



LEARNING CONNECTIONS

Which UK Schools of Architecture engage with children and young people, and what form does engagement take?

WELCOME
EVERYONE

THIS SPACE
HAS BEEN
DESIGNED
& BUILT
BY
YOUNG
PEOPLE

Fig 1: [Front Cover Image] RENEW project by Bartlett, UCL Outreach x Matt+Fiona (2022)

Fig 2: Design Curial: The Kids Are Alright - Co-Designing with Young People (2019)

SUMMARY

Architecture affects everyone, yet it is the one subject that is not embedded into children's lives. Young people's voices are excluded from discussions and decisions on urban design whilst creative subjects are excluded from the school curriculum. Young people have a vested interest in their own neighbourhoods, yet are often not part of the long-term engagement process. To ensure that young people's voices are heard, it is essential to create opportunities for them to engage in the design process.

Equally, university schools of architecture and the built environment are uniquely placed to teach future built environment professionals the techniques and values of engaging with young people. These spaces for research hold the potential to develop methods and understanding of engaging with community groups to better shape our shared built environment. However, at present it is not mandatory for universities to include community engagement as part of their architecture/built environment courses. Therefore, engagement is limited and varied.

The aim of this research is to find out which UK schools of architecture and the built environment currently offer outreach programmes to children and young people, secondly, which identities are involved in the organisation, design and delivery of engagement, and thirdly, exploring the forms of engagement that this may take, highlighting best practices that can be shared across universities and the wider industry.

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About Thornton Education Trust

Thornton Education Trust (TET) is a charity created to advance education in architecture and urban design for children and young people.

TET believes that youth engagement should be recognised as a valuable part of creating better neighbourhoods and social impact. TET's aim is to build capacity in the field of engaging children and young people in the built environment through creating a community of practice via research, an awards programme and online TET Dialogues.

TET seeks to close the gap between architecture and education: to embed architecture in young people's education, and to embed young people in architecture.

TET Goals:

- Promoting the value of youth-led design/children engagement within the built environment sector.
- Encouraging joined-up thinking and sharing of resources
- Embedding youth-led design approaches within architectural and urban design practice
- Encouraging schools to include the theme of architecture into their teaching
- Demonstrating the valuable skills, opportunities and knowledge to children and young people
- Creating a lasting impact on the design process and the communities involved
- Inspiring the creation of a future generation of place makers
- Informing policy

1. Introduction

This research builds on the well-established fields of children's participation and university outreach, but shifts the focus to the little-studied dialogue and interactions connecting the two. This study aims to find out more about the nature of these connections, providing insight into the impact of such experiences for the young participants, university students, university staff and on the wider industry and community. This research aims to build capacity across the built environment sector so more young people can engage, learn and be empowered.

This report should be used as a starting point for expanding conversation on positive participatory practices. The results, though far from exhaustive, have been collated to offer a database of existing programmes, while case studies have been explored to provide further understanding of the challenges, values, and varying forms of university engagement with young people.

1.1 Three key questions guide this study:

Which UK schools of architecture currently provide engagement with children/young people?

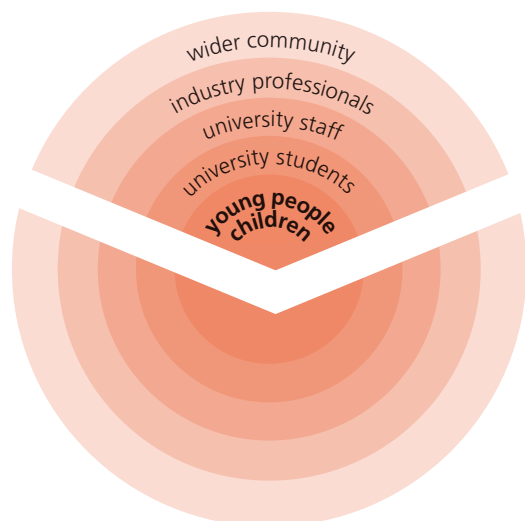
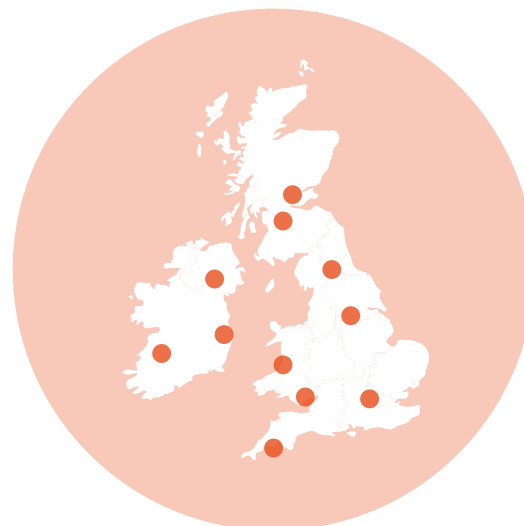
Investigating current, historic and planned engagements across the UK to better understand the context of youth engagement with architecture schools. Where possible, exploring how embedded engagement is within the architecture course.

Who is involved with the organisation, design, and delivery of such engagement?

Identifying the various contributors and collaborators within engagements, and the nature of their involvement. This is in order to illustrate the roles required and the impact that engagement may have on each group.

What form does engagement take?

Recognising that different forms of engagement provide different challenges and opportunities. Ultimately evaluating each form of engagement to develop 'best practices' to be shared across universities and the wider industry.



1.2 Why is youth engagement important?

Reasoning for children and youth engagement has evolved over time with dominant themes including children's rights, children as unique users of services, and participation as a learning tool. It is now known that such participation builds soft-skills and other benefits such as increased self-confidence, leadership abilities and a strengthened sense of community. Participation has been described as an "intrinsic and life-changing inner process"¹.

"Children have the right to give their opinions in all matters that affect them and to have their voices heard. Children's views should always be taken seriously, no matter their age."

