



The Coronavirus and Human Rights





Lesson Objectives

- Explain what is meant by the term human rights, and describe which of these rights are absolute and which can be limited in exceptional circumstances.
- Identify which human rights have been impacted by the global pandemic.
- Justify whether or not you think that access to the internet should be a human right.



Q: What are Human Rights?

The basic **rights** and **freedoms** that belong to every person in the world, from birth until death. They apply regardless of where you are from, what you believe or how you choose to live your life.

Q: Why are rights important?

Q: What rights should all people be entitled to?



Activity 1: Consider the statements in the table. Place them into three categories: In every case, in most cases, in some cases.

- 1. Killing another person is wrong**
- 2. Torture is wrong**
- 3. A person accused of a crime should be tried by someone who has nothing to do with the case.**
- 4. After a certain age people should be able to marry whoever they wish**
- 5. People should be allowed to have, or not have, whatever religious belief they wish**
- 6. Everyone over a certain age should have the right to vote**
- 7. People should be allowed to criticise the government**
- 8. People should not be punished for something that wasn't a crime when it was committed**



The Human Rights Act 1998

After World War II politicians in Europe wanted to make sure such a horrific event never happened again.

They joined forces to write the European Convention on Human Rights. This set out a number of rights that all people were entitled to.

In 1998 these rights were written into UK law.





The Human Rights Act 1998

Human rights protect people from an abuse of power by the state.

An individual can only enforce their human rights against public bodies (e.g. a school, hospital, or the Government).

You cannot enforce your human rights against another individual.





The Human Rights Act 1998

Absolute Rights:

Apply in all situations. They must be upheld in all situations with no exceptions.

Limited Rights:

In certain circumstances they can be limited or restricted. There must be a legitimate, legal reason for doing so.





Coronavirus Act

On 25th March 2020 a new piece of emergency legislation came into effect.

It set out a series of measures to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.

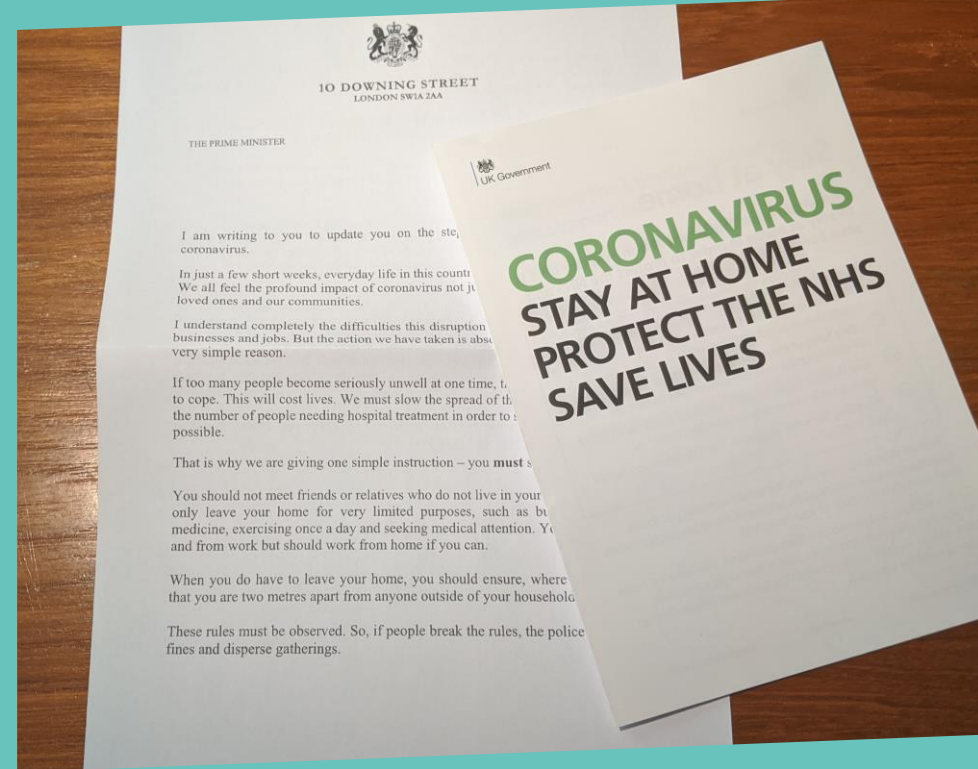
The legislation is time-limited to 2 years and has to be reviewed every 6 months.





The Act covers 5 areas

1. Increasing the health and social care workforce.
2. Easing the burden on frontline staff.
3. Introducing measures to contain and slow the virus.
4. Ensuring that the deceased are managed with respect.
5. Ensuring people are supported.





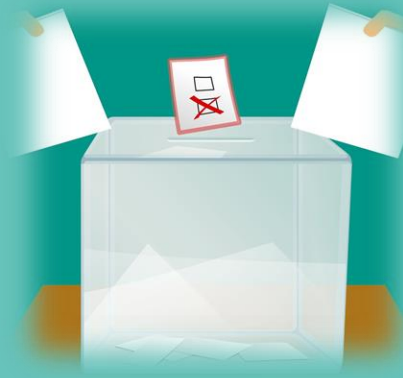
Measures to contain and slow the virus



Prevent people gathering



Move to remote learning for most young people



Postpone electoral events



Quarantining



Restrictions included ...





