# United Kingdom

## Working Paper

*Nathalie Huegler*
*Natasha Kersh*
*Helen Lawson*

EduMAP

# Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship

## Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship (EduMAP)

*EduMAP is a Horizon 2020 research project focusing on adult education among young adults at risk of social exclusion. Particular attention is paid to educational policies and practices needed to foster active citizenship among vulnerable young people.*

# 1. Challenges in AE provision and access

In the UK, good practice research focused on the following programmes:

- GP1 is a mentoring programme aimed at raising the aspirations and participation opportunities of young people at risk of social exclusion (many of whom come from care experienced backgrounds) in a Scottish city.
- GP2 is a vocational skills programme for young people aged 16-19 at a small college in an inner city London neighbourhood
- GP3 is an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programmefor learners aged 19 and overat a medium sized college in London, focused on promoting skills and competencies in relation to both language and way of life in the UK
- GP4 is a 'gateway' programme for unemployed young people aged 16 to 29, providing personalised support alongside a tailored learning experience

The adult education provision and access challenges reported across the UK-based data are linked to diverse needs and circumstances of young adult learners vulnerable to social exclusion. In GP4, GP1 and GP2, key issues are about overcoming personal, social and motivational barriers to accessing further learning opportunities. These include, for example, barriers related to socio-economic deprivation, often taking the form of intergenerational cycles of poverty, long-term unemployment and low aspirations affecting whole communities, combined with health (mental health) and learning difficulties, drug use or the risk of becoming involved in gangs and criminal activities. In all three GPs, these factors along with negative experiences in previous educational contexts and negative self-images linked to this (e.g. as disruptive or as lacking academic abilities) can manifest themselves as barriers to social, but sometimes also to spatial mobility (at the extreme, not feeling able to leave the house, but also not feeling comfortable in group contexts, in large learning environments or in leaving familiar neighbourhoods).

For learners in GP3 on the other hand, a key barrier (and focus of the programme) is language competency, along with other barriers related to learners' lived experiences as migrants or refugees (which may include socio-economic deprivation; highly varying experiences of previous education – from high level qualifications through to no or very limited previous education; isolation; experiences of discrimination, lack of access to childcare; etc.).

Overall, those who have gaps in their initial education, have been unemployed long term, lack qualifications and have a range of personal and social difficulties as detailed above face the greatest barriers in accessing adult education, particularly where this involves formal learning and qualifications that they may have struggled with previously in their lives. However, the policy context particularly in England has made it difficult for educational institutions to offer learning opportunities with lower thresholds, as funding has been reduced especially in the more informal education and community-based sectors, with focus instead set on accreditation and qualifications. This affects particularly programmes for learners aged 19 and over. At the same time, a stronger focus on English and Maths skills (as a requirement for learners aged 16-19) can also pose a barrier for those who have struggled academically but want to engage in practical learning (as a first step and as an alternative to not engaging in education or training at all).

## 2. Gender and diversity aspects tackled in the studied programmes

Across the UK-based data, educators and policy makers emphasise the need to take account of gender and diversity issues in programme design and development, referring to range of factors, such as gender, race, class and (dis-)ability, which may interact in an intersectional way. All programmes are set in areas that have experienced migration either traditionally or more recently and many learners describe living in diverse environments as a normal part of their day to day experience. GP3 has a particular focus on learners who have more recently come to the UK from other countries, but the overall learner cohorts in the other programmes are also reported to be ethnically diverse. Equality- and diversity-related learning is considered an important issue in several of the programmes, for example in relation to raising awareness about forms of racism, challenging stereotypical views and use of offensive language, or promoting a conduct of behaviour among learners. Among some learners, feelings of disenfranchisement exist in relation to lacking resources and services at local level, with the arrival of migrants or refugees sometimes being blamed for this. Others report an increased understanding of diversity through both formal learning content on programmes and informal interactions within ethnically diverse learner cohorts. On the other hand, some learners in GP3 report experiences of discrimination and feeling as outsiders linked to their status as migrants with still limited English language skills, with the programme mitigating these factors by improving their confidence and language competence levels.

