



The Big Legal Lesson



February 2025

What's the law got to do with me?

Classroom Notes

Ages 11-14



Supported by



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The Big Legal Lesson

Classroom Notes

Age range: 11-14

Introduction: Thank you for taking part in The Big Legal Lesson 2025. You are joining a network of thousands of teachers across England and Wales who are committed to developing young people's knowledge of the rule of law and their legal rights.

Thank you to international law firm Mishcon de Reya for sponsoring The Big Legal Lesson again in 2025. Their funding allows us to offer all resources and support to participating schools for free.

Also, thank you to our education partners The Law Society for their continued support in helping us deliver legal education to young people across the UK.

Time commitment: This resource pack has been designed to give you flexibility. There are five separate activities included. You can choose to deliver all the suggested activities in these classroom notes. If you choose to deliver all activities, you will need a minimum of two lessons. Alternatively, select those that best suit the needs of your students and your time-frame. The supporting PowerPoint can be used in its entirety, or it can be edited, saved, and delivered across several shorter sessions. Where time is limited, individual activities could be run in tutor-time.

Taken part before? If students have participated in The Big Legal Lesson before or they have a good basic understanding of what the rule of law is, teachers might choose to spend less time on Activities 1-3 and instead focus their time on Activities 4 and 5.

Learning objectives

After taking part in The Big Legal Lesson students will be able to:

Activities 1-3:

- Explain what the rule of law is;
- Identify how the law impacts their day-to-day lives;
- Examine who has the power to make and change laws in the UK.

Activities 4-5:

- Consider the impact that recent changes to the law will have on their lives and the lives of others;
- Describe a change they would like to make to the law;
- Identify what actions they could take to make their voices heard by people in positions of power.

Activity overview

| | |
|--|---|
| Activity 1: What is the law? Students share what they currently know about the law and use this to write a definition of what the law is. | No resources needed |
| Activity 2: What's the law got to do with me? Students are introduced to Remy and explore how the law impacts Remy's day. They go on to consider how they interact with the law on a daily basis. | Worksheet 1 (1 copy per student) Worksheet 1b (1 copy per student) Worksheet 1c (1 copy per student, optional) |
| Activity 3: Who makes the law? Students consider which people in the UK have the power to make and change laws and what power individual citizens have to impact the law. | Worksheet 2 (cut into cards, 1 set per group) |
| Activity 4: The changing law Students look at recent changes to the law and consider what impact these changes might have on different individuals. | Worksheet 3 (1 per student) |
| Activity 5: Making my voice heard Using all they have learnt, students suggest a change they'd like to make to the law and examine what actions they could take to make their voice heard on this issue. | Worksheet 4 (1 per student) |
| Plenary | 'My new law is' and 'One new thing I learned is' templates (a few copies of each) |



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Make some noise about what you've done!

Help us spread the word about the importance of legal literacy! We'd love to see what you got up to as part of The Big Legal Lesson. Send us your photos, ideas and feedback via social media @YoungCitizensUK using the hashtag #TheBigLegalLesson.

Download our media pack for help with sharing your involvement. It includes branded graphics, social media posts, a press release template, MP letter template and other useful bits.

Tell us what you thought

Once you have delivered your activities, please take two minutes to complete a short evaluation form. Your feedback helps us to keep this campaign freely available.



[Teacher Survey](#)



[Student Survey](#)



[Legal Volunteer Survey](#)

Other resources

Young Citizens has a range of other freely available classroom resources which explore the law in more depth. We also have resources covering topics such as social action, democracy, digital citizenship, media literacy and the economy.

For more details and to access these free resources visit - <https://www.youngcitizens.org/resources/browse/>

SmartLaw subscription

A SmartLaw school subscription provides teachers with access to over 25 high quality, tried and tested classroom resources. The resources inspire young people to engage in the complex world of the law, providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to become legally capable. Aimed at KS3, 4 and Post-16, the units tackle a number of SMSC, Citizenship and PSHE themes using the topic of the law. No prior experience of law is needed to deliver the units. Written with the support of our legal professional volunteer network they contain all the necessary information and examples that you need to engage your students in the rule of law.

