Taking Part? Case Study:

Approaches to Active Citizens Learning: A review of policy and practice 2010-2013

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Abstract

This scoping exercise identifies continuity and change in the environment for active citizenship learning in England, since the change of government in 2010. It maps key initiatives in the range of learning opportunities for active citizenship available between 2010-12 and draws out key elements of continuity and change apparent in their structures, learning approaches and the models of participation they promote. Key findings include refreshed interest in civil society in Freirean approaches to promoting critical forms of active citizenship, which has intensified in response to economic, political and social change; and change for the worse in the structures and resources currently available to support active citizenship learning.

The paper recommends further research, in the form of an in-depth, longitudinal study, of learning and forms of active citizenship emerging from current participatory citizenship activities, both government-sponsored and non-governmental.

1. Introduction

1.1 The research

This small piece of research was conducted in partnership by London Civic Forum (LCF), Take Part Network and Taking *Part?* Research Cluster, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, The Cabinet Office and the Barrow Cadbury Trust.

1.2 Scope and aims of this research

A significant increase in social and economic inequalities in England in recent years (documented in London Voluntary Service Council's year-on-year Big Squeeze research for example[1]) has been widely attributed both to the impact of the recession brought on by the 2008 global financial crisis and to domestic political change. Active citizenship in its broadest sense (see 1.4 below) has taken centre stage in political, media and public discourse around the Big Society, public disillusionment with political, media and state institutions, volunteering and worklessness and anti-capitalist protest.

This research review takes 2010 as our starting point: the year which saw the election of the Coalition government and the launch of its Big Society concept, following a period in which the New Labour government had supported active citizenship in various forms. Two years on, it seems pertinent to undertake a critical review of the impact of political, social and economic developments on community-based practice.

The Take Part Network commissioned this paper as part of its long-term commitment to evidencing the need for more community-based adult learning, to help citizens become more active and develop a stronger voice in both civic and civil society.

It is aimed at an audience of practitioners of active citizenship learning and community-based learning, researchers, policy analysts, and anyone with an interest in public policy in the areas of social policy, democracy, adult learning, community development and active citizenship.

It aims to:

- Review policy, social and economic developments in England since 2010 which have impacted on active citizenship

- Map continuity and change in the provision of active citizenship learning in this period

- Provide practical insight into the drivers behind key developments in policy and practice, and identify useful areas for further research.

1.3 Methodology

The methodology combined community-based and desk-based research with a series of semi-structured telephone interviews with more than twenty individuals involved in work related to

active citizenship learning, based at central and local government, higher education and voluntary and community sector organisations across England.

Table 1.3: Telephone interviews

Organisation	Role of interviewees
Take Part Network	Members based at academic institutions
Local authorities: former Take Part Pathfinders	Managers
Local voluntary and community sector (VCS) infrastructure organisations: former Take Part Pathfinders	Managers Senior managers
Local VCS delivery organisations: former Take Part Pathfinders	Managers
University: former Take Part Pathfinder	Senior manager/academic
Central government	Officer
National adult education organisations (VCS)	Senior managers
Community Organisers Programme	Community organisers Manager at a delivery partner Trustee at a host organisation

As part of the protocol used by the *Taking Part?* research cluster programme at Lincoln University, each interviewee was invited to contribute in a personal capacity, and consequently the anonymity of all respondents should be preserved in reporting. Respondents agreed to contribute on this basis.

The wide remit of the research question and time constraints mean that this report does not claim to represent a fully comprehensive scoping of continuity and change in active citizenship learning since 2010. Instead, it aims to survey and highlight significant factors, led by the observations of the participants, to explore some areas of particular interest to interviewees in a little more depth, and to make recommendations for future areas of further research.

1.4 Terminology

It is crucial to acknowledge the politically-charged and contested nature of all language around participation and citizenship. While this small-scale project does not aim to review the definitions and typologies of participation from an academic perspective, a brief discussion seeks to make explicit key influences on the language adopted in this research.

We adopt the definition of 'active citizenship' articulated by the Take Part Learning Framework[2]. This encompasses civic and civil society participation, volunteering and activism, as depicted in Diagram [1] 1.

The notion of active citizenship was central to policy-making under the New Labour administration, including

Diagram 1: Take Part model of active citizenship

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[1] Model produced by Exeter CVS.

Government-supported initiatives like the Active Learning for Active Citizenship Programme (2004-6) and National Take Part Programme (2008-11). The apparent 'newness' of civic participation in the model seems to have led to a general perception that the term 'active citizenship' prioritises civic over civil society forms of participation. But it is important to note that this term is used in a way that encompasses participation both in civil and civic society.

A range of further definitions and typologies of participation were considered for this research. A 2009 literature review undertaken as part of the Pathways Through Participation research project, distinguished three forms of participation: Individual, Social and Public[3]. Mark Parker's *Activism in Southwark* goes on to review a range of typologies of public participation[4], and proposes a new one identifying Consumer, Conscientious, Communal, Civic and Critical[5] activities as the key normative forms of activism. Of course, any one individual can move between, or combine these forms in a single act or series of acts. In a paper exploring participatory citizenship from a European policy perspective, Hoskins and Kerr described four competing models of participatory citizenship espoused by decision-makers and policy analysts: Liberal, Communitarian, Civic Republican, and Critical[6]. Applied to situated practice, there are connections and distinctions between the features of each of these models. Commonalities include the broad range of 'domains' of activity identified, and the distinction between individual and collective (social) forms of participation, as well as formal and informal roles (see diagram 1.4.2). Key differences include the motivations of active citizens on the one hand (ranging from less to more critical or transformative) and of policy-makers on the other, underpinned by different political philosophies defining the relationship between, and roles of, citizen and state.

2. Context: continuity and change for active citizenship, 2010-12

2.1 Continuity and change in social policy since 2010

The rhetoric used by the Coalition government's 'Big Society' and Localism initiatives represented an apparent shift in political philosophy away from promoting active citizenship in *civic and civil* society towards a focus on *social action and community self-help*. This is part of a wider trend identified across Europe where, in the past few years, more governments are 'favouring support for community activity, as opposed to conventional political participation, with a smaller perceived role for government in society overall.'[7]

The Conservative Party's Big Society vision of a Britain 'where people come together to solve problems and improve life for themselves and their communities'[8] became an explicit part of the Coalition agreement in 2010. It emphasised the 'good neighbour', 'voluntary worker' and 'community group member' elements of the active citizenship model (see Section 1.3, above), situating participation firmly outside the civic realm, and chimed well with the Liberal Democrat manifesto commitment to "the promotion of community-based social action and to the devolution of ... powers to localities and neighbourhoods"[9].