Gender is often considered as intersecting with other factors, such as ethnicity, class, (dis-) ability or family status (e.g. as a young parent or young carer). For example, practitioners in GP2 refer to educational disadvantages affecting young men from white working class backgrounds who make up a significant proportion of their learner cohorts. Other gender-related factors concern risk of involvement in crime (which is considered to be higher for young men) and risk of unplanned early parenthood (considered to impact more significantly on the life chances and opportunities of young women). The importance of role models among educators is highlighted by several of the programmes, for example in relation to gender matching in the mentoring programme (GP1). From the perspective of some policy experts and practitioners, flexibility (for example in relation to hours of contact, settings and modes and methods of delivery used within programmes), along with a supportive infrastructure (e.g. of childcare provision, or in relation to funding), are key ingredients for making programmes more accessible to a diverse range of young people with varying needs.

# 3. The concept of APC as it is defined, understood or approached in the context of the study by different respondent groups

*Practitioners*

Understandings and conceptualisations of APC vary among the AE practitioners interviewed in the four UK-based GPs, in line with the context of specific programmes and the groups they target, as well as practitioners' own professional and organisational standings. Despite this diversity, there are some common themes:

The capacity of young adults to be active citizens is considered as linked to feelings of **belonging and connection (to a community or society).** However, this sense of belonging and connection may be threatened as a result of experiences of exclusion, such as unemployment, repeated negative experiences in educational contexts, mental health problems, experiences in care or contact with the criminal justice system. In the case of migrants with limited English skills, communication difficulties and resulting isolation may pose particular barriers. APC is also seen as linked to **capabilities and resources** - for example, being able to meet one's basic needssuch as housing and income, but also having confidence, self-esteem as well as the ability to develop **aspirations** and make active choices. In this context, active citizenshipis also associated with **autonomy**, both in a socio-economic sense and in the self-image of adult learners who are exercising a higher degree of choice in relation to their learning experiences compared to school / compulsory education contexts.

In England (GP2, GP4 and GP3), a specific issue raised in the context of conceptualizing APC was the duty by law for publicly funded schools and colleges to take measures to prevent extremism and radicalization (also known as '*Prevent*' duty) while promoting so-called 'fundamental British values' (such asdemocracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance in relation to faith diversity). Practitioners had different views on whether this duty facilitated or hindered the development of APC-related competencies: while it was critiqued as potentially divisive and diminishing the richness of cultural diversity (especially in large cities such as London), by way of its status as a statutory duty it could also provide some further opportunities to introduce APC-related topics into existing curricula.

*Policy makers*

Policy makers interviewed the UKincluded those at local level who were directly involved in overseeing programmes, as well as those influencing policy developments at more national levels. Local policy makers' perspectives were often closely related to those of AE practitioners, for example in considering that young adults' self-image and the (often implicit) messages they receive about their prospects of success are critical factors in relation to their capacity to engage in APC.One view highlighted that **participation takes place at qualitatively different levels**, and for young adults in vulnerable situations this may happen at fairly basic and limited levels:for example, having a basic income enables a form of economic

participation, but this is far removed from the levels of choice, influence and power that might be available to someone familiar with the complex processes driving national economic systems. Similar differences exist with respect to social and political participation, and these differences are significant for people's life opportunities. Policy specialists at national levels echo some of these points, emphasizing the significance of supporting young adults' sense of **confidence and agency**. One perspective is that APC-related learning encompasses a **set of interlinked capabilities** (including health, financial, digital and civic competencies), which are underpinned by literacy and numeracy skills, and through which learners exercise their agency. It is important in this context that AE programmes connect with learners' existing experiences, skills and capabilities, meaning that **learners need to be regarded as co-creators of programmes** rather than as passive recipients of knowledge.

*Young adult learners*

Data across all four UK GPs suggests that for many young adult learners, the concept of active participatory citizenship (APC) initially has limited relevance; in fact, a significant number of learners interviewed comment that they either *'don't understand'* what it means, had not thought about it, or even that they had no particular interest in the concept. However, interview conversations with young adult learners about their aspirations and interests, as well as about practical and everyday life contexts reveal more details about their **implicit understanding of APC**. From this, a number of key themes emerged:

Many young adult learners link APC with certain qualities – such as being supportive, reliable, trustworthy and helpful towards others (whether friends, family or community members). A prerequisite for this is the capacity to be **helpful and supportive**, something that could be brought about through having experienced **receiving help and reciprocating this** to others, or as a result of resilience developed in the process of **overcoming adversity** which provides motivation to support others.

**Socio-economic participation** is also considered as an important aspect of APC – through *earning a living* and achieving economic independence (from parents or from state benefits). Working, engaging in training, volunteering, or developing entrepreneurship ideas is also considered as something which makes young adult learners feel they can be more active in their lives overall and which boosts their confidence levels.

