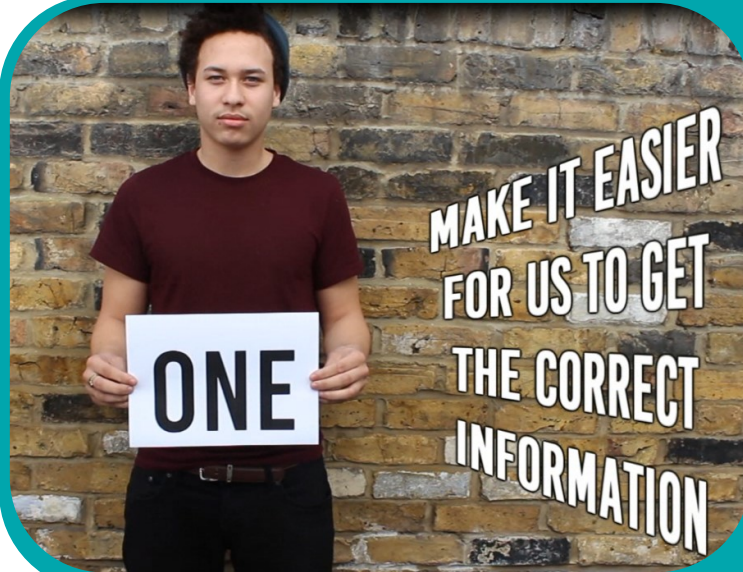


# Raising young people's awareness of their rights

Written by Joe Lee-Dowd, young campaigner, May 2015



Research has shown that young people are more likely to need advice when faced with a problem than any other age group, and are considerably less likely to be aware of our rights.

JustRights and Youth Access estimate that 2 million young people experience complex problems requiring professional advice every year (Youth Access, 2009). Without the correct information easily available to us though, we are often unsure of what to do and where to go for help, meaning that young people do not even seek advice on half of these issues. That's **1 million** young people left to cope alone with their problems every year.

## The problem according to young people:

JustRights and Youth Access spoke to young people across the country, discussing why they tend to be confused about their rights and what they think can be done about it.

Many young people agree that our confusion is largely due to a lack of **readily offered** and **easily accessible** information.

The **multitude of websites** and lack of organisation in the information we seek exacerbates our problems—information we do receive is **often contradictory**.

Young people want to be able to **help themselves and solve their own problems** as far as possible. We need the correct information for this to become a reality.

The difficulties young people face make us feel **rejected and ignored** by the authorities.



## Why we want change:

- Low awareness of rights and services is one of the main reasons young people fail to resolve their problems and get the help they need (Youth Access, 2009)
- Young people do not feel like any effort is made to actively inform us of our rights—**only 16% of young people** feel that the authorities want us to know about our rights (JustRights, 2014).
- 95% of young people think that accurate information about young people's rights should be easily available **online in one place** (JustRights, 2014).
- 84% of young people believe that the situation would improve if we were better educated to understand our rights, and to **share our knowledge** with other young people (JustRights, 2014).

## Young people's priorities for change

- Young people need one website set up where we can find all the information we need on our rights and services.
- All young people should be taught about their rights through the National Curriculum.
- Young people should be sent a pack of information about their rights in the post with their National Insurance Number when they turn 16.
- Teachers, youth workers and social workers should actively help us find out about our rights.
- Young people should be trained up to educate others about young people's rights.



## Young people's experiences with seeking information on their rights:

- "There are a lot of people who **don't know what they're entitled to.**"
- "It's so easy to get lost on the internet." - "The internet is largely difficult to communicate with."
- "If there was one page everyone knew about!"
- "The rules and our rights are so complicated, they come from a mix of hearsay and misinformation for most young adults."
- "They should be **taught in colleges**, they should have it in the **advice centres**. They should put up posters."
- "I wouldn't know where to go for advice. **It is not advertised.**"

*"The Government are quite eager for young people not to know their rights."*

*"They don't want us to know because they don't want to get into trouble. It's a lot less work for them to deal with if we don't know what to ask for."*

Arlind, aged 16

## 65% OF YOUNG PEOPLE

believe that government doesn't want them to know about their rights and entitlements



Young people's discouraging experiences with using existing institutions and resources to seek advice, particularly when faced with problems and decisions which affect our lives, are leading us to lose faith in the system. Many young people—65% according to our survey—are driven to feeling as if the government and the authorities are happy for us not to know about our rights and entitlements so the burden on them is reduced.

Young people's rights are of no use to us without being actively informed about them. The Make Our Rights Reality manifesto has set out how young people feel our access to information can be improved so that we can understand our rights, help ourselves and solve our own problems as far as possible, and always know where to go for help.

**Make Our Rights Reality is a young person-led manifesto and campaign to improve young people's access to information, advice and legal support**

**TAKE ACTION:  
SIGN OUR PETITION  
MAKE OUR RIGHTS  
REALITY**



Hear from young people in their own words – watch our film online

[www.change.org/p/make-our-rights-reality](http://www.change.org/p/make-our-rights-reality)

*youth*  
**ACCESS**  
to information, advice and counselling

**justrights**