- United Nations, Rights of the Child core principles²

1.3 Why is youth engagement important for architectural education?

Across the UK there is a decline in the funding of creative subjects at primary level, and uptake of Art and Design as a secondary subject. This presents vulnerabilities for courses such as Architecture at higher education level³. Universities must therefore consider initiatives that promote and support the visual arts curriculum at various levels.

Concurrently, there is contemporary debate around the range of skills that architectural education should be developing in future professionals, the scope of abilities that the profession should more overtly value, and the overall composition of the profession⁴. With growing expectation for architects to embrace community engagement, particularly with marginalized or unheard voices, it is vital that architecture students are provided the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills of such practices. Schools of architecture shoulder a key responsibility for determining the profession's composition and its relationship to that of the society that it serves.

1.4 Why is youth engagement important for architectural industry?

The Royal Institute of British Architects recognises that "an inclusive and diverse profession that is representative of the society it serves is pivotal to meeting the challenges of the future"⁵. In order to achieve this, addressing the barriers to entry for pre-university young people and progression for university students within the profession is fundamental.

Equally, practices can be involved with engagements, offering professional guidance, facilitation expertise or technical advice, for example. While this involvement may not result in economic benefits for the practice, it can provide positive profiling that can help to procure future work⁶. Rewards in this way might be intangible, though not fully billable.

1.5 How might youth engagement with architecture schools occur?

Nearly all UK universities now offer some form of outreach and engagement for young people into higher education⁷ in the form of practical skills and knowledge through open days, guidance on choosing courses, interview preparation, or general skills such as critical thinking, resilience and stress management. This study is focused solely on engagement involving children and young people with architecture/built environment courses.

With the growing support for youth engagement in design, questions such as 'is children's participation really worthwhile?' are heard less; and questions such as 'what methods are proven to be effective?' are heard more. 'Effectiveness' is dependent on a number of variables for each form of engagement.

Four main types of engagement have been identified within this study, ranging in; time scale, aims, output, delivery, level of participation and people involved:

Programme

A long-term engagement, with the primary aims/outcomes centred on development for children and/or young people.

Live Project

A long-term engagement resulting in a realised output in the form of a structure, report, design proposal etc.

Workshop

A single or multi-day event with immediate visual or learned outcomes for children and/or young people.


























Resource

Activities, guides or databases that can be utilised by children, young people, carers, teachers, architecture students or professionals relating to engagement.

Inconclusive

Due to the limitations of this study, further investigation into relevant outreach programmes was not feasible.

2. Table of Results

	University	Outreach Type	Outreach Name
1	Architectural Association	Workshop 	AA x Accelerate Studios
		Programme 	Summer School
		Programme 	AA x Little Architect
2	Arts University Bournemouth	Inconclusive	
3	Bath Spa University	Workshop 	BSU x House of Imagination CIC
4	Birmingham City University	Live Project 	Connections
5	Centre For Alternative Technology	Live Project 	
6	Coventry University	Inconclusive	
7	De Montford University Leicester	Inconclusive	
8	Edinburgh University	Programme 	Access Creative Education in Schools [ACES]*
		Live Project 	
9	Falmouth University	Inconclusive	
10	Kingston University	Workshop 	Subject Insight Visits
11	Leeds Beckett University	Inconclusive	
12	Liverpool John Moores University	Programme 	LJMU x A Class of Your Own
13	London Metropolitan University	Live Project 	Studio 4: City as a School
		Live Project 	Storytelling Igloo x Aberrant Architecture
14	London South Bank University	Inconclusive	
15	Loughborough University	Live Project 	Outdoor Classroom x Butcher Bayley Arch.
16	Northumbria University	Resource 	Designing With Children
17	Nottingham Trent University	Inconclusive	
18	Oxford Brookes University	Inconclusive	
19	Queen's University Belfast	Inconclusive	
20	Ravensbourne University London	Resource 	Repurposing Architectural Elements
		Resource 	Teacher CPD - Architecture & Spatial Design
21	Robert Gordon University	Programme 	Access Creative Education in Schools [ACES]*
22	Royal College of Art	Inconclusive	
23	Sheffield Hallam University	Inconclusive	
24	The Glasgow School of Art	Programme 	Access Creative Education in Schools [ACES]*
25	The London School of Architecture	Programme 	Part 0
		Programme 	[un]Building x National Saturday Club
26	The University of Westminster	Programme 	Children's University Workshop x Archimake
27	University College London	Programme 	Design Unlimited x Matt+Fiona
28	University for the Creative Arts	Inconclusive	
29	University of Bath	Inconclusive	
30	University of Brighton	Inconclusive	
31	University of Cambridge	Inconclusive	
32	University of Cardiff	Resource 	Resources for Primary/Secondary/Further
		Workshop 	Shape My Street Competition
33	University of Central Lancashire	Inconclusive	
34	University of Dundee	Programme 	Access Creative Education in Schools [ACES]*
35	University of East London	Inconclusive	
36	Univeristy of Greenwich	Inconclusive	

2. Table of Results


















	<i>University</i>	<i>Outreach Type</i>	<i>Outreach Name</i>
37	University of Hertfordshire	Inconclusive	
38	University of Huddersfield	Inconclusive	
39	University of Kent	Live Project 	DROP IT!
		Workshop 	Summer School
40	University of Lincoln	Workshop 	
41	University of Liverpool	Inconclusive	
42	University of Manchester	Live Project 	Praxis Atelier: P.L.A.Y
43	University of Newcastle Upon Tyne	Inconclusive	
44	University of Nottingham	Inconclusive	
45	University of Plymouth	Live Project 	Outdoor Classroom
		Resource 	Children's University: Design Dream House
46	University of Portsmouth	Live Project 	iHeartPompey
		Workshop 	Motiv8
47	University of Reading	Workshop 	Summer/Autumn School
		Programme 	Reading Scholars
48	University of Salford	Inconclusive	
49	University of Sheffield	Resource 	A Handbook for Live Projects
		Live Project 	[Various]
50	University of the Arts London [CSM]	Workshop 	UAL Insights: Summer School
		Workshop 	Short Courses
51	University of Ulster	Resource 	Outreach Academy
52	University of Wales Trinity St David	Inconclusive	
53	University of Wolverhampton	Inconclusive	
54	University West England	Live Project 	Hands On Bristol
		Programme 	Shape My City

Table of Results: Analysis

This desk research was conducted over two weeks, utilising university websites and online publications, as well as digital communication with various university staff, students and professionals working within the field of youth engagement in architecture. This method, though limited, offers a comprehensive reflection of engagement projects in architecture schools across the UK, inviting further discussion and more detailed research opportunities.

