

Young people from across Southampton are at the heart of Connecting Culture, a new ground-breaking research project focused on addressing the question of how the city's thriving Cultural Quarter can enrich the lives of those aged five to 25.

CONNECTING CULTURE

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Louise Coysh

Project Manager and Associate Director (Arts and Culture)



Children are central to our culture – they are its future. A new research project is embracing this by recruiting young people as Cultural Connectors and inviting them to take part in a Creative Consultation in order to build a new future in the arts.

Led by the University of Southampton, Connecting Culture is a two-year project supported by a £75,000 grant from Arts Council England and involving a large consortium of arts organisations and child-focused services.

The aim is to enable young people to produce a Young People's Manifesto and Map to be

adopted by Southampton City Council's 'Child-Friendly Southampton' policy and create a sustained cultural programme that reflects their needs. In addition the project will align with major cultural developments in the city such as Southampton's UK City of Culture bid.

Louise Coysh is Project Manager and Associate Director (Arts and Culture) here at the University of Southampton, said: “We’re very excited to be launching Connecting Culture which will place strategic cultural development at the centre of our work whilst enabling the voice of children and young people across the whole city of Southampton to be heard and acted upon in such a positive way.”



The project will involve:

- Over 350 children and young people from across Southampton taking part in an artist-led **'Creative Consultation'**
- The recruitment of 10 young people aged 16 to 25 as **'Cultural Connectors'**, a dynamic cohort of young researchers
- A series of **'Young Peoples' Commissions'**: new public artworks that will be commissioned and led by young people, including a new Young People's Manifesto and Map
- Working with the project partners to embed a culture of knowledge exchange, learning and **CPD** at the heart of the project
- A vibrant programme of **Events** providing a chance to share learning and project outcomes, including artwork commissions
- A **Research Programme** including the development of a new Cultural Mapping Tool enabling the capture and use of quantitative data across Southampton. This tool builds upon the existing work of the University of Southampton's Software Research Group (SRG) and its Engagement Activity Mapper.



The research programme underpinning the Connecting Culture project – led by Dr Ronda Gowland-Pryde, Public Engagement Spectrum Manager – will employ innovative, creative approaches.

These include using workshops, journal entries, drawing, photography, blogs, vlogs and mapping to embed cultural democracy within the research, evidencing individual experience through a variety of means.

With the Research Team, the Consortium and young people will utilise the qualitative and quantitative data gathered throughout the research project to trial, develop and shape

1 Turner Sims and Southampton Music Hub Schools Concert

2 SÓN Orchestra and SocoMusic, Tales of the Young Persons Orchestra workshop

3 Art Asia, Mela performance, 2019

cultural activities and future provision for children and young people in Southampton.

The research process is intentionally open, collaborative and iterative, providing opportunities for the Consortium partners, children and young people to co-develop new models of knowledge exchange and practice for creative programming.