Immersive learning programmes

Young Citizens also runs a range of immersive learning programmes about the law including Mock Trials Competitions and Legal Workshops. For more details visit - <https://www.youngcitizens.org/legaleducation/>

Teacher training

Want to support your students to make their voices heard with key decision makers? Take a look at our online teacher training - [Getting Heard](#). In this free training resource we explore who holds 'the power' locally, and nationally, including political and financial decision-makers, and other influential people such as the media and religious and community leaders. The training provides you with the tools you need to support students to engage with decision-makers and influential people to make change in their communities.



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Introduction

Use **slides 2-3** to introduce the class to The Big Legal Lesson and what they will be learning about today.

Activity 1: What is the law?

Display **slide 4**. Working with a partner, students should try to write their own simple definition of what the law is and then list any prior knowledge they have about the law. This should be kept as it will be returned to in the plenary.

Take some feedback from students before going through the information on **slides 5-7** which provide a brief overview of what the rule of law is. Some additional information is provided below to support your discussions.

Slide 5

- **Publicly declared** - Laws are clear and communicated to all citizens. Everyone knows what the laws are and can easily find out information about the laws.
- **Equally enforced** - Laws apply to all citizens including those in positions of power such as the government and the police.
- **Accessible and impartial** - Justice is delivered in a timely manner by qualified and independent representatives.

Slide 6

Another key feature of the rule of law is that it is independently adjudicated. This slide explores how powers are balanced in the UK.

Separation of powers is the principle that the three branches of state should be distinct in order to protect citizens. A strict separation of powers would mean no branch could exercise power over another and no one should be a member of more than one branch.

The UK follows a less strict interpretation of this. In the UK the executive (the government) is made up of MPs who also form the legislative, the executive is accountable to the legislative.

The government and the prime minister are not directly elected; instead the leader of the party who secures the most MPs becomes prime minister and they in turn decide on who will get ministerial positions within the government. For example, they decide who will become chancellor, home secretary etc.

In contrast a country such as the US follows a stricter interpretation. They have an executive (the president) who is directly elected and is entirely separate to the legislative (Congress).



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Activity 2: What's the law got to do with me?

If students have completed The Big Legal Lesson taster activity you may like to skip this activity, or do a short re-cap and then direct students straight to the challenge on slide 13.

Display **slide 8**. Briefly ask students to shout out any laws they think they might have been affected by so far today.

Read about Remy's day on **slides 9-12**. A copy of the story can also be found on **worksheet 1a**. Give students a copy of **worksheet 1b**. Ask students to match the part of Remy's day to the appropriate law(s).

Go through the answers providing additional information about how each law is impacting Remy's day. The answers for this activity can be found in the table below.

Extension: Display **slide 13** which challenges students to write a time-line of their day, identifying all the times they will come into contact with the law. Students can record their work on **worksheet 1c**.

| Remy's day | The Law |
|--|--|
| Remy is 13 years old and is in Year 8 at school. It's Monday morning. Remy gets woken by their alarm and heads downstairs to pour themselves a bowl of chocolate cereal. | <p>The Food (Promotion and Placement) (England) Regulations 2021 place restrictions on certain businesses relating to the price promotion and placement of certain foods and drinks that are high in fat, salt or sugar. These restrictions apply to certain foods and drinks both in shops and online.</p> <p>There are also other laws which say how much tax needs to be paid on soft drinks, for example if they have more than 5g of sugar per 100ml, this makes them more expensive.</p> |
| At 8:00am Remy heads out and walks to the bus stop, then catches the bus to school. | <p>The bus driver is subject to a number of laws when driving. Most of these are covered by the Road Traffic Act 1988. It also sets out many conditions for drivers; for example, drivers must be insured, their vehicle must not be in a dangerous condition, they must obey traffic signs and speed limits.</p> <p>Bus drivers who drive school buses are required to have completed an enhanced DBS check. Schools cannot hire drivers who are included in the children's barred list, for example, because they have previously been convicted of certain offences (e.g. supplying drugs).</p> |
| The school day starts with tutor time and then Remy heads off for science followed by maths. | <p>The Education Act will affect Remy's education. Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child receives an education. The legal age you can leave school differs across nations but is generally at some point after you turn 16. In England you must stay in some form of education or training until you are 18 (or have reached a level 3 qualification.) Most schools are required to follow the National Curriculum which sets out the key learning for each subject.</p> <p>Under the Equality Act schools are under a duty not to discriminate against a pupil on the grounds of certain protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation).</p> |



