

Law Makers & Law Breakers

AIM

To introduce participants to the challenges of making laws and deciding punishments



Time

45 Minutes

Material

Flipchart paper and markers

What to do

Write the “A” crimes in the centre of the flipchart pages, one per page. Write the related “B” crimes on the reverse of the page. Do this for all of the crimes. Place the flipchart pages around the room with the “A” side facing up. Divide your large group into smaller groups of about four or five people. Tell them that they are the law makers and their task is to read the crime written on each of the pages and write down what they think an appropriate punishment would be if an adult did this crime.

After two minutes tell them they must move on to the next flipchart. Once they have written on all of the pages, ask them to turn the page over, they are now on the “B” crimes. They write what a fair punishment would be if they or their friends broke these laws?

Debrief

How did it feel to be the law maker? Was it easy or difficult to decide on a punishment? Were you fair in your decisions? Do you think young people get a hard time with the law in Ireland? What about the rest of the world? Did adults and young people receive the same punishment? Should/does this happen in real life?

Read out some of the statements in the fact box and ask for initial reactions, why do they think this is the case?

“A” Crimes

- Driving dangerously and causing a person to fall off a bicycle
- Vandalising a National monument
- Politician accepting a bribe
- Being drunk & disorderly in a public place
- Membership of an illegal organisation

“B” Crimes

- Joyriding driving dangerously in a housing estate
- Spraying graffiti on public property
- Influential parents getting you out of detention
- Being under the influence of a non prescription drug
- Being in a gang

Action Idea

Using a world map and facts about justice around the world, put a pin in the countries and run a line of thread to the outside of the map where you display what you think is fair or unfair about their justice systems.

fact BOX

- In Costa Rica, young people between the ages of 12 – 15 who break the law can be imprisoned for up to 10 years.
- In Ireland there are 4 times more males than females aged 14 - 16 in young offender institutions.
- In Ireland in the year 2000, 6 boys aged 14 - 16 appeared in court for not attending school.
- In Ireland the age of criminal responsibility for most crimes is 12. In Iran it is 14 for boys and 8 for girls.