

How to make friends and Influence People

Power

How can young people get to have power to influence what happens in their community?

While it is true that everyone especially young people have limits to what they can achieve if they are 'smart' they can achieve so much more.

One of the things to remember is: **There are limits to power for everyone**

At times you might find it an uphill task but be prepared to concentrate on one thing and be clear about what you want to achieve.

The Barriers to Making a Difference

As a group exercise note down reason why it might be difficult for the group to get their views heard and to make a difference.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Here are some ideas from young people.

- The Government decides on what is taught in school
- The local council decides on how much money a school will have to spend
- The governors employ the staff and need to adhere to employment law
- Parents too will want a say in how the school is run!
- There is only so much money to spend
- Other people of all ages will have different ways about the money should be spent
- There are often rules and policies, which mean that some things are more difficult to action than others.
- Not listened to because too young
- No money

Now ask the group to suggest ways in which they or other groups can affect decisions being made

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

Power comes from:

- Representing a large body of people
- Money
- Friends - Allies
- Influence – talk to the right people, persuade
- Publicity.
- Demonstrations

Representing a large body of people

This is one area where young people, either through a school council or by gaining the support of many pupils, can really help itself.

You need to demonstrate that you truly represent the views of the pupils in the school. Ways you can do this are:

- Elections – get a good number of people voting on an issue
- Getting pupils' views - use the Citizenship lessons to find out what issues pupils think are important and what they think about those issues
- If there is a particular issue that people feel strongly about – get a petition together – you will have evidence of the number of pupils who feel strongly about an issue

Money

This is more difficult but:

- Ask the school for a sum of money for which the school council will be responsible.
- Many local councils have money which can be spent by local residents – that should include young people
- The school council may be able to be able to apply for money from outside organisations. For example, a number of local councils have funds, which young people can use to spend on projects.
- The local CVS is another useful place where you can get information about further funding.

Influence

Sometimes it's not what you know but who you know!

Two ways of influencing people:

- Get young people's representatives into the meetings where decisions are made. This could be having a representative of the School Council onto the governing body of the school.
- Be persuasive. For example, in school if you are approaching the Head Teacher about an issue – do it properly! The same applies if you want to put your case to a local councillor!
 - o Make a formal appointment
 - o Make sure there are three or four of you - you will be able to help each other
 - o Prepare your argument and practise it before hand
 - o Be polite but stand your ground

- o Don't get fobbed off! Make people say
 - When something will be done
 - How it will be carried out
 - Who will be responsible
 - If it cannot be done – why?
- o If money is going to be involved find out how much things will cost
- o Show how you are representing other young people
- o Show how it will benefit the school or community.

Publicity

This does not just mean getting your picture into the papers – but it might.

It is making sure that everyone in school and associated with school knows what the pupils think whether that is under the auspices of the schools council or in other ways.

Within school use the notice boards to 'sell' your message. This might be promoting the school council by letting people know who the representatives are, what are the current issues, what has been done by the council in the past.

If the school has a newsletter ask to put in an article or a schools council might want to have a set section so that everyone including parents can know parents know what you are trying to do.

Allies

It is a really useful skill to work out who can help you. There will be people who share your aims. Fill in the table below with the names, contact details and how different people can help your cause.

Name	Contact details	In what ways can they help

Be prepared to contact people. The council might want to send a copy of its minutes to Governors meetings, on important issues the council might want to write to the Governors.