

# SESSION 5

## TIME TO ACT

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Youth activists protesting against global warming and pollution © Getty/Jacob Lund

### In this session

Students will explore human rights issues affecting young people and how to be an activist. Looking at two youth campaign movements on gun control and the climate emergency, they will analyse the tactics and strategies used to mobilise support and make change – and devise their own action plan on an issue important to them.

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

### Aims

- To identify and evaluate effective tactics that activists can use to effect change
- To plan a campaign focusing on a human rights issue that is relevant to young people

### You will need

- Access to the internet for research and video clips

**Handouts:** Human rights and young people planning sheet (optional, one per student)

Youth activists case studies (one per student)

Weighing it up grid (one per student)

What, why, who, how worksheet (one per student)

## Pre-session preparation (optional)

It would be useful for students to choose and research a human rights issue affecting young people either in their local area or nationally in the news recently, preferably one they care about, and complete the *Human rights and young people* planning sheet.

## INTRODUCTION 5 minutes

### Human rights and activism

If students completed the pre-session task, ask them to summarise the human rights issue they researched. What did they discover?

Explain that in this session students will devise an action plan to respond to the issue that they have chosen. If they did not complete the pre-task, ask them to read the *Human rights and young people* resource sheet and discuss with a partner which rights impact them. What would they like to change in their college/school/country/the world? Ask students to vote for their most important issue to take action on from the sheet (or possibly order them from least to most important to them). Use this as the class action for the activities later.

Ask students what they think are the barriers that they will face in the process of taking action on an issue that they care about. Answers may include difficulties engaging people on their issue, barriers to being listened to, conflicting priorities making it difficult to spend time working on it or being unsure about how to take meaningful action.

Next, tell students that many young people have successfully spoken out in the face of human rights violations. Can they think of a young person who has made a positive difference to our world? What did they do? What about a campaign that has been successful? What happened?

Take some feedback. Then ask if any of the activists discussed shared similar qualities (or differences) that helped them. What were they? What has contributed to the success of their movement or campaign work?

## TASK 1 15 minutes

### Evaluating an existing campaign

Hand out the *Youth activists case studies* sheet. Ask students to read through both the case studies – one is about the March for Our Lives Campaign, the other is about the School Strikes for Climate movement. Stress that both campaigns have mobilised millions of people worldwide.

If you are in a computer room, ask students to spend a few minutes navigating each of the websites (included on the handout) to look at the tactics and strategies that the campaigners have used well and identify any areas that they think could be improved. Ask students to discuss the questions at the bottom of the resource:

- What techniques were used to raise awareness about the issue?
- How did people find out about the campaign?
- Why do you think the campaign went global?
- Are there any tactics that you could apply to your campaign?
- Are there any aspects that you would improve?
- Overall, how successful was the campaign?



March for Our Lives rally  
in support of gun control,  
Washington DC, US, 2018  
© Associated Press/Cliff Owen/Alamy  
Stock Photo

## Suggested background videos to watch

### Case 1

[The Rise of Greta Thunberg explained](#) by Sky News  
(2 minutes, 55 seconds)

### Case 2

[Emma González's powerful March for Our Lives](#) speech in full by Guardian News  
(7 minutes)

**Teacher note** This is an emotive speech dealing with gun violence, specifically an attack killing 17 people at a school in Florida, 2018. Before you teach the session check it is appropriate for your class. Emma González now uses they/them pronouns and goes by X González.

Take feedback as a class. Explain that students will now start to plan their own campaign, and there are many tactics they can use to take action. Can they think of any? Record them on the board.

## Ideas to suggest

### To raise awareness to change attitudes and behaviour

Write an article, hold an online workshop, create posters, share information in other interesting ways, take part in a peaceful protest in your community.

### To lobby and persuade to change policies

Start a petition or online campaign, collect evidence, write to your MP.

### To work with others, such as support charities and NGOs

Fundraise, join an existing campaign, invite a speaker to do a talk at school or college, volunteer.

## TASK 2 15 minutes

### Taking action for human rights in your context

In pairs, ask students to discuss the following:

- Is there anything that needs to change in your local area to ensure that human rights are protected?
- What actions might you use to overcome this human rights issue?

Ask them to create a mind map of their answers and actions to overcome this human rights issue or empower other people to take action to create positive change.