In the period preceding the 2010 election, the Labour government had articulated a commitment to empowering communities through supporting active citizenship, led by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG)[10]. Significant resources had been invested in Active

Learning for Active Citizenship (for example through the £3.1 million Take Part Pathfinder Programme); there were requirements on local government to engage and empower communities (e.g. through Local Strategic Partnerships, and the Duty to Involve) and local government performance on community engagement and empowerment was measured through the National Indicator Set. The Regional Empowerment Partnerships, set up by DCLG as part of the National Empowerment Partnership (NEP) Programme (2007-11), whilst not directly focused on community learning, were a key driver for cultural change in public and third sector institutions.

While the Big Society represented continuity in adopting some key drivers of active citizenship introduced under the previous administration – namely devolution of power and public service reform – it did so with a new focus on 'community self-help', volunteerism, reduction of the state, and stronger emphasis on neighbourhood-level engagement. Early related government initiatives included the Localism Act (CLG), Open Public Services White Paper (Cabinet Office (CO)), Giving White Paper (CO), Academies Act (Department for Education), Community Organisers Programme (Office of Civil Society (OCS), CO), Community First Programme (OCS), Big Society Capital (CO) and National Citizen Service (OCS). It is notable that the majority of Coalition initiatives are located within the Office of Civil Society and the Cabinet Office, whereas the majority of Labour initiatives were led by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Before the general election, David Cameron had voiced a strong interest in the Alinskian community organising work of member-funded organisation Citizens UK, active in the UK since 1996[11]. While the government's Community Organisers Programme specification was strongly influenced by the Citizens UK model, the contract was won by a partnership led by Locality, whose bid promised a Freirean approach to Community Organising[12]. Case Study 8.3 offers a brief exploration of active citizenship learning opportunities within this programme.

Government discourse around 'responsibility' has connected extensive welfare benefit reform with policy supporting community self-help[13]. A related shift away from concern with 'equalities' towards the more nebulous concept of 'fairness'[14] has also been well documented[15], and the Coalition has proposed scrapping the previous government's Single Equality Act 2010, as part of its 'Red Tape Challenge'[16].

In early 2011, the Cabinet Office established the Behavioural Insight Team to introduce 'nudge theory' across a range of public sector activities[17]. A government source for this research made a strong connection between Localism and the Coalition's interest in behaviour change, stating that this approach, while challenging in practice, is seen as a key tool for inspiring and enabling communities to take proactive action towards ownership in local neighbourhoods. However, other interviewees emphasised the failure of behaviour-change approaches to address the root causes of social inequalities.

The co-occurance of the Big Society project with an economic programme of deficit reduction through public sector spending cuts led to the widespread criticism that it constitutes a tool for austerity, 'designed to conceal a deeply damaging withdrawal of the state from its responsibilities to the most vulnerable'[18], with active citizens and communities stepping in to fill the gap. A

useful and comprehensive analysis of recent welfare reform is available in London Voluntary Service Council's Big Squeeze 2012 Report[19].

Non-governmental contributors to this research all argued that the Big Society project was undermined by austerity measures. Several contributors went on to express the view that the Big Society may have been intended all along to 'divide and rule', or to promote the neo-liberal political project, which supports high levels of deregulation and an increased role for the private sector, and which was clearly implicated in the causes of the 2008 financial crisis.

One interviewee working in one of four 'Big Society Vanguard Areas' confirmed that the term was no longer in currency in the area, although the local authority continued to pursue work around the key themes identified through the original project.

Notwithstanding the failure of the 'Big Society' vision to garner public support, throughout 2011 and 2012 the government continued to roll out initiatives related to support for social action, including the 'Red Tape Challenge' (OCS), the 'Building Safe, Active Communities' work of Baroness Newlove (CLG), a pathfinder mutual initiative (OCS), support programmes for community groups seeking to engage with Neighbourhood Planning and Community Rights (CLG), and Community Learning Trust pilots (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills).

2.2 Social and economic continuity and change

2.2.1 'Active citizenship is on hold while people make ends meet'[20]

All non-governmental sources interviewed for this research agreed that the stressful economic climate created by austerity economics and welfare benefit cuts are creating increased inequalities and disadvantage, and pushing citizens to focus on their immediate needs, rather than to participate in the public realm. An academic said, *"Unemployment makes people more individually focused."* While a voluntary sector worker commented, *"When you're struggling to hold down three part time jobs, participation isn't going to be your focus."* An academic based in the north of England said, *"The end of housing market renewal pathfinders means that some communities no longer exist. Houses were knocked down and were not replaced. You physically look around and see change for the worse."* Non-governmental interviewees cited the closure of services such as libraries and day centres as having a negative impact on citizens' ability to come together in public spaces. There is also evidence that economic pressures coupled with the negative portrayal of benefit recipients in government and media narratives is creating a culture of increased intolerance and abuse of the vulnerable, for example disabled people[21].

2.2.2 Depoliticised Britain

Several non-governmental interviewees described modern British society as 'depoliticised'. One said, *"The Left is struggling to find a political language that resonates with the experience of the really poor. We need to work towards 'everyday democracy' - to make politics and citizenship a part of everyday life, not just part of the state."* An adult learning professional identified a lack of political background and awareness amongst younger colleagues in his sector, and an academic observed the short-lived nature of the 2010 student protests against hikes in higher education fees. While government discourse

around the 2011 riots focused on law and order, much public debate focused on disenfranchisement, inequality and political inarticulacy, particularly amongst young people[22].

In fact, many citizens have negative associations with the political. The Pathways Through Participation research (2012) found that even citizens involved in civic roles often strongly reject the term 'political' to describe themselves[23]. One interviewee for this study connected this rejection of the language (if not the practice) of public-realm politics to the weakening of the organised labour movement since the 1980s. Alongside this, long-developing public disillusionment with institutional politics has been exacerbated by incidents such as the MPs' expenses scandal[24] and the Leveson Inquiry, whose revelations included a political class compromised by relationships with the press. The emphasis of the Big Society and Localism agendas on social action rather than civic participation, and communal rather than critical activities, plays well to this public antipathy towards the political.

However, some notable public resistance activities over the past few years suggest that welfare reforms and austerity are igniting some interest in critical forms of active citizenship. UK Uncut and UK Disabled People Against Cuts have led several effective protests against public sector cuts, and Climate Camp has run successful guerrilla gatherings bringing people together for discourse and learning. In 2011, public disaffection with the finance sector triggered the (largely) politicised anti-capitalist global Occupy movement, which established illegal peaceful camps in urban spaces across the UK. Operating outside mainstream politics, Occupy represented a highly visible return to the politics of resistance. There was a strong emphasis on learning, critical dialogue and discourse at the camps, many of which offered lectures, seminars and discussion sessions.