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| Remy's day | The Law |
|---|---|
| After maths, it's break time followed by PE, then lunch. | <p>In 2019, an all-party parliamentary group on fit and healthy childhood recommended that school children should have a legal right to 75 minutes of break time in the school day. This would allow for the chief medical officer's recommendations of 60 minutes of physical activity each day. However, there are currently no such laws in place. The School Premises (England) regulations 2012 requires that schools have suitable outdoor space to allow students to play outside and do physical education outside.</p> <p>Schools have a number of legal duties to provide healthy and nutritious food and drink. Schools should also make reasonable adjustments for pupils with particular requirements, for example to reflect medical, dietary and cultural needs.</p> |
| In the afternoon Remy has a 30-minute appointment with the school's careers adviser. They talk about what options Remy wants to pick for GCSE. | <p>The Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Act 2022 makes it a legal requirement that all schools and academies provide independent careers guidance for pupils in school in Years 7 to 13.</p> |
| After school Remy gets the bus home, grabs their bike and heads off to do their paper round. | <p>There are lots of laws involved here. The Children and Young Persons Act 1933 protects children from (i) working in conditions which may be harmful to their safety, health or development, (ii) being ill-treated within the workplace and (iii) working long hours. Legally, young people can only start full-time work after the end of the academic year in which they've reached the minimum school leaving age - they can then work up to a maximum of 40 hours a week. The youngest age you can work part-time is 13, except children involved in areas like acting and modelling.</p> |
| <p>When Remy gets home, they have some French and English homework to do before they can relax.</p> <p>After dinner Remy spends some time chatting with friends online before heading to bed.</p> | <p>The Online Safety Act 2023 received Royal Assent on 26th October 2023. It will make social media companies more responsible for users' safety on their platforms. For example they will have to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Remove illegal content and prevent users from being exposed to such material;Protect children from harmful content;Enforce age limits and age-checking measures. <p>Under data protection law, online services are not allowed to collect or store children's personal information if they are under the age of 13, they can only do this legally if the child's parent gives their consent.</p> <p>Under the Human Rights Act, Remy has the right to privacy. This means Remy's personal data is protected as part of their private life and cannot be collected, used or disclosed without justification. Under Data Protection and GDPR laws personal data that social media companies have collected in relation to Remy must be processed fairly and lawfully.</p> |



Activity 3: Who makes the law?

During this activity students will consider who has the power to make and change laws in the UK. Please note certain powers have been devolved from the UK parliament to the Scottish parliament, National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly. Each of these have their own executive and legislative powers in certain areas such as health care and education. For the purposes of this activity, we are only examining how laws are made in the UK parliament.

Split the class into small groups and display **slide 14**, which challenges groups to list all the people they think are involved in making and changing the law. After a few minutes display **slide 15**, which lists some ideas.

Give the groups a set of role and descriptor cards from **worksheet 2**. Ask groups to match the role card with its definition. Next, display **slide 16** and ask students to consider which of these roles has the power to make or change the law. Ask the groups to place the role cards in a line from most to least influential.

Take in some feedback from each group. Use the information below to support your discussions. Conclude the activity by summarising who is involved in the law-making process using **slides 17-18**.

| Role | Can they make and change the law? |
|-----------------------------|--|
| MPs in the House of Commons | Yes At a general election citizens vote for an MP to represent them in parliament. A total of 650 MPs are voted in and they all sit in a special chamber called the House of Commons. Part of an MP's job is to debate and vote on laws in the House of Commons. More than 50% of MPs must vote in favour of a new law for it to then be considered by the House of Lords. |
| Peers in the House of Lords | Yes The House of Lords is the second chamber of the UK parliament. There are currently 785 peers in the House of Lords. Of these, some are Lords Spiritual (who sit by virtue of their position in the Church), some are hereditary peers (who sit because they inherited the right from their ancestors), but the majority are life peers (who are appointed by the monarch on the advice of the prime minister or House of Lords Appointment Commission). Their job is to check and challenge the government. As part of this they discuss and debate any proposed changes to the law. The House of Lords cannot prevent bills passing into law, except in very limited circumstances, but they can delay bills and force the House of Commons to reconsider their decisions. |
| The Prime Minister | Yes (but not on their own) During a general election political parties put forward their vision for the UK through their manifestos. The political party that wins the highest number of seats in a general election forms the government. The prime minister leads the government. Once elected, the government will look to introduce legislation through parliament to deliver its manifesto promises. The prime minister is also an MP so sits in the House of Commons and debates / votes with the other MPs. |
| The King | Sort of The final stage of getting any law created or changed is called Royal Assent. This is more of a formality and usually the monarch always grants Royal Assent. The last time a monarch refused was in 1708. The monarch is not able to introduce any new laws. |



