

Standing up to fight against hate crime

Year 9 students win national award for their campaign to end hate crime in Merseyside

Students at Rainhill High School in Merseyside were shocked when they learnt about the murder of a young local woman, Sophie Lancaster, in 2007 – a crime seemingly motivated by prejudice against the victim's identification with the 'emo' subculture. After some further research into the tragedy, students discovered that while crimes against alternative subcultures were recognised as a type of hate crime within Greater Manchester, this was not the case in Merseyside.

Plan of action

The group felt that both Manchester and Merseyside were extremely culturally diverse and wanted to **help protect their local community**, making sure that the next generation appreciate all walks of life instead of turning to discrimination.

Students decided to join forces with local charity, **The Sophie Lancaster Foundation**, with the aim of getting laws around hate crime strengthened.



'It has been a fantastic opportunity for all our pupils to get involved in a project that has raised awareness amongst their peers about such a topical issue. Winning the award from Giving Nation has helped them not only feel that the project has been a real success but has helped them make a meaningful donation to The Sophie Lancaster Foundation to enable them to continue with the important educational work that they do with young people.'

Jacque Ayre, Head of Life Skills, Rainhill High School

A variety of approaches

The success of the group's campaign was partly down to their use of a wide range of approaches and activities.

They combined educational activities with fundraising and lobbying to create a campaign with real impact.



Amongst other things, students:

- Met with local police & the Youth Advisory Board
- Set up a petition
- Organised a workshop at their school on the theme of diversity
- Organised a memorial day for Sophie with all proceeds going to the Sophie Lancaster Foundation

The team also negotiated with their school management to get a special day allocated each year to the curriculum that will focus on raising awareness of crimes against alternative sub-cultures.