

Talking about human rights

What we know works:



Make human rights relevant

Talk about how human rights benefit a wide range of people and issues that people already care about - children, people in care, victims of domestic violence, people experiencing mental health problems.



Use inclusive words and phrases

Express human rights as something “we” can be proud of, or that help “all of us”.



Showcase human rights ‘wins’

Give specific but concise examples of where human rights have been an agent for change and produced real results for individuals and society.



Demonstrate how human rights bring to life values we all share

Use phrases like ‘freedom’, ‘fairness’, ‘justice’ and ‘equality’ as values that underpin human rights. Talk about ‘our pride in having human rights’.



Focus on your arguments, not theirs

Pivot away and shift the focus back to positive messages about human rights.

What doesn’t work (for most people):



Educating with facts

Facts alone won’t bring people round to your way of thinking - if a fact doesn’t chime with a person’s own experience it will simply bounce off them.



Arguments about legal and procedural issues

Few people will be interested in engaging in the detail of how human rights institutions and laws work in practice. Those that do are probably already positive about human rights!



Myth-busting

Myth-busting helps to reinforce negative views. Most people won’t hear your ‘truth,’ they’ll hear the original argument you’re trying to disprove.



International arguments

Arguing that Britain should be setting an example internationally creates very mixed responses. It relies on people caring a lot about fairness in other countries when in reality very few people prioritise this above domestic concerns.