



# How does music affect the lives of teenagers in Manchester?

Peer Research Project

2011

Lead trainer and report author: Amelia Lee

With support from



**Thanks to the young people who did the research, to those who took part in the research and all others who helped us**  
**This piece of work was based on participatory ‘action research’ models to enable the young people to generate, control, steer and evaluate the work at every stage.**

## **Foreword**

*North West Together We Can (NWTWC) encourages collaborative learning, practice and research about community empowerment and engagement across the North West. NWTWC is supported by a partnership of voluntary organisations, local authorities, academics, and community groups who are working together to build support for community empowerment and active citizenship.*

*NWTWC is the empowerment network for this region supported by the Department for Communities and Local Government. We are also a delivery partner for the North West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Strategy and supported by Stockport Council. The peer research projects were funded through the Targeted Support Fund from the Department for Communities and Local Government which aims to support community empowerment and cohesion in the region.*

*We are delighted to support ICA-UK’s peer research projects as feel that it is vital that young people have their voices heard about issues that are important to them. Young people need to be listened to by decision makers so that services can truly reflect their needs, and young people can feel that they have contributed towards their futures.*

**Eve Davidson NWTWC**

## **Situation, participants & aims**

‘Northwest Together We Can’ (NWTWC) invested in an engagement project where the young people of Reclaim designed and undertook a piece of research about a topic they highlighted as important to their community.

**The issue they chose to investigate was how music affects teenagers lives in Manchester**

ICA:UK trained a group of young people to undertake this research, supported the project in action and worked with the group to generate findings and recommendations. The group gained a large amount in relation to their own knowledge, and increased passion for their community. The research also opened them up to the opinions of their peers in the community.

These young people have experiences which are first-hand and ideas which start right from the ground level, so it is important to hear them. The young people involved in the peer research made it very clear that they felt that the images of young people are often tainted and distorted, which doesn't enable problems that communities face to be offered solutions.

The young people came up with these project aims:

We want to carry out a piece of research to find out how music affects teenagers in Manchester. We will do this through questionnaires, interviews and mystery 'shopping'. We aim to make contact with 250 people. We will do this through schools and friendship networks, including an online version of the questionnaire too. We will do this piece of research in 4 weeks.

Why? We want to research this because we are teens in Manchester. No-one has researched this before as far as we know. We want to research the positives as well as the negatives. We want to know how important music is to people and how this has changed. We want to help people to understand teenagers and get rid of some stereotypes e.g. 'bad' boys and sexualised girls. We want to know how music affects people's wider lives e.g. their education too.

## **The Questionnaire Findings**

- 245 people took part in our survey
- 65 per cent were female, 30 per cent male and 5 per cent trans.
- Half were 13-18 years old, 15 per cent 19-26, 20 per cent were aged 26-40 and 10 per cent were over 40 years old.





## Is music a way to express yourself? If so how?

106 people said yes it was a way to express yourself, 41 said it was not a good way. It is an extension of who you all are, e.g. 'dancing, express friendship/ love and sociability.' It can 'break down my wall' e.g. release stress. It can help you express your identity and find the real you. It can define your style, your relationships, and even your education. This is done through dancing, singing, lyrics, writing lyrics, and through types of beats and tunes.









## could change a teenager's life completely?

Lots of people said yes to this question. They generally thought the affects would be positive more than negative. They said it can inspire people and help people to express their emotions, become more social, be a release and an escape, give confidence and a better view of life and be able to 'see the world in a different light'. They thought it could even help people to become healthier and happier, giving you better life choices and future path, including if it was a focus for your career. But also, people through that it can have a psychological affect on teenagers. It can make you more aggressive and more angry. It is important but as one person pointed out, music isn't everything, and is not on its own always that powerful, but can be a tool for good if used in conjunction with other things.

## Peer Researcher's evaluation

### I have learnt...

Not everyone shares the same ideas about music  
More about group dynamics  
About all the different ways you can collect research

### I have felt...

Proud  
Young people really do care about how they are seen  
Young people are very aware of stereotypes  
Excited about picking our research topic

### I will stamp on...

Not having enough time to do the research in and feeling stressed!  
Time pressure.

### I will take away...

The idea that the government no longer care  
Internet tools like survey monkey and wordle  
Carefully listening to music lyrics  
More knowledge about how music affects teenagers

## Recommendations for...

### Young people

Listen to lyrics more so you know what the messages are behind the songs

Don't forget you can be a gem in the dirt- you can change your life through music. Get involved with music e.g. workshops/ lessons

### Business

Make festivals more inclusive and inviting to young people e.g. frequent, easy to get to and different genres. Be aware of the messages/ images you send out to young people

### The Community, organisations and schools

Remember young people can be inspired and change their lives around through music. Use music in your work e.g. music festivals, music workshops. Run music workshops more for young people to find out what people are thinking and feeling. Listen to young people, they are not all the same

Use music to help young people become more involved and educated about issues, e.g. taught in school through citizenship lessons, as a tool to help people volunteer. Make sure young people always have someone to talk to like a mentor.

### The Media and Music Industry

Think about and consider censorship more. Lots of young people think that in some cases it is a good idea. Listen to young people

Be more aware, careful and responsible about the influence you have on young people