2.2.3 Volunteering

A recent fall in volunteering levels has been linked by commentators to the Big Society agenda[25]. However, there remains a strong tradition of volunteerism: an academic reported that her overseas contacts were consistently *"impressed by the culture of volunteering in the UK."* The British public's understanding of the term 'volunteering' centres on altruism and community service, and has not been widely associated with political activity. Between 2010 and 2012, several major national and international public events created a showcase for volunteering connected with national pride: a royal wedding (2011), jubilee (2012) and the London 2012 Olympics. Each triggered small resistance events, such as republican rallies during the jubilee.

However, there have been massive cuts to volunteering infrastructure: for example, a Volunteer Centre director interviewed for this research told us his organisation had lost half of its staff since 2010. There have also been public concerns about volunteerism becoming tainted through its use to support a public service agenda, for example, volunteers taking over the running of closed public services such as libraries[26].

3. The need for active citizenship learning 2010-12

New policy introduced by the Coalition government triggered an extensive response around the need for support and learning for active citizenship. The following review explores policy briefings and papers published by NIACE, the Workers Educational Association (WEA), the Take Part Network and the Royal Academy of Arts, and comments from interviews conducted for this study.

3.1 Active learning in pursuit of social justice, post-2010

A December 2010 statement by the Take Part Network[27] highlighted the essential role of dialogue in learning for participation. Meaningful active citizenship, the Network states, is only possible through a process of social transformation which *"relies on people's awareness that nobody can escape being part of power relations, and that these exist in the spaces … where their reflection takes place. Dialectic experiences are an essential part of the process that leads to strategies for social transformation, and to imagine a different tomorrow."*[28] The Take Part approach to learning, based on the pedagogic values and principles of Paolo Freire, is set out in full in the Take Part Framework[29].

NIACE's July 2011 briefing 'Why adult learning will make the Big Difference to the Big Society' identifies some specific demands which the government's social agenda makes of citizens, and makes a strong case for wide-ranging adult educational support as a prerequisite for participation: *"We all need to understand the new deal being forged between us, government ... and our neighbour... The need for learning accelerates at times of greatest change so that we can interpret our environment autonomously, adapt to it successfully, and ultimately shape and control it."*[30]

In a 2011 internal discussion paper for the WEA, Greg Coyne explored the need for a revival of transformational adult education in a longer socio-historical perspective[31]. In his paper, he argues that since the 1980s a focus on modular and vocational further education has stripped the politics out of education, *"accrediting competence with too little emphasis on theoretical or underpinning knowledge and no wider contexts discussed"*[32]. Coyne argues that in the context of austerity and benefit reforms, there is a need for radical community education, to *"encourage and enable learners to identify key issues that affect them and their communities at local and 'global' levels"*[33]. Coyne sets out a Freirean educational model for the WEA, in which students of all subjects are supported by facilitators in the role of peers, to conduct community action research and to take and reflect on individual and collective action.

There was widespread criticism from non-governmental interviewees for this report about the lack of government support to combat widening equality gaps opened up by the new opportunities for participation under Localism. This echoes concerns raised by contributors to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Localism[34] and is articulated by NIACE: *"Ensuring social justice and equality in the Big Society is perhaps its greatest challenge... Learning is not the answer to making sure the Big Society is open to all, but it is essential to the solution."*[35]

Two interviewees argued that while the government's Big Society model, creating spaces for civil society participation outside of civic interaction with the state, was intended to enable communal forms of active citizenship, it has opened up new possibilities for public dialogue and therefore

for critical forms of participation: *"Who would ever have imagined that a Conservative government would be creating spaces for resistance?"; "Their peculiar politics - libertarianism around organisation and self-organisation - were a big surprise, and are very interesting. However I'm under no illusions — the voluntary sector has been decimated."*

Three interviewees felt that public anger in response to government reform was beginning to re-politicise elements of UK society. Several more felt that this was still not the case for many individuals, whose concerns remained personal and domestic; one articulated a strong current need to raise consciousness and galvanise anger around poverty, inequalities and oppression.

Interviewees held widely differing views about the importance of supporting civic forms of active citizenship in the current context (see 1.3, above). Several were sceptical, arguing that the previous government's civic-focused approach to active citizenship had served as a means to co-opt activists or volunteers into serving top-down government agendas, *"feeding the beast"*, in the words of one interviewee. However, many others interviewed for this study identified an even stronger need to enable civic participation and voice in policy and decision-making in a new policy environment which allows fewer spaces for it. A number of interviewees based at local voluntary sector agencies criticised the current government's lack of support for initiatives increasing public knowledge about civic structures, and highlighted the need for outreach and learning to enable those from more marginalised communities — for example people with learning disabilities — to have a voice.

3.2 Learning for Localism, 2010-12

NIACE's response to the 2011 consultation 'New Challenges, New Chances', emphasises that *"adult learning is essential to enhance the capacity of citizens to contribute to their communities, develop resilience in the face of radical changes to public services, as well as to help to shape, deliver and evaluate the services that affect their lives... What is vital is that individuals and communities are included as co-producers in order to create solutions with and not for them."*[36]

Non-governmental interviewees highlighted the increased need for highly specialised skills and knowledge if citizens are to engage with localist initiatives, such as legal expertise and technical knowledge around planning systems. They also emphasised the continuing need for more generalist skills and confidence for participation as articulated above, in areas such as public speaking and presentation skills, influencing, negotiating and relationship and network building. An interviewee from the WEA emphasised the continuing importance of basic skills such as English for Speakers of other Languages, literacy, numeracy and ICT. NIACE summarises this broad inventory of the skills and knowledge demanded for participation in localist initiatives as follows:

> *"...Greater agency requires more than the increased opportunities and entitlements offered by the reforms. It needs the ability to read, write, […] work online and to source and use data. It needs knowledge about planning and decision making and the skills to influence them, and it entails the 'know-how' to develop networks and coherent groups, and the acumen to manage money, take innovative ideas to market and build fledgling 'mutual' businesses."*[37]

One interviewee for this study, in light of the specific pressures created by current political agendas, took a more critical perspective, stating: *"Localism is disempowering. Neighbourhood level engagement is designed to keep people busy - it keeps them away from engaging with policy at national level."* In response, she set out five areas of learning essential for active citizenship:

- Confidence, skills, awareness of rights and self-esteem
- Knowledge and understanding of structures and systems
- Practical skills such as group work, persuading and influencing, presentation skills and IT
- Networking, enabling and supporting collective action
- Equality and democratic values

The RSA's 'Beyond the Big Society' report identifies a 'hidden curriculum' in the Big Society agenda which extends any inventory of need beyond confidence, skills and knowledge to competencies, the latter defined as '*grounded in values, attitudes and dispositions, and responsive to complex and often unfamiliar demands in context*'[38]. The authors argue that *"taking participation seriously means recognising that it is often personally challenging, socially divisive or politically contentious"*[39]. Effective participation in the Big Society project requires competence in autonomy, responsibility and solidarity, and the paper posits a strong role for transformative learning in community settings, designed to support adults' personal development in these areas. While there are clearly parallels between this psychology-based model of developing mental complexity and the notion of conscientisation, these are beyond the scope of the RSA paper, which focuses on adult development as a tool for "aligning Big Society objectives with Big Society resources."[40]

Local government representatives highlighted the need for support for time-banking projects, work to engage more people in councillor-led ward assemblies, neighbourhood level activity such as Neighbourhood Planning, and the development of robust volunteering policies.

