

**Involving Young People in Peer
Education:
A Guide to Establishing Sex and
Relationships Peer Education Projects**

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Section 1 Introduction

The context

The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy for England was launched by the Prime Minister in June 1999. The ten year strategy has two core aims:

- to halve the rate of conceptions among under 18s in England by 2010 and to set a firmly established downward trend in conceptions among under 16s.
- to reduce the risk of long term social exclusion for teenage parents and their children by getting more teenage parents into education, training and employment.

One of the central themes of the Strategy¹ is to improve the sex and relationships education (SRE) that young people receive. Research has shown that many young people feel strongly that the SRE they received was ‘too little, too late and too biological’. Ignorance about sex is a key risk factor for teenage pregnancy² and recent research shows that levels of ignorance are still high amongst young people³.

As well as having high rates of teenage pregnancies, young people in the U.K. also experience high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Young people want and need good quality SRE in order that they can protect themselves⁴. Nine out of ten young people believe that SRE helps them to be more responsible about sex⁵ and the research evidence supports this notion⁶.

Different methods of delivering SRE are being utilised to complement traditional classroom based provision. Peer education approaches have been identified by key guidance documents^{7, 8} as having the potential to contribute to SRE both in and outside of schools.

What can peer education contribute?

While all SRE provision should be sensitive to the range of young people’s needs, peer education approaches can be particularly good at ensuring messages are meaningful because they involve young people who belong to these groups and understand the needs and issues themselves. As well as imparting knowledge, peer education approaches usually focus on raising young people’s self esteem and social competence as well as developing their skills so that they can make informed choices about their behaviour, and feel able to act on these choices.

Peer education approaches value the views and experiences of young people, making them the experts and recognising that they can positively influence and support each other. Involvement can enhance peer educators' confidence and their sense of engagement with their school and communities. They can benefit all young people, but may have particular value as a way of including young people who are often excluded from the mainstream for example, young parents, young people from black and minority ethnic groups, disaffected young people and those with special educational needs.

Peer education programmes are now widespread. A rapid mapping exercise revealed over 70 SRE related projects in England alone. Some have been established for a number of years and others, namely the A PAUSE programme, are currently being rolled out into different areas. Despite increasing experience of instigating peer education programmes and expanding evidence base for this work, many are still developing peer education programmes from scratch. The Teenage Pregnancy Unit commissioned this guide to share and encourage good practice.

Aims of the guide

The guide aims to provide basic information for those considering or planning to develop peer-led approaches to delivering SRE. We also hope it will be useful to those working with established projects and who want to know more about specific issues, such as how peer education works or how to evaluate their project. The guide attempts to give a balanced and realistic view of what is involved in setting up and maintaining a peer education programme. Drawing on both research and real examples it describes the potential benefits and how established projects have dealt with some of the challenges that can arise. The guide does not prescribe one model of peer education, but aims to share some core principles and a framework that can be applied in developing good practice.

How was the guide developed?

A number of processes were brought together to inform the development of this guide:

- a review of academic literature on peer education approaches and SRE;
- a survey of existing peer education UK projects; and,
- visits to nine projects selected to reflect the diversity of models, settings and young people involved in and receiving peer education interventions. During these visits researchers met with project co-ordinators, teachers, peer educators and those who had received peer education to find out more about how their project operated.

How to use the guide

The guide is intended as a useful ongoing reference for peer education projects as they progress through the various stages of establishing a project. It may be read from cover to cover or alternatively dipped into when information about various aspects is required. The list of contents is intended as a clear signpost to relevant sections.

Throughout, the text is illustrated with examples of established projects and extracts from interviews with individuals involved with them. Each section is concluded with the key points that have been discussed and suggestions for further reading around the issues that have been covered.

Section 7 provides a useful checklist of the main activities involved in establishing a peer education project.

Further reading

- Social Exclusion Unit (1999) Teenage Pregnancy. TSO: London.
- DfEE (2000). Guidance on Sex and Relationship Education. London: DfEE 0116/2000.

