APPG Inquiry on Adult Education

Submission from Communities that Work

Introduction

Communities that Work (CtW) is the national body in England focused on social housing and employment. We bridge the gap between housing, employment and government to drive better job and earnings outcomes for working-age tenants and residents across our communities.

CtW is led by our members – social landlords who own and manage 1.6 million homes across England – who play a vital role in supporting people to thrive through meaningful and sustainable employment.

Question 24. What are the main barriers, if at all, preventing disadvantaged adults from accessing or succeeding in adult education?

The main barriers preventing disadvantaged adults from accessing or succeeding in adult education are structural and relational. For many adults living in social housing, participation is shaped by a wider set of factors including poor mental or physical health, caring responsibilities, transport costs, financial insecurity, low confidence, digital exclusion and limited awareness of what provision exists or how to access it.

Our experience with the JobsPlus pilot (see Figure 1) has shown that adults often require encouragement, help to stabilise their circumstances and support to navigate complex systems. In other words, disadvantaged adults are prevented from accessing and succeeding in education – and wider routes into the labour market – not because they do not value learning, but because provision is too often insufficiently connected to the realities of their lives.

Evidence from the Social Mobility Commission suggests that place-based factors – including poor transport connectivity, limited access to local opportunities and weak alignment between support services – are significant. People in disadvantaged areas are more like to disengage where systems are fragmented and support is difficult to access, thereby reinforcing patterns of economic inactivity and disengagement from educational and labour market opportunities.[1]

This reflects wider evidence on inequality in access to opportunity. The 2025 Youth Voice Census highlighted that the same groups consistently report lower wellbeing, weaker support and fewer opportunities.[2] These barriers, therefore, are systematic

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[1] Social Mobility Commission (2025), Regional Insights: Creating fairer chances across the regions. Available at 2025-11-25 - Regional Insights: Creating fairer chances across the regions - OFFICIAL (accessed 26 January 2026)

[2] Youth Employment UK (2025), Youth Voice Census 2025. Available at Youth Voice Census - Youth Employment UK (accessed 14 April 2026)

and reinforce the need for adult education and wider support systems to be designed around those facing the greatest disadvantage.

Question 25: Which groups in society are currently least well served by adult education, and why?

From our perspective, social housing residents are particularly poorly served by adult education, and wider opportunities in the labour market. As set out in our *Building Opportunity* report[3], this is primarily because this group tends to be more likely to have a characteristics associated with poorer outcomes than the population as a whole. As of 2022, they are more likely to be disabled (41 per cent vs. 17 per cent), from an ethnic minority (21 per cent vs. 14 per cent), or have no qualifications (18 per cent vs. 5 per cent).

Figure 1: About JobsPlus

JobsPlus is a voluntary, community-led employment programme that embeds tailored support directly within social housing neighbourhoods. It is designed to reach people who are furthest from the labour market and least likely to engage with traditional employment services.

Adapted from a successful US model, JobsPlus works by combining:

- On-site employment support delivered through local community hubs
- Dedicated caseworkers offering flexible, one-to-one support
- Community champions drawn from local residents to build trust and engagement
- A £400 Into Work Bonus for sustained employment

The programme focuses on place, relationships and dignity, addressing confidence, health, caring responsibilities and practical barriers alongside job search. It is currently being piloted across 10 sites in England, based in areas of predominantly social housing with high levels of worklessness.

Since launching in summer 2024:

- Over 1,000 people have engaged with JobsPlus
- 270+ participants have moved into work
- 18 per cent secured employment within the first eight months

[3] Institute for Employment Studies, *How social housing can support skills, talent and workforce development*, December 2022, https://www.communitiesthatwork.co.uk/images/pdf/Building_Opportunity_Final_Report_v_final_2_011222.pdf (accessed 10 June 2025)

These groups are least well served because traditional delivery models often assume a level of confidence, stability, connectivity and institutional trust that many people do not have. They may struggle with travel, childcare or inflexible timetables and they may have had previous negative experiences of formal systems and therefore be less likely to engage with services delivered in unfamiliar or intimidating settings.

Question 26: What policy of funding changes would have the greatest impact on social mobility and inclusion through adult education?

People living in social housing are far more like to engage with education opportunities and wider support when it is embedded in their communities and delivered by organisations that they trust. In our experience, the common features of effective support are rooted in trusted, community-led and holistic approaches.

Social landlords are well placed to reach those who are furthest from education and work. As trusted anchor institutions at the heart of communities, they are uniquely positioned to support residents, coordinate services effectively and ensure that support mechanisms are available and accessible to people who need them most. These include core support – such as one-to-one CV coaching and job-searching assistance – as well as specialist support for more vulnerable tenants. In many instances, this is complemented by wider holistic support, such as guidance on navigating the benefits system and helping people to sustain their tenancies. Given this established role, the Government should incentivise the sector to partner with them to reach people across our communities, deliver local and effective support into education and employment opportunities, and establish relationships with people, households and communities.

Question 27: Please share any examples of how adult education has supported social mobility, inclusion or community cohesion in your area.

While Communities that Work is not an adult education provider, the evidence gathered from the JobsPlus pilot demonstrates how adult learning can support inclusion and mobility when it is embedded in trusted, community-based provision.

The interim evaluation of the pilot[4] – published in September 2025 – showed that 11 per cent of participants undertook a qualification as a result of JobsPlus, including essential skills and vocational course such as digital skills, construction, food hygiene, manual handling and security. These participants also reported increased confidence, reduced social isolation, improved job readiness, increased skills and knowledge, and better mental health and wellbeing.

Question 35: Please share any evidence you have of your adult education provision improving mental health, wellbeing or social cohesion in your community.

Evidence from JobsPlus shows what happens when learning and skills supported are delivered through a community-based, person-centred model. Participants in the pilot described significant improvements in confidence and wellbeing, with the

[4] Institute for Employment Studies, *JobsPlus Pilot Implementation and Process Evaluation* (September 2025), https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/JobsPlus-pilot-interim-evaluation-report-626.pdf (accessed 13 April 2025)

evaluation showing reduced social isolation, stronger feelings of belonging and improved mental health linked to having a routine, trusted caseworker support and access to a welcoming community hub. It also found that participants undertook essential and vocational learning, including digital skills and other courses that supported confidence and progression.

The evidence demonstrates that learning provision can improve wellbeing most effectively when it is not detached from the social realities of people's lives.

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