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| Role | Can they make and change the law? |
|------------|--|
| A judge | <p>No</p> <p>Most laws are created in parliament and are called acts of parliament, e.g. The Human Rights Act. It is not a judge's role to make the law but rather to uphold it.</p> <p>There is an area of law known as common law. This dates back to the 12th century when attempts were made by the monarch to ensure that standards of justice were similar throughout the country. The monarch would appoint judges to travel around the country providing justice and sorting out disputes. Decisions made by these judges were written down and gradually, over time, they built up to form a detailed record of English law. Common law is also sometimes referred to as case law or precedent law. However, it is important to remember that judges are not free to make law based on their personal views. An example of common law is the law around murder which has never been made into an act of parliament.</p> |
| The police | <p>No</p> <p>The police are responsible for maintaining public order and safety. They enforce the law, preventing and investigating criminal activities. They have no direct involvement in making or changing the law.</p> |
| A lawyer | <p>No</p> <p>Lawyers are there to advise on the law; they cannot make or change it.</p> |
| A citizen | <p>Whilst citizens do not have any direct power to change the law, they can influence it. For example, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Voting in elections (once they are 18);■ Contacting their MP/local council representatives to express their views on matters they think are important;■ Petitioning - Anyone can start a petition on the Government website. If a petition receives 10,000 signatures it will get a response from the government. If a petition receives 100,000 signatures they are considered for debate in parliament.■ Campaigning for causes they believe are important;■ Taking part in peaceful protests. |
| The media | <p>Whilst the media has no direct power to influence the law, it is hugely influential on public opinion, thus influencing the law indirectly. There are examples of cases where the media has exposed stories that have eventually led to changes in law.</p> <p>For example, in 2009 the <i>Telegraph's</i> expose of MPs' expense claims led to a change in the law and the prosecution of a number of MPs. Similarly, the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 was largely a response to widespread media coverage of the potential risks posed by dogs.</p> |



Activity 4: The changing law

Display **slide 19** which explains that each year lots of changes are made to the law. Students are challenged to consider what impact these changes might have.

Worksheet 3 provides two different examples of recent changes to the law. You might choose to look at both these examples or choose the example that best suits your students. Either in pairs, or small groups, ask students to read through the information on their worksheet and then discuss the questions on **slide 19**.

Activity 5: Making my voice heard

Display **slide 20** which explains that each year many changes are made to the law. Students are challenged to consider what impact these changes can have. **Worksheet 4** provides different case studies of recent changes to the law. Students should read through the information provided and then discuss:

Q: Why was the law changed?

Q: What impact will the change have on the characters described?

Q: Who else might be impacted by the change?

Q: Do you agree with the change? Why/why not?

You might choose to look at all the examples or choose the example that best suits your students. Alternatively, students might choose to research a current change that is being suggested to the law. All bills that are currently making their way through parliament can be found here - <https://www.parliament.uk/business/bills-and-legislation/>

TELL US YOUR IDEAS

We'd love to hear what new laws students suggest. Get students to write them down, take a picture and share with us @YoungCitizensUK #TheBigLegalLesson. A template is included for this at the end of the pack.

Plenary

Slide 21 - Ask students to go back to the definitions they wrote and the list of what they already knew about the law from Activity 1. What new information can students now add?



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Worksheet 1a

What's the law got to do with me?