Section 2 Setting the scene

What is peer education?

Definitions of peer education vary, reflecting differing practical and theoretical approaches. Generally they encapsulate the idea that it is interaction between people who are similar in some way which can be a positive force for spreading ideas and altering attitudes and behaviour.

Where did the idea come from?

An early form of peer education was the 'monitor' system developed in Victorian schools where older school pupils taught literacy and numeracy skills to groups of younger pupils. The scheme was a way to enable teachers to cope with teaching large groups of young people and children of varied age and ability. The similarity between 'monitors' and students might not have been great as monitors acted like teachers in their own right, dispensing punishment and reward for good work.

Peer tutoring experienced a renaissance during the 1960's particularly in North America and the former Soviet Union. Again older students were involved in providing learning support to younger pupils, but on this occasion such schemes were based on educational psychology theory. This theory suggested that interaction between peers was related to successful learning because children develop their abilities through sharing their thoughts, discussing ideas and learning to compromise with other young people who are similar to themselves. Peer-to-peer interaction also seemed to lack the intimidating overtones which children felt existed in their interactions with adult teachers.

Peer counselling approaches were derived from this earlier work. They focus on helping young people deal with personal problems by putting them in contact with peers who have had the same experiences. Both peer tutoring and peer counselling have continued to develop.

Peer led approaches

A recent review of approaches, involving young people as peers, identified five models⁹. Each of these is different in purpose and the type of work being done. Box 2.1 gives short descriptions of each of these.

Box 2.1

5 models of peer approaches:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Tutoring | focus on academic learning, usually in schools e.g. paired reading |
| Befriending | supporting and encouraging the formation of friendships between young people in order to help those who feel isolated and lonely |
| Listening/
Counselling | provision of one-to-one support by peers to young people under stress, with problems or needing to talk |
| Mentoring | one-to-one relationship between young people providing support before someone is troubled or in difficulty e.g. pairing children coming from primary into secondary school with older pupils |
| Mediation | aims to resolve disagreements and arguments between other young people and reduce conflict and victimisation |

Peer education is something different to each of the above. It tends to be about developing a group's basic skills to bring about better understanding, academic progress or to teach about healthy lifestyles and choices, for example around sex and relationships or drugs.

What models of peer education exist?

Within peer education four main types of approach can be seen¹⁰.

1. Educational approach

This is the form of peer education that is discussed most extensively within this resource, and the one that is used most commonly in schools. It usually involves the presentation of information in a formal setting, usually a school or a youth club, to complement and enhance school based SRE. A typical project involves peer educators giving presentations using didactic and interactive techniques (see Box 2.2 for examples).

Box 2.2

Examples of the educational approach

Swindon Peer Education Project works with secondary schools in the Swindon area. Trained peer educators from years seven and nine work with teachers to deliver SRE. Their activities include developing and presenting school assemblies, devising role-plays and facilitating discussions with whole classes and small groups.

Great Yarmouth Sexual Health Information Team [SHIFT] involves young mothers working with health promotion specialists. Together they develop and deliver SRE classes to young people aged 13 to 16 in local schools. The sessions provide age appropriate SRE, and tackle issues of self esteem, communication and negotiation skills.

The A PAUSE [Added Power and Understanding in Sex Education] programme has been implemented in over 100 schools across the country. Some elements of the programme are led by peers drawn from years 12 and 13. They use a variety of techniques including role-play, small group discussions and presentations to work with year 9 groups. Support materials and training are provided by A PAUSE. The aim of the peer educators' input is to assist young people to have correct understandings of norms of sexual behaviour and to develop assertiveness skills. Their work is complemented by other elements of the programme which are delivered by teachers or school nurses.

2. Outreach approach

In this approach, the peer educators share characteristics with, but rarely belong to, the same social group as those receiving the peer education. They maybe the same age, from the same ethnic group, speak a common language, or share the same sexual orientation. It is important that the peer educators are identifiable with, and are seen as having credibility among, the target group. The intervention is tailored closely to the characteristics of the target group and takes place in settings where they congregate e.g. shopping centres and bars. While there may be formal 'instructive' elements, outreach programmes are more likely to involve discussion and information sharing (see Box 2.3 for an example).