2.1 Sharing Connections

Out of the 54 universities searched, 28 [52%] shared some form of engagement between young people and architecture courses online, bringing to question the value of broadcasting engagements online. How might these websites be accessed by young people to find engagement opportunities, or for architecture students to develop their own understanding of outreach within their institution? Engagement might also be utilised by universities to advertise their courses and connection to the wider community.

During the search for this information, other useful online databases were found which can support further study related to this topic. 'Designing With Children' aims to inspire design practitioners and bring together in dialogue anyone interested in exploring how children's cultures, capacities and imagination may have an impact upon the design profession, design process and ultimately the built environment⁸. Though this online database is not limited to engagement with universities, it can provide easily accessible examples for various forms of participation with children and young people to be used by architecture students, tutors setting briefs, or in practice.

2.2 Multiple Connections

Out of the 28 universities which were found to offer engagement, 42 programmes, resources, workshops, and live projects were identified. Majority of the universities found offered at least 1 form of engagement [54%], while many offered 2 forms of engagement [44%] and one university offered 3 forms of engagement [2%]. The benefit of offering multiple engagements from one university ensures that a wider variety of people/outcomes can be reached. However, there is also potential for one single engagement to provide effective, meaningful engagement with resources pooled by various identities for a shared project. As Douglas Smith, Head of Birmingham University reflected on Live Project philosophy in 1961: "to do a little, thoroughly, rather than a lot, superficially"⁹.

2.3 Undated Connections

One limited aspect of this research was the fact that information online did not always state the date or status of each form of engagement. It was difficult to identify engagements which were historic, and therefore no longer 'live', which were currently in progress, and which were at an early, developmental stage. The distinction has not been made in these results, as it is still beneficial to identify any engagement undertaken by architecture schools. Further study into the exact time line of engagements found might reveal reasons why they have been discontinued, lessons learned from long running initiatives, and challenges faced by newly created outreach work.

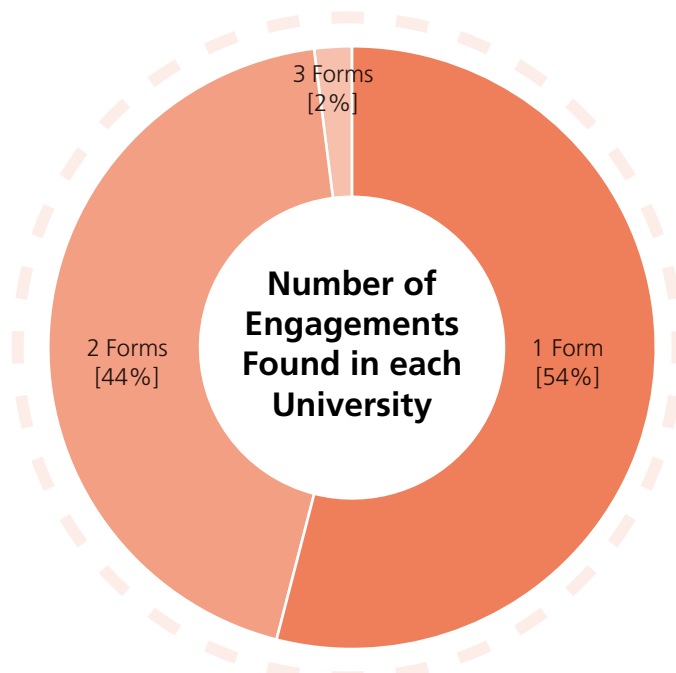
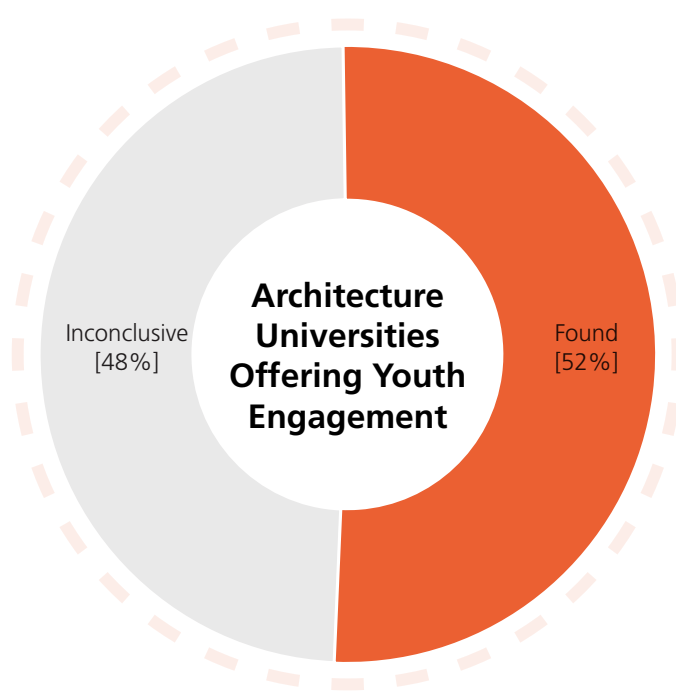


Table of Results: Analysis

2.4 People Making Connections

Another challenge was identifying exactly which people or groups were involved in the organisation, design and delivery of engagements.

