

Press release: 1,000 young people to be trained as Democracy Ambassadors

Today during National Democracy Week, the Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith, will be unveiling a new programme aimed at inspiring school-age young people in full time education to engage with democracy from an earlier stage.

The Democracy Ambassador's scheme has been launched to tackle an imbalance in democratic engagement between the UK's older and younger generations.

Research revealed by the most recent Hansard Society Audit of Political Engagement indicates that 18 to 34 year olds are much less likely to feel confident in their knowledge of politics than those who are 35 and above.

Only 39% of 18-24 year olds and 35% of 25-34 year olds claim to know at least a 'fair amount' on the subject.

The Democracy Ambassadors programme, will see 1,000 13-16 year olds recruited across the UK to inform their peers about our country's democratic processes and promote participation. It is intended to increase school-age young people's confidence on the subject, ahead of reaching voting age at 18. People can apply to register to vote at 16, with registration a first, vital step on the path to full democratic engagement. The programme will complement activity aimed at the same age group delivered in schools.

The scheme will be delivered in partnership with Young Citizens and target those who are less likely to be registered to vote when able, including those from disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds. It is being announced as we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the 1928 Equal Franchise Act this week, which gave women equal voting rights.

Ambassadors training will include:

- educating them on how democracy works in England at both a national and local level
- equipping them with the skills to share this knowledge further
- a challenge to reach out to 100 of their peers and encourage

Young Citizens hosted a pilot session for Democracy Ambassadors yesterday to trial key components of the training scheme with a host of 13-16 year olds. Feedback will prove vital in making sure that the final programme meets the needs of the target audience when it's rolled out across England later this year.

Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith said:

National Democracy Week is about inspiring, empowering and engaging people in democracy. School students in particular have told me they want the information and skills to be able to cast their votes when they become adults.

The Democracy Ambassadors scheme has been designed for this age-group as they head towards voting age, to build a legacy of engaged future citizens.

CEO of Young Citizens, Tom Franklin, said:

For nearly thirty years Young Citizens has been championing the importance of young people's democratic participation. Young people are not apathetic to politics, they just need to be given opportunities and encouragement to get involved.

Through Democracy Ambassadors we hope some of our youngest citizens can boost their understanding of how our democracy works and give their peers the confidence to get informed and involved locally on the issues they feel passionately about.