

SESSION 1

HUMAN RIGHTS IN REALITY – ARE WE EQUAL?



Action to stop persecution of LGBTI people in Chechnya, 2019 © AI

In this session

Students will improve their knowledge about human rights and key human rights instruments with a particular focus on the Equality Act in the UK. They will explore factors that shape them by creating personal identity maps and consider equality by playing an adapted version of Snakes and Ladders.

This is part of our set of sessions in our Further Education pack.

Aims

- To understand what human rights are and why they matter
- To learn about laws that protect our rights
- To evaluate the relationship between human rights and equality

You will need

- Access to the internet to watch video clip:
[Human rights in two minutes](#) (2 minutes)
[An introduction to the Equality Act 2010](#) (3 minutes)

Handouts: The Equality Act 2010 fact sheet (one per student)

Character cards (cut up, one per student)

Snakes and Ladders board game (one per group)

Counters (one per student)

Dice (one per group of four to six students)

Teacher note

This session asks students to explore their own and other people's identities. Please let students know about this session the week before and ask them to share any concerns or worries they may have with you. At the start of the session make it clear to students that everyone comes from lots of lived experiences and have different identities, and that this is a safe space to discuss human rights. Inform them that all opinions must be presented in a rights respecting way.

INTRODUCTION 15 minutes

What are human rights?

Tell the class that you will be talking about human rights – what they are, where they come from and how universal they really are.

Watch a video

Play the clip [Human rights in two minutes](#) which clearly explains what human rights are.

Explain that the video introduces the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. It is one of the key instruments of human rights.

As they are watching, ask students to note down:

- 1 A definition of human rights
- 2 Examples of human rights in the UDHR
- 3 Who is responsible for upholding these rights
- 4 Whether the UDHR is legally binding
- 5 Any other important points to talk about afterwards

Take feedback. Do they have any questions about what they have seen?

Make sure they understand that human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that every person has because they are human.

They are universal – meaning they apply to everyone no matter where they are from, what they believe or how they live their life. They help everyone to be happy, healthy, safe and lead a just life with dignity.

Emphasise that although the UDHR is not legally binding, the protection of the rights and freedoms set out in the Declaration has been incorporated into many national constitutions and domestic legal frameworks, including in the UK the 1998 Human Rights Act and the Equality Act 2010, both of which the government is responsible for protecting.



Eleanor Roosevelt holds up the Universal Declaration of Human Rights © UN Photo

What is the Equality Act?

Explain that everyone in Britain is protected from discrimination, harassment and victimisation under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to education and training, the provision of services, work and other areas of public life.

They can find out more by reading the Equality Act fact sheet – hand out a copy to each student.

Explain that we all have at least one of the nine ‘protected characteristics’ listed under the Act, which are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Ask students to think about how it relates to them. We will refer back to this later in more detail.

Exploring opinions on human rights

Tell the class you will now read several statements (see below) about human rights. Ask them to line up across an opinion line in the classroom with strongly agree and strongly disagree at either end. Or draw a continuum line in their book with the numbers 1-10 along it and place a mark where their opinion falls (1 is strongly disagree, 5 is neutral and 10 is strongly agree).

After each statement, encourage students to think about reasons to support their position (they could attempt to convince others to move to their point on the line). Take some feedback for each statement. Why do they think that?

Tell them to note down or remember their answers – if time allows, revisit the questions at the end of the session to see whether anyone’s views have changed.

Suggested statements

I know what my human rights are
I know where my human rights come from
Everyone has the same human rights and are treated the same
We are all equal
I know how to take action to create human rights change
The UK government cares about the human rights of people in this country
Human rights create fairer societies

TASK 1 10 minutes

Human rights and me

Explain to students that they will now produce an identity map. Begin by exploring the word ‘identity’ and what it means. Take feedback.

Ask them to draw around their hand on a piece of A4 paper. Inside their hand, they should write down words to describe themselves and things that are important to them. For instance, hobbies, qualities, characteristics, personality, values, what makes them unique.

In pairs, ask students to use their identity maps to answer the following questions:
What has been the biggest influence on your identity?
Can you find something you have in common?
Can you find something that makes you unique?
What qualities or characteristics should be protected by law as a basic human right? Why? Highlight or underline them on the identity map.

Class question

Are there any characteristics missing from most or all of the identity maps?
Why are they absent? Refer back to your Equality Act 2010 fact sheet if helpful.