Box 2.3

An example of the outreach approach

London Brook's peer education project provides training to vulnerable young people, frequently those at risk of being excluded from school. The peer educators are trained in sexual health matters and work with Brook at nightclubs, festivals and other events. They aim to raise awareness of Brook services among the young people they know and meet, through opportunistic discussion. They also work alongside health professionals to deliver PHSE and citizenship sessions in schools.

3. Diffusional approach

This approach focuses on influencing opinions and beliefs through informal interactions that take place within young people's social networks (see Box 2.4 for an example). Peer educators utilise spontaneous discussions in informal settings. The involvement of natural opinion leaders, who are regarded as credible and trustworthy sources of information, is important. Their status can increase their influence, and their popularity gives them access to wide social networks. Young people normally have a great deal of involvement in running these programmes and this prevents them becoming too pedagogical.

Box 2.4

Example of the diffusional approach

Student Health Advisors Group [SHAG] is a peer led health project on the Isle of Wight. It operates through a college of further education. Students at the college are trained as 'Shaggers'. They are supported by the project co-ordinator, a health promotion specialist, a qualified nurse and midwife to run a 'drop in' service. This service also provides an informal space which many students use as a place to simply have coffee or access the available computing equipment. As a result, there are potential opportunities for very informal advice giving and counselling. Uniquely, the peer educators also operate an interactive website. The website is advertised locally and provides information on sex and relationships and other health concerns. Young people are encouraged to post anonymous messages on the site, which are responded to by the team of peer educators.



4. Community-based approach

This approach has much in common with community development approaches to health promotion. Peer educators are typically involved in the development and implementation of projects that aim to develop a coalition of organisations and representatives within a community to address an issue. Communities can be geographical, for example a school or housing estate, or be a community of people such as those from a minority ethnic group or young gay men. Examples of this approach include HIV/AIDS prevention projects involving gay communities and safer sex promotion for young people on holiday where individuals, public and private sector organisations come together to organise and support interventions.

How does peer education work?

Theories of health behaviour, learning and social influence can help explain how peer education approaches can work to effect change in young people's sexual knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviour. These theories continue to develop, as our understanding of the determinants of young people's sexual behaviour becomes more refined¹¹. Wherever possible there should be a theoretical rationale for the design of an intervention. There is evidence that a proven theoretical grounding for sexual health promotion with young people is necessary to ensure its effectiveness¹².

Theory tells us that peer education could work through the following three mechanisms:

Changing social norms

Perceptions of what an individual sees as normal among the people whose opinions and views they respect (*social norms*) have influence on their behaviour^{13,14}. Peer education provides young people with realistic information about the sexual behaviour of their peers and maybe effective by modifying any inaccurate perceptions they held.

‘Peers straight away can dispel things like “all 16 year olds have had sex”... they have a street cred that’s powerful going into schools. Even just saying SRE is important, that it matters and how you conduct your life matters. The project wouldn’t work with just one group – peers or health professionals – it needs both.’

Project co-ordinator

Diffusion of new ideas

Theories of diffusion¹⁵ suggest that change is initiated by a few key people in a group who are trusted, liked and whose views are valued by others. Others copy their actions. Peer educators are often selected because they have this potential for influence. By communicating healthy messages regarding sexual behaviour, peer educators may be effective.

Increasing self efficacy

Where training in new skills is accompanied by building an individual’s confidence in their ability to apply them it is likely to be more effective. Social Learning Theory¹⁶ explains this by stating that when people become more confident (increasing *self efficacy*) they can take control of what happens to them and what they do. Peer education tries to increase both young people’s sexual health skills and their confidence to put these into practice.

The factors that influence young people’s sexual attitudes and behaviour are very complex and no one theory can completely explain or predict them. But these theories provide good grounds for thinking that peer education approaches to SRE should help effect changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour. What does research tell us about how effective peer led approaches really are?

