

TEACHER'S NOTES
ACT NOW
ACTIVITIES
SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

- Write a letter to your local politician
- Organise a petition
- Invite a speaker to your school
- Organise an exhibition or display
- Give your own talk
- Write and perform a play

EXAMPLES:

- Letter to politician
- Petition
- Invitation letter to guest speaker

Keen to try out your citizenship skills? Want to get involved in making your community a better place to live and work? Hopefully you will find many of the activities and ideas below useful in helping you get started. However quite often the best ideas are ones you think up yourself. Once you have had a look at the list below, get thinking and see if you can come up with any ideas for activities yourself.

Write a letter to your local politician

If you're unhappy about something in your community you could write a letter to a local politician to ask him or her to do something about it.

The problem might be particular to your area, like a need for more rubbish bins, or it may be a bigger issue such as the protection of the environment.

Depending on the problem and what you think the solution is, you might write to your local councillor, NI Assembly Member or Member of Parliament.

Have a look at our example letter (Appendix 1) and see how easy it is.

Organise a petition

This is very much like a letter, but it has a stronger message because it shows that lots of people care about the issue. Politicians are very interested in hearing what the people who vote for them care about.

Head your petition with a short statement explaining what you want changed and why. Then collect signatures from people who support your idea. Also get them to print their name and details of where they live.

It should be sent to the person in charge, or who has responsibility for that particular issue, so make sure you find out who that is.

Look at our example petition (Appendix 2) if you want to see what one looks like.

You can find some guidelines on writing a petition on the Friends of the Earth web site:
http://www.foe.co.uk/learning/take_it_further/write_petition.html

Invite a speaker to your school

You may wish to know more about a certain aspect of citizenship and you're probably not the only one.

There are many groups in Northern Ireland set up to tackle issues like sectarianism and racism. Even more are concerned with global problems such as famine and fair trade. Why not invite someone from one of these groups to come and talk to your class or school?

You can use the Directory on this website to find a speaker. Remember though that this isn't a full list and there will be more groups in your area that you could contact.

On this website you'll also find an example of the kind of letter (Appendix 3) that could be sent as an invitation. Make sure that if you do organise a talk there is somewhere appropriate to hold it and enough people for your visitor to talk to.

Organise an exhibition or display

The experience of asylum seekers, the importance of voting - there are many citizenship issues you could take a look at. Why not make your own display to tell more people about them.

You could display your work in your school or for your youth group. Maybe you could use somewhere else like your local library.

There are lots of different ways to make your display as well. Choose one that works for your topic and that is fun to do.

You could organise a photography competition on a citizenship theme, display the entries and award prizes for the best ones.

Or you could make a magazine or newsletter.

Give your own talk

For a citizenship topic that really interests you, you might want to do some research of your own. Then when you're the expert you could give your own talks.

At school you could organise a visit to other classes to tell them about what you've learnt.

At your youth group you could do something similar. Some of the community groups in this site's Directory could perhaps supply you with some valuable information on your chosen topic.

Write and perform a play

There are plenty of stories to be told on the subject of citizenship. You could write and perform a play that would help people to understand some of the issues.

It can be about anything you want, perhaps the story of a victim of racism or sectarianism, or another problem particular to your community.

You could perform it at school or to your youth group. There may be other people you could invite along to see it.

Remember there are many ways you can learn about citizenship through activities you are already involved in.

- If you are in a debating society then one week you could choose a motion on a citizenship topic.
- If you are in a choir then maybe they'd be willing to perform for a disadvantaged group in the community.
- If you belong to a sports team they could organise a match against another team from a different community group.

When organising an event you'll want to organise publicity to let people know about it. Take a look at our Publicity section where you'll find the best way to interest the media in your project.

Finally, the easiest way to find out what you can do for your community is to ask them. Contact local community groups and find out about their work. They will be able to tell you about the citizenship issues that they are worried about and are trying to deal with. If they have their own projects, maybe you could volunteer to help.

APPENDIX 1Letter to local politician

22 Booker St
Owlsville
BT74 4TB

Omagh District Council
The Grange
Mountjoy Road
Omagh
BT79 7BL

1st February 2006

Dear Mayor Rainey

I am writing to you about the children's play facilities in Omagh town.

Much of the equipment in the playground is in need of repair or replacement. If this does not happen soon there is sure to be an accident to one of the playground's users.

I think the Council should have a look at the playground and see what can be done to make it safer for children.

I look forward to your reply.

Steven Jones

APPENDIX 2

Petition for a zebra crossing

Station Road, at the entrance to St. John's College, is an extremely busy stretch of road. A great number of people going to the college must cross this road on their journey.

We consider a zebra crossing to be necessary to ensure the safety of pedestrians and road-users at the entrance to St. John's College, Station Rd.

The Petition will be sent to:

Divisional Manager
Roads Service Division Office
High Street
Coleraine
Co. Londonderry

Name	Signature	Address
John Owens	<i>John Owens</i>	Main Street Portrush
Mary O'Neill	<i>Mary O'Neil</i>	Lane Hill Portstewart

APPENDIX 3Letter to community group

Ballynowhere High School
26 Upper Island Road
Lisanowlagh
BT93 3TB

Education Officer
One World Centre
4 Lower Crescent
Belfast

20th March 2006

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to you on behalf of Year 10 in Ballynowhere High School.

We are currently studying Fair Trade and would like to host an event at our school to raise awareness.

We are aware that the One World Centre has produced a lot of information on this subject and it would be very useful to us if you, or one of your colleagues, could come to the school to tell us more about the issues.

We would be very grateful for any help you could give us.

Kind regards,

Declan Morrow