The distinction between university outreach teams, and architecture specific staff was not readily available within online information. There is value in these groups working together for engagement delivery. Outreach teams will more likely have the expertise in organisation, relationships with school networks, and resources such as time and funding available, while architecture staff provide knowledge relating to content, tools/materials required and can offer insight into outcomes necessary to pursue knowledge or further study of architecture.

More obvious was architecture student involvement, which tended to be greatest within Live Projects, with these offering the most agency and decision-making power for this group. There is also some involvement by students within Programmes and Workshops, though on an optional and voluntary basis. In whichever form of engagement, whether Programme, Live Project, Workshop or Resource, the impact on architecture students was greatest when their contribution could be integrated with their studies.

One group missing from nearly all engagements researched was architectural practices. Despite the opportunities for both professionals, students and young participants during co-design and participation, it seems as though practice youth engagement is distinctly separate to engagement involving or initiated by universities. While an understanding of the necessity for outreach is growing within the architectural industry, largely fuelled by a burgeoning demand to display 'Social Value', practices must also recognise the important role that they play in the education system¹⁰. By working alongside universities and pre-university youth together, practices hold the capacity to engage with multiple generations simultaneously.

"All practices should consider outreach with schools: it introduces new possibilities to young people."

- Practice Team, Royal Institute of British Architects¹¹

Lastly, a growing number of third-Party organisations focused on architectural education were found to collaborate with universities, facilitating the institution's architectural outreach projects. Many of these offer regional support, though majority are Greater London based. Third-party organisations cannot be depended upon, but might be utilised for knowledge sharing and training opportunities. Some of the third-party organisations found include:

- > **MATT+FIONA:** Working with Bartlett School of the Built Environment to deliver 'Design Unlimited'
- > **Open City Accelerate:** Direct engagement with 3 London schools and Birmingham City University
- > **Urban Learners:** Partnered with London School of Economics to deliver 'Configuring Light'
- > **National Saturday Club:** Partnering with London School of Architecture to deliver (Un)Building
- > **Class of Your Own:** Partnered with University of Edinburgh and Liverpool John Moores University
- > **Archimake:** Partnered with University of Westminster
- > **The Architecture School for Children:** Partnered with University of Manchester
- > **Design West:** University of West England to deliver 'Shape My City'

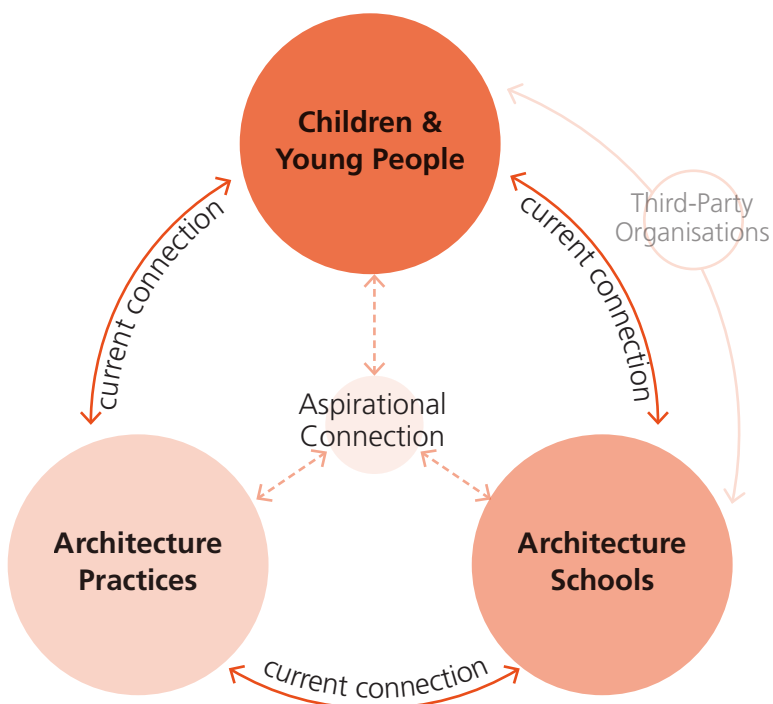


Table of Results: Analysis

2.5 Diverse Connections

Programmes [31%], recognised here as a longer term form of engagement, ranging from minimum two months to one or more years, may be the most prominent form of engagement as they can be the most effective and meaningful. For example, Robert Gordon University's experience in delivering the ACES project over a number of years has shown that "to be effective, engagement activity with young people, schools and other partners has to be ongoing and sustained over a long period. While undoubtedly an expensive, resource intensive approach, it nevertheless provokes more fundamental questions about entry to architecture"¹².

Workshops [29%], which can range from one-off events to maximum one week-long 'summer schools', provide instant, visible, impact and outcomes. For example, the tangible outcomes for workshops might include individual artworks by young participants (such as models or drawings), group collaborative outcomes (such as small structures) or various portfolio content. Though benefits may be shorter term than programmes, the fact that workshops can be less resource intensive than programmes allows for multiple events to happen throughout the year.

Architecture workshops and programmes identified within this research were found to be largely instigated by wider university staff, with the support of architectural tutors and students. While this allows the university outreach team to develop their own practice of engagement, it omits opportunities for greater learning and agency by their students.

Live projects [24%] are often determined each academic year, heavily dependant on the requirements of the local community at the time and the tutors involved willing to facilitate relationships and projects. Live projects, particularly at undergraduate level, are often unique to a small group, unit or studio, where community engagement is part of the brief. While this benefits the small group of participants, it does not recognise the value of participation experience for all future architects. Live projects are the most likely to engage a wider range of groups and individuals, from consultants, real clients and industry professionals. With this, the power dynamics and levels of participation is important to understand. Architecture students must be encouraged to evaluate their positionality when working with children and young people, as too often 'young people' can be generalised into a homogeneous group.

The least common form of engagement found was online **Resources [17%]**, which is unusual considering these can be the most time and cost effective form of engagement. One potential reason for this lack in online resource provision from universities is that there are several other avenues for young people/teachers/carers to search for activities online before university websites. For example, one university provides a YouTube video "Designing a Dream House for Your Favourite Cartoon Character"¹³ which at the time of this report, had just 67 views online, suggesting this resource is not being fully utilised. Databases such as 'Children's University'¹⁴ offers an easily accessible search for online resources available from higher education institutions. These require further marketing and awareness building for relevant groups to access these potentially valuable resources.