Is peer education effective?

Researchers have reviewed the evidence for peer education approaches and have compared the effectiveness of peer education to traditional approaches to promoting young people’s health^{17, 18}. Only a small number of evaluations were considered of sufficient rigour to be included in these reviews. Inclusion of studies was based on the quality of the design of the evaluations and not the quality of the interventions. Most described interventions in the USA.

The reviews concluded that peer education can be effective in health promotion with young people. Peer education programmes have been shown to have the potential to increase knowledge and have positive impact on attitudes, intentions and self-efficacy. A smaller number of studies have shown that peer education can change young people’s behaviour, for example, interventions around smoking reduced the

numbers of young teenagers who started smoking. Where teachers had delivered the same programme, the evaluations tended to show peers were more effective, though the results were not unanimous.

Box 2.5

Great Yarmouth SHIFT regards their peer education programme as benefiting three separate groups:

1. The **young mothers** who are trained as peer educators and who lead the SRE sessions in schools.

‘The young mothers love it. They beg to get on and stay on the project. They benefit tremendously in terms of knowledge, they build friendships, they can experience an amount of responsibility... to go and talk to the kids in schools. It’s got status for them and it helps with jobs and prospects.’

2. The **young people** in schools who receive an enhanced SRE curriculum.

‘The kids, they say that they really benefit from it. When we held a conference recently involving over 100 young people, they said they loved it and wanted more of it, especially the boys, who really get into the work we do on relationships.’

3. The **schools and teaching staff** who are able to offer enhanced SRE provision to students and who are supported in the preparation and delivery of certain components of the SRE curriculum.

‘Schools say they really enjoy it. I think if they didn’t we wouldn’t be in demand as much as we are.’

Note

It is important to remember that peer education is not a complete solution to SRE. It should be seen as one component of the SRE programme that young people receive.

What makes a programme effective?

Those that have looked to identify the characteristics of effective programmes have found this a difficult task. The pool of good quality studies is small; the range of topics addressed diverse; the ages and kinds of young people involved in programmes has been very different. In addition, papers do not always fully describe aspects of programme development and implementation which might have influenced outcomes. To try to address this question researchers^{19, 20, 21, 22, 23} have looked at the process of developing and implementing programmes. Reviewing published studies²⁴ projects were found to have several common characteristics (see Box 2.6).

Box 2.6

Common characteristics of implementing peer education projects

- Peer educators were the same age or one or two years older than the target group;
- projects involved young men and women;
- peer educators were mainly involved in providing information or combined information giving with skills development;
- most training programmes included a residential course, often over one or two weekends;
- the major components of the training were:
 1. understanding young people and their needs
 2. teaching skills e.g. classroom management
 3. personal development skills e.g. assertiveness and problem-solving;
- although the extent varied, projects were developed in partnership with peer educators.



What are other benefits of peer education?

In addition to there being evidence that peer education approaches are effective in increasing young people's knowledge and skills and, in some instances, changing their behaviour, research shows a number of other benefits:

1. **Young people find peer approaches very acceptable.** Their satisfaction is associated with a number of elements including:
 - perceiving peer educators as credible sources of information;
 - seeing their sessions as fun;
 - appreciating not being lectured at or looked down on;
 - use of less traditional teaching methods e.g. games and role plays; and,
 - feeling that peer educators understand young people's problems better than teachers.

It is important to add a note of caution here. Some studies show that some young people have been unhappy with aspects of peer education programmes. Their reservations have included the following:

- perceived problems with how peer educators deal with some emotive issues e.g. abortion;
- the emphasis they place on feelings and emotions; and,
- feeling uncomfortable when peer educators are shy or nervous.

‘I really enjoyed role playing... especially acting things out, like saying ‘no’ three times when someone’s putting you under pressure ... They made you feel really comfortable and if you did something wrong they wouldn’t laugh.’

Young person

‘They come up to me and ask me all sorts of questions. The way they speak to me is different from the way they speak to teachers, they show more respect for me. They talk to me because I can talk on their level... I can talk in their lingo and I suppose that’s what they like.’

