

From Local Archive to Classroom: Youth-Led Insights for Inclusive Teaching



What happens when young people help shape the resources they learn from?

This report captures insights from 12–18-year-olds who explored new, free educational resources rooted in Manchester’s Global Majority histories.

Through creative, hands-on activities and honest discussion, young people shared what inclusive education should look like and how locally grounded, archive-based materials can help students feel seen, confident and connected in the classroom.



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List of Contents

List of contents	1
Introduction	2
Connection to identity, culture & community	3
Young people want broader, more diverse histories	4
Migration, immigration & refugee journeys	5
Language, culture & identity	6
Health, crisis, and social change	7
• Covid-19 Collecting Project (GB3228.103)	
• Brave Women of the NHS (GB3228.106)	8
Local and contemporary activism sparks engagement	9
Creative, hands-on activities bring archive materials to life	10
Educators should also know what helps engagement: Clear, bite-sized, collaborative learning	11
The message from young people is clear: “We want this.”	12
Next Steps:	13
• Amplifying young people’s voices	13
• How educators are guiding our next steps	13
• Co-creating our digital exhibition space	14
• How to access the resources	14

Introduction

At our 'Your Voice, Your Education: Shaping Inclusive Educational Resources Workshop', we invited young people aged 12 to 18 to spend an afternoon to test out three of our new free educational resources;

- Activism through Poster Design
- Community Profiles
- Understanding Activism through Local Figures

These resources use creative activities to explore materials from our collections that document the lived experiences, activism, cultures and histories of Global Majority communities in Greater Manchester.

We wanted the workshop to give participants a different way to learn with a local, hands-on and creative focus. We also asked them to discuss what inclusive education should look like and to help shape youth-led recommendations that will guide how these resources are developed and used in classrooms.

Conversations about inclusive education often focus on large-scale change within schools, requiring time, capacity and resources educators may not have. But what if engaging, locally rooted materials that help students feel seen, confident and connected are already available? The collections in our archive aren't abstract objects sitting behind glass; they are living, breathing stories from Manchester's Global Majority communities whose experiences shape the city today. And young people have been telling us, that these are the histories they want to learn.

Key themes, reflections and suggestions:

We have compiled a summary of key workshop findings, along with themes and reflections that educators may find useful as they consider how to embed these insights into their teaching.

1. Connection to identity, culture & community

Across the workshop, young people shared how powerful it was to learn about the histories of communities they identify with.

They told us they felt:

“Made me feel like I need more info on my cultures, but I also feel a connection to the region”

“Seen that my history is important”

“Positive change and inclusion can still happen from our history”

“A bit more confident. More accepted. ”

“I felt like I learnt a lot of different things. African Caribbean and community that I knew more than I did before I came here. I also felt interested and happy.”

“Lots of familiar areas such as Moss Side and Cheetham Hill”

“I’d like to learn more about modern day history, nothing past the 1900’s”

“I like how we talked about local history instead of histories from America/Africa”

“Local histories, interesting, new topics, new people and their stories”

When they explored Global Majority histories, migration stories and Manchester-based activism, their sense of identity came alive. They spoke about feeling “activated”, “Knowledgeable”, “Interested”, “Engaged as I was learning new things and I also felt intrigued” and eager to learn more. This is something educators can harness immediately. When classrooms use materials from local Global Majority archives, students see their heritage not as something peripheral, but as central to the collective story of the place they call home.

2. Young people want broader, more diverse histories

One of the themes in the feedback was the desire for more diverse, specific, and local representation. These were the themes that were recurring throughout their feedback:

Black Histories

"I feel like there needs to be more variety of African communities in the UK"

"More diverse communities not only Jamaican or Nigerian communities"

"More stories need to be for Congolese communities"

"I want to learn more Black history and how Black people fought for their rights"

"African-Caribbean cultures"

"Less about the famous big figures MLK etc. More about diverse range. Sub-Saharan Africa/Middle East"

These aren't niche requests; they reflect the demographic reality of classrooms today. Young people want histories that mirror the world around them. The desire for complexity and specificity mirrors earlier consultations, seen in our [Black Histories Manifesto](#). For educators, this reinforces the importance of moving beyond repeated narratives and seeking out local, nuanced histories that represent the diversity of their students. The collections in our archive already hold these stories, open for educators to use in their teaching.

3. Migration, immigration & refugee journeys



Young people also expressed a strong interest in understanding migration and refugee experiences:

“Immigration history”

“Why people are seeking asylum- the reason”

“Refugee stories”

“Displacement”

“Immigration + migration stories”

“Would like to hear activism stories from local diverse communities that migrated to Manchester”

“Russia/Ukraine War”

Students want honest, human stories about how and why people come to the UK and what life is like for migrants and refugees in Greater Manchester. Our website includes a dedicated [‘Support for Educators’](#) page including a section on the theme of [‘Refugeeism’](#) with contextual materials and activities. We also created a [‘Cultivating compassion and critical thinking: thoughtful steps to engage young people with refugeeism’](#) resource for educators working with learners who may have had limited opportunities to explore these issues or who may hold ambivalent or even anti-refugee feelings.

4. Language, culture & identity

Another key theme centred on language and cultural identity:

“Language barriers, different cultural stories.”

“Identity.”

“Language barriers.”

“Religious communities”

“Mixture of religions.”

“African-Caribbean cultures.”

Young people want space in the curriculum to explore multilingualism, cultural identity, and religious diversity, especially as lived in their own schools and communities. Many of our collections speak directly to these experiences. Our [SoundCloud page](#) includes clips from oral histories that reflect these themes in the voices of those who lived them.

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5. Health, crisis, and social change

"Pandemic history"

"Pandemic"

"Black death"

"Equality."