Another perspective on APC focuses on the aspect of 'citizenship' of a particular country, linked with ideas of **belonging, rights and entitlements**. For some learners, being a citizen of the UK is linked with notions of national pride, although this is not equated with any greater sense of entitlement compared to others. A sense of belonging is also mentioned in the context of living in a particular neighbourhood or community for some. However, individual young adult learners also express a sense of disenfranchisement, particularly in relation to the fair distribution of resources (i.e. whether people who have lived in an area for a long time should have priority to access services such as housing over those who have more recently arrived, such as migrants). Other young adult learners, on the other hand, make specific reference to learning in contexts of diversity, for example reflecting on their own (relative) privileges when comparing their situation to those of young refugees studying at the

same college. For learners in GP3, being in the position of 'newcomers' may involve a sense of *starting from zero* and in this context, improving their proficiency of the English language is often considered as a key step in increasing their capacity to participate in day-to-day life.

## 4. Elements that are critical and or significant for enabling learners to become active citizens, or to develop APC competencies in the studied programmes

While the four programmes researched in the UK are diverse in terms of their focus, target groups, content and methodologies, the key elements thatare critical for supporting the capacity of young adult learners in vulnerable situations to engage in active participatory citizenship include:

- An understanding of the specific contexts and situations of learners and the possible barriers arising from these in relation to their participation and learning capacities
- Supporting learners in developing confidence and self-esteem, at a pace which works for them and with a flexible format, including allowing for set-backs
- Providing access to opportunities, resources and networks – which includes both exposure to new experiences and contexts and meeting other people in similar situations or facing similar challenges
- A focus on relationships between learners and educators which are based on trust, reliability and co-creation

Each of the programmes includes these elements in different ways and with a different focus, depending on each setting. In GP1 the focus is on the mentor-mentee relationship and the investment this involves for both young people and their mentors, with the aim that raising young people's confidence levels and broadening their horizons will enable them to overcome social, economic and personal obstacles on their path to further education or employment. In GP2, a critical element is the small setting of the college in which young people feel recognised and treated as an individual with unique qualities and strengths. GP3 focuses on the development of language proficiency, but also provides opportunities to learn about various aspects of life in the UK. One aspect relevant to many learners is the provision of a crèche in one of the centres where the programme is run. In GP4, there is a strong emphasis on helping learners develop positive attitudes about their own capabilities and strengths, through a personalised and highly flexible approach that centres on regular meetings with a personal advisor (alongside other learning opportunities as suitable and appropriate to learners' aims and goals).

## 5. Competencies and qualifications possessed, represented and/or cultivated through by the AE practitioners who contribute to the design, development and delivery of APC programmes for VYAs

A key theme emerging from the UK-based good practice research is the central importance of the AE practitioners' capacity to develop an understanding of young adults' life circumstances and any barriers they might face. Reflecting on actual, potential and hidden vulnerability contexts is considered as a starting point for AE practitioners, enabling them to shape their approaches accordingly. Across the UK-based data, there is a high level of agreement on key AE practitioner competencies and skills needed to successfully include young adults in vulnerable situations and promote their own capacity to actively participate in society. These qualities, skills and competencies include:

- empathy and patience
- good communication and listening skills
- flexibility and the ability to respond quickly to changing situations
- a respectful and understanding attitude towards young adults' circumstances and experiences, especially in relation to previous negative experiences in the education system
- being prepared to engage in a relationship based on mutual trust within the specific learning context
- a degree of resilience and persistence, motivating and challenging learners appropriately
- being non-judgemental, honest and having a sense of humour
- being passionate about their work and wanting *to make a difference*

As the contexts of the four UK-based programmes vary, there are different levels of emphasis on the various qualities and skills listed above. In GP1 and GP2, some learners are reported to appreciate practitioners who share some commonalities with them, for example coming from the same neighbourhood, sharing similar interests, etc., allowing them to identify with them as role models. This may also be affected by the younger age range of learners in these GPs. The extent and depth of the relationship between AE practitioners and learners depends on the individual context of a programme and the AE practitioners delivering it. In the UK-based GPs, this ranges from relationship-building between mentors and young people being the core aspect of the programme itself in GP1, through the role of personal advisors in GP4, to tutors expected to deliver a specific subject, with some provision for out of class support in GP2 and GP3. Therefore, the competencies and skills described above will apply in different ways for AE practitioners, with the boundaries, flexibility and expectations being different for each role. In this context, practitioners and policy makers point out the importance of being able to distinguish between what practitioners can provide themselves and where they need to suggest referrals to (or draw on the advice and guidance from) specialist agencies.

