



## Helping gay and lesbian young people shape the Peer Support Project

Manchester

### Context

Peer Support Project was a small voluntary organisation based in Manchester that offered support to LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning) young people.

Many of the young people they worked with were experiencing severe bullying, some had mental health and learning difficulties, and others were self-injuring. Encouraging these young people to take on a public role in promoting the organisation was extremely challenging.

Peer Support Project started where young people were at, valuing whatever contribution they could make, from creating a magazine to supporting other LGBTQs.

Building on this work, they also wanted to formally involve young people in their Project Coordination Team, to start to plan sessions and to play more of a role in the organisation's direction.

### Process

Over a period of two months, ICA:UK worked with a small group of young people and staff to look at different elements of participation, considering:

- What does being involved in the LGBTQ community mean to me as a person?
- What does “participation” actually mean?
- What rights do I have as a young person?
- What power do I have to make things happen?
- How do adults influence me?



*Voting on the rights that young LGBTQ people feel that they have*

The series of sessions ended with young people planning and implementing their own media project, designed to highlight issues facing LGBTQ young people.

### Outcomes

During the final evaluation session, one young woman said that from participating in these sessions, she had learnt “how to get on with people a lot more, to be more outgoing and to know that people like you.”

*“You have been extremely flexible in your delivery and approach, and have worked really well with a group of young people who are extremely difficult to focus and have high support needs. The preparation you have put into sessions has been outstanding. ... Participation is now a live issue rather than a ‘word’ we think we should be doing.”* Jill Greenfield, Project Manager, Peer Support Project