

THE CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT - DO THE RIGHT THING LOCAL PROJECT

CHILDREN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE IDEA OF HUMAN DIGNITY

Philosopher Martha Nussbaum¹ states that "the language of rights is well established" but that "the idea of rights is by no means a crystal clear idea". We have therefore sought throughout the *Do the Right Thing Local Project* to support participants – child and adult – to think about human rights as having a concern with social justice and fairness and primarily with the more intuitive idea of **human dignity**. Our hope is that by reflecting on social justice, fairness and human dignity participants are supported to think about *what children and young people are able to do* and *how they live their life*. In this way we can think about human rights as having an interest in *outcomes* – in other words *what does it actually mean if we secure a right for someone?*

In PowerPoint presentations used in our Do the Right Thing Local Projects we have explained **human dignity** to children and young people as follows:

Every human being is important and special.
We call this human dignity.



Respect for human dignity means that we should be friendly and kind to others and it is wrong to hurt other people or make them feel bad about themselves.

No matter how others treat you, they never have the right to take away your human dignity.



When you learn what human dignity means to you, you are less likely to accept when other people hurt, discriminate or put someone down.



In relation to **children's human rights** our key message to children and young people has been that:

- All children's rights are your rights no matter who you are or where you live.
- Every child has the right to life and to be healthy.
- When adults make a decision that affects you they must consider what is best for you.
- You have a right to have your say about things that affect you.

¹ Nussbaum M. (2000) 'Women and Human Development' Cambridge University Press page 97