Young mother and peer educator

‘I thought it was very good, they weren't much older than us so they remembered what topics you're interested in at our age.’

Young person

‘It's more interesting than just having a teacher going on and on and on. You get more if it's someone else. You want to hear their story.’

Young person

‘I think it was good that younger people were discussing it – you get more embarrassed if older people talk to you so I thought it was better.’

Young person

- 2. Involvement in programmes enhances the personal development of peer educators.** Many evaluations^{25, 26} show that young people who become peer educators gain knowledge, confidence and inter-personal skills. Their sense of maturity and confidence in managing their own relationships are raised. They are able to clarify their own attitudes and values. The significance of these benefits marks peer education as having a potential to contribute to Citizenship programmes as well as the Personal Social and Health Education framework.



‘Before doing this, I was always thought of as a bit of joker and a clown. When I tell my mates and my family that I give my time up to go into schools to do this, they’re a bit shocked, because you need to be responsible. It’s opened my eyes to what I can do for myself.’

Young mother and peer educator

- Peer education projects can be a mechanism for giving young people control over their own health.** The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child²⁷ says that all people under 18 years old have the right to say what they think and to be listened to by adults when they make decisions that affect them. They also have the right to get information and express what they think, unless this contravenes other people’s rights (articles 12 and 13). Both the Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health Strategies embrace such notions. They stress the importance of involving, consulting and empowering individuals. Peer education can enable young people to increase control over, and improve, their own health.

It is important to remember that on occasions, and especially in school settings, giving young people increased control may result in tensions with those who advocate traditional teaching approaches. Programmes try to avoid these difficulties by setting out very clearly what role and responsibilities peer educators and teachers will each have.

- Peer education projects can be inexpensive to set up.** Very practically, many peer education projects require little formal funding. However, they do rely heavily on the goodwill and commitment of key individuals, not least the peer educators, who give up their time and expertise (page 24 gives guidance on estimating project costs).

‘The lack of cost and no budget, is one of the reasons we’ve been able to do it. My time is provided by the health promotion department and the premises are provided by the college. Apart from photocopying and cups of coffee there aren’t many other costs on this project.’

Project co-ordinator

Key Points

- Peer education approaches have existed since the Victorian era, but saw a resurgence in the 1960s.
- There are a number of different models of peer led interventions and types of peer education, which reflect differing aims and approaches.
- Peer education may operate by changing social norms, promoting diffusion of new ideas and/or by increasing self-efficacy in those who receive it.
- Peer education programmes have been shown to be effective at increasing young people’s knowledge, positively influencing their attitudes, intentions and, in some instances, behaviour.
- Others benefits include young people’s appreciation of peer education; the personal development of those involved as peer educators; the potential to empower young people; and the limited funds necessary to instigate programmes.

Further reading

- Hartley-Brewer, E. (2002) *Stepping forward: Working together through peer support* www.ncb.org.uk
- Wight, D., Abraham, C. and Scott, S. (1998) Towards a psycho-social theoretical framework for sexual health promotion, *Health Education Research* 13(3) pp. 317-330.
- Brodala, A. and Mulligan, J. (1999) *The PeerAid book: Approaches to setting up and running young people’s peer education projects*. London: CSV Education for Citizenship and the IBIS Trust.
- Svenson, G. and collaborators (1998) *European guidelines for youth AIDS peer education*. Luxembourg: European Commission. www.europeer.lu.se

Section 3 Planning for success

Planning is vital to success, whatever the approach of the project and wherever it is located. A good plan is essential to clarify what the project will do and the rationale for why it will achieve its aims. It will also help in gaining the support of partners and raising funds for the project.

Planning is hardly ever undertaken in a neat series of discrete stages. The following sections describe what should be included at the project planning stages.