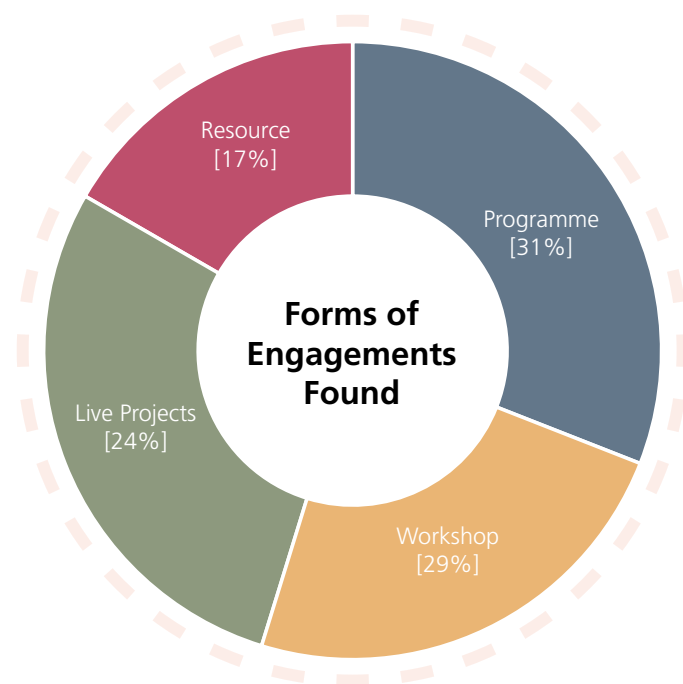




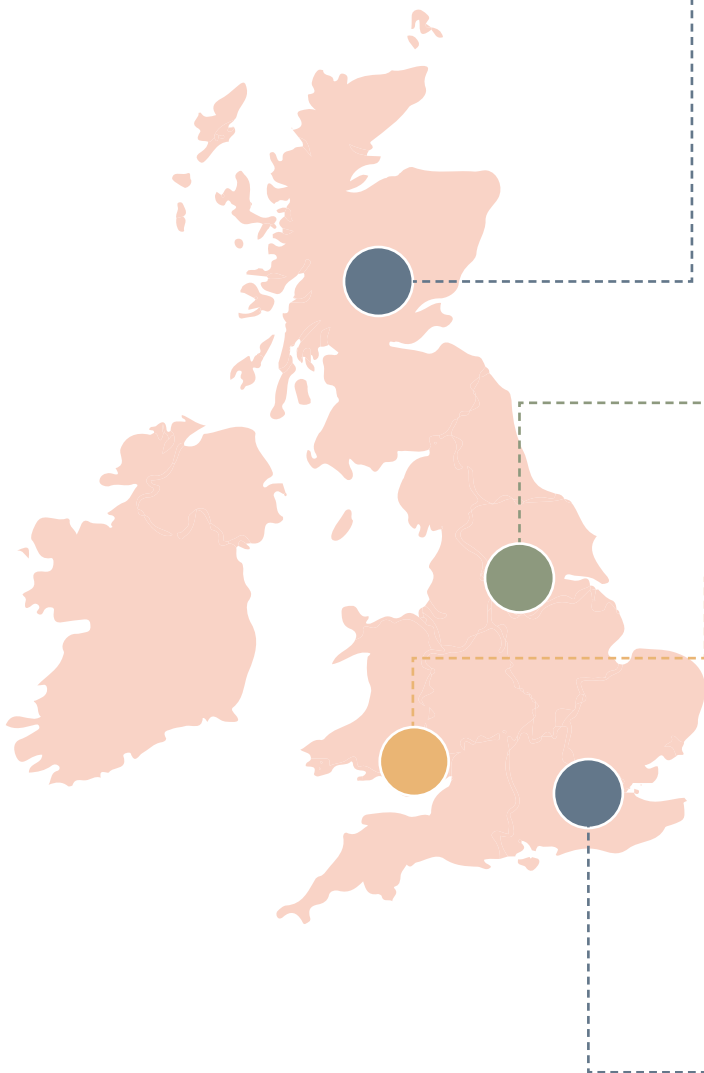
Fig 3: RENEW project by Bartlett, UCL Outreach x Matt+Fiona (2022)

3. Case Studies

In order to understand more deeply the types of engagement offered by UK architecture schools, the following four case studies have been selected. These provide a range of engagement types, locations, time-scales, outputs, delivery methods, levels of participation and people involved.

In the limited scope of this research, further detail into Resources found, as a form of engagement, was not feasible. As Programme was the most prominent form of engagement, two case studies have been discussed, demonstrating the variables that exist within this same form of engagement.

While the aim of this research is predominantly focused on which schools of architecture offer engagement with children or young people, who is involved, and what form engagement takes, these studies do not extend to evaluating impact or effectiveness. In each case study the values and challenges are suggested, but this requires more detailed review.



PROGRAMME:
University of Dundee, Edinburgh University,
Glasgow School of Art, Robert Gordon University



LIVE PROJECT:
Sheffield School of Architecture



WORKSHOP:
Cardiff University



PROGRAMME:
London School of Architecture

PROGRAMME

Access to Creative Education in Scotland

University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow School of Art & Robert Gordon University

Access to Creative Education in Scotland (ACES) is a Widening Participation project for eligible pupils in years S4-6 who attend a state school in Scotland. ACES is part of a national project which aims to encourage applications from pupil groups that are typically under-represented in art, design and architecture courses at university, and to enable the making of informed choices about degree level study in these areas¹⁵.