After first reviewing state-funded support programmes available (Section 4), there follows a speculative analysis of the current central government understanding of the need for active citizenship learning, based on these programmes and on confidential interviews with four government employees (Section 5).

4. Scoping: Active Citizenship Learning Activities, 2010-12

4.1 Active Citizenship Learning Activities at former Take Part Pathfinders

Under the previous government's Take Part Pathfinder Programme (2008-11), 18 local partnerships between local authorities and third sector organisations were contracted to deliver active learning for active citizenship at a local level, based on the Take Part model and Framework (see Section 1.3). Programmes varied widely in their aims and styles in response to identified need, and included, for example, the transformational Schools of Participation model[41], courses in online participation, local and Parliamentary democracy[42], and a wide range of activities offering targeted support designed to empower members of vulnerable communities[43]. During this period, there was little in the way of mainstream adult learning which specifically supported active citizenship, other than the Take Part Pathfinders.

For the current research, a total of ten organisations formerly involved in the delivery of a Pathfinder programme were surveyed, to identify continuity and change in their active citizenship learning offers since the completion of the Take Part programme in March 2011. Interviewees were selected to be broadly representative of the range of sectors involved in delivering the National Take Part programme. The results of this survey are detailed in Table 4.1 below.

Broadly speaking, results show that all organisations have continued to deliver at least some activities developed during the Pathfinder, with most securing alternative sources of funding from local statutory organisations, charities and charitable trusts, and other statutory funds such as the Higher Education Widening Participation Fund. However, most activities continue on a substantially reduced scale than during the Pathfinder. None of the four voluntary and community sector (VCS) infrastructure organisations were able to attract sufficient resources for ongoing and regular active citizenship learning, and apart from short-term programmes their offer is limited to the distribution of paper and online-based support materials (information on involvement opportunities and How To Guides, for example).

In terms of new activities initiated since the Pathfinder, both the local authorities and the university have found small-scale opportunities within Localism-related and other government initiatives, and two organisations (one university and one local VCS organisation) have developed commissionable packages and fee-funded training. Active citizenship learning is central to one national VCS education provider's new volunteer development programme whilst one local VCS infrastructure organisation has become a partner in the British Council International active citizenship programme. However, no other infrastructure organisation has developed new work on active citizenship.

Table 4.1: Active citizenship learning activities 2010-12 at former Take Part Pathfinder organisations

Interviewee No.	Organisation Type	Ongoing activity initiated prior to 2010	New activity initiated post-2010
1	VCS Infrastructure	Continued use of 'How To' guidance materials and online support pages developed under Pathfinder Programme.	Participation in several small-scale European and International initiatives: a. British Institute 'Active Citizens' Programme b. Grundtvig Programme (European Commission)
2	VCS Infrastructure	Continued use of 'How To' guidance materials and online support pages developed under Pathfinder Programme.	None.
3	VCS Infrastructure	Continued use of 'How To' guidance materials and online support pages developed under Pathfinder Programme.	None.
4	VCS Infrastructure	Continued use of 'How To' guidance materials and online support pages developed under Pathfinder Programme.	None.
5	Local VCS direct delivery	Participant-led action learning project initiated under Pathfinder programme, now funded by a local higher education provider, small grants and a private donor	a. A new commissionable package which offers 2nd tier support to embed the approach in partner organisations. b. A fee-paying practitioner programme.
6	Local VCS direct delivery	A small number of courses on topics including parliamentary democracy and community leadership, initially developed under the Pathfinder Programme, now funded by local government and grants from trusts	None.
7	Local Authority	Small-scale ongoing delivery of courses supporting citizens to engage with local policy	None.

		and decision-making, resourced by national adult education charity. b. Ongoing advisory role re. active learning for active citizenship within organisation and local partnerships c. Take Part approach embedded in still-current strategic documents.	
8	Local authority	a. Ongoing delivery of courses supporting citizens to engage with local policy and decision making, funded by local strategic partnership and community education provider b. Ongoing advisory role around active learning for active citizenship and youth empowerment within Council c. Take Part approach embedded in decision-making structures, which emerged through Pathfinder programme.	Core-funded youth programme supporting participation in neighbourhood development
9	University	a. Small-scale ongoing delivery of action learning activities and second-tier training in participatory practice in a social care setting, funded by Higher Education Widening Participation Fund. b. Ad-hoc workshops on community leadership in partnership with local VCS organisations	a. Commissionable package of second-tier training in participatory approaches for practitioners b. Core-funded training delivered as Panel Partner for a Community First Panel c. Peer mentoring training developed and delivered through the Healthy City Programme d. Workshops with residents groups in partnership with two local Housing Associations
10	National VCS adult education provider	a. Ongoing courses in active citizenship, delivered with core funding b. Civic participation content embedded in some	Delivery of active learning for active citizenship embedded in new national volunteer development programme (core funded).

		mainstream provision, such as the ESOL Curriculum (core funded)	

4.2 Other Non-Governmental Active Citizenship Learning Activities in England

A scoping of other active citizenship learning programmes available to UK citizens was explored.

Caveat

This research was necessarily brief, and readers are referred to each organisation's own website for more information. The summary below is not exhaustive, but highlights activities flagged up by interviewees for this research. In categorising programmes as representing continuity since before 2010, or new developments since, this scoping elides detail - there are certainly new developments within programmes of which we are not aware. For the purposes of this study, we have identified continuity where programmes have been running since before the change of government, and whose structure and delivery approach has remained broadly consistent. Of course, within this, all effective programmes supporting citizens with participation constantly evolve in response to the social, political and economic environment. An investigation of innovation in any one of the programmes under heading B in Table 4.2 would be an interesting area for further research.