Next ask students to star their top three action ideas and fill in the *Weighing it up* grid. It uses the following checklist to establish which one will work best.

- How easy are my ideas to achieve? (Difficult, average, easy)
- How much impact will each one have? (Big, average, small)

You will need to consider the time and resources you have as well as the number of people you can influence.

Once they have chosen their issue to work on, ask students to fill in the *What, why, who, how* worksheet to analyse it in more detail. Give them five minutes to do this.

As a class, discuss some of the issues and campaign and action ideas.

Explain that the discussion the students have just had (deciding what action to take in response to a human rights abuse) mirrors conversations that campaigners and activists have had throughout history. Change doesn't just happen, and it can begin with people coming together to discuss and debate ideas, or even when one person sees that something is wrong and decides to act on their own.

## MAIN TASK 20 minutes

### What can you do?

Students now need to create a plan for action in the form of a list or a mind map.

Remind them to keep in mind the change they want to see, the people and the human rights they want to protect, and who they can ask for help.

They must think about how they can encourage people to take part in their action. For instance, if it is a creative action (poster), can they put it somewhere so people can see it? Can they ask the local media to write an article? Can they share their actions on social media?

If they need more context on the power of social media to raise awareness, play the clip [How to use social media hashtags to change the world](#)

If inspired, students can film a 60-second campaign video to post on the school's Twitter/X account, using a special hashtag.

## FINALLY... 5 minutes

### Reflection

Tell students to reflect on the work they have done so far. What have they learned? Make at least five bullet point notes and write one sentence summing up what this session has shown them about their ability to be a change maker.

### Extension

#### Students can:

- Come up with an elevator pitch for their campaign, one to two minutes, designed to inspire people to take action. It should explain what the issue is, the changes they want, and how people can get involved to help.
- Watch the clip [How to Protest Peacefully](#) by Amnesty International
- Join Amnesty's [Urgent Action Network](#) to take action for a fairer world.
- Continue their campaign and raise awareness in their school.
- Join or start an Amnesty youth group at school or college: [amnesty.org.uk/groups/student](https://amnesty.org.uk/groups/student)
- Download and fill in [A Well-Being Workbook for Youth Activists](#)

# SESSION 5 RESOURCE

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

FOR THE  
STUDENT



The European Youth Federation has suggested that some of the most common human rights violations that affect young people include:

- Age-based discrimination in employment or other areas of life
- View of young people as inexperienced
- Intersection of age with other identities such as religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, gender identity, etc. leading to multiple discrimination
- Lack of access to information on sexual and reproductive health and services; adequate mental health support for young people
- School segregation for young people with disabilities
- Lack of access to education for young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers
- Minimum wages for young people that fall below the national minimum wage
- Unpaid internships
- Consistently high youth unemployment rates

Source: <https://tools.youthforum.org/youth-rights-info-tool/human-rights-and-young-people>

**Look at the news – online or in print – and identify a human rights issue that affects young people. Use the search feature or site index to look for relevant online articles by using key words. When you have read the story, complete the following details.**

LEARNING ABOUT  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
IN FURTHER  
EDUCATION

Write a brief description of the issue...

Who has been affected? List the full names of specific individuals. Provide statistics for the number of people involved.

What caused the problem? Is it a long term or a short-term issue? Who is responsible?

What needs to be done to resolve this issue? Who is responsible – an individual, an organisation or a government? Do you have any ideas for actions that would put pressure on the responsible party? What could help to change this issue?



# SESSION 5 RESOURCE

## YOUTH ACTIVISTS CASE STUDIES

FOR THE  
STUDENT



Greta Thunberg, 2018  
© Hanna Franzén/TT News Agency/  
Alamy Stock Photo

### CASE STUDY 1

#### Greta Thunberg and Fridays for Future climate strikes

Greta Thunberg grew up in Sweden. When she was 15, she felt so desperate about the climate emergency, that she decided to do something about it. In August 2018, every school day for three weeks, she sat outside the Swedish parliament holding a sign saying, 'School Strike for Climate'. This was her protest against the lack of action taken by the government.

She was alone to begin with. She used social media to update people on her protest and her posts soon went viral on Instagram and Twitter/X. Other people joined her. The hashtags #FridaysForFuture and #Climatestrike were used to spread information and encouraged other students and adults around the world to protest outside their parliaments and local city halls against the inaction of their own government.

