

Being an active Citizen



What does Citizenship mean?

Citizenship is about everyone having certain rights and responsibilities.

Rights such as:

- The right to vote
- The right to get married
- The right to work
- The right not to be discriminated against

Responsibilities such as:

- Helping other people
- Respecting others
- Not discriminating against anyone
- Not breaking the law

Citizenship is about how you put your rights and responsibilities into practice.

It might be about voting, or getting involved in political activities.



It might be about being actively involved in your community, taking part in groups and associations.

Having a voice, and being listened to, is at the heart of citizenship.



What do people need to be active citizens?

Knowledge



People need knowledge and information about how decisions are made. This means understanding how councils, governments and systems work.

Sharing ideas and getting support to take action



Citizenship is about expressing your opinions but also listening to others and coming together to agree decisions and make a plan of action.

You should be able to say what you think and to be given your rights as a citizen. An example of this might be that if any adult wants to work then support and information on benefits etc. should be provided to make this possible.



Being an active citizen

How we live our lives and what we do depends on our values and attitudes. Active citizens tend to have a strong sense of fairness and caring for others.

Citizens must feel they can make a difference and have some control over their lives. For example it is worth writing to your MP about something that you care about because your voice as a citizen matters.



Having the confidence to speak up and say what you think is an important part of being a citizen.

How do people learn citizenship?

By participating (Taking Part)

Most of us have opportunities to participate in groups and activities and we can learn a lot from this.

Taking part in groups we can gain confidence and learn more about society. We might also get new skills such as taking minutes or chairing meetings.



Participation is a natural human thing. If it is not happening it's because of some barriers. So to promote participation, the barriers need to be removed.

To participate fully you need

- **Information** - if you don't know or don't understand, or are given the wrong information, you can't participate.



- **Vision** - to dream with others about where you want to go.



- **Connections** - to help overcome the separation and isolation that services create by focusing on people as 'client groups'.

- **Relationships** - focus on building relationships within the community and connecting with others



- **Room for everyone** - this means welcoming differences between people, and encouraging different points of view and different ways of doing things



- **Discussions** - questioning, challenging, suggesting alternatives, negotiating until you reach an agreement.

Education

Sharing ideas is important - people learn from each other by sharing their stories and hearing about other's experiences.

When discussing concerns and coming up with solutions sometimes people realise they need to have more knowledge and information about the issues.



You also learn by 'doing' or **TAKING ACTION** when something is happening in your community and you want to do something about it.

