



## How Unity Radio is Promoting Engagement and Resilience in Manchester's Young People

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Thank you to Lee Dinsdale, Director of Unity Radio in Manchester for this case study about how they are supporting young people and contributing to the local ambition to implement the [THRIVE Framework](#) (Wolpert et al., 2016).

### Unity Radio

Unity Radio broadcasts music, debates and discussions to the Manchester region and is available online to everyone. One of its core aims is to promote the overall wellbeing of young people.

Unity Radio produces radio shows which openly tackle issues relevant to young people including subjects such as drinking alcohol and taking drugs. Past shows have raised awareness of the risks of running away from home and associated issues such as child sexual exploitation. This content sits alongside music, fashion and interviews with local artists. Unity Radio therefore plays a role in promoting the health and wellbeing of their listeners by educating them on these issues.

One of Unity Radio's prime tools for promoting wellbeing is facilitating young people to support and empower their peers and other young people. They use radio production projects as a platform to support young people to express their views and share their learning on important topics. In the 'Next Generation Youths' project Unity Radio piloted a [weekly programme focusing on Child Sexual Exploitation](#) which was produced and presented entirely by the 23 local young people involved in the project.

### The Impact of Unity Radio

In the 'Next Generation Youths' project, there was a significant reduction in the number of missing from home incidents among the 23 people who regularly engaged in the production of the radio show. This was an unexpected outcome of the project and a huge impact when you consider the risks that young people can experience when they run away from home. The cost of searching for a young person is significant for each missing episode so there are the added benefits of cost savings too.

Lee says that when young people are involved in helping other young people, and working in a peer-to-peer support environment, it builds confidence and can often have a positive impact on how they are doing at school.

Unity Radio aims to raise the overall confidence and well-being of young people involved in their radio production projects. They teach young people radio broadcasting skills which facilitate their re-engagement with education and promotes further skill development. Lee says they wanted to find ways to fill the achievement void in many of these young people's lives through their participation in Unity Radio. In the first half of 2016, 13 young people participated in a joint project between Unity Radio and Liverpool Young Runaways Project. They produced a two-hour radio show about Missing from Home. Seven of the young people achieved a Bronze Arts Award accredited qualification by taking part. They have also created



up-skilling and talent development opportunities for young people through a host of urban arts and music workshop sessions too.

Unity Radio conducted a project with Salford CCG working with 31 young people originally from the Czech Republic. Lee said that according to the local youth services they saw an improvement in their English-Language skills, confidence, and in their settling into region Lee and his fellow Directors see Unity Radio as an alternative way for young people who either do not need CAMHS or who are not engaging effectively in CAMHS to take part in supportive and wellbeing-promoting activities. They are aware of the fact that they cannot replace clinicians but feel that they are often engaging with young people experiencing emotional problems and work to help them in their world to harness their creativity and promote their own well-being. Lee says that everyone from the radio facilitators to the DJs at Unity are credible and skilled in what they do and that holds positive sway with the young people working on their projects.

Lee sees Unity Radio as having a huge potential to contribute to the health, education and social outcomes for local young people and their families.

### Unity Radio and the THRIVE Framework

The work that Unity Radio carry out contributes to several different principles of the THRIVE Framework. For example, Unity Radio contributes to health and wellbeing promotion for young people who are 'Thriving' by raising awareness and knowledge of risky behaviours and engaging them in positive, confidence-building projects.

Unity Radio is an example of effectively using the resources and expertise available in the community to support young people. The staff members at Unity know about other local services and resources that they can effectively signpost young people to.

*“As this project has shown, young people’s mental wellbeing can be successfully supported and improved by their own sense of value and confidence in being able to meet the challenges of a stressful society. With a strong level of self-worth their resilience is increased thereby improving their own outcomes and prospects in life, without any high level interventions from specialist services.”*

- Maria Slater, General Manager for CAMHS at Central Manchester University Hospitals Foundation Trust and lead for the [Manchester and Salford i-THRIVE Accelerator site](#)

Unity Radio also provides a form of early intervention to young people who may be at risk of developing further problems down the road. Lee says, “for example, if we work with a young person who has previously gone missing, we work to create diversionary activities to prevent that young person reaching a crisis in the future”.

Unity could also play a valuable role for children and young people who are considered to be 'Getting Risk Support'. For example, there may be a young person who is currently unable to benefit from further interventions available in traditional CAMHS but who may still benefit from being involved in Unity Radio.

### The Future of Unity Radio

Unity Radio plan to recruit someone to support them to evaluate their projects with the goal of building an evidence base of their impact. They want to capture the impact of what they do



across every aspect of a young person's life. Gathering this evidence will lead to opportunities to expand and work more closely with other local agencies involved in children and young people's mental health in the future.

Historically, Unity Radio has worked with youth services and youth offending teams. This year they will receive funding which will allow schools to identify young people who are not currently very engaged in their studies and ask them whether they would be interested in working with Unity. Their aim is to complete a project with the school, looking at the impact working with Unity Radio has on school engagement.

Unity Radio have been working in collaboration with other agencies more recently, using self-referral and direct referrals. They have a vision of more multi-agency working in the future. They would like to work collaboratively with other statutory agencies wherever possible, such as by working with a young person's support worker or CAMHS clinician to co-ordinate the input which will most help that young person. Caseworkers or speech therapists could come in and take part in a show and be part of the team, sharing their clinical expertise in a relaxed environment. Communication and interviewing skills that are learned in Unity Radio projects could be part of speech and language therapy or peer-to-peer support.

Unity Radio will be starting an exciting new project in July 2017 focused on helping children who regularly go missing. Their 'Changing Self-Belief' project has been commissioned by Greater Manchester Mayor and Crime Commissioner Tony Lloyd and will work with 100 young people from across Greater Manchester over the next two years.

If you would like a copy of the full evaluation of the NGY Project or the Liverpool Runaway Project email Lee Dinsdale at [leedinsdale@unityradio.co.uk](mailto:leedinsdale@unityradio.co.uk).

Unity Radio: <http://www.unityradio.fm/>

*Edited by the i-THRIVE Programme Team.*

# UNITY RADIO