

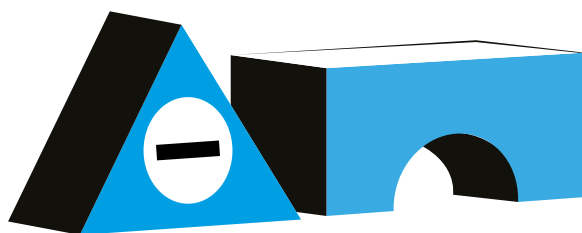
DISCUSSION EXPANSION GUIDE

As you work through the OutRight activities this year, there are some in-depth ideas to explore, and hopefully these will encourage questions and discussion in your setting. Alongside watching our videos, familiarising yourself with the background reading for this year, and attending our support workshops, we hope this guide will be useful to help you have full, detailed conversations with your group.

How to talk about learning spaces

As mentioned, we want our learning spaces topic to encompass the wide range of ways that children can access their right to education (and others).

When we talk about spaces, we mean the whole environment and everything that affects it – from air quality and temperature to cultural contexts. We mean the building or structure where the learning is taking place, the accessibility of that space, who can attend, and of course, the quality of the education provided.



Barriers and bridges

This year, your group's learning across the five OutRight activities will be brought to life through two themed workstreams that you might like to think about ahead of time – barriers and bridges.

Barriers are the many things around the world that may prevent children from accessing learning spaces and enjoying their rights.

Bridges are the many ways that we can find solutions and break through barriers, connecting children to their rights.

While the focus of this year's campaign is through the lens of international stories, we understand that some of the barriers and bridges discussed throughout also apply in a UK context. We've framed this year's learning around children's lived experience, and we'd encourage you to welcome conversations about how these experiences might also present in your own learning spaces. Obviously, there's a need to be mindful of wellbeing when having these conversations. We've added some wellbeing watchout flags throughout these activities, but you'll know your group better than we can, so do think about wellbeing as you plan each new activity and adapt it to your setting.

Barriers

There are many barriers that impact children's access to education and learning spaces. We have provided some further information below, but this is, of course, not a complete list. We'd encourage you to do your own thinking in your setting about additional barriers too.

Poverty

Children living in poverty tend to have access to fewer and poorer quality resources at home, in their neighbourhood and at school, research by UNICEF UK shows. This includes, for example, poorer quality housing, greater food insecurity and poorer quality local services including schools.

This form of inequality creates differences in children's daily lives, including poorer-quality diets, (if section is renamed) lower levels of physical exercise, and a higher likelihood of engaging in paid work rather than school studies.

The research found that children from disadvantaged contexts were more likely to work before or after school, and that the pressure to do this due to a shortage of money had negative impacts on their education – including the ability to engage in homework or active learning. It also had an impact on their ability to engage in play and leisure time.

Violence

Violence is a complex issue. It doesn't just mean fighting with guns or bombs – violence can enter children's lives in much more subtle, hard-to-spot ways, and is also influenced by multiple interconnected factors including deeply rooted social and gender norms and power imbalances.

Some children may face very real fears about attending school or a learning space. They may experience violence on their way to and from school, in their classroom or online, and this has significant consequences on their ability to learn. Research from the Safe to Learn Coalition found that being bullied, threatened, or attacked significantly reduces children's ability to feel safe and learn.

Corporal punishment (which is still legal in 67 countries) lowers learning outcomes and reinforces harmful norms.

Violence increases school absenteeism significantly, and contributes to dropout, especially for girls facing harassment, early pregnancy or marriage.

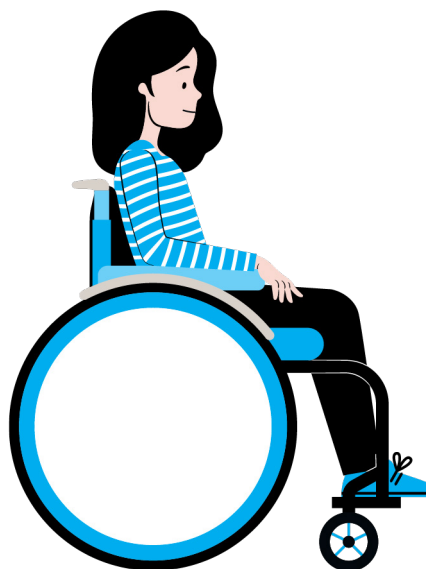
Gender inequality

Despite evidence showing how important learning is to children's development, gender disparities continue to exist in education. Around the world, 122 million girls are out of school, and almost four in ten adolescent girls and young women don't complete upper secondary school.

