Mobilise! A course on Active Citizenship


Facilitator Notes

These notes are designed to help anyone who will be working through the Mobilise course with a group of learners. These notes have been developed through the piloting of the online course in two different spaces with two different groups of learners, although both were refugees and asylum seekers – feedback on the course material and its delivery has been used to develop these notes and the accompanying resources. Any notes specific to the pilots are highlighted in yellow.

We have included plans, scripts and some activities from the workshops which we developed which can be used as proformas if needed.

These notes will cover the following topics: -

- **The values of the Mobilise! Project**
- **A description of the course**
- **Practical considerations**
- **Things to consider before you start…**
- **Workshop structure and activities**
- **How to evaluate and reflect on progress**
- **What next?**

The values of the Mobilise! Project
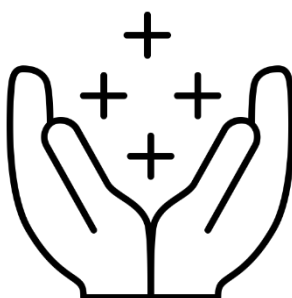
Mobilise! is a project that seeks to encourage active citizenship and increase people's confidence about engaging in political and civic life. The project is a partnership between [Global Link](#), a Lancaster based charity that works with asylum seekers and refugees in Lancashire, and a team at the Universities of Lancaster and St Andrews.

The project explores historical and contemporary stories of activism collected by two Heritage Funded projects, [Documenting Dissent](#) and [Remembering Resistance](#), to create online resources and activities about active citizenship. To do this, we work with volunteers & local communities of asylum seekers and refugees, and aim to enable everyone to feel more confident about participating in political and community life.

The course was launched in October 2020 and was piloted with two sets of learners in early 2021.

The Mobilise! Team worked with a consistent set of values throughout the project. These values are:
Collaborative, Creative, Trust, Learning, Inspirational, Respect, Optimism

We hope that anyone who delivers the course will aim to work with these values as well. Delivering and participating in the course is, in itself, a form of active citizenship.

If teachers would like, they can ask their learners to co-create their own values for the course through discussion or by using creative activities

A description of the course

WELCOME TO THE MOBILISE! PROJECT COURSE ON ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP!

The course covers some of the main concepts involved in active citizenship in a democracy. It is based around stories about people who have been active citizens in different ways. It is designed to help people understand concepts of active citizenship and encourage them to participate in political and civic life themselves.

There is an introduction to the course, then four units:-

- Community and Solidarity - What it means to be part of a community
- Rights in Policy - How rights are put into law or policy
- Rights in Practice - How rights are carried out in practice
- Methods - The methods active citizens use to work for change

Each unit introduces the topic. It then presents some stories that explore these topics in more detail using videos, oral histories and other resources.

Finally, each unit looks at what you can learn from the stories and has an activity and some questions to help those participating explore and understand the topic further.

The course is designed for learners to work through each unit in succession, but each unit can also be delivered in a standalone capacity.

Practical considerations

**Before beginning the course, there are a number of practical considerations: -**

Online versus face-to-face

While the course itself is based entirely online, it could be delivered either online, face-to-face or in a blended format. All approaches have merits and disadvantages including engagement, cost and accessibility, and it will need to be considered what format is best for your group of learners. If being delivered face-to-face, there will still need to be access to some form of technology to allow the group to watch the necessary online material.

In our pilot programme, we ran the course via online sessions, which worked well, but did require more consideration around engagement activities than may have been true of face-to-face sessions.

Over what time period to run the course

The course consists of an introduction and four units. It can, therefore, be run across five sessions, but this can be shortened or lengthened depending on the needs of the learners. Each individual group will have different needs and practical issues to consider.
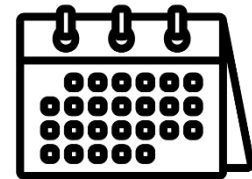
The two groups with whom we piloted the course had two different experiences – one ran the course over 8 weeks whilst the other only had 2 sessions, covering two of the four units. The latter expressed an interest in taking part in more workshops.
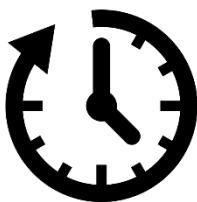
Timings

Consider what time of day to run the course, and how long each session should be. This may need to fit around childcare and other locally run workshops / sessions. If the course is online, the workshops are best not to be longer than 1.5 hours.