In 2019, four million marches across 161 countries joined a huge climate strike demanding politicians to do more. More than one million students missed school during 24 hours of climate action.

The UK Student Climate Network set up by a small group of students in the UK was inspired by Greta's speeches and ideas and it coordinated strikes in the UK, using #YS4C (Youth Strike 4 Climate). It was supported by the UK Youth Climate Coalition.

On 15 February 2019, more than 10,000 students across the UK protested in support of political action on climate change, and a month later, 50,000 participated.

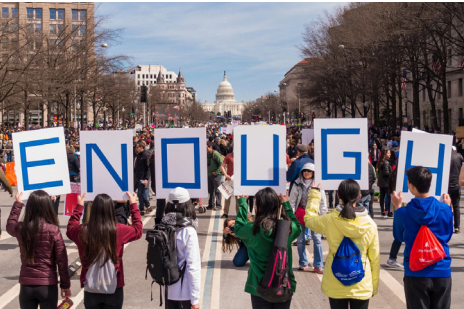
#### Extra research:

[UK Youth Climate Coalition](http://www.ukycc.com/youth-strike-4-climate) (www.ukycc.com/youth-strike-4-climate)

#### Discussion points

What techniques were used to raise awareness about the issue?  
How did people find out about the campaign?  
Why do you think the campaign went global?  
Are there any tactics here that you could apply to your campaign?  
Are there any aspects that you would improve?  
Overall, how successful was the campaign?

LEARNING ABOUT  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
IN FURTHER  
EDUCATION



March for Our Lives demonstration © Rob Crandall/Alamy Stock PhotoNews

## CASE STUDY 2

### Marching for our lives

Born out of a tragic school shooting, March for Our Lives is a youth-led movement dedicated to promoting direct action by young people to eliminate the epidemic of gun violence.

It was created by the survivors of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, US, in February 2018, where 17 people were killed.

In March 2018, the first March for Our Lives demonstration took place in Washington DC, with over 880 other events throughout the country, to protest gun violence and demand that their lives and safety become a priority. The most prominent voices at the march were the people directly affected. For instance, X González, a student and survivor of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas shooting, punctuated their speech with six minutes and 20 seconds of silence – the length of the gunman's shooting spree.

Dozens of marches also took place on the same day around the world to lend their voices to the cause. It became the biggest gun-control protest in a generation.

Inspired by the Freedom Riders, a group of student activists who challenged segregation on buses in the 1960s, the March for Our Lives movement went on to tour the US on Road to Change. Its aim was to encourage young people to register to vote and to be educated on gun violence issues. They also met with family members, community leaders and survivors of gun violence.

The movement now has hundreds of organisations around the US led by students who enact change on a local level. The March for Our Lives website says: Whether organising a walkout at a high school, lobbying for better safety measures on campus, writing state-wide legislation, or showing up at school board and city council meetings, our [local organisations] make change. This movement is more than a single election. We're building out our local and state grassroots power. We're lobbying Congress to close loopholes and pass common-sense legislation to save lives. We will not stop until we see the change we demand.'

March for Our Lives has brought international attention to the debate on gun violence. Among other wins, they've helped pass over 300 gun violence prevention laws in the US and in September 2023, President Biden created the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention.



**Extra research:** [March for Our Lives](https://marchforourlives.org) (<https://marchforourlives.org>)

### Discussion points

What techniques were used to raise awareness about the issue?  
How did people find out about the campaign?  
Why do you think the campaign went global?  
Are there any tactics here that you could apply to your campaign?  
Are there any aspects that you would improve?  
Overall, how successful was the campaign?

# SESSION 5 RESOURCE

## WEIGHING IT UP grid



How easy is it to achieve this action? Consider the time, resources and opportunities you have			
	Difficult	Average	Easy
Big impact			
Average impact			
Little impact			
How much impact will this action have?			
Consider the message you want to get across.			
Who will see it?			
Who can join in?			
Who will it help?			

# SESSION 5 RESOURCE

## WHAT, WHY, WHO, HOW

FOR THE  
STUDENT

**WHAT** is your issue? What is wrong and what needs to change?  
What human rights are involved? Are any rights being denied?



**WHY** is this issue occurring?



**WHO** can help sort out this issue?



**HOW** could you persuade them or work with them to bring about change?  
How can you convey your message? What action could you take? List three ideas.