Students want to look at historical crises and how communities survived, adapted and supported each other, including recent events like COVID-19. For educators looking to explore this theme further, we have the following collections available:

Covid-19 Collecting Project (GB3228.103)

In 2020, we launched an open call to Global Majority communities to ensure their voices were represented in the historical record of the pandemic. The collection includes poetry, photographs, videos, news articles, personal reflections, posters and recordings. It also contains material from Manchester's Black Lives Matter demonstrations, reflecting how the pandemic and the global call for racial justice were interconnected.

This collection can help learners draw connections between past pandemics and modern experiences, showing how health crises reveal longstanding inequalities. It also offers a way to examine community resilience, activism and solidarity, including the intertwined stories of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Brave Women of the NHS (GB3228.106)

This collection features interviews with nurses and healthcare workers who helped shape the NHS after the Second World War, alongside reflections from today's staff. These stories show how migration built the NHS we rely on today and offer strong local role models.

For educators, these materials can support explorations about how the NHS workforce has evolved, shaped by migration and changing labour markets. The collection opens up discussions about integration, discrimination, empowerment and the experiences of women who helped build the NHS. The stories also highlight the vital contributions of African and Caribbean women in post-war Manchester. The materials demonstrate why preserving these voices is essential to the historic record and should be taught in schools and beyond.



6. Local and contemporary activism sparks engagement

Young people enjoyed exploring activism, but they also asked for more local and current examples:

“Schools should focus on local activists instead of abroad”

“I thought that the create your own campaign was good, but would be better if there were more examples of activism that are to do with today’s times/more timely”

“I learnt about 3 activists”

“More activists from Manchester”

“So much Manchester history with so much community focus”
“Examples that relate to today”

This feedback highlights how local activism can inspire students by showing them that change is possible in their communities and within their lifetimes. Our “Radical Manchester” digital exhibition section and the [“Understanding Activism Through Local Figures”](#) resource, which includes three local activists demonstrates that activism is not distant or abstract. It shows that activism has taken place here, continues today and includes people whose experiences may mirror those of the young people in the classroom.



7. Creative, hands-on activities bring archive materials to life

Poster-making and campaign designing were described as:

“Interesting”

“Entertaining”

“Engaging”

“I enjoyed making my own poster.”

“Enjoyed looking through the posters.”

“Something different from school”

Young people want to interact with historical materials in a hands-on way. Using archive items alongside creative tasks helps history feel alive and usable rather than something they simply read.

For educators, these creative approaches offer memorable and accessible ways to explore complex topics. Our archive is not just a bank of information, it is a toolkit for curiosity-driven learning that can be turned into collaborative, discussion-based activities. We hold a wide range of posters, images, oral histories, photographs, flyers and campaign materials that are ideal for this kind of engaging work.



Posters created during the workshop

8. Educators should also know what helps engagement: Clear, bite-sized, collaborative learning

Young people also told us how to make the best use of these materials:

- Keeping fact sheets short and digestible
- Allowing opportunities for discussion
- Making activities collaborative

This feedback provides a practical roadmap for educators wanting to integrate community-based resources into lessons. Clear information paired with interactive learning can help students better understand and reflect on the stories they encounter.



Image taken during the workshop

9. The message from young people is clear: “We want this.”

The most encouraging part is that the young people described the workshop as:

“Interesting”
“Intriguing”
“Engaging”
“Enjoyable”
“Different from what we do in school”

They left wanting to know more about their identities, communities, and the hidden histories around them. This is the strongest argument an educator could ask for. Young people aren't resistant or disengaged from learning histories. They are resistant to learning histories that do not reflect them. Young people flourish when the curriculum makes space for who they are.

If we want classrooms that are inclusive, meaningful and genuinely engaging, we need to teach the histories that young people are asking for. The stories exist; the materials are available and young people have shared their voices. When educators use local archives that centre Global Majority communities, we give students what they are telling us they need - recognition, representation, relevance, connection and agency. We as educators can come together to bring these histories into the heart of learning.

Next Steps:

We are not just gathering feedback, we are acting on it. Following the workshop this is what we have done:

Amplifying young people's voices:

This report was created to recognise and celebrate the time, honesty, and insight that young people shared with us during the workshop. Their perspectives matter, and we want to make sure they aren't just heard in the room, but carried forward, reflected on, and used to shape real change.

We have brought together the key messages, themes and reflections that emerged from the workshop so educators can hear directly from young people: what they value, what they want to see in their learning, and how education can better reflect their realities and interests.

How educators are guiding our next steps:

We connected with educators to hear their insights and make sure our resources aren't just useful but genuinely transformative. As educators test our resources with their groups and provide feedback, we will be continuously refining the materials included to ensure they truly reflect how young people want to learn while also supporting teachers' needs. Our goal is to create resources that seamlessly bring together young people's voices and classroom practice, making learning more local, relevant, and representative.

If you are an Educator who wants to test these resources with your group and provide feedback, please get in touch with us by emailing rrarchive@manchester.ac.uk

Co-creating our digital exhibition space:

Young people told us what themes matter most to them, and we are using these insights as the foundation for our next steps. We are refreshing and refining our digital exhibition space to spotlight the stories, themes, and perspectives they want to see in their education. We are also working on creating surrogates (digital copies that allow us to provide wider access to materials) that will be available as a supplement to the exhibition space. These updates will directly support the activities in our Educational Resources, helping to bring meaningful, student-driven learning into education in a tangible and inspiring way.

How to access the resources:

To access the Educational Resources used during this workshop, visit our Self-led tours and activities here.

We are pleased to share that these self-led activities are under the Creative Commons License and can be used for educators to freely use, adapt, and share as well as modify to fit your students' needs. We hope these resources will provide ease of access to educators to implement Global Majority Histories into their teaching.



Visit Us!

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