There are various reasons for this disparity. Barriers to girls' education include factors such as harmful social norms, child marriage, and gender-based violence, and these vary across communities and countries. There are also other structural factors, such as where facilities at schools don't meet the sanitation, hygiene and safety needs of girls, including support for menstrual health and hygiene.

While progress has been made toward gender parity across the world in primary school enrolment, there's a clear gap in adolescence, with figures showing nearly one in four girls aged 15–19 are not in education, employment or training, compared with one in ten boys. However, in some contexts

such as in the UK, gender disparities affect boys differently at certain stages of education, with evidence showing that boys underperform girls across most major educational indicators and are less likely to progress to higher education. However, girls are still underrepresented in STEM subjects, and gender inequalities extend into life after education. Despite often outperforming their male peers academically, women are less likely to enter professional or managerial roles and tend to earn less after graduation, reflecting persistent structural inequities.



Disability

There are an estimated 240 million disabled children worldwide, but disabled children are often overlooked in policy making, limiting their access to education and their ability to participate in social, economic and political life. Worldwide, they are among the most likely to be out of school, and this may be due to barriers stemming from discrimination, stigma, and the failure of decision makers to incorporate disability in school services (such as accessible classrooms, ramps, resources, etc).

Inclusive education is the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn and develop the skills they need to thrive. However, inclusive education is often not prioritised by governments, and disabled children's voices are not listened to in policy making, or design.



Infrastructure

Learning spaces need proper infrastructure, not just within themselves, but within their communities – for example, they can be affected by a lack of safe water supply, limited access to toilets, and physical things we need like roads.

Research from the Centre For Global Development found that when children don't have access to water at home, they may be responsible for collecting it for their families. Girls, specifically, around the world spend 200 million hours each day collecting water, which takes time away from school. Also, without access to safe water, water-related illnesses often keep children out of school.

Many children who are out of school around the world live in rural areas, where they're more likely to have to walk for long periods of time or cover significant distances to attend local schools. Lower quality roads may also make travelling to schools harder – meaning it's not just harder for pupils to get there but for resources and supplies to be delivered too.

• Climate

The climate crisis has significant impacts on children's right to education. Because of human-induced climate change, Earth is warming faster than it would naturally. From heatwaves and droughts to rising sea levels, it impacts every aspect of our world today. Globally, climate disasters are already disrupting education for 1 in 7 students.

Schools in many parts of the world, especially in low- and middle-income countries, lack proper ventilation, cooling systems, and access to safe drinking water, which are vital during extreme heat and heatwaves.

This can make classrooms unbearable and potentially hazardous during extreme heat, which affects children's ability to learn and retain information. The heat may also disrupt their journeys to and from school, and sometimes schools may be forced to close completely to

avoid creating health issues for children and teachers.

Events like floods can also disrupt education systems, meaning schools are closed or temporarily converted to shelters for people who've lost their homes. When families struggle to grow crops or find clean water due the floods, children can also miss school or drop out altogether as they must help with housework or earning wages.

Remember, all of these barriers can intersect in individual children's lives, layering up to make obstacles even harder to overcome. Poverty and inequality are very often underlying where children are affected by multiple barriers.

Bridges

Bridges can be created by communities and by children themselves, but duty bearers have a responsibility to support those efforts and break down bigger, systemic barriers that individuals don't have the power to change alone. Here are some of the ways this can happen:

- Governments around the world can work to improve safety nets. The 2025 State of the World Children's Report said that governments must make ending child poverty a national priority. Reducing child poverty would increase access to education for children and young people.
- Governments and local communities can work to address immediate inequalities in education, by making sure that schools have trained and qualified staff to teach children, and that they have the resources needed in the classroom.
- International Aid helps children around the world realise their right to education, whether through temporary learning spaces set up the wake of disaster, supporting governments to invest in teacher training, or providing schools with equipment and essential infrastructure like toilets and clean water supplies.
- Campaigns, such as OutRight, can act as bridges too. Many campaigns highlight the importance of education, with research, data and real-life stories of children around the world, and this can be a powerful tool to show duty bearers the importance of education and learning spaces – and ask them to protect them.