Activity 2

Q: What impact has the Coronavirus Act had on our Human Rights?

Record your thoughts using the table on **worksheet 3** or **page 4** of your student workbooks.

The Big Legal Lesson
Worksheet 3

The Coronavirus Act 2020

Article taken from Human Rights Act	Notes on how this right has been impacted
2. Everyone has the right to life	
3. No one should be tortured or treated in a way that is cruel or humiliating	
4. No one should be treated as a slave Everyone has the right not to be required to perform forced or compulsory labour	
5. Everyone has the right to liberty	
6. Everyone has the right to a fair trial and within a reasonable time	
8. Everyone has the right to respect for private and family life	
9. Everyone has the right to hold whatever beliefs	



Q: If these rights are protected by law, why was the Government able to create new legislation which restricts them?

- Many of the articles in the Human Rights Act can lawfully be limited in certain situations.
- Article 2 - 'Everyone has the right to life' places a legal duty on the Government to take positive steps to protect people whose lives are at risk.
- Many of the articles from the Act specifically make mentions of lawful restrictions for the purposes of preventing the spread of infectious diseases and protecting public health and safety.



When the world faces a crisis

Major world events often lead to questions being raised around human rights.

The Human Rights Act was created in response to World War II.

This happened over 70 years ago. Some would argue that they may need updating.





Emerging rights

Q: Has the Coronavirus pandemic highlighted any rights that are not in the Human Rights Act?

Q: What about the right to connect? The right to accessible, affordable broadband?





In February 2020 ...

- 96% of households in the UK had internet access.
- In households with one adult aged over 65 this dropped to 80%.
- 76% of adults used the internet for banking.
- 87% of adults had shopped online within the last 12 months.





The Digital Economy Act 2017

- In the UK you have a legal right to access high speed, affordable broadband.
- Ofcom defines 'affordable' as costing no more than £46.10 a month.
- If you cannot access broadband at £46.10 per month you have the right to request a universal service connection.





A global emergency

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic on 23rd March 2020 schools shut for all students but the children of key workers and vulnerable learners.

The majority of students did not return to school until September.

In January 2021 schools were once again asked to return to remote learning.





Access to online learning

One week after schools closed, teachers were asked if **all** of their students would have access to the internet.

- 38% of teachers surveyed in private schools answered yes.
- This fell to 12% in state schools and just 2% in schools in the most deprived areas.





Access to online learning

Teachers were also asked what support their schools were putting in place to support students who were struggling to access online learning.

31% of secondary school teachers at state schools said they were providing laptops to students.

6% said the school was supporting students with no internet access by providing dongles.





The digital divide

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have less access to the technology needed for online learning, including a computer and connection to the internet.

20% of young people on free school meals have no access to a computer at home, compared with 7% of other young people.

This can be a particular problem for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.





Free at the point of delivery

In their 2019 General Election manifesto, Labour promised if they were elected they would provide nationwide, superfast internet access which was free at the point of delivery by 2030.

How?

By bringing parts of BT into public ownership and creating a new British Broadband public service.

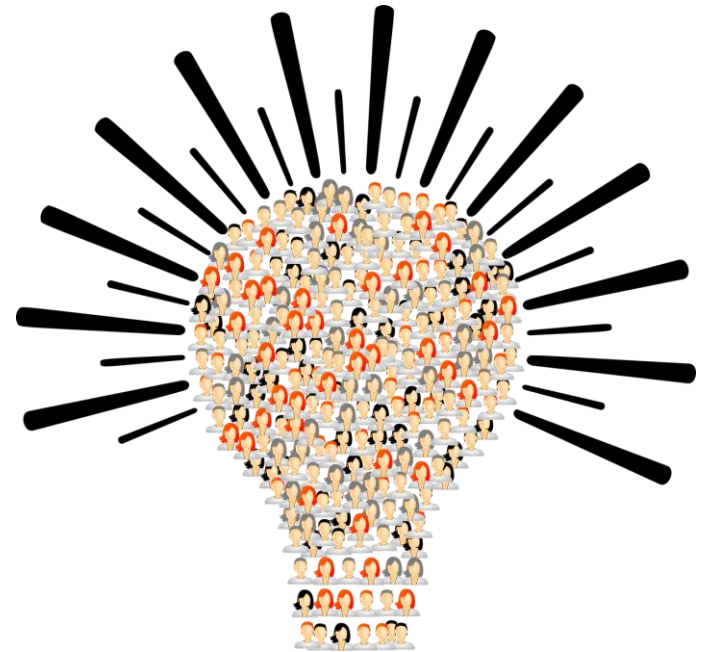




What do you think?

Q: Should all UK citizens have access to broadband which is free at the point of delivery?

Record the arguments for and against this on worksheet 4 or page 5 of your student workbook.





Plenary

Q: Write a short definition of what a human right is.

Q: Which three human rights are ‘absolute’?

Q: List three restrictions which have been used to prevent and control the spread of coronavirus and say which article(s) from the Human Rights Act they have impacted.

Q: Describe one thing that you have learnt today that has surprised you.