Strategic funding from Scottish Funding Council was made available to 4 HEIs: University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow School of Art and Robert Gordon University. All the activities are free of charge and ACES provides materials for the pupils. By working in close proximity with young participants over an academic year, it becomes possible to observe them in ways that the conventional application process could never facilitate. **Activities and events, delivered over one year, typically include:**

- One-to-one pre-application guidance for pupils, their family and advisers
- Advice and guidance for each subject strand and extra-curricular requirements
- Workshops on personal statements, interview techniques and portfolios
- Specialist creative workshops
- Portfolio preparation courses
- Gallery and exhibition visits
- Career exploration workshops and events
- Opportunities to meet and shadow current students

The ACES programme is delivered individually by each of the 4 HEIs, coordinated by the various 'Wider Access and Outreach Teams'. This method of organisation brings together the wider university staff knowledge, skills, and resources related to outreach alongside the contribution of architecture staff for relevant activities and events over the year. The relationship between the 4 HEIs, and the similarities/differences of delivering ACES is unclear.

Young participants engage within tutorial-sized groups, with academic tutors working closely to develop a mentoring relationship. Additionally, 'Student Ambassadors' bring enthusiasm and first hand perspectives of undergraduate study to the programme, acting as an invaluable peer mentor and critical friend, creating positive experiences for both young participant and architecture student¹⁶. Involvement by undergraduate architecture students is optional and voluntary.

Key Information

Target Age Group: 14 - 18 year olds

Groups Involved: Young participants / Student Ambassadors / Tutors / University Outreach Team / local creatives

Eligibility: care experienced / lives within the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation lowest 20% (SIMD20) or 40% (SIMD40) / estranged from family / refugee or asylum seeker / entitled to Free School Meals / entitled to Education Maintenance Allowance / low income household / rural or remote area / facing educational disadvantage.

Time length: 1 academic year [June - April]

Aims: To build ambition, enable access and support the achievement of participants, whilst also engaging with parents and carers. The model integrates tutor, pastoral and peer support over a sustained period to meet the needs of the individual learner.

"Pupil confidence and resilience has taken a real hit in recent years, particularly due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Pupils struggle to step outside of their comfort zone, particularly around travelling to new places. [The Programme Coordinator] often tries to meet pupils in schools first, to help pupils put a face to a name and to feel more confident about coming to campus."

- University of Dundee ACES Programme Coordinator

Want to study architecture?



Fig 4: Instagram post by ACES Edinburgh

LIVE PROJECT

Sheffield School of Architecture

The Live Projects are a pioneering educational initiative introduced by the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield (SSoA). Masters architecture students work in Live Project groups with a range of clients including local community groups, charities, health organisations and regional authorities. Live Projects include design/build, master-planning, building feasibility studies, sustainability strategies, online resources and participation tool-kits. In every case, the project is real, happening in real time with real people.

Clients, users and groups that architecture students work with during Live Project vary year to year, and group to group. SSoA has collated an easily accessible online database of all Live Projects¹⁷, including those related specifically to engagement with children and young people.

Of note for this research, is the 'Maker Mindset' Live Project (2023).

13 architecture students, led by 1 tutor mentor, worked alongside local primary school staff, parents, children and external consultants to produce a community-focused and engaging group project, concentrated on user feedback and a co-design process that strived to create meaningful outcomes for all involved. This was achieved through three strategic phases: Phase 1 'Building a Network, Phase 2 'Improving the Existing', and Phase 3 'New Build'¹⁸.

'Maker Mindset' demonstrates the potential benefits for Live Project, inviting greater decision-making and agency by architecture students in the organisation, design and delivery of this project than other forms of engagement.

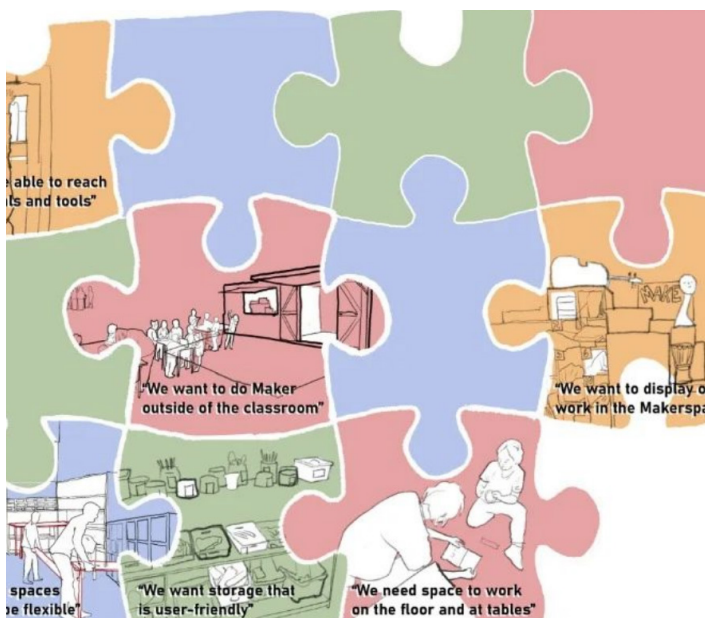


Fig 5: Maker Mindset Engagement Outcome Diagram

Key Information

Target Age Group: 4 - 11 years old
[primary school, age unspecified]

Groups Involved: Primary School Children / School Staff / Parents / Student Designers / Mentor / External Consultants

Eligibility: No Selective Criteria

Time length: 3 week engagement period

"Far beyond the tangible results, as powerful as they have been, the project has created moments that are impossible to capture."

"The energy through school, the sense of possibility and creativity, problem-solving and togetherness has touched the lives of so many children in deep, profound and meaningful ways. For all these reasons, the true legacy of this project is hard to overestimate."

- Headteacher, Arbourthorne Community Primary School¹⁹



Fig 6: A Handbook for Live Projects by Sheffield School of Architecture

WORKSHOP

Shape My Street Competition

The Welsh School of Architecture (WSA) runs an annual Shape My Street competition designed to introduce young learners to ideas about home, place and community. The competition was launched in 2019 by Dr Ed Green and is a national design competition for primary schools in Wales, supported by the STEM network, the Design Commission for Wales and the Future Generations Commission.

