

Making a positive environment

This section looks at how young people can participate in changing their environment. It aims to empower them to influence change for the better. Where we are affects how we feel: every place has positive and negative aspects. These may be a result of physical factors (interesting buildings, lots of trees) or social factors (littering, threatening or friendly atmosphere).

You will find inspirational stories of how young people have transformed their environments at:

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/citizenx/getinvolved/projects

The process of identifying what the young people do or don't like is the first step towards encouraging positive change. People will have different perceptions about what works and what doesn't, and the process of agreeing what needs to be changed and the impact of those changes on others is an important part of developing skills. It is important young people can follow through at least some of the actions they have identified through these activities.

Learning outcomes

Young people will:

- have identified an aspect of their environment they would like to change (Activity 21)
- recognise that how people feel about their environment is influenced both by physical and social factors (Activity 21)
- start to think about things they can do to make their environments more positive (Activities 22 and 23)
- recognise they can contribute to positive change (Activity 22)
- have identified some of the steps that need to be taken to bring about positive change (Activity 22 and 23).

You will need

- digital or disposable cameras for use in groups of three (if available)
- art materials
- enough copies of Worksheet 16: *Our plan of action* for each group.

Optional:

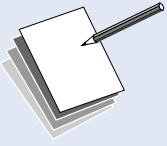
- case studies downloaded from www.bbc.co.uk/schools/citizenx/getinvolved/projects
- facilities for downloading, projecting or printing photos
- flip chart
- sticky notes
- felt tip pens.

Suggested icebreakers:

What I did

How I feel

(See page 21)



Worksheet 17: Poster power

- 1) Write a clear description of the behaviour the group objects to, for example:
- When you ignore me when I want serving in your shop...
 - When you don't take my ideas seriously...
 - Sometimes you assume I am causing trouble...

- 2) Explain what effect that has on you, for example:
- ...I feel small
 - ...It made me feel angry
 - ...I think nobody is on my side

- 3) Write a statement about what behaviour the group would like, for example:
- ...and I want you to stop
 - ...and I want you to know that...
 - ...and I want you to listen to what I have to say.



Activity 21: **Our environment**

1. Explain to the young people that in this session and the next, they will be thinking about what they like and dislike about their school or setting and how they can work together and with other people to make improvements.
2. In small groups, invite the young people to list some of the things they like and dislike about their school or setting. Draw out that both physical issues (for example, dark, ugly spaces) and social factors (for example, attitudes and behaviours such as bullying) contribute to how we feel about a place.

3. Either:

In groups, ask young people to use the digital or disposable camera to photograph aspects of their environment that they like and aspects that they dislike. Try to encourage each young person to find at least two examples of each. To illustrate the social and behavioural factors, they might want to enlist each other's help to create the scenes (for example, someone dropping litter or pretending to bully someone).

Or:

Using art materials, ask the young people in small groups to create a presentation of an area of their school/setting that they would like to change. It must be something that the young people can begin to make a real and achievable difference to over a fairly short period of time.

Reflection

What do you value and what would you like to change?

How can you begin?

Did you notice anything new about your school/setting when doing this activity?



Activity 22: **Plan of action**

1. Get the young people to share the issues they photographed or drew for Activity 21.
2. Either:

Ask the whole group to prioritise the issue they would like to do something about. Discuss what would be a fair and democratic way of deciding which issue will be chosen to work on. One option is to hold a straightforward vote, in which each group nominates an issue and has two minutes to explain why it is most important, before everyone votes.

Or:

Ask the small groups to decide which issue they would like to take action on.
3. Ask young people to come up with a list of ideas, skills and approaches to help them implement their action plan.
4. Give each group a copy of Worksheet 16 to discuss and complete. Alternatively, you could complete it as one large group. Make sure that each action has next to it the name of the person who will carry it out and the date they will do it by. When completing the action plan encourage the young people to come up with SMART actions that are:
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Achievable
 - Relevant
 - Time related.
5. Agree when you will review progress.
6. Ensure that you share the action plan with the head teacher or management committee and encourage them to offer their support and even a reward for carrying the plan out.

Reflection

How did you decide as a group which issue to focus on? How easy/difficult was this?

How will you monitor whether your plan is working?

How will you feel if it doesn't work?

How will you feel if it works?



Activity 23: **Poster power**

Either:

1. Divide the young people into small groups and give each group a copy of Worksheet 17: *Poster power*.

Or:

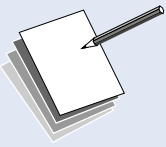
1. Write the examples from Worksheet 17 on a large piece of paper or board and go through them with the group.
2. Invite the group to discuss situations they have witnessed or experienced in which they felt angry, disrespected or disregarded. They might want to think about situations in the community such as in shops or on the street.
3. Either as one large group, or in small groups, ask the young people to agree on an issue they want to develop a group 'I' statement about and to produce a poster that tells the rest of the world what they feel about this issue. They should use the format of Worksheet 17 as the basis for their work, but may want to include pictures or symbols too.
6. Back in the whole group, invite participants to display their posters and share their message in whatever format they would prefer, for example as a rap, song or a group statement.

Reflection

How did you feel about making a strong clear statement in your group?

How might you use the skills you have learned today in the rest of your life?

How will you display your statement?



Worksheet 16: Our plan of action

We [give names]		
Would like to		
Because		
1) This is what we plan to do to improve things:		
2) These are the other people we will need to get help from:		
3) We will involve them by: (for example, talking to them, writing them a letter, making a poster, talking in an assembly)		
4) We will know we have been successful when:		
List of things to be done	Who will do them	By when