**Introduction**

Hello everyone, it’s great to see you all and to have the chance to work with you on the Mobilise course.

To begin with, we wanted to introduce the main ideas we’re going to be looking at in the workshops and show you the course.

The aim of the course is to increase people’s knowledge and confidence about taking part in community and political life. The course includes lots of stories of people who have tried to change things they didn’t like and to improve things for others. These stories show how change happens and they’ve got lots of lessons about how we can work together to help make our communities better places to live.

There are two important ideas that we’ll keep seeing in the course: community and active citizenship. Before introducing the content of the course, we wanted to briefly explain what these ideas mean.

**Community**

Community means different things to different people, but most people understand community as a group of people who have things in common, who share certain attitudes or characteristics and care about similar things. Community can be a local area where people live. As well as being linked to a particular place, communities can also be created when people come to work together on a cause or project that they care about.

For example, in Lancaster a community might be linked to a certain place, like Skerton, the Ridge estate or Freehold. A community might also be a religious community who attend a certain place of worship. Or, it could be a group of people that is linked because of a connection to an organisation, like the community that has grown around Global Link.

Communities almost always involve cooperation and trust, and can be created when people work together to solve a problem and support one another.

In the course, we’ll learn about communities that have developed because they care about an issue, like the environment, or racism, or inequality, and have come together to try and bring about change. For example, by stopping the damage done by harmful industries, or by campaigning for equality.

By coming together in a community, people can do more than they could on their own. The course shows what happens when people create and take part in communities to try and make things better.

**Active citizenship**

Citizenship is another important idea that will come up in the course. It is a term that has different kinds of meanings. Citizenship can mean a legal status where you are legally recognised as being a member of a state. This status gives you certain rights and responsibilities, such as being able to vote in an election.

Citizenship can also be used more broadly to refer to taking part in a community and through being an active citizen. If someone is an active citizen, it means they are actively involved with their community and they care about their community enough to want to change it. Rather than just being a member of a community or society, active citizens work with others to try and improve things for themselves and other people.

Active citizens use imagination and enthusiasm to make things better. They contribute to projects that bring people together around issues they care about. Active citizens respect other people and believe in democracy and human rights.

There are lots of different ways of being an active citizen. You could volunteer to help with a local charity, you could get together with your neighbours to clean up your street, you could start a campaign to change a law that you think is unfair, like the campaign to allow asylum seekers to work.

The course is full of examples of active citizenship. From women who have protested for fair pensions, to people who have campaigned for asylum seekers to be given money instead of vouchers to buy food, to parents who have worked across communities to try and bring about peace in Israel/Palestine, and communities who have tried to protect their local environment by stopping trees being cut down.

The course introduces the ideas of community and active citizenship through the stories of people who have tried to change their communities and make them better. We’re excited to share it with you, so together we can learn what active citizenship might mean for you and the communities you’re part of. [6 mins]

**Course introduction**

Now I’ve explained the main ideas the course looks at. I want to introduce the different sections of the course and describe what we’re going to cover in the next two workshops. Although I’m going to describe all four sections of the course, we’re only going to be looking at two small parts, so please don’t worry that you will need to work through everything in the next two weeks. I just want to provide an introduction to the course so you know more about what it covers.

There are four sections in the course. The first is on community and solidarity in active citizenship. This section looks at the importance of community, gives examples of different ways people have built a community around an issue, and describes what makes a strong community when you’re trying to bring about change.

The second section is on rights in policy. This looks at the rights we have as people who live in the United Kingdom and how these are protected by the law. For example, this might be the right to housing or healthcare. It describes how people have tried to change the law to make it fairer, for example, the campaigns in the past that have fought for all citizens over the age of 18 to be allowed to vote.

The third section is on rights in practice which looks at how people have responded when the rights in law we covered in the previous section are not carried out properly. For example, when men and women, or people of different religions aren’t treated equally, even though the law requires that they are.

The fourth section is on methods of active citizenship. This section describes the practical ways we can become active citizens, for example by volunteering or persuading politicians to support a campaign.

Each section is full of stories about groups of active citizens who have come together to try and bring about change. These stories show how people have created campaigns, volunteered to help others with their problems, persuaded politicians to listen, and marched in the streets to show how much they care about an issue.

Hopefully that’s inspired you to learn more about these ideas!

In this workshop, we’re going to concentrate on the first section of the course, which looks at the idea of community and active citizenship. Next week, in the second workshop, we’re going to look at the methods we might use to try and bring about change.

All the way through the sessions, we’d like you to think about what you find interesting or inspiring about the stories of active citizenship we look at and to start to think about what community and active citizenship means to you, what you like about your community, and what you might want to see change.

Now we’re going to think more about the idea of community with an activity that we’re going to do in small groups.