It is also noteworthy that AE practitioners in the UK-based data particularly emphasise 'soft skills' in relation to what they need to support young adult learners in vulnerable situations, while skills and qualifications acquired through training and

professional development are also mentioned, but receive comparatively less emphasis. Being experienced in their roles or in working with particular groups of young adults in vulnerable situations is also something that AE practitioners in the UK-based data consider significant, along with general life experience.

## 6. Critical factors and conditions (favourable and unfavourable) that affect the potential of AE policies to cultivate APC for VYAs

The UK context of AE over past decades has been influenced by a concern for socio-economic participation, particularly through engagement in the labour market of those who might otherwise become recipients of public welfare benefits. While there are differences in educational policy among the different devolved governments within the UK, some common developments are observable. Overall, policies have been strongly influenced by economic considerations, and the development of young people's employability skills has been considered as a key element for their successful integration and inclusion. Factors such as the rise in unemployment rates, the increase in the number of young people not in employment, education or trainingas well as migrationtrends have contributed significantly to the socio-economic objectives of adult education and lifelong learning.  At the same time,there has been concern about growing socio-economic disparities and about the relatively poor performance of young people (16-24) in England and Northern Ireland in literacy and numeracy skills in international and intergenerational comparison.   In the UK context, adult education (AE) and further education (FE) are commonly used terms, which can be both overlapping and distinct.   AE may be used as an umbrella term, interchangeably with Lifelong Learning, or considered through a more specific lens (e.g. community learning), while FE is often (though not exclusively) associated with a VET focus.A key aspect is that funding for young people aged 16-19 is separate from that for learners aged 19 and over, a factor which has also been influenced by policy efforts to encourage young people to stay in education and training up to the age of 18.

These contextual factors are relevant to the UK-based good practice programmes, with some issues highlighted particularly through the research, particularly for the three GPs based in England (GP2, 3 and 4). They are mostly expressed as unfavourable conditions, although in some cases this is due to unintended consequences of what is regarded principally as a favourable condition.

One problem observed is a lack of flexibility within the AE system, particularly for programmes aimed at learners aged 19, mainly because funding focuses on accredited and formal courses and the more informal and community-based forms of education have been substantially affected by funding cuts. However, this can be problematic in the case of young adult learners in contexts of vulnerability and/or social exclusion, because informal and community-based programmes tend to have a lower access threshold and may be more easily accepted by learners with negative experiences and views relating to formal education. ESOL programmes (e.g. GP3) are also affected by funding cuts, leading to less provision and barriers for some learners to access courses.

The funding situation for young people aged 16-19 is described as more favourable,

particularly in the context of the *raisedparticipation age* in England, aimed at encouraging young people to remain in education and training at least until the age of 18. At the same time, publicly funded education programmes for this age range have to include English and Maths qualifications unless young people have already reached a certain standard. While this policy is aimed at enhancing skill levels, practitioners and policy makers interviewed are concerned that for learners who already struggled with these subjects at school, having to re-take exams can pose a barrier to engaging in education or training overall (especially in a context where they may be interested in more 'hands-on' or vocational learning). For practitioners and policy makers, this also relates to the perceived lower status of vocational learning (and AE/FE overall) in comparison to academic learning (and higher education pathways).

At the same time, there is some concern about the often-changing offer of programmes, with providers often not being able to plan ahead due to funding systems, making continuity difficult. This can have an impact both on the quality of available programmes but also on the sustainability of good quality programmes. As a result, in the view of one local policy maker, good practice may be sometimes sustained *despite the [policy] system, not because of it*.

As for the role of APC-related competencies in the curricula of programmes, the focus on formal learning and accreditation is generally viewed as narrowing the opportunities available to provide a favourable context for this kind of learning. As discussed above, some practitioners consider the Prevent agenda in England (see above) as having the potential to re-introduce some APC-related content back into formal programmes (because it has become a requirement to do so), but others are critical of this as a narrow and exclusive approachthey see likely to increase mistrust and divisions rather than encourage active citizenship participation.