Table 4.2: Other non-governmental active citizenship learning activities 2010-12

A. Programmes continuous since before 2010

- **Parliamentary Outreach: direct_delivery**
- Workplace and Union learning: union learning reps, workplace learning reps **TUC Education**
- Higher education youth and community education and community leadership: e.g. Freirean programmes offered at providers such as **Birkbeck, Goldsmiths College, Manchester Metropolitan University**
- University-community partnership development such as University of Brighton **CUPP**
- **Citizens UK Community Organising training**
- Community learning provided by social landlords and/or tenants federations e.g. **Leeds Tenants Federation**
- Church Poverty Action Group (CPAG) piloted 2005**Sustainable Livelihoods Approach**,
- Sheila McKechnie Foundation's workshops for community campaigners **Skills-based learning support**
- **British Council Active Citizens Programme**
- Sharing events and course for organisational members of <u>Urban Forum</u>, <u>Locality</u> and <u>National Association for Voluntary and Community Action</u> (NAVCA)
- A range of ongoing active citizenship learning support is concentrated around environmental action and engagement, led by organisations including **TalkAction, Groundwork,** and **Bioregional.**
- Specialist learning support for and/or by communities of interest is provided by a wide range of equalities based organisations, such as the **Disability Law Service, Roma Support Group,** and **The Asian Health Agency.**

- Take Part runs networking events and online good practice sharing opportunities **Take Part Network**
- Niace continues to support adult continuing education through policy and development work, and deliver a range of government initiatives (see Case Study 8.1) **NIACE**

B. New activities, initiated since 2010

- **Parliamentary Outreach: second tier training**
- Higher education community organising courses e.g. at **University of Brighton, QMW**
- WEA restructure and refreshed internal debate around paper **'Active Learning and the WEA'** (see Case Study 8.2) **vision, mission and values**
- New/expanding active citizenship learning programmes at the Young Foundation:
- **Citizens University ('The U')** and **Uprising**
- Web-based peer support networks: **OurSociety** (started 2011, closed 2012); **PowerHouse Network** (started 2012); **NatCAN** (started 2011)
- Delivery of key government programmes by Locality (Community Organisers Programme, Community Rights Support Programme) and NIACE (Adult Community Learning Fund, Community Learning Innovation Fund, Community Learning Trust Pilots): see below
- Community Development Foundation transferred to charitable status; now running government Community First programme): see 6.3 below

Change since 2010 has also taken the form of closure. Since 2010, several organisations or programmes which provided active citizenship learning (for example, London Civic Forum and Operation Black Vote's Magistrate Shadowing Scheme) have closed due to lack of funds.

4.3 Government programmes with elements of active citizenship learning

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills maintained one significant active citizenship programme initiated by the previous government, the Community Learning Champions Programme. A range of new initiatives across government departments, delivered by external agencies, have learning and support elements. The following are the most significant in terms of funding:

Cabinet Office
- Community Organisers Programme (Locality) (see Case Study 8.3)
- National Citizen Service (range of providers)
- Community First (Community Development Foundation)
- Social Action Fund (Social Investment Business)

Department for Communities and Local Government
- Community Rights Support Programme (Locality)

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
- Community Learning Champions (NIACE, continuous since before 2010)

- Community Learning Trust Pilots (NIACE)
- Adult Community Learning Fund and Community Learning Innovation Fund (NIACE)

Local Government

A range of active citizenship learning opportunities continue to be delivered through local authorities and local adult education providers. There is no comprehensive database of activities - this would be an interesting area for future study. Case studies are provided in the paper *Social Value of Adult Learning for Community Empowerment*[xliv] published by NIACE and the Local Government Group.

5. Analysis: Continuity and Change in Active Citizenship Learning

The following analysis draws out key themes from the scoping of active citizenship learning activities since 2010 detailed in Section 6, and identifies elements of continuity and change. It is supported by three more detailed case studies on developments at NIACE, the WEA and Locality's Community Organisers Programme, in Section 8.

5.1 An environment for flourishing active citizenship learning?

Hoskins and Kerr (2012) identify four key factors that enable and sustain learning for participatory citizenship: sustainable funding, well-organised and sustainable structures, collaboration and the internet[xlv]. The first three are explored below; the role of the internet is discussed in 7.21.

5.1.1 Funding

Interviewees confirmed that active citizenship learning at organisations across sectors has been severely impacted by the recession and public sector spending cuts. For example, all interviewees from voluntary sector infrastructure organisations had a strong background in, and stated a commitment to, active citizenship learning. Three of the four had made more than one grant funding bid to continue work in this area, but only one had been successful in securing resources. At NIACE, a workforce cut of 75% has meant that there is now less capacity for development work (see Case Study 8.1).

Direct delivery VCS organisations have found resources from a range of sources to continue to deliver small-scale active citizenship learning opportunities. Local authorities and the Higher Education institution have largely used core funding and funds from partners to support some ongoing activities, and have built active citizenship learning approaches into work around new government initiatives (e.g. Community First, Change Champions). Interviewees based at both central and local government cited spending cuts - for example the slashing of participatory ward budgets in one area - as limiting possibilities for the development of active citizenship learning work.

Limited resources were also cited by several interviewees as a factor in the form of active citizenship learning they were now providing. Some indicated that reduced capacity had been a driver for innovation - for example, in the development of second-tier support packages to enable partners to deliver participatory activities in-house at Parliamentary Outreach. Two ex-Pathfinder organisations had developed commissioning models to resource activities. Several interviewees from both government and non-government organisations identified limited resources as one driver for developing increased peer-to-peer volunteer-based support.

Broadly, interviewees from across sectors expressed extreme pessimism about the future of active citizenship learning in their organisation or area, as a direct result of economic recession.

5.1.2 Local partnerships and collaboration

Locally based organisations, including local authorities and universities, were unanimous in stating that they had lost a range of valuable partnerships and networks since 2010. Reasons cited include: closure and loss of staff at local voluntary and community sector partners; restructure and redundancy in local government partners; increased financial pressure meaning less capacity to innovate or travel to meetings; the abolition of regional governmental structures in 2010 and changes in the funding of Local Infrastructure Organisations[xlvi]. Interviewees in rural areas were particularly affected.

The impacts of this change included fewer chances to share good practice and develop new approaches regionally and nationally, more 'patchy' work, and reduced opportunity for innovation, partnership development and mutual support at a local level.

There were mixed reports about the impact of the current environment on the development of joint working. One Higher Education-based respondent reported that new pressures were leading to increased cross-sector collaboration and sharing. NIACE is currently producing a report on increased activity and interest around community participation and partnership at universities (to be published in 2012). However one university-based interviewee emphasised that community sector closures were having a negative impact on the development of work in this area. Another interviewee identified a culture of increased competition within the voluntary and community sector, arising from diminished resources.

At a local level, a key distinction between the Locality and Citizens UK models of community organising is the former's work outside existing community-based infrastructure and the latter's concentration on organising through existing community networks and organisations (see Case Study 8.3).

5.1.3 Local government structures

Reduced capacity for local collaboration has been exacerbated by changes to local government, including a sharp decrease in resources, the termination of policy drivers around participation such as the Duty to Involve and the statutory Local Strategic Partnership structure. It has been reported that within local authorities, teams previously responsible for community engagement have experienced disproportionately high levels of job loss and restructure, and in many cases have been abolished.