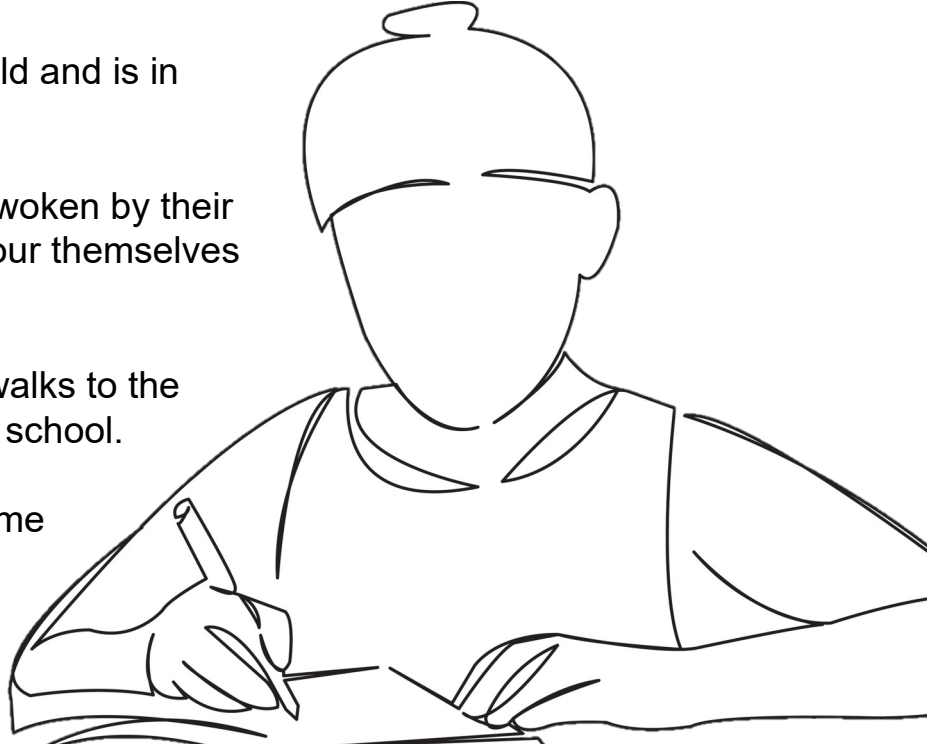
This is Remy. Remy is 13 years old and is in Year 8 at school.

It's Monday morning, Remy gets woken by their alarm and heads downstairs to pour themselves a bowl of chocolate cereal.

At 8:00am Remy heads out and walks to the bus stop, then catches the bus to school.

The school day starts with tutor time and then Remy heads off for science followed by maths.

After maths, it's break time followed by PE, then lunch.



In the afternoon Remy has a 30-minute appointment with the school's careers adviser. They talk about what options Remy wants to pick for GCSE.

After school Remy gets the bus home, grabs their bike and heads off to do their paper round.

When Remy gets home, they have some French and English homework to do before they can relax. After dinner Remy spends some time chatting with friends online before heading to bed.



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Worksheet 1b

Match the part of Remy's day to the law(s).

This is Remy. Remy is 13 years old and is in Year 8 at school. It's Monday morning, Remy gets woken by their alarm and heads downstairs to pour themselves a bowl of chocolate cereal.

At 8:00am Remy heads out and walks to the bus stop, then catches the bus to school.

The school day starts with tutor time and then Remy heads off for Science followed by Maths.

After maths, it's break time followed by PE, then lunch.

In the afternoon Remy has a 30- minute appointment with the school's careers adviser. They talk about what options Remy wants to pick for GCSE.

After school Remy gets the bus home, grabs their bike and heads off to do their paper round.

When Remy gets home, they have some French and English homework to do before they can relax. After dinner Remy spends some time chatting with friends online before heading to bed.

Food (Promotion and Placement) (England) Regulations

Education Act

Children and Young Persons Act

Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Act

Road Traffic Act

Equality Act

Human Rights Act

Online Safety Bill

Communications Act

School premises regulations

Data Protection Act



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Worksheet 1c

What's the law got to do with me?

| Describe your day | How will the law affect you? |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
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| | |



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Worksheet 2

A Police Officer

A Judge

A Lawyer

The King

A Member of Parliament

A Citizen

The Prime Minister

The Media

A Peer



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Worksheet 2

**Their role is to maintain law and order within our communities.
This includes protecting the public and preventing crime.**

A member of the House of Lords. The House of Lords has around 800 members most of whom were appointed by the monarch on the advice of the prime minister because they are expert in their field (e.g. education, music, sport).

The Head of State. They must grant 'Royal Assent' for all new laws.

A public officer appointed to preside over cases in a court of law.

A person who has been elected to represent the people from a particular geographical area in the House of Commons.

The leader of the government. They are the person who is in charge of the political party that won the most seats in the House of Commons at the last general election.