## 7. Lessons learnt from laws and policies that contribute effectively to cultivating APC for VYAs

Among the laws and policies considered to contribute effectively to cultivating APC, support for young people leaving care is considered an area that has taken an overall positive development in recent years. This has been particularly due to some cross-departmental policy work, influenced strongly by non-governmental organisations involved in support and advocacy for young people leaving care. The disadvantages faced by young people with experiences of the care system have included a much lower rate in education, training and employment at the age of 19 compared to the general population, as well as a very low rate of participation in higher education programmes. A government strategy document in 2016 (entitled '*Keep on Caring*') proposed objectives such as the promotion of supported internships for young people with education, health and care needs, along with the provision of training costs for care leavers undertaking apprenticeships up to the age of 25. Policy makers interviewed for the research considered that the strategy for care leavers provides a clear focus on the challenges they face and the support which government can provide, leading to several initiatives in this area.

Another policy area with scope to support the participation of young people at risk of social exclusion are traineeship programmes, providing education and training for young people aged 16 to 24 which is aimed at helping them prepare for work or an apprenticeship. While adult skills funding policies have supported the development of apprenticeships, these may not be accessible to young people who have struggled in education previously or who for a variety of reasons (including personal or social difficulties, caring responsibilities or health problems) need more flexible programmes. A policy maker interviewed in the UK-based research considered that initial barriers preventing young people on unemployment benefits from accessing the programmes were addressed effectively by the government, providing a greater degree of flexibility in this case.

## 8. Existing practices of information access and communication (emerging patterns and tendencies; people/social networks; media/platforms/channels; content/messages) about adult education in the studied programmes

Information access and communication practices and patterns vary across the different UK-based GP programmes researched and are highly context-specific.

In GP1, an informal learning programme using mentoring as a key approach, young people are recruited through their existing education or support contexts (i.e. their school or a professional such a social worker). Existing participants are involved in providing information to new learners and acting as peer ambassadors for the programme. The relationship and communication between mentors and young people is a key element of the programme, while communication among the different agencies and actors involved in the programme (the overall organisation running it, the partnering schools, coordinators and mentors) is also very important.

In GP2, the smallness of the learning environment and the familial character of the organisation facilitates the development of supportive relationships between learners and educators, which many of the young people appreciate particularly. Learners often find out about the programme through word of mouth, because they know somebody already studying (or working) at the college, because they have been involved in other activities run by the organisation running the college, or because they live close to the college and have seen its courses advertised outside or in local media. Some learners stay in touch informally and visit occasionally after completing the programme, while a few also find employment opportunities, including by becoming 'home grown' tutors (a fact which is considered advantageous for understanding the contexts in which young people grow up locally).

In GP3, educators support migrant and refugee learners with limited English skills by building their confidence to interact not just in class, but also use their language skills in everyday life contexts, where some may be socially isolated. To do this, relationships of understanding and trust are important. Communication is considered a co-constructive process based on continuous development and dialogue in this context, which contributes to both social inclusion and integration of learners. Support may also extend outside the classroom, with educators sometimes taking on informal guidance or advisor roles in individual cases. Learners' motivations stem not only from wanting to feel more able to communicate with others in everyday life in a range of contexts, but for many who have children, this is also linked to supporting their children's education. At the same time, their own networks play a significant part in accessing information, through 'word of mouth' channels. Networks may also be established or extended through having participated in the same class, with many learners keeping in touch with their peers through channels such as WhatsApp groups.

In GP4, learners are recruited through a variety of means, including through leaflets,

collaboration with a range of partner organisations, as well as advertising in the local press, on social media and through word of mouth. Nevertheless, recruitment can be challenging. A key aspect of communication during the programme is its personalised character based on the needs and aims of each learner, which provides low-threshold accessibility and a lot of flexibility, but also places the communicative skills of practitioners at centre-stage. The programme and its communication practices are designed based on a recognition that many learners will have experienced a range of barriers and problems that have so far prevented them from engaging successfully in employment, education or training (e.g. mental health problems, difficult family contexts, learning difficulties, negative experiences in school, drug use, etc.). The programme's individual and personalised approach allows practitioners to develop relationships of trust, on which all successful communication towards the programme's aims is based. The provision of ongoing support for young people even once they have started work or another education / training course is described as one of the unique aspects of GP4, setting it apart from other more short-term programmes which lack this provision. At the same time, inter-agency communication is of key importance for the programme.