The closure of regional government structures, which prior to 2010 delivered a range of empowerment activities, has also led to reduced opportunities for partnership, particularly in rural areas. In contrast with government, many national non-governmental agencies involved in active citizenship learning have maintained their regional structures, such as Parliamentary Outreach, WEA and the TUC Education Programme.

5.1.4 Structures within central government

Since 2010 there has been a significant shift in responsibility for community-based initiatives from the Department for Communities and Local Government to the Cabinet Office. A contributor to this research with insight into government indicated that this shift broadly reflects the political interests of the ministers leading each department, reflecting in particular a strong focus on decentralisation at the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Three interviewees from non-governmental organisations involved in adult learning were keen to acknowledge the commitment to community learning of John Hayes, the former Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning. One said, *"crucially, he sees community learning as useful. Even though he comes from a patrician perspective, he understands that good education is important – something New Labour couldn't get its head around."*

As a result, there has been relative continuity across administrations for adult community learning, with safeguarded funding, on-going support for the Community Learning Champions Programme, and two funding programmes which emerged directly from the previous government's Transformation Fund (see Case Study 8.1).

5.2 Models of learning for active citizenship

5.2.1 Interest in models of peer-to-peer learning and dialogue

Broadly, there appears to be continued and increasing interest from across sectors in peer-to-peer learning models such as that of the Community Learning Champions, the independent study circles advocated in Greg Coyne's paper for WEA, time-banking, several local 'champion' projects cited by interviewees, and independent learner-led groups emerging from the Adult Community Learning Fund (2011-12), profiled in a paper currently in production at NIACE.

> **Comment [G2]:** Can we get any updates on this?

This represents strong continuity from developments prior to 2010: student-centred learning promoting dialogue and non-hierarchical peer support is an essential element of the Freirean model, and Greg Coyne's paper, in particular, makes this background explicit. Another interviewee acknowledged the fit between volunteer-led, peer-to-peer learning approaches and the Big Society vision of grassroots-based communal participation, and noted that the Community Learning Champions programme was unique in surviving the change of government intact. On a pragmatic note, several interviewees were explicit in referring to reduced resources as a key driver for promoting volunteer-led, peer-to-peer learning models.

Two interviewees with links to the Community Organisers Programme emphasised its strong basis in Freirean dialogue and relationship building in the public realm (see Case Study 3). The National Citizen Service programme also emphasises the value of learning through intense shared experiences for socially mixed groups of young people[xlvii].

A number of new volunteer-led online networking opportunities now offer citizens the opportunity to learn through web-based dialogue, activity and peer support. These include the National Community Activists Network (NatCAN), which hosts regular webinars and highly active online discussion groups, and the PowerHouse Network which supports action and

change through power analysis. As more new online public spaces open - for example the grassroots-led, neighbourhood based sites described in research by Networked Neighbourhoods[xlviii], and the social media and mobile phone platforms key to organising the volunteer 'Broom Army' of volunteers who cleared up after the August 2011 riots (as well as to the organisation of the riots themselves) - they create more potential for learning through peer-to-peer dialogue.

However, not all online networks can successfully sustain activity. Public sector attempts to replicate such locality-based internet crowdsourcing have been unsuccessful in the UK - for example, there was very little public take-up of sites rolled out by several local authorities in London in 2010-11[xlix]. The volunteer-led OurSociety network, which was launched in early 2011, announced it was 'going into sleep mode' in July 2012. It attributed its failure to *"the tailing off of debate about 'big society' and the realities of life for many people, where just getting by has become the priority"*[l].

Peer-to-peer activity also forms part of the government approach to supporting active citizenship, described in the next section.

5.2.2 Learning for different forms of active citizenship

Diversity remains in the forms of active citizenship supported by current learning programmes in the UK. A number of local government and voluntary sector organisations continue to base their work on a civic republican model of participatory citizenship, engaging with and seeking to improve existing governance structures. These include Parliamentary Outreach, content around local democracy in WEA's English for Speakers of Other Languages curriculum, some elements of the Uprising project, the Salford Apprentice at the Community Pride Unit, and 'How [Placename] Works' courses run at two local authorities and one local voluntary sector organisation. Of course, many of these activities also include elements of critical active citizenship. However, interviewees confirmed that it is increasingly difficult to secure resources for such activities.

Fewer learning opportunities focus directly on developing critical active citizenship, but these continue through programmes like Schools of Participation at the Community Pride Unit, Citizens UK's Community Organisers training and the Sheila McKechnie Fund's training for community campaigners. Several interviewees identified a reduced focus within the Trade Union education provision on education for critical forms of active citizenship since the 1980s.

Despite a great deal of talk of Freire and Alinsky in 2010, since then national government has appeared less interested in supporting critical forms of active citizenship; its learning opportunities instead focus on support for community-level social action, community service, and community ownership, for example through the Community Learning Champions Programme, Community Organisers Programme, National Citizen Service (NCS) and the Community Rights Support Programme. At the time of writing, government is consulting on a proposal for a National Retirement Service, based on the NCS model.

However, interviewees involved in the Community Organisers Programme identified opportunities to develop learning for critical active citizenship (see Case Study 3). Emergent

learning for critical participation may also turn out to be a feature of other government-led initiatives.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills appears to take a broader perspective. Its objectives for Government-supported Community Learning connect with the broad aims of the Big Society, to support *'stronger communities, with more self-sufficient, connected and pro-active citizens'*. This permits support for both civil and civic forms of participation, and the objectives contain a rare government commitment to support activities leading to increased civic engagement.[li]

5.2.3 Government initiatives for behaviour change: enabling, inspiring and nudging citizens

Government departments leading on Localism and Big Society-related initiatives have demonstrated little interest in supporting active citizenship learning programmes. The emphasis, instead, is on activities to change behaviours and attitudes in order to inspire and enable citizens into proactive, rather than issues-based, community activity. *Enabling* is understood in terms of reducing red-tape restrictions on community-led activities, and making available new financial models and access to good practice and expertise. *Inspiring* takes place through peer-to-peer championing activities within communities, and building banks of case studies and resources.

There is no targeted provision for citizens or communities facing barriers to social action or participation. Instead, there is a strong focus on the needs of the already active, offering support to 'those who know' in order to enable them to engage others. The government-funded Community Rights Support Programme (delivered by Locality) was cited as an example of a programme established to address these needs.

The theory behind government approaches to behaviour change focuses on 'nudging' - provoking new activities by influencing people's instinctive decisions - and encouraging 'thinking' (their inverted commas) to denote a process in which citizens are brought together for more explicit debate and analysis, as part of a process leading to desired behaviour change outcomes[lii]. The British Academy gives the example of the 'Handforth Big Chin Rub', a community philosophy project which encouraged more people to get involved in civic activities, as an example of a 'think'[liii]. The degree to which 'thinking' in these terms is a form of critical public participation depends on whether or not the behaviour change outcomes are fixed in advance or emerge from the analytical process led by the thinkers themselves.

