Resource pack for those working with young people

The Electoral Commission as well as other organisations frequently release resources for schools and youth organisations, aimed at a range of age groups. While these provide a lot of valuable input, it can be time consuming and quite tricky to find the resources you would like to use/require for your lessons. To make it easier, I have collated the resources as well as summarised them to create this overview document. Some activities I use/have used in the past for youth outreach sessions and would recommend can be found at the end. Should you have any questions, or would prefer a member of the Portsmouth City Council Election Services to come and deliver a session to your class/group at no cost to you, please do not hesitate to contact me at sarah.lehmkuehler@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Youth resources in general can be found at https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/resources/resources-educators/education-resources. There are a range of categories such as lesson plans, short activities and assembly resources.

The lesson plans are very helpful both to integrate throughout the year but also to run as a one-off day. More school-specific, they consist of a PPT which includes notes that help the teacher guide the students along it.

Lessons 1-3 give a more basic introduction to democracy, elections and voting.

Lessons 4-6 allow students to get active themselves and be involved in the process of electoral registration. They encourage young people to consider barriers to voting and how to overcome them.

The short activities are similar in content to the lessons but designed to e.g. open a different lesson on politics or for use in youth groups/non-teaching environments. They can nonetheless be good to add in at the beginning or end of a lesson and can be run independently of other lessons.

The Assembly resources start off more interactive and allow students to get involved immediately. They may pair well with a short activity, or even as an assembly ahead of using the lesson plans.

The school referendum resource helps if your school is trying to gather student feedback/a student vote on a certain (real-life) issue such as e.g. a change in school uniform.

In addition to these activities, especially the lesson plans, we would encourage you to add a practical element to the lessons, such as handing out registration forms, having students register, and then running a mock election. Materials for this such as a polling booth or ballot box can be supplied by us. If you are interested in borrowing these, or would like some assistance with running a voting session, please contact sarah.lehmkuehler@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

https://www.democracyclassroom.com/all-resources is a large selection of resources covering multiple topics such as practical advice on preparing to vote in an election, understanding the political system and law-making processes, media literacy, and information about political parties. These resources can be filtered by topic, age group or

type of resources. Please note that they are not supplied by the Electoral Commission or the UK government but by "Democracy Classroom", which is a collaboration of democracy, education and youth organisations. You will need to create a free account to access these resources.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rock-enrol-engaging-young-people-in-democracy is a set of lesson plans aimed at the 16+ age group. They can be run as a full set over multiple weeks, a workshop day, or a one-off individual session. Below are summaries of the lessons so that you can pick the one(s) most appropriate to your group.

- o Lesson 1 is a good exercise to highlight the importance of electoral registration, which many other programmes are lacking; it also introduces general concepts around voting and elections. It might work better for older students though who are able to, or close to being able to register.

- o Lesson 2 is less focused on voting and elections and more covers current issues and debating them. It can be used well to set ground rules of how to debate controversial issues respectfully, or follow on from a lesson you may have already done on this.

- o Lesson 3 talks about the challenges of government and shows how difficult it can be to come to a conclusion (in the money exercise), as well as highlights things such as coalitions (in the power exercise). It can be a good way to encourage them to vote if their conclusions on how to spend money are radically different from current policies.

- o Lesson 4 circles back to focus more heavily on elections and the voting process itself, as well as the following process of lawmaking. Students will be well prepared to vote 'in real life' once they are able to. This lesson links in well with lesson 1 as a set on voting and electoral processes. For a more comprehensive citizenship unit, the whole programme is useful.

Shout UK is a UK project that works on community engagement and political awareness in London. They have a range of videos hosted on YouTube that explain more about Voting and Elections that can be accessed via https://www.shoutoutuk.org/resources/#political. Please do note however that these videos are specific to London, e.g. mentioning "elections in London" rather than speaking more generally. There are video resources specifically on elections such as those on registering to vote and voter ID, but also many others on topics like human rights, the monarchy, and misinformation.

Youth Count Democracy Challenge (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ef5b1b786650c129b9af06b/Youth_Count_Democracy_Challenge_Nov_2015.pdf) is a longer programme of lessons that can be run over a period of time. If you are only looking to run a one-off session, most lessons work well by themselves too. There is an overview of topics covered in the front (pp.8-9), so that you can pick a lesson based on your desired topic. I have noted down some comments on the lessons in the following, to help you choose which one(s) to run.

- Lesson 1: Activities 2 and 4 can be used at the start of a lessons or workshop to work out a baseline of understanding. Activities 1 and 3 are more relevant when planning to deliver the whole programme (or at least a series of lessons)

- Lesson 2: The usefulness of this depends heavily on your class. For students that have an understanding of terms surrounding democracy and elections for example, activity 2 is too simple, and activity 3 may be too. They can however be adapted by providing the timeline, or speeding up the activity and then debating the laws added into it.

- Lesson 3: This again depends on whether or not your class has covered these topics before and appeals more to a basic knowledge/younger students. Activity 3 is popular with these types of programmes, but works better when you think students will disagree on some statements. Otherwise you can provide your own statements too.

- Lesson 4: Both activities, but especially Activity 3 cover leadership in general, and are not as "election-specific" as other lessons as they explore ideas applicable to many areas of life. If you wanted to speed up this lesson, Activity 2 can be shortened/adapted (e.g. only creating one "law").

- Lesson 5: this is best done as a set with lesson 6. Alternatively, you could pick one set of matching activities from lessons 5 and 6 and make them into one lesson. This activity also may need to be adapted based on student age and interests (i.e. the treasure hunt part). You also might want to adapt the politicians on the cards to people likely to be known by your students/of relevance to them.

- Lesson 6: Needs some materials from lesson 5. Introduces a debate within the classroom, which can be a nice foundation for future sessions. However, both sessions may feel quickly outdated, especially as politicians change.

- Lesson 7: One of the lessons most focused on voting, and one I like to use. It's a great way to introduce conversations around barriers to voting and how they can be addressed. I would follow on from Activity 2 with another exercise on how to best address these barriers - this can also be added into Activity 2 rather than writing down "good reasons" why someone should vote.

- Lesson 8: This is more suited to younger students, especially Activity 3. While Activity 4 can be good as an add-on to other lessons, I would mainly run this lesson if I was doing the whole set of lessons as a longer course.

- Lesson 9: A great lesson with practical applications, making sure students know who they can speak to/how to get involved with their MP. Activity 2 is particularly relevant for this, and can be expanded to speak about local councillors and local democracy as well. In Activity 4, it can be difficult to keep statements about party policies neutral, especially if they are likely to be emotionally charged for some students. In this case it may be better to skip the activity.

- Lesson 10: This is a nice lesson on young people that have made a difference, and the inclusion of a local speaker can help connect this more to students' everyday life. However, in a shorter workshop focused around voting and elections, this would be a lesson to skip.

- o Lesson 11: If you have the time, this is a nice way to connect young people to local democracy. However, you can always cover these aspects as an add-on to Activity 2 in Lesson 9 if you are short on time/no relevant speakers are available.

- o Lesson 12: While not directly related to electoral processes, this is a good chance for students to practice debating in a constructive way. Activity 3, including the instructions on setting rules for a debate, will be helpful for students in other contexts too. It is important here to strictly enforce rules around factual statements so that the session does not become too emotionally charged. As an add-on, you could discuss with your class what they think about politicians' debating styles in other countries (e.g. the US) and what kind of debate they prefer (factual vs. emotionally charged/accusatory).

- o Lesson 13: An excellent demonstration of the importance of voting, that will hopefully lead to students understanding the analogy of 'throwing away their power' in the context of not voting. This can be expanded/changed with the "Vote with your feet" exercise in Lesson 1 of the 'Rock Enrol' resource pack (see above). It matches particularly well with Activity 3 (ideally run 'Vote with your feet' first, then Activity 3).

- o Lesson 14: A lesson that is particularly helpful for students who are anxious about the actual process of voting. Activity 2 can be expanded to highlight other ways of voting such as postal votes, and how to apply for them. You can contact your local elections office to ask about borrowing "real" elections equipment such as a voting booth and ballot box.

For the 2025 "Welcome to your Vote week", the Electoral Commission has released some new resources. They are split into age groups, and cover the topics of "Mis- and Disinformation" and "Local Democracy".

Mis- and Disinformation: There is a 1-hour-lesson as well as 4 "mini sessions" per age group to accommodate different formats. For all lessons, a plan which links them to the curriculum is provided.

7-11 age group (https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/resources/resources-educators/mis-and-disinformation-resources-ages-7-11): The lesson is a very basic introduction to voting, using shapes as candidates in an election. The topics however are "real" political topics such as transport and the environment. Kids take part in a vote and learn more about the process, including counting the votes etc. This is then followed by a quiz. The "mini sessions" 1-3 cover elections very generally, AI influence on voting, and identifying and countering misinformation. Session 4 is a scavenger hunt/quiz on elections. The sessions are more focused on Mis-and Disinformation than the lesson, which is focused on voting and electoral processes.

