Community Action assisted the team to recruit a social enterprise (ncise) in Derby to support us recruiting a community group; the Derby Afghan Community Association. We met with the Chair of the Association, Fesal Ahmad Amani, who explained that there were a number of young men within the Afghan community in Derby whom he believed would gain from being involved in the project, even though they had never previously worked together as a group of young people.

LISTENING HARDER

Eight young men were recruited by the Chair, who the team met with to explain the project and to ask for their involvement. The young men were keen to be involved. In order to listen harder, the young men undertook a photo-voice project. They used disposable cameras to take photographs of their daily lives which they used to make posters which they then annotated and then discussed with the research team. The purpose of this activity was to help create relationships with the young people and gain an understanding of their daily lives and their 'civic engagement'.

The photo-voice project revealed the young men to be keen scholars, proud Muslims and hard-working employees. Despite their busy lives, these young men were keen to contribute to their community.

BROADENING OPPORTUNITIES

It was important to the project team that the civic action project the young Afghans were involved in was one in which they chose to reflect on their own preferences, motivations and experiences. For this reason, the young people were encouraged to think about what they wanted to do. It became clear that the group wanted to contribute to improving the lives of Afghan families in Derby, although they found it very difficult to decide on a project that would achieve these ends. It took several weeks before they finalised their ideas and agreed that they would like to be trained in skills that would allow them to support the work of the Chair of the Community Association. Particularly, they wanted to know how to run a community organisation and manage an office.

DERBY AFGHAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

MAKING IT POSSIBLE

Whilst the EngagED team were very enthusiastic about the project idea, although it presented challenges to them, as they lacked the skills to be able to offer this training. The team identified a trainer with the necessary skills to work with the group and to offer a high quality training programme. This role was taken on by Ilona Navickiene, Development Worker at ncise.

REWARDING EXPERIENCES

The young people involved found the project very rewarding. They were satisfied that they were able to support their community, and the Community Association, and thereby contribute to the Afghan community in Derby, both with the project and into the future.

As keen scholars, the young men also welcomed opportunities to learn new skills and felt that their experiences would also help to enhance their opportunities to gain access to the colleges and universities of their choice.

THANK YOU!

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- Shirebrook Academy, Derbyshire
- YMCA, Derbyshire
- ncise, Derbyshire

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FIVE FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD PRACTICE

THINKING DIFFERENTLY: Think and probably act differently in order to challenge mis-conceptions about young people's lives, experiences and starting points.

LISTENING HARDER: Ensure we listen more carefully to everyone and that the results of listening are reflected in our practice.

BROADENING OPPORTUNITIES: Recognise all forms of civic action including those that take place in the family, community, school and cyberspace.

MAKING IT POSSIBLE: Help young people to help themselves succeed in civic action that matters to them.

REWARDING EXPERIENCES: Support young people to reflect on and recognize the benefits of their civic engagement and ensure that their contributions are recognized by others.



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www.engaged.educ.cam.ac.uk