

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

A UNIQUE two-day event saw young women from across Wigan Borough exploring the meanings of sexual exploitation.



Whether it be through music, the internet, advertising or simply text messaging, the girls looked at the way in which women can be exploited in everyday life.

The event raised awareness of the issues and empowered the young women to make their own choices about the subject.

The young women took part in workshops examining how women were portrayed in the media.

They also looked at how to stay safe on the internet, and saw the ways in which



things like Facebook pictures can be exploited even if you think they are bit of fun.

Chantelle Seenan, 16, from Tyldesley, said: "We've learnt that sexual exploitation is many things, like the way women are shown in newspapers and on TV. But it's not just women, men can also be exploited.

"We've also learned to watch how we are acting and be careful of how others might read it."

Toni Ince, 16, also from Tyldesley said: "We did an exercise where we pretended to pose for different Facebook pictures. It

showed us that although you might post pictures that you think are funny, other people might take the meaning of them a different way.

"I've learned that I should be careful on things like Facebook and not to accept anyone I don't know as a friend just because they have a nice picture."

Ali Kahn from the Big Comedy Shop ran workshop sessions throughout

the two days. She said: "We're not trying to scare these young women, we are trying to educate them.

"It has been a really great event and the girls have really been opening up about how they feel to be young women."



Kim Curless, Wigan Council's Positive Activities for Young People Co-ordinator, and Youth Worker Kath Thompson, said after the event: "This has been an excellent forum for young people to explore these issues, which in turn will allow them to make informed choices to keep themselves safe.

"It's such a vast issue but we've put it into context and got the young women together in a safe environment to look at the impact this subject has on them.

"It has been about educating them on what sexual exploitation is and empowering them to say, no I don't want it to happen to me."

Marsh Green Girls' rap

Marsh Green Girls Group attended the sessions and made their own rap on sexual exploitation.

One of the group, 14 year old Leah Unsworth, said: "We've been given loads of great advice like standing up for yourself and not letting anyone force you to do what you don't want to do.

"We want to take it further now. We want to make the rap into a video and we are planning to go to an event at the town hall to take about the issue some more."

Don't have sex for cheques
It's so much easier to send a text
Stop yourself before you go with the flow
There is another way you can go
Don't be ashamed by the way that you look
Because of the people in the book
Don't take pictures of yourself in the shower
Just to show them who has the power
Celebrities today are showing so much flesh
But do they really look better wearing less?
We gotta spread the word across the nation.
Sexual exploitation...

By Abbie Hughes, Alicia Lowery, Tanya Hilton, Stacey Unsworth, Leah Unsworth and Rachael Glynn.



Marsh Green Girls Group pose with Lowton Girls Group

THE LINC CHATS TO ELBOW

As you read this, the winners of the Mercury Music Prize 2009 are set to be announced.

We caught up with Manchester band and outgoing winners, Elbow, to hear what life has been like since they scooped the prestigious prize in 2008.

It's nearly a year since you were announced as the Mercury Music Prize winners 2008 for your album *The Seldom Seen Kid*. What has the past year been like for you after being propelled to this new level of fame?

The past year has literally been a whirlwind since winning the Mercury Prize.

To be honest the only repercussions in terms of fame has been that taxi drivers now know who we are and trips to Tesco can sometimes take a little longer!

The great thing is that we are now playing to ever greater numbers of people worldwide, and our last gig of this tour is at the Manchester Evening News Arena.

Fame isn't something that we strive for but it's nice when it happens.



Elbow pick up the Mercury Prize

How and when did Elbow form, and has the line up of the band changed over the years?

Elbow formed around twelve years ago after our previous incarnation of Mr Soft came to nothing.

The reason we changed our name was that we had inundated record companies with demos, which, to be honest, weren't that good.

We went away and wrote, then decided to rename the band as the music was vastly different.

The line up hasn't changed in the 18 years we have been together.

In the early years, did you ever expect or want such a level of fame?

We didn't set out to attain any level of



Manchester's finest - Elbow

fame. What we wanted to achieve was the ability to live off what we loved doing and be able to raise families and pay mortgages, and continue to make records and tour the world.

This year you fulfilled any band's dream of playing Wembley Stadium. Which do you prefer, larger stadium gigs or more intimate venues closer to home?

We can't lie and tell you we prefer to play intimate venues - we like playing them but have played them for years - but there is nothing like hearing thousands of people cheering for you!

Playing Wembley Arena was an incredible moment for us, but playing the stadium supporting U2 will be pretty good as well!

Listening to your lyrics, Elbow are a band that seem to be very much rooted in the North. How much does Manchester and the North West affect and influence your music?

It's everything! It's about being proud of your background and heritage. Also Guy's (Garvey - lead singer) ability to take the everyday and make it magical allows people to see into a world that is already there.

Elbow have been around for years and have worked at getting a strong following.

What advice would you give to up

and coming musicians starting out on the long slog to get noticed?

The only real advice we can give is to enjoy it. It can be one of the most exhausting, exhilarating, rewarding, interesting jobs but as soon as you start to not enjoy any aspect then give up.

Essentially we are all mates and enjoy each other's company whether we are on stage in front of 30,000 people or stuck in a tour bus in Germany!

Also get companies to come to you, make them think they are the ones missing out. Oh and practise!

The times of making money through record sales is pretty much over so musicians will now make money through touring.

Who do you fancy for the new Mercury Prize winners this year and what advice would you give to them?

Not too sure but probably either Kasabian or Florence and the Machine.

What's next for Elbow?

Write the next record!