11-14 age group (https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/resources/resources-educators/mis-and-disinformation-resources-ages-11-14): The lesson for this age group focuses on mis- and disinformation rather than electoral processes/voting. Students are encouraged to think about examples of mis- and disinformation they have encountered on

e.g. social media and the impact this may have. There is a brief quiz involved as well as an activity at the end of the lesson. The "mini sessions" are on identifying mis- and disinformation (the same as in the lesson), recognising AI, trusted sources/checking sources, and where to find information on political topics. The final session on finding information includes a "digital scavenger hunt", which requires the use of e.g. phones to access the internet.

14-16 age group (https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/resources/resources-educators/mis-and-disinformation-resources-ages-14-16): This lesson is similar to the 11-14 age group lesson and also focuses on mis- and disinformation. It adds in "Democracy Milestones" i.e. the age to register/vote. But otherwise also contains a video + quiz. The "mini sessions" are also similar to those in the 11-14 age group, covering the same topics of identifying mis- and disinformation (the same as in the lesson), recognising AI, trusted sources/checking sources, and where to find information on political topics. The final session on finding information again includes a "digital scavenger hunt", which requires the use of e.g. phones to access the internet. The main difference is that the sessions go into slightly more detail than those for the 11-14 age group.

For the 16-18 age group, a slightly different resource is provided, titled "Local democracy activities" (https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.electoralcommission.org.uk%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2F2025-02%2FLocal%2520democracy%2520resource.pptx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK). It lists useful information as well as key dates regarding the election timeline (please note that these are not relevant to Portsmouth this year, as there are no scheduled elections in Portsmouth in 2025). The rest of the resource consists of 5 activities, all aimed at getting young people about the ways to get involved in decision-making processes. Activity 4, called "Who does what?" is one I use frequently for groups as it really provides a good understanding of both the role of local government but also possible shared responsibilities.

Below are some lessons I find particularly relevant to explaining the electoral process as well as the UK system of democracy. Some may suit some age groups better than others. All activities can be combined across programmes to suit your needs.

Top picks by programme:

- o Electoral Commission Lesson plans
  - o Lesson 1 (slides) - "Everyday Politics": a good activity for students who are less interested in politics or find it hard to see the impact in their daily life. You can expand this by talking about whether the mentioned examples fall under local or national government authority.
  - o Lesson 4+5 (slides) - "Campaign research" + "Campaign planning" (lesson 4) and full lesson 5: these lessons give students the chance to think about barriers to voter registration/voting as well as implement their own campaign

to overcome these barriers. They are suited to a slightly longer project across multiple lessons so that students get the chance to see results from their campaigns. They are also very suitable to e.g. a youth club or any group involved in community outreach. Lesson 6 reviews these campaigns and is a nice way of analysing students' approaches, if you have the time for it.

- o Rock Enrol!

    - o Lesson 1 (pp.3-6) - full lesson, but especially "Vote with your feet": a good way to start off a lesson or workshop, and the sticker part of it has a good impact

    - o Lesson 3 (pp.9-12) - "Show me the money": groups often enjoy this activity. It works particularly well if their decisions differ from current policies, to encourage them to get involved to create change

- o Youth Count Democracy challenge

    - o Lesson 7 "Using your vote" (pp.58-64) - full lesson

    - o Lesson 9 "They work for us" (pp.74-83) - Activities 1-4, but in particular activity 2: this can be expanded nicely by introducing local councillors too. If running the full lesson, you will need to adapt this lesson slightly to ensure the provided information is up-to-date.

    - o Lesson 13 "Power to the (young) people" (pp.105-111) - Activities 2-4, but in particular activity 3: if not running activity 2, introduce the "power" cards at the start of activity 3.

    - o Lesson 14 "At the ballot box" (pp.112-124) - Activities 2-3: this especially suits students who may be nervous about the act of voting. Please note that we can provide props such as a full polling station set-up upon request (email elections@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

- o 2025 "Welcome to Your Vote week" resources

    - o The resources for the 7-11, 11-14, and 14-16 age groups are well suited to introducing the topics of mis- and disinformation. For resources regarding voting and elections, I would prefer those listed above.

    - o "Local Democracy Activities" (16-18 age group) - Activity 4: This is an activity I use frequently. It is very helpful in highlighting the impact of local government and can also be used (possibly adapted) for younger students.

I hope this resource pack makes it easier for you to find materials for your class or youth group. Should you have any questions, or would like a member of the Portsmouth City Council Election Services to run a session for your group, please reach out to sarah.lehmkuehler@portsmouthcc.gov.uk