The research conducted specifically with a group of young adults for Communicative Ecologies Mapping (CEM) in the UK involved migrant women who were ESOL learners at the same college running programme GP3 (but in a specific local community venue). What emerged in relation to information access and communication patterns in relation to adult education is that the women used diverse platforms and means (written leaflets or programmes, online information, or through word of mouth). However, social networks and contacts (both personal and sometimes professional) were particularly significant to facilitate their access to programmes and resources.

# 9. Leveraging on VYA's information access and communication practices about adult education

Overall, a key aspect emerging from the study of communicative ecologies across the GPs and in the specific CEM research strand is that communicative practices are highly context-dependent: what works for one group of potential learners or in one programme may not apply in the same way for other contexts. However, some common themes include:

- At the point of accessing AE, a common preference for many young adults in this research for personal communication with someone they know and / or trust (whether personally or through a professional context, e.g. support workers) is significant, alongside accessing more general forms of information (via printed or online media).
- Relationships and networks remain of key importance throughout the course of programmes and some learners keep in touch with each other through platforms such as WhatsApp groups, for example in GP3 or in the CEM research group. In the latter contexts, improved confidence levels in communication mean that participation in programmes widens the range of channels which may be used to access information for future courses. At the same time, this also exposes dilemmas for some programmes in terms of how to reach young adults in vulnerable situations who are particularly isolated (for example as a result of mental health problems or other circumstances which mean they barely leave their homes).

From the perspective of AE providers seeking to promote access to their programmes, the research overall indicates that providing information and communication about AE opportunities through a variety of means is important, but that these need to be adapted to specific contexts. General examples include (but are not limited to) the following:

- A digital 'presence' through a website and social media channels (ideally adapted to the specific communicative practices of their target group, bearing in mind factors such as age or languages)
- Printed media such as leaflets and brochures (ideally in various languages)
- A local / community presence, allowing people walking past the buildings to notice the programme venues and ideally 'walk in' without the need for an appointment
- Considering the potential role of current and former learners as peer ambassadors for programmes, especially given the importance of 'word of mouth' for new learners
- Using multi-agency approaches, for example by providing information about programmes in health centres, other education and advice services, places of worship, community centres, etc.
- Bearing in mind the significance of supportive services (both inside and outside of the organisations running programmes – examples include provision of a creche or of counselling services)

## 10. Information accessed and used during the design of AE for APC programmes

The information accessed and used during the design of the UK-based programmes varies in accordance with their focus and whether they are part of a wider accreditation scheme (GP2 and GP3) or based on more flexible and local design (GP1 and GP4). Overall, relevant data for design purposes includes information about the learner target group, for example figures relating to young people not in education, training or employment in a local area (GP4), as well as about existing local opportunities for training, education or employment. For programmes with a vocational focus (such as GP2), information relating to likely career aspirations of potential learners is relevant for selectingqualification types. Overall, one of the key areas of information for programme design is knowledge of relevant funding regimes. In case of the researched programmes, this includes the various funding streams administered through central government (with different budgets for learners aged 16-19 and those over 19, as well as for different types of programmes), at local level or through European funding schemes (e.g. the European Social Fund programme).

Practitioners and policy makers consider that there is a greater need foreffective information management and sharing of relevant resources (e.g. local educational programmes or volunteering, training and employment vacancies), but a key challenge is posed by the effort and resources that would be needed to constantly keep this up to date. Developing and optimising data systems to track the progress of learners within programmes also remains a challenge for learning providers, due to the varying demands and needs of funding bodies at central and local government levels, as well as of providers themselves.

The extent of (and scope for) learner involvement in programme design strongly depends on the context and parameters of the programme. Programmes which are based on formal accreditations and qualifications (GP2 and 3) leave some room for design to be adapted and influenced by feedback from learners, but the overall frame tends to be set by the accreditation awarding bodies.

At a policy design level, the UK-based research revealssome examples of engagement with young adultsin order to influence the development of educational policies. Non-governmental organisations play a significant role in bridging the gap between policy maker (civil servants') perspectives and the experiences of young adults. These policy-influencing organisations rely on networks with learning providers and organisations which directly support the social inclusion of young adults in vulnerable situations. While there are examples of successful policy influencing work using these network, research participants also note that there is more potential for these 'bottom-up' perspectives from young adults, supporting organisations and AE providers to be taken into account by government bodies responsible for the design and development ofpolicies.