

Topic: Legal rights and responsibilities

Lesson: Relationships and legal rights	KS or Year Group: Y9
Resources: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Resource 1 – Legal rights surrounding relationships2. Resource 2 – Cohabiting couples: what are their rights?3. Resource 3 – What are my legal rights?	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils can understand that legal rights are relevant to cohabiting couples.• Pupils can understand that legal rights are relevant if cohabiting couples split up.

National Curriculum

Key Concepts: 1.1b

Key Processes: 2.1a, 2.2a, 2.2b, 2.2c, 2.2d, 2.3d

Range and Content: 3a, 3f, 3g, 3i

Curriculum Opportunities: 4a, 4b, 4c, 4g

Lesson

Pupils explore some keywords linked to the legalities surrounding cohabitation. They read some facts about the rights that cohabiting couples do/don't have. They then hotseat some characters (who are seeking advice about their rights) and some advisers.

Starter

- Lesson objectives are shared with pupils.
- Pupils are given **Resource 1 – Legal rights surrounding relationships**. Volunteers read out the keywords so that they can be explained if necessary.
- Pupils are asked to discuss the following in pairs:
 - Fifty years ago in Britain, did people have civil partnerships? Did unmarried couples live together very often?
 - Why do some couples live together without being married or part of a civil partnership?
 - Why is it useful that the UK has laws about cohabitation?

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- Give an example of a situation in which cohabiting adults might need to seek advice about their legal rights.

Main activity

- Pupils get into small groups, each of which needs to contain a competent reader.
- Pupils spend ten minutes reading through **Resource 2 – Cohabiting couples: what are their rights?** and discussing the information.
- In their books, pupils answer two of the following questions from the board:
 - Do you think that the rights that you have just read about are mostly fair or unfair? Explain.
 - Did any fact particularly surprise you? Why?
 - If you could change one of the rights, how would you change it?
 - Why do you think that cohabiting couples do not have the same rights as couples who are married or have a civil partnership?
 - Do you think that cohabiting couples should have the same rights as couples who are married or have a civil partnership? Justify your opinion.
- Pupils are invited to read out their answers to the rest of the class.
- Those who do so are praised. Pupils are reminded that the ability to feed back opinions confidently is a vital part of Citizenship lessons.

Plenary

- Pupils make a circle of chairs. An empty chair is used as the hot seat.
- Pupils are given **Resource 3 – What are my legal rights?**
- It is explained that the characters on **Resource 3** are seeking advice about their rights.
- Pupils are invited to come to the hot seat and to read out (or re-phrase) the question from one of the characters.
- Other pupils are then invited to step into the hot seat and to offer expert advice (based upon the information on **Resource 2**). For example, a model answer for character A's concerns might be:
 - 'If the house is in your name only, then your ex-boyfriend does not have any right to stay there any more. He can't profit from the house financially or make you sell it either. Maybe he is trying to upset you because he feels bitter about what has happened. On the other hand he might be misinformed about his rights – like lots of people in England and Wales! Incidentally, who ended the relationship is irrelevant. If your ex-partner would benefit from an expert telling him where he stands legally, ask him to consult the "advice now" website.'

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- Pupils who volunteered to hot seat are praised.
- Pupils are asked to nominate classmates who were particularly successful in their roles. Pupils are asked to consider what made them successful and to work on these skills in future lessons.

Aim high

- During the starter, high-achieving pupils should explain some of the vocabulary to the class.
- During the main activity, high-achieving pupils should read one of their answers out to the class.
- During the plenary, high-achieving pupils should take part in the hotseating.

Assessment

In order for pupils to achieve certain levels within the lesson, the following should be considered:

Level 5:

- Pupils suggest why people's needs should be balanced within (and after) relationships.
- Pupils clearly communicate their arguments about the rights of cohabiting couples.

Level 6:

- Pupils describe some of the influences shaping opinions (within the class) about cohabitation.
- Pupils understand some of the complexities of relationships within modern UK society.

Level 7:

- Pupils explore the range of opinions (within the class) about the rights of cohabiting couples.
- Pupils argue persuasively about why cohabiting couples should have more/fewer rights.

Level 8:

- Pupils make perceptive observations about the ways in which cohabiting couples might safeguard their rights.
- Pupils hypothesise what might happen if cohabiting couples were to be afforded the same rights as couples joined in marriage/civil partnership.

Check the web

www.advicenow.org.uk/livingtogether/

Summary of key learning

- Pupils can appreciate that there are different situations in which cohabiting couples might seek legal advice.
- Pupils can suggest how cohabiting couples might obtain advice about their rights.

Resource 1 – Legal rights surrounding relationships

Everyone knows that relationships involve *feelings*.
However, have you ever thought about the legal rights that people have during
and after relationships?

You will need to use some of the following words:

legal rights law obligation contract duties

childcare financial ties mortgage property

cohabitation mutual respect trust

commitment self-respect inheritance will

relationship breakdown bitterness resentment

conflict (un)reasonable

Resource 2 – Cohabiting couples: what are their rights?

Lots of people in England and Wales think that if a couple live together for long enough then they will have lots of rights.

People sometimes tell stories about cohabiting people who try to take each other's money and possessions after a break-up.

1. What if my cohabiting partner lives in a house that I own, but then we split up?

- You do not have to give him/her any money even if he/she gave up work to decorate the house or to look after it.
- You have the right to ask him/her to leave your house.
- You have the right to keep all of the furniture that you bought with your own money.

2. What if we break up and there are children involved?

- You have the right to see a family mediator. This is a specialist who helps people to work out what is best for your children if a relationship ends.
- Unmarried fathers whose children were registered after 1 December 2003 have equal rights to mothers in terms of their children.

3. What if I am ill and want my partner to act as my next of kin?

- You can carry an official card that proves that he/she is your next of kin. He/she is then allowed to make important decisions about you, if you are in a coma for example.

4. What if my partner dies and there is no will?

- You do not have the right to automatically inherit anything from him/her.
- You will not get any of his/her pensions even if you had children together and even if you gave up your job to look after them.

5. What if my partner dies and he/she leaves lots of debt?

- You have the right to forget about his/her debt (as long as it isn't in your name too).

6. What about the future?

- Experts say that laws about cohabiting couples are unlikely to change before 2012.
- Cohabiting couples can get professional advice about their rights from www.advicenow.org.uk/livingtogether.

Resource 3 – What are my legal rights?

A I have just dumped my boyfriend. He's been paying me rent for five years. He says that I have to sell the house and give him half of the profit.

E I have £20,000 of debt in my name. If I die first, will my partner have to pay it? We have been together for fifty years but are not married.

B My girlfriend and I have just had a terrible break-up because I met someone else. She says that she'll make sure that I never see my one-year-old daughter again.

F My partner finished with me after four years of us living together in his house. I haven't worked for the last year as I have doing DIY for him and decorating his house.

C My partner of 30 years was killed in a car crash last month. She didn't make a will and we didn't have a civil partnership. Can I get access to her savings? I don't have a job.

G My partner and I have just broken up. I bought all the furniture for the house because my girlfriend was a student. She says she has the right to half of it because she cannot afford any.

D I have a brain tumour and it is likely that I am going to be in and out of consciousness over the next few months. Can my unmarried

H I don't want to be legally joined to my partner because we're so happy the way that we are. Is the law likely to change next year so that we can have the same rights as my married friends?