Establishing the rationale for the project

It is important to have a clear rationale for a project and for that to relate to the circumstances and needs in the locality where the project will be set. Questions around whom the project should try to reach, who should be peer educators, what the setting and the content should be, need to be considered. It should be informed by the following:

- the rates of teenage pregnancy and, if available, sexually transmitted infections, across the area
Are they high in particular wards/estates/school catchment areas?
- patterns of use of local sexual health services
Are they used or not used by disproportionately high numbers of young people from a particular locality?
- information available from surveys or needs assessments with young people
If a needs assessment has not been completed can one be undertaken?
- the views and experiences of those involved in delivering SRE

Thinking about whom a project is trying to reach relates closely to the choice of setting. There are many possible combinations of groups and setting which a peer education project might work with:

<p>generic groups e.g. young people of a certain age in local schools</p>	<p>groups with particular attributes e.g. young people who are especially vulnerable</p>
<p>generic settings e.g. local schools, youth clubs, nightclubs</p>	<p>specific settings e.g. a sports club, a park</p>

See Box 3.1 for examples.

Box 3.1

Examples of 'target groups'

London Brook peer educators target young people who are defined as 'vulnerable', such as those who are experiencing social and material disadvantage or who have been excluded from school.

Gateshead Young Women's Outreach Project peer educators work in schools with mixed gender and female only groups, community based young women's groups and with young women who are participants in the broader project who are commonly non school attenders.

Swindon Peer Education Project is a school based project which supports peer educators from years 7 and 9 to plan and deliver SRE sessions to their same age and younger peers.

Setting aims and objectives

A project will need a clear statement of aims and objectives. These will help determine the shape of the project. The process of setting these should involve funders, partners and crucially young people, as this will encourage them to take ownership of the project.

An **aim** normally describes the intended outcome of a project (see Box 3.2 for examples).

BOX 3.2

Examples of aims

London Brook

- To help young people to be informed and confident.
- To improve access to Brook services, particularly for more vulnerable young people.

Student Health Advisors Group [SHAG]

- To provide information and advice on a range of sensitive issues, including sex, relationships and drugs, to all young people on the Isle of Wight.

Gateshead Young Women's Outreach Project

- To increase contraceptive use.
- To increase the ability to resist the pressure of unwanted sex.
- To raise awareness of issues in the lives of very young parents.

Any one aim can give rise to a number of specific **objectives**. Clear objectives are crucial because they inform the choice of approach and content. Objectives should provide a guide to the project but should not be so restrictive as to obstruct the flexibility that is essential to peer education (see Box 3.3).

The detail of objectives might be worked on as project plans are put into action. Objectives might become more precise about numbers, timescale, management and training at a later stage. The more specific objectives are the easier it can be to estimate the resource and cost implications. The mnemonic SMART is often used as a way of remembering the elements of clear objective setting (see Box 3.4).

Box 3.3

Examples of objectives

- To teach young people the skills to negotiate sexual encounters safely.
- To provide information and advice to young people on safer sex, such as how to use condoms correctly.
- To promote easy access to counselling and advice services for those concerned about sexual health.

Box 3.4

SMART objectives

S pecific	Concise, not open to different interpretations
M easurable	Framed so that it is measurable
A chievable	Possible to achieve in the timeframe
R ealistic	Feasible given the constraints and circumstances
T ime bound	Tied to a deadline for achievement

Developing a basic model for the project

Having fixed initial aims and objectives, these should inform the design of a project model. Later this will include a lot of information about the content and approach to be adopted. In the early stages though a basic model is needed to present to young people, funders and other organisations. A good model will cover all the following:

- who will co-ordinate the project;
- which agencies will be partners;
- which young people will be involved as peer educators;
- who should be the target group;
- how the work will be done and what approach will be used;
- what the steps are in implementing the project; and
- what systems will be in place for monitoring and evaluation.

How will young people be involved?

Peer education projects often raise challenging issues about working with young people. Acknowledging their expertise and giving them power can be threatening for some adults, and they may lack the confidence to let young people make decisions. These concerns are often well intentioned but can undermine the project. Making unfulfilled promises to young people about the extent of their influence will result in distrust. Developing a clear idea from the outset of how young people will be involved and how they can have influence may avoid tensions arising.