Several non-governmental sources for this research expressed a perception that the government was not providing sufficient infrastructure support to enable citizens to engage with new initiatives: *"They say the right things - 'yes we want people to engage and people need support to do that' - but it has to be backed up by support for that to happen - it's been undermined. There are loads of bits of money to compete for, but core funding for that support work doesn't exist."*

Meanwhile, the Community Learning Trusts pilot prospectus locates the Government Supported Community Learning Programme firmly in the context of Localism and open public services. The Programme intends to target disadvantage, widen participation in learning and develop stronger communities, through funding community-led learning trusts which *"recognise and meet the*

Comment [G3]: Not sure what is meant by this choice of adjectives, especially 'pro-active'

differing needs, wishes and aspirations of various communities, working ... in a way that strengthens and builds civil society.'[xliv] Pilot areas have recently been announced.

6. Case Studies

The following case studies provide some insight into developments focused on active citizenship learning at the UK's two leading voluntary and community sector adult education organisations, and within the Locality-led Community Organisers Programme, which opened in 2011.

6.1 Adult Learning for Empowerment and Participation at NIACE

The National Institute for Adult and Community Education (NIACE) is an independent organisation which supports and promotes adult community learning through development, research and advocacy. NIACE is resourced largely through national and European state funding, with some additional resources from grant making bodies and trusts. NIACE has been heavily impacted by public sector funding cuts since 2010, as a result of which it has lost around 75% of its workforce.

Despite this drastic downsizing, NIACE continues its work around active citizenship learning. Between 2003 and 2010 NIACE was involved in the steering committee of the ALAC programme - Active Learning for Active Citizenship pilots and supported the development of the Take Part Learning Framework; a representative now sits on the Taking Part Research Cluster ESRC advisory group. Traditionally, NIACE has been highly committed to Freirean approaches to community education, with a majority of staff from community development and informal learning backgrounds. Its ongoing commitment to participation, empowerment and learning models promoting equal status for teacher and students was outlined, for example, in the 2011 report "The Social Value of Adult Learning for Community Empowerment"[lv]. A range of recent policy briefings and consultation responses outline NIACE's views on the importance of adult learning to deliver social justice under the Coalition Government agenda[lvi].

In recent years there has been a strategic move within NIACE to ensure that the formal adult learning sector is better represented in the workforce, and the staffing balance now includes more staff from further education, skills and workplace learning backgrounds, to reflect the diverse adult learning interests represented by NIACE. This might be expected to lead to a wider range of interpretations of ideas on participation and empowerment, and to a greater diversity of approaches to implementing them across NIACE's work.

Despite funding cuts reducing the amount of development work it is able to deliver, NIACE has experienced some continuity in programme delivery around active citizenship learning. For example, it delivers the government-funded Community Learning Champions programme, which supports volunteers to promote adult learning in their communities, and is one of the few programmes which survived the change of administration intact. Although resources have not permitted a longitudinal study of the participation of Champions, it seems likely that they go on to increased participation in civic and/or civil society as a result of the programme.

The Adult Community Learning Fund (ACLF, 2011-12) and Community Learning Innovation Fund (CLIF, 2012-13), both managed by NIACE and funded by BIS, are continuations of the funding model developed for the Transformation Fund under the previous government, albeit with a stronger focus on partnership and with a significantly smaller funding allocation (ACLF

£2.25m, CLIF £4m, compared with the Transformation Fund's £20m in 2009-10). Demand for both the ACLF and CLIF substantially outstripped available funds.

One new initiative in which NIACE is involved is the Community Learning Trust pilot scheme: NIACE managed the tendering process and will deliver the support programme attached to it in 2012-13.

6.2 Continuity and Change at the Workers Educational Association (WEA)

In 2011, Greg Coyne, North West Director of WEA, published the paper 'Active Learning at the WEA' as an internal document to stimulate dialogue about the nature of learning at the WEA. The paper advocates a return to a critical pedagogy suffused with opportunities for critical public participation leading to a 'flourishing democratic re-engagement'[lvii]. It seeks to promote learning as *"a social process where human beings learn off and with each other... teaching and learning is shared by student and teacher alike"* and to build an action research approach into learning across all subject areas[lviii].

While Coyne identifies elements of the post-2010 environment - privatisation, the dismantling of the welfare state, austerity - as making this project particularly urgent, he traces continuity in the need for transformative education in the long rise of the neoliberal project in the UK since the 1970s[lix]. Over the same time period, Coyne identifies a long-term shift away from a shared background in transformative, politicised adult education in the adult education workforce, and specifically at the WEA, a view shared by another interviewee for this research.

The paper coincided with a national restructure at the WEA in 2011, prompted by internal developments on-going since 2004. Coyne reports a positive response to his paper from senior managers. This interest in a return to a more transformative approach is reflected in the refreshed mission, vision and values brought in by the new Chief Executive, making an explicit commitment to *"A better world - equal, democratic and just; through adult education the WEA challenges and inspires individuals, communities and society"*[lix]. Its mission includes *"Involving students and supporters as members to build an education movement for social purpose"* and *"Inspiring students, teachers and members to become active citizens"*[lxi]. The WEA explicitly subscribes to an approach *"using active learning and a student centred approach in which teachers and students work as equals"*[lxii].

In terms of its influence throughout the organisation and in the classroom, Coyne's paper was used to initiate a series of Freirean study circles for staff and partner organisations; while it took a couple of years to get people to enter the discourse, the paper has been well received. Coyne expressed reservations about the extent to which the approach has yet reached tutors and practice in the classroom. However, another WEA-based interviewee felt that this transformative practice is already happening in WEA classrooms, and cited the national Take Part programme as one influence on this. Examples she gave to support this view included the participatory approach promoting civic and critical participation taken by tutors on the English as a Second Language course: this now includes input from Parliamentary Outreach, opportunities to explore and understand the role of local councillors, and a critical perspective on the government national citizenship agenda.

A Freirean perspective on active citizenship is also embedded in national developments in volunteering at the WEA, with renewed emphasis on targeted support for those from disadvantaged communities.

Both interviewees expressed strong interest in Locality's Community Organisers programme ("*it fits in with WEA's approach", "it's worth drawing lessons from"*) and one stated an interest in Citizens UK's Community Organising approach. However, the WEA has not yet had the capacity to engage with either programme.

Potential challenges in the development of a more transformational approach to active citizenship learning at the WEA will include supporting colleagues at classroom level to adopt an approach where they have to be open to a wide range of ideas and political persuasions. One interviewee cited the importance of an ongoing emphasis on social justice in this regard. Strategies for sustaining internal dialogue and stimulating self-led study were also identified as challenges.

Securing and retaining the resources required to sustain such activities might also pose challenges. One interviewee identified improved links with corporate social responsibility in the private sector as a possible strategy to address this.

6.3 Learning for Participation through the Community Organisers Programme

The Coalition Government's Community Organisers Programme, led by Locality, was established in 2011 to *'create a new home-grown movement of community organising for the 21st century, grown directly from the strengths, concerns and hopes of communities across the country'*[lxiii]. The programme, which explicitly claims to be based on Freirean approaches, aims to train 500 community organisers using Re:Generate's Root Solution Listening Matters community engagement methodology, and to place them at community-based host organisations. Organisers are directly employed by Locality for one year, following which they (and possibly their hosts) must seek continuation funding and alternative employment arrangements. The aim is that they in turn recruit and support a further 4,500 'part-time community organisers', who act in a voluntary capacity.

The Coalition Government demonstrated a strong interest in the Alinskian community organizing strategies of Citizens UK while developing the specification for the programme, but Locality was selected over Citizens UK and several other bidding partnerships for the contract.

Comment [G4]: Not sure how relevant this para is – sounds a bit too biased to me

Mayo, Mendiwelso-Bendek and Packham (2012) identify potential continuities between earlier programmes of active learning for active citizenship (with a more civic republican focus) and Locality's Community Organisers Programme, particularly around an interest in Freirean approaches[lxiv]. To explore the kind of learning for active citizenship which might be emerging from the programme, informal interviews were conducted with four contacts: two community organisers and two individuals connected with partner organisations involved in the programme.

The Re:generate Trust articulates the Roots Solutions Listening Matters (RSLM) approach as a way to *"unearth untapped talents, skills and resources in communities"*[lxv], bring together new networks[lxvi], and highlights the importance of building confidence in communities to engage with political and institutional power[lxvii]. The approach uses dialogue and critical reflection[lxviii], and aims to motivate and enable engaged-with community members to identify and act on solutions to local problems. Two interviewees explicitly identified this approach as strongly Freirean in its emphasis on dialogue, praxis and community-level action.

All four interviewees identified a range of positive learning outcomes for the community organisers themselves. Key elements of the programme include weekly peer support meetings for groups of organisers, and structured opportunities for reflection to inform action. Organisers' learning as individuals was reported as widely varied, but was reported as including skills for self-management, reflective practice, teamwork and communications and mentoring.

Two interviewees stated that an element of support for critical public participation - Freire's 'conscientisation' (or critical awareness-raising) - was missing from the programme at present. As part of their training, one organiser had completed a power analysis of his local area, but had not applied it to his practice. However, another organiser highlighted the strong potential of the approach to create new public spaces for critical discourse and political activity. She suspected this would become easier to develop once succession funding and new management arrangements were secured for organisers at the end of the one-year government-funded phase. All those interviewed mentioned the six 'Going Deeper' follow up learning opportunities open to organisers, some of which offer alternative models of community organising.

What learning opportunities are the organisers themselves able to create within communities? While the RSLM approach was described by several interviewees as narrow and restrictive, all of them acknowledged its potential for initiating dialogue within communities. Two interviewees felt that the approach had potential to support organisers into a more active role as facilitators of change, or animateurs, but that in their areas, organisers did not yet have the skills or support to take on this more transformational role. One identified local organisers' key achievements as collecting and recording community intelligence and in some cases, taking social action on behalf of those they engaged with.

One organiser told a story to illustrate the way in which the RSLM approach could draw out and support existing social capital. He had started a dialogue with a young man on the periphery of gang culture, who had initially seemed reluctant to engage. But after having attended several local meetings he had gone on to set up a youth project for younger children, which he said had always been his dream. Another organiser gave the example of holding a community meeting with local residents who had never attended such an event before. She identified important learning outcomes around confidence, understanding how meetings work, and skills and motivation for participation - but emphasised that such learning through community involvement is necessarily long term.

The two organisers expressed very different feelings about the learning opportunities available to 'volunteer organisers'. One felt that the shadowing role taken by volunteers accompanying organisers on house visits was valuable in offering learning about the RSLM process. Another

interviewee emphasised the confidence and skills in reflection and community involvement that volunteers were gaining. Another felt that this approach to volunteers was not useful, and was uncomfortable with the very idea of 'volunteer organisers', divorced from the issue-based activism which motivates many people to take part in their own time.

Finally, two interviewees mentioned the programme's clear focus on working with individuals rather than through organisations: one of the Locality programme's clearest differences from the Citizens UK model of organising. One found it frustrating that local organisers were not yet able to connect effectively with existing local activities, networks and partnerships and felt that the programme's reach was significantly compromised as a result. However another praised the inclusive nature of the door-knocking approach, initiating support for individuals who are not yet engaged in any collective activity, no matter how local and small scale that engagement.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research

Several key elements of continuity and change in active citizenship learning in England since 2010 emerge from the scoping and analysis in this paper.

First, the government focus on a communitarian model of participatory citizenship marks a broad shift from the previous administration's interest in civic republican forms of active citizenship. However, there is some continuity in the availability of learning opportunities for civic participation offered by local government and VCS organisations, although these are increasingly local, informal and piecemeal.

Second, within civil society and non-governmental agencies there appears to be a growing interest in developing learning for critical forms of active citizenship, representing continuity in the espousal of Freirean principles and language. This renewed interest may have been triggered by resistance to public sector cuts and benefit reform, amongst other policy-related factors. An increase in online activity and in peer-to-peer learning opportunities (including those generated by government-sponsored programmes) rather than targeted active citizenship learning programmes appear to be the main sources for developing this growth in critical participatory activity.

Finally, it is clear that for almost all interviewees who took part in this study, 2010 represented a sharp change in terms of the infrastructure available to support active citizenship learning, with government austerity measures jeopardising the availability of resources, support networks and opportunities for collaboration necessary for supporting active citizenship learning. Anxiety and pessimism about the immediate future for active citizenship support in England was expressed across sectors, with explicit reference to government spending cuts and welfare reform.

The broad brief and limited timescale of this scoping exercise have only enabled it to skim the surface of the current environment for, and activity around, active citizenship learning in England. It has revealed a landscape rich with possibility for more in-depth research, including:

- Longitudinal studies of emergent forms of participatory citizenship in the activities of participants in current learning programmes – including those sponsored by government.

For example, several interviewees predicted that in the current context, critical and civic forms of activism might be found to emerge from involvement in learning programmes intending to promote collective forms of citizenship.

- Research exploring the forms of learning for active citizenship emergent from the growing range of internet-based opportunities for peer-to-peer dialogue around active citizenship.

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