A range of communication outlets through which news can be spread.

Me, you, us! The people that live in a country.

This person is an expert in law. They can give advice on legal matters. They can also represent people in court.



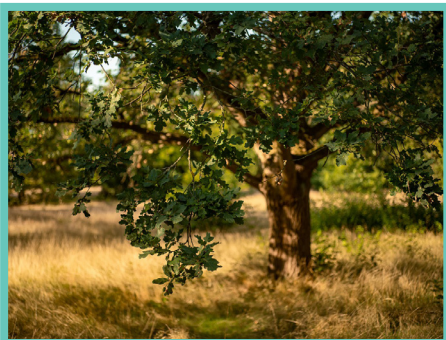
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Worksheet 3



Protesting

Charley has lived in a small village her entire life. The village used to be surrounded by woodland. The woodland was home to much wildlife. Over the last few years, the village has changed. Much of the local woodland has been cleared to make space for new houses.



A new area of woodland has recently been purchased by a developer who plans to clear it and build a large supermarket. Charley has had enough. When the date arrives for the woodland to be cleared she chains herself to a 200-year-old oak tree in protest.



Mark works for the construction company which have been contracted to clear the woodland. This is not the first time he has not been able to carry out contracted work due to protesters.

What does the law say?

The Human Rights Act says that everyone has a right to hold their own opinions and to express them freely.

It also protects everyone's rights to freedom of assembly and association. This includes your right to take part in protests. However, these rights are not absolute. This means that restrictions can be placed on them by the government in some situations. For example:

- To protect national security or public safety;
- To prevent disorder or crime;
- To protect the rights and freedoms of others.

In May 2023 a new law was introduced, the Public Order Act. Amongst other things, it made 'locking-on' an offence.

What is locking-on? When individuals attach themselves to others, objects or buildings. The locking-on offence carries a maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment, an unlimited fine, or both.



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Worksheet 3

Striking



Alice is a doctor working in a hospital. The past year has been tough. The cost of many things, like rent, food and electricity have been rising. Alice sometimes struggles to pay all the bills. She has been taking part in a number of strikes recently about pay.

Eva also works at the hospital. It is her job to organise rotas and make sure there are enough staff working on each shift. Eva has had to cancel a number of operations during the strikes. It is her job to let patients know when their operation has been cancelled.



What is a strike?

A form of industrial action which happens when members of a trade union are in dispute with their employer. Members of the trade union form a group that refuses to work. There are strict regulations in place which say when trade unions can call a strike.

What does the law say?

The Human Rights Act says that everyone has a right to freedom of assembly and association. This includes your right to take part in protests and be part of a trade union. However, these rights are not absolute. This means that restrictions can be placed on them by the government in some situations. For example:

- To protect national security or public safety;
- To protect the health and morals of others;
- To protect the rights and freedoms of others.

In July 2023 a new law was introduced, the Strikes (Minimum Service Level) Act. The law allows the government to enforce minimum service levels during strikes in six sectors, including:

- Health
- Fire and rescue
- Education
- Transport

Employers from these sectors can stop identified workers from taking part in a strike.



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Worksheet 4

Making my voice heard

Q: If you could create a new law, or change an existing law, what change would you make?

Q: What are the arguments for and against your suggested change?



Q: Which individuals would be affected if the law were changed?



Q: How would society be affected if the law were changed?



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Worksheet 4

Making my voice heard by those in positions of power:

Think about who you would need to get on board to support your proposed change to the law? For example:

- MPs
- Peers
- Legal professionals
- Experts in the field
- The media
- Charities
- Business leaders
- Community groups
- Local residents
- Religious leaders

Q: How will you effectively communicate with the people you have identified?

There are many different ways of communicating with other people; it can be tricky deciding which method to use. E-mail, phone call, face-to-face meeting, virtual meeting, letter, social media? Choose a communication method that best suits your initial ask, and have a second (even third) in reserve in case you don't get a reply to your first attempt.

Remember, MPs can get hundreds of requests from constituents every week. Journalists are frequently out and about. In order to get your voice heard by a decision-maker, you need to make it as easy as possible for them to see your communication and to reply.

Use the table below to plan who you need to communicate with, what your key messages are for them and what communication methods you will use.

| People I want to communicate with | Key messages | How will I contact them? |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |