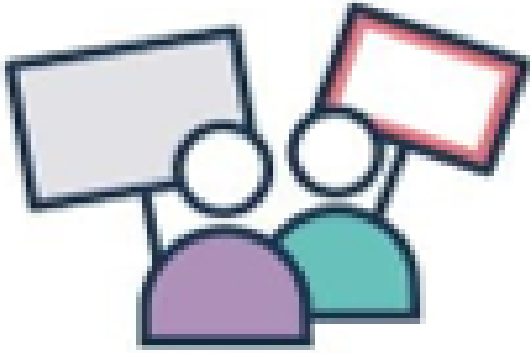


The Right to Freedom of Assembly and Association



This is one of the 16 human rights (also called Articles) in the Human Rights Act. It is Article 11.



‘Freedom of assembly’ means you have the right to get together with other people in a peaceful way to say what you think about something that is important to you.

This is called a ‘protest’ or demonstration’.



‘Freedom of association’ means you have the right to join groups about things that are important to you, such as a union or a political organisation.

Nobody can force you to join these groups either.

When could this Right matter to you?



If you are protesting without hurting anyone or damaging anything, and the police use too much force to stop you from doing this.



If you are treated unfairly because you are a member of a certain group, such as a political party.

Can your Right to Freedom of Assembly and Association be restricted?



Yes.

This right can never be taken away from you. But sometimes public bodies (like the police or local authorities) can limit your right to protest or join groups.



Public bodies and the staff working for them have to show how any limits on this right are...

1. Lawful

Is there a law that says that it is okay for staff in a public service to stop you from protesting or joining a group? The police have some powers to limit or stop protests if they think it could cause a lot of harm





2. For a good reason

This might be to keep other people safe, to stop crime, or to protect other people's rights.



3. Thought about properly

Staff must think about all the things they could do and pick the least restrictive one.



You can talk to staff in a public body about what they decided or did. You can ask them to tell you how this was lawful, for a good reason and thought about properly.



If you think changes could be made which mean your right to protest or join a group would be better protected, then you can tell staff in a public body because their decision might not be the least restrictive option.

What do staff in public services have to do about my right?

They have to **RESPECT** your right.

This means staff in public bodies should not stop you from protesting or joining groups that are important to you unless they can show that this is needed.



Staff should protect you if you get together with others to say what you think about something important to you.



They have to **PROTECT** your right.

This means staff have to do things that protect your right to protest or join groups, and make sure you are involved in conversations about actions they take.



They have to **FULFIL** your right.

This means that if something goes wrong, staff need to find out why and try to stop things going wrong again.

The Right to Protest in real life



A group of people were on their way to protest about something that was important to them.



The police stopped their bus before it arrived at the protest.

The police were worried that the protesters would not be peaceful, so they decided to stop them from going to the protest and making everyone go home.



One of the protesters took a human rights case to court.

The court decided that their right to protest had not been protected by the police.



This was because the police did not think properly about what they should do. Sending everyone home and stopping them from protesting was **too restrictive**.