Take feedback as a class. Write on the board any qualities or characteristics from the identity maps that they think should be protected by law as a basic human right.

If time allows, ask students to name any other rights that might be missing. Record those too.

TASK 2 10 minutes

Making the most of the Equality Act

Refer back to the Equality Act fact sheet.

Watch [An introduction to the Equality Act 2010](#) (3:11 minutes) by equalityhumanrights.com which outlines important areas of the Equality Act and provides examples of how it works.

Questions to ask

Why do you think the Equality Act is so important?
How does it impact your identity?
Are there any aspects of your identity (from your identity map) that it does not protect?

Extension for Task 2

Continue a more in-depth discussion

Are any characteristics more important than others?
In your opinion, which characteristics are the most important?
How would you feel if the Equality Act was abolished?
How can we all contribute to a fairer and more equal society?

What do human rights mean for people

Ask students if they agree with the following statements.

- 1 Everyone in this country enjoys the same basic human rights.
- 2 Human rights abuses are a problem in some countries but not in the UK.

Why or why not? Can they name any examples they've seen in the media of people enjoying or being denied different human rights. If time allows, take a few responses, but leave the discussion open-ended.

Share the following statistics

In the UK

49 per cent of people agree that everyone in the UK enjoys the same basic rights.

39 per cent of people agree that human rights abuses are a problem in some countries, but they are not really a problem in the UK.

[Source: FRA, Fundamental Rights Survey, 2020](#)

Ask students if anything surprises them about these statistics.
Why? Why not?

Can they think of any individuals or groups who would disagree with these statistics?



MAIN TASK 20 minutes

Snakes and Ladders

- Ask if everyone is familiar with the board game Snakes and Ladders. You may wish to remind them of the rules of the game.
- Is the game fair? Do all players have an equal chance of winning? Do all people have an equal chance at succeeding in life? Why, why not?
- Explain that the class is now going to play a different version of Snakes and Ladders based on human rights and equality.
- Divide the class into small groups of four to six.
- Distribute one dice, the appropriate number of counters and the Snakes and Ladders worksheet to each group.

Ask each student to pick a character card and read it carefully.

Explain there is a twist to this version of the game. If they go over on a STOP! square, the instructions they follow, such as move forward/back/miss turns, will depend on the content of their character card.

Teacher note: Please ensure that you read the character cards before the lesson and carefully select which students receive which character cards. If it would be beneficial to your class, you could also create your own character cards. Emphasise that students will be completing this game as their characters and not as themselves. However it may bring up some personal difficult feelings or issues and they should let their teacher, form tutor or safeguarding lead know if they need support at any point.

Before starting, announce the following: If their character card says you do not have British citizenship, move back six spaces. Those with character cards highlighting they grew up in poverty need to move back four spaces. Those with a character card listing a disability or a caring responsibility, move back two spaces. Those who have a character card that lists an academic qualification and never have to worry about money, move forward two spaces.

Check that each group is playing the game correctly.

Allow students to play the game for around 10 minutes. If they reach the end of the board, invite them to start again.

Student feedback and outcomes

Afterwards, ask each group to discuss:

How did they find the game?

Which characters did the best? Why?

Were some characters immune from going down the snakes and why?

Which characters faced the biggest obstacles to get to the finish? For instance, those who have difficulties making ends meet, the unemployed, as well as those with lower education.

If all the characters have equal human rights, why didn't they all have an equal chance of winning?

Would the Equality Act help any of the characters? How?

Does everyone in the UK enjoy the same basic human rights?

Conclude by highlighting that this version of Snakes and Ladders could be said to reflect real life insofar as not all people enjoy the same treatment and opportunity but it is never too late to get informed about your rights, challenge discrimination and inequality and consider the part that they can play to improve the situation.

Remind students that they can speak to you after the lesson if this has brought up anything that they would like to discuss.

FINALLY... 5 minutes

Revisit opinions on human rights

Ask students to think back to the statements at the beginning of this session. Have any of their opinions changed? Discuss in pairs, and/or take feedback as a class.

Emphasise again that while human rights and equality are not synonymous, the good news is that as a society we are not just reliant on the law – there are ways we can make change.

Extension

Students can: Write a response to the following question. Is the law sufficient to ensure that our human rights are protected or does more need to be done? If so, what? This should include individual responsibility.

