



## CASE STUDY: We Are Music



**Cultural Organisation Group:**

We Are Music

**Sector:** Music Education

**Video:** Simple Things Festival

**Author:** Culture team, Essex  
County Council

**Delivery period of project:**

Spring 2022 – Spring 2023



# The story of We Are Music

## Introduction

We Are Music (WAM) - [www.we-are-music.org.uk](http://www.we-are-music.org.uk) - have been operating in Tendring, the most deprived area in Essex, for 13 years and work with children and young people to help change lives through popular music. Over the years, WAM have provided in excess of 5,500 hours of tuition by working with over 700 young people. A 2019 survey revealed that over 23% were either playing music, performing in a band, enjoying further music education or were working with a portfolio career in the music industry.

There are three parts to the work:

**Harwich Rock School** provides regular rehearsal and learning sessions for young people, aged nine to 16-years-old.

**Get Known** provides activities and supports young people aged 16 to 25-years-old by helping them advance their careers into the music industry or further education. Providing live performance videos and studio single track recordings as well as performance opportunities.

**Outreach Work** including the Rock the Tower project in Jaywick.

WAM artists won the Music for Youth National Partnership Awards for Rock Pop and Urban in 2013 and 2014 and WAM bands played at the Music for Youth Proms at the Royal Albert Hall in 2012, 2014, and 2016. In 2018, two WAM acts were invited to perform at 'English Week' in Biberach Germany. Most of WAM recordings result in the artist being played on BBC Introducing radio.



## The “Challenge” or “Opportunity”

The WAM Youth Council, comprising young people from Harwich and Jaywick, identified what was most important to them. Young people in the area revealed that music was essential to their wellbeing and mental health issues.

Key outcomes:

- A range of live performance opportunities and events, including two major annual events.
- Regular music sessions at WAM Harwich.
- Regular music sessions at WAM Jaywick to re-start after a two-year break.
- Taster sessions for recruitment and “prospecting” for new talented artists.
- Saturday “open house sessions” at WAM Harwich where young people could meet, jam, organise bands and gigs and just liaise with people with similar interests.
- Professional support to help talented young people into the music industry.



## Why the group or practitioner chose to partner with Essex County Council (ECC)

To increase wellbeing through performance was essential, so a request was submitted to the ECC Arts and Cultural Fund to run the Simple Things Festival and to restart WAM Jaywick.

The ECC Culture team had supported WAM previously in 2016 when they provided a grant to assist with the Landslide Festival in Brentwood, run by WAM and the young team.

ECC had also been involved alongside Essex Music Hub in funding the Rock the Tower sessions at Jaywick Martello Tower. Re-opening this was considered a high-priority and so funds were requested to run for 40 weeks (one year of term time sessions). Sessions started in June and will run through to April 2023. Previous WAM work at the centre had produced a girl band and encouraged an autistic young man to progress a career through music and to take a university degree.

## How the ECC Culture team responded

WAM's application to the Arts and Cultural Fund clearly outlined the Tendring young residents it aimed to engage with via a programme of live music and teaching sessions and a festival, using music as a fun and exciting way to benefit project participants.

The ECC Culture team has supported the project via regular meetings and has offered assistance wherever needed in terms of marketing, PR and general project advice.

## The results

The Simple Things Festival on Saturday 2 July 2022 attracted an audience of over 500 people, involved many local organisations, and returned £4,000 in funds. Outcomes included:

- Genuine feel-good factor for young people and the local community.
- Commitment from local community and supporters for a 2023 festival on Saturday 1 July.
- Youth Council of WAM working on the organisation.
- Invitation for acts to play the 2023 Clacton Beach festival

The success of this year has provided a real stimulus for the WAM Youth Council to get involved in organising a large event and has done much to improve the wellbeing of the young people involved.



### Jaywick Martello Tower WAM sessions

This project operates weekly sessions, providing full band teaching. ECC funding, along with the provision of the Martello Tower, has enabled them to support these sessions until May 2023. Since opening, the distribution of flyers and word-of-mouth has resulted in growing numbers each week. Young people from the Jaywick center were able to participate in the Simple Things Festival in June. Outcomes to date include:

- Two autistic brothers, who attend Market Field school, are learning guitar with a view to joining a band.
- A one-to-one session is being run with a young boy who cannot mix in a group environment.
- A young drummer from the Harwich operation is being trained to become an assistant music leader.
- One of the former Jaywick students, now 21 who is autistic, is helping with the training sessions.
- The WAM Youth Council, comprising young participants, who shape the direction of the charity, now includes three young people from Jaywick.
- The WAM Youth Council has established a Saturday open house session at Harwich to enable young artists to mix, jam, organise bands and events.
- Additional funding from Tendring District Council has been secured to enhance the Jaywick project and extend support beyond May 2023.
- The participants of WAM Jaywick played at The Harwich Kingsway Hall to an audience of over 200 people.

### Additional Funding:

- In September 2022 the National Lottery Community Fund gave WAM a grant to support core community activities for three years to help talented young people into the industry. This excludes WAM Jaywick.
- In September 2022 Tendring District Council gave WAM a grant to continue the operation of Jaywick WAM in 2023.
- More plans are being developed for helping talented young people into the industry and more funding requests are being submitted in October 2022.
- An application to the 2023 Essex Arts and Cultural Fund will be submitted.



## GETTING INVOLVED

Here at Essex County Council, we are passionate about arts and culture and keen to support projects across the county. If you have an idea you would like to share with us, take a look at the Arts and Cultural Fund page on the Explore Essex website: [www.explore-essex.com/culture/arts-culture-fund](http://www.explore-essex.com/culture/arts-culture-fund) or get in touch via email: [culture@essex.gov.uk](mailto:culture@essex.gov.uk)