Communication

When contacting participants about arrangements for the course, make sure you communicate with all the learners in your group in a format that is accessible and appropriate for them, and give them timely reminders when each session is due to be held.
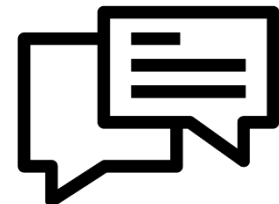
During our pilot work, we used email and Whatsapp for last minute reminders.
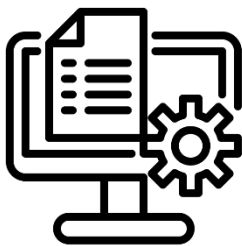
What platform to use for an online course

There are now many platforms which can be used to run online workshops. It is worth considering which is best for the needs of the group as well as considering if there is a cost to the use of a platform, which may be prohibitive. It is also important to be sensitive to the digital literacy of those involved in the course – sometimes simple is much better!

We used Zoom to deliver the workshops as well as Jamboard for any participation. Both these platforms worked well, though an account is necessary for the former. It may be needed to build time into workshops / planning to show learners how to use any platforms with which they are not familiar.

How big should the group be?

It is worth considering how many participants are feasible and this is obviously governed by the size of any facilities (if run face-to-face) or the capacity of an online platform (if run online). It is also worth noting that some online platforms also have difficulty showing more than a set number of participants at any one time, which can make it difficult to view faces and this can affect the flow of activities. It should also be noted that too large a group will make it a challenge to build trust and allow full participation by all learners, while too small a group could possibly mean there are fewer contributions and interactions.
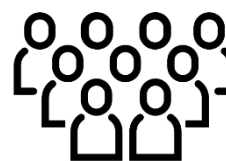
We had 8 - 12 learners in our group, which was a good number – we also divided into smaller 'breakout' groups for some activities.

Things to consider before you start…

Engagement

Engagement is very important – the Mobilise! project is based around collaboration and trust and, for this to work, all those who participate need to be fully engaged in the course.

If the course is run online, social interactions before and after class are missing, so it is even more important to include activities which build trust and relationships between the learners.

Activities / ideas which help with engagement are: -

- Icebreakers and activities which introduce a personal element to the course
- show genuine enthusiasm in learners and their interests
- get to know learners and use this knowledge in activities and discussions
- make space for socialising and humour in classes and activities.

We used icebreakers at the start of each session which were relevant to the course content – one example was for each person to find an object in their room at home that represented a community to which they belonged, and then show and explain the object to everyone else.

It is also important to consider how you explain and discuss topics to make sure everyone understands the language and terminology used – there is a script on one part of the course which can be used for guidance.

Sensitive issues

It is very important that people feel safe when participating in the course, as some parts of it include sensitive topics or stories that could be triggering for those involved. This is why building trust throughout the course is so important (see above). It can be stated that all discussions are confidential before each session begins so learners feel safe to share.

Some of the stories and material used in the course may be triggering for the group, including stories around fleeing war. However, without knowing each individual circumstance, it is impossible to know what may be upsetting to some participants so facilitators should always be sensitive to this, no matter what material is being discussed. If a participant is clearly distressed by any of the discussions/ activities / material used, take appropriate action immediately to assist that person and ensure this is followed up afterwards.

Some of the topics raised could be difficult to discuss with some participants, depending on their cultural background. One example of this is the campaigns around LGBTQI+ rights – however, rather than avoiding these topics, it is important they are discussed and it can be shown that the law protects the rights of those identifying as LGBTQI+ in this country through a series of legislation. It is important that the facilitator / teacher is familiar with the stories and material beforehand and feels confident to discuss it.

Context

It is important that the course is delivered in a local context and also that it is brought into dialogue with participants' experiences to make it as relevant as possible. There are ways to do this through the activities and the discussions held that can be seen in the attached workshop plans.

Workshop structures and activities

The course is designed to be worked through by an individual, by following the units, looking at the resources and completing the activities. However, if delivering the course to a group with facilitation, there are lots of different ways to add value to the sessions and deliver the material in more distinctive ways.

You will find two workshop structures that were used to deliver sessions, and these can be adapted or used as exemplars to follow.

A jamboard link to one of the workshops is also below:-

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1OEIkygzz_dwxVs4bvLwBSG8ZWzIeWcRLR1mgW72O2EM/viewer

How to evaluate and reflect on progress

There are many methods to evaluate how you feel learners are progressing through the course. You can use surveys before and after the course, you could hold evaluation workshops or you could have follow-up interviews with the participants. It is important to plan the evaluation methods for the outcomes which you need so this is not a prescriptive or exhaustive list. However, do remember to think about this before you begin the course with the learners so you can build it into your work with them.

What next?

Mobilise! is all about encouraging participants to become more engaged in political and civic life. It is, therefore, very important to be able to support participants to get involved further once the course is completed. This could be encouragement and support to create a campaign about an issue that is important to them, or it could be the creation of a 'Lived Experience' group, where people can discuss issues that affect them, and how to create change. Think what might be best for your group of learners.