The Shape My Street competition is concerned with design and quality in our neighbourhoods and introduces participating Key Stage 2 classes to core ideas about home, place and community. The initiative integrates science and technology learning with creative design-based exercises and structured learning activities. Classmates will discuss which aspects of 'home' and 'street' make successful neighbourhoods.

The competition activities are intended to develop understanding of the importance of design and quality in the built environment, and raise awareness of careers in related creative industries. The competition is intended to maximise engagement across primary schools in Wales, and a particular aim of the programme is to encourage participation from schools in remote geographic locations and economically disadvantaged communities.

Participation requires a minimum of two half days in-school. All competition resources and supporting material are provided for free. This activity was adapted during COVID-19 pandemic for delivery at home, with adult assistance²⁰.

Key Information

Target Age Group: 7 - 11 years old

Groups Involved: Inconclusive

Eligibility: No selective criteria

Time length: Self-led

Aims:

- > To increase awareness of the importance of design.
- > To stimulate discussion around community, neighbourhood and place.
- > To combine science and technology learning with creative exercises.
- > To raise the profile of careers in design and the creative industries.

Delivering 5 Foundation Phase areas of learning:

1. Personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity
2. Language, literacy and communication skills
3. Mathematical development
4. Knowledge and understanding of the world
5. Creative development

- Welsh School of Architecture²¹



Fig 7: Shape My Street Competition by Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University

PROGRAMME

London School of Architecture: (Un)Building / Part 0

The London School of Architecture (LSA) was founded with the mission to find alternative routes for architecture, thereby making architectural education more affordable and accessible. With outreach as a prominent part of this school, established in 2015, community engagement with a variety of groups is embedded within the course.

(Un)Building

In January 2023, the programme '(Un)Building' was launched, introducing the practice of spatial design as a collaborative effort made successful through working together with young people aged 13 - 16. The course incorporates the insights of a wide range of practitioners who are engaged in shaping the built environment in order to address contemporary issues such as the climate crisis, using East London as a case study. The programme explores new ways of designing with sustainability and re-use in mind, considering how spaces can be built, unbuilt and adapted to allow for new uses. The approach prioritises keeping as much of the built environment as possible while minimising waste.

Through making, immersing participants in their local surroundings and working closely together the programme seeks to challenge and move beyond traditional teaching methods and assumptions about the remit, relevance and potential of space making²².

This university outreach programme benefits from the expertise and reach of the The National Saturday Club, a "powerful, countrywide network of shared knowledge and best practice"²³. This partnership allows for the potentially resource intensive programme to be most effectively and efficiently delivered.

Part 0

(Un)Building is the pilot project within the London School of Architecture recently launched 'Part 0' campaign. According to LSA: "Part 0 will provide a holistic and integrated vision for widening access to built environment careers to young people and career-changers"²⁴. Part 0 will be 'a series of sub-degree interventions' providing qualifications from Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE) through to Level 5 (equivalent to a diploma). LSA also has plans for an architectural qualification worth half an A Level.

Key Information

Target Age Group: 13 - 16 year olds

Groups Involved: Young participants / Student Volunteers / Course Leaders / National Saturday Club / Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) / Leading Inclusive Futures Through Technology (LIFT) / Islington & Hackney Council / Industry Professionals

Eligibility: exclusively for 20 young people aged 13 to 16 year olds living in Hackney and Islington.

Time length: 20-week course. 3hrs every Saturday from January - May 2023.

Aims: Inspire young people to explore and develop relevant and resilient forms of space-making.

"Part 0 aims to build a common educational framework across the built environment with equity and diversity at its heart."

- London School of Architecture²⁵



Fig 8: photo by Jim Stephenson



Fig 9: RIBA - Why outreach with local schools is a great way to demonstrate social value

4. Conclusion

The following outlines key findings from this research as well as introducing areas for further study.

4.1 Power in Connections

There is critical difference between “going through the empty ritual of participation and having real power needed to affect the outcome of the process”²⁶. Therefore, one area for greater research is exploration into the power dynamics when engagement takes place between each of the groups referred to in this study; children and young people, architecture students, architecture staff, wider university staff, industry professionals and, where relevant, the wider community. Frameworks such as Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation (1969)²⁷ or, more specific to youth engagement, Hart’s Ladder of Engagement (1992)²⁸, illustrated across, offer a visual understanding of the varying levels of participation. Though these eight-rung ladders are a simplification for complex connections, they help to illustrate that there are significant gradations of participation or engagement. The ‘level’ of each engagement should be made explicit to all parties, particularly young participants and architecture students, who are in the process of learning about engagement which they will carry on to become the next generation of citizens and architects.

4.2 Evaluating Connections

It is important to note that the aim of this dataset is not to show the impact of outreach, but simply to show the outreach activities delivered by UK schools of architecture. A review of impact and effectiveness could be done using universities own monitoring tools such as feedback surveys, for example, “over 90% of the students who responded [to programme feedback survey] regarded participation in ACES as having encouraged them to apply to university, evidence that the programme achieved its aim of encouraging disadvantaged students from target schools to apply to degree courses.”²⁹. Or, more accurately, by utilising independent monitoring tools such as The Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT). This tool “provides collaborative, innovative yet affordable solutions for widening participation outreach teams throughout the Higher Education sector”³⁰. The main objective of this national non-profit-making collective is to provide a monitoring and evaluation tool for the efficacy of university outreach work. Further investigation could be taken to explore the current relationship, and potential future opportunities specifically between architecture schools and this service.