SESSION 1 RESOURCE

EQUALITY ACT 2010 FACT SHEET

FOR THE
STUDENT



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What is the Equality Act 2010?

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people in the UK with different characteristics from discrimination in the workplace and education, and in wider society.

Discrimination happens when a person takes any actions that harm those they are prejudiced against. Prejudice describes ingrained thoughts and feelings towards others. Prejudice is not unlawful, but acting on that prejudice is.

Who is protected?

It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of the following characteristics (called 'protected characteristics'):

1 Age

This applies to any age group.

2 Disability

This describes any 'physical or mental impairment or condition that has a substantial or long-term effect on someone's ability to carry out day to day activities'.

3 Gender reassignment

This covers anyone who is transitioning, has transitioned, or has made the decision to transition to a different gender identity.

4 Marriage and civil partnership

This protects anyone who is married or in a civil partnership.

5 Pregnancy and maternity

This covers people who are pregnant, recently gave birth or who are breastfeeding.

6 Race

This covers skin colour, ethnicity, nationality and national or ethnic origins.

7 Religion or belief

This covers all religious faiths and beliefs, including atheism.

8 Sex

This covers any unfair treatment linked to the sex that you were assigned.

9 Sexual orientation

This describes anyone who is attracted to the same, different, all or no genders.

Discussion points

Are there any aspects of your identity from your identity map that the Equality Act does not protect? Highlight or underline them.

Extension

Are any characteristics more important than others?

In your opinion, which characteristics are the most important?

How would you feel if the Equality Act was abolished?

LEARNING ABOUT
HUMAN RIGHTS
IN FURTHER
EDUCATION

SESSION 1 RESOURCE

CHARACTER CARDS

ONE CARD
PER STUDENT



Cut up and hand out one character card to each student. If time is an issue, select four main cards.

You are a male British national with a degree who earns £35,000 a year. You have no children and own your own car and house.

You are a female British national with a degree who has two children. One of your children has special educational needs and requires some attendance at hospital appointments during your work hours.

You grew up in social housing with one parent. The financial burden affected your education and it was a difficult process to access benefits. When your parent got ill you had to care for them which again affected your education and wellbeing.

You are a female with refugee status in the UK. You rent a room in a shared house and rely on public transport to get to and from your zero hours job. You earn below the national average.

You are a disabled man who relies on Personal Independence Payments to get by. You are unable to work or drive. You have one child.

You are a non-binary person who went to public school and has a good job. You have one child and own a home.






You are a female asylum seeker who has applied for refugee status in the UK. You are unable to work due to government restrictions on employment and live in full board accommodation receiving only £8.86 a week to live on.

You are a child from London who is studying GCSEs. Decide on the specifics of your character yourself but they cannot be your own identities.

SESSION 1 RESOURCE

SNAKES AND LADDERS

ONE PER GROUP

40	41 STOP! If you earn more than £35,000 a year, move forward six spaces. 	42	43	44	45 STOP! If you have a child with special educational needs, go down the snake. (to 36). Funding cuts mean you have had to give up work and homeschool.	46	FINISH
39	38 STOP! If you are applying for asylum, your application has been rejected. You are going to appeal but go down the snake to six.	37	36 STOP! If you rely on disability allowance, the government have made cuts. Go down the snake to 19.	35	34 STOP! If you are under 18, move back two spaces. 	33	32 STOP! You need to move house. If you can raise money for a deposit move one place. If you don't think your character is able to do this, move backwards two spaces.
24 STOP! If your community has been vilified in the media, go down the snake to 22	25	26	27	28	29 STOP! If you have a zero hours contract, go down the snake to 18.	30	31
23 STOP! If you are more likely to be stopped and searched by the police, move back three spaces. 	22	21	20 STOP! You're being considered for promotion. If you have a degree, you've got the job. Move up the ladder to 26.	19	18	17 STOP! If you went to public school, move forward five spaces. 	16
8 STOP! Your local bus isn't running. If you rely on public transport miss every other turn until the end.	9	10	11	12 STOP! If you feel confident travelling on your own at night continue. If not, miss a turn.	13	14	15 STOP! If you have a caring responsibility, go down the snake to the start.
7	6 STOP! There's been a rise in food prices, if this will affect you move back two spaces. 	5	4	3 STOP! If you do not need flexible working arrangements climb up the ladder to 11	2	1	START
-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1