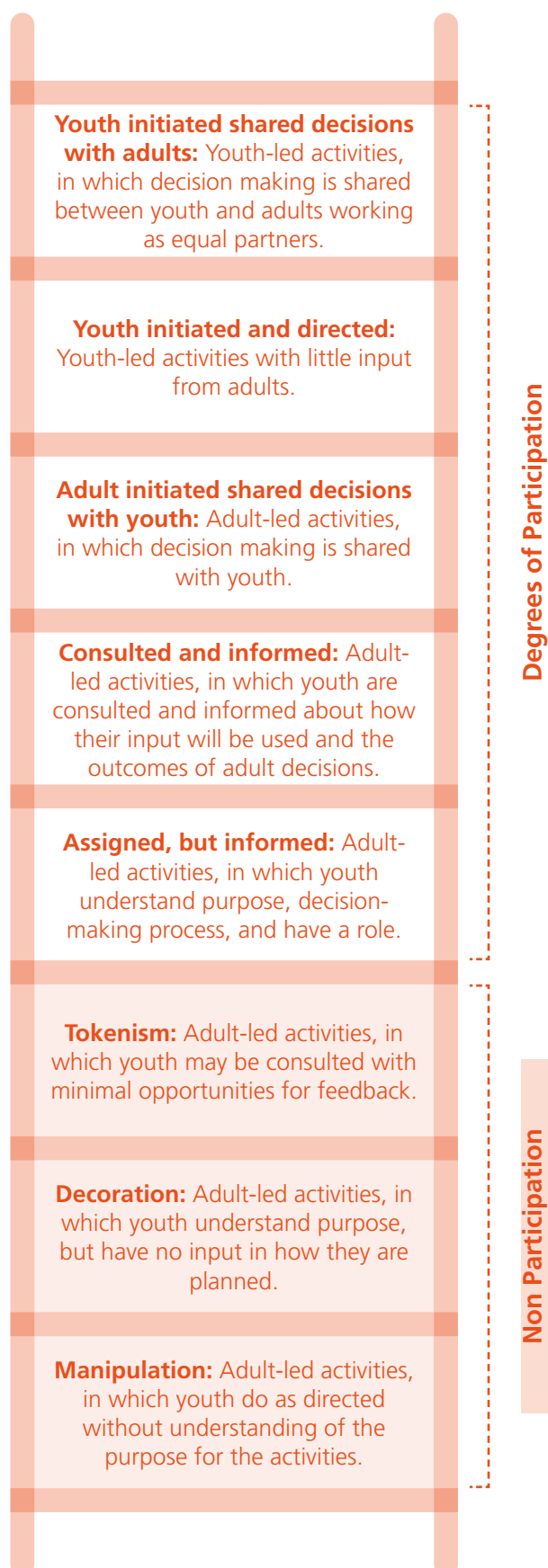


Fig 10: Adapted from Hart, R. (1992) Children’s Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship

4.3 Industry Connections

One of the areas identified as lacking in these findings is the contribution of practices to projects involving universities and young people. This research has introduced a case for more three-way engagement, though further exploration into the specific ways architecture practice might contribute to university engagements with young people is required.

This study highlighted the fact that engagement across UK architecture schools is sporadic and varied. This is largely due to the fact that engagement with any community members, not least young people, is currently not a specific requirement from policy and industry guidelines. With greater reinforcement by organisations such as Architects Registration Board, Royal Institute for British Architects and more broadly, the Ministry of Housing and Planning, children and youth engagement practice can become instilled within architecture education, and in turn, professional culture.

Support from wider industry bodies might also come in the form of financial support, as funding is a key need to be addressed in order to create long-term activity and impact. Funding sources were made available by some engagements found while others could not disclose funding, costs or budgets associated with youth engagement and architecture courses. Expanding upon the ACES case study, this project was made possible due to funding from Scottish Funding Council as a result of an ambitious political agenda, in which widening access to education was a central priority of the Scottish Government since 2010³⁷. This project demonstrates the need for industry and governmental alignment to support future positive engagement.



Fig 11: Shape My City by University of West England

4.4 Future Connections

In order to build capacity for the future, specific training is required for best practice, recognising the responsibility and sensitivity associated with community engagement generally, as well as requirements unique to children and young people. Universities have the potential to operate as important sites for community connections, with children and young people as key influencers of adults and intergenerational knowledge and behaviour change.

Best practice may not come in the form of any one of the engagement types identified in this research, rather, success depends on a multiplicity of engagement approaches. Regardless of the form of engagement adopted by architecture schools, all approaches should be “planned, coherent and contribute to an incremental journey taking young learners toward their educational and developmental goals”³².

Ultimately, this research has provided a starting point for more detailed discussion around engagement by UK schools of architecture with children and young people. Architecture schools hold the potential to develop methods and understanding of engaging with future generations to better shape our shared built environment. The aim is for these findings to be used by institutions across the country to develop their own practices, building connections across the built environment sector so more young people can engage, learn and be empowered.

“For the future health and diversity of the UK, we need to be demonstrating that there is a route into the built environment professions for all of our young people.”

- MacDonald & Springett, co-founders MATT+FIONA (2022)³³

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IMAGES

Fig 1: RENEW project by Bartlett, UCL Outreach x Matt+Fiona (2022)

Fig 2: image credit n/a, words by Perry, F. (2019) Design Curial: The Kids Are Alright - Co-Design with Young People [<https://www.designcurial.com/news/the-kids-are-alright-co-design-with-young-people-7542727>]

Fig 3: RENEW project by Bartlett, UCL Outreach x Matt+Fiona (2022)

Fig 4: Instagram post by @ACES_edinburgh (2023)

Fig 5: Instagram post by @maker_mindset_ssoa (2022)

Fig 6: STIC, Ecclesall Woods, Sheffield (2012) image from 'A Handbook for Live Projects' by Sheffield School of Architecture (2013)

Fig 7: Shape My Street by Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University (2019)

Fig 8: photo by Jim Stephenson

Fig 9: Little Architects workshop by Architectural Association

Fig 10: Adapted from Hart, R. (1992) Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship [<https://www.cph.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/RogerHartLadderOfParticipation.pdf>]

Fig 11: Shape My City by University of West England [<https://www.designwest.org.uk/shape-my-city/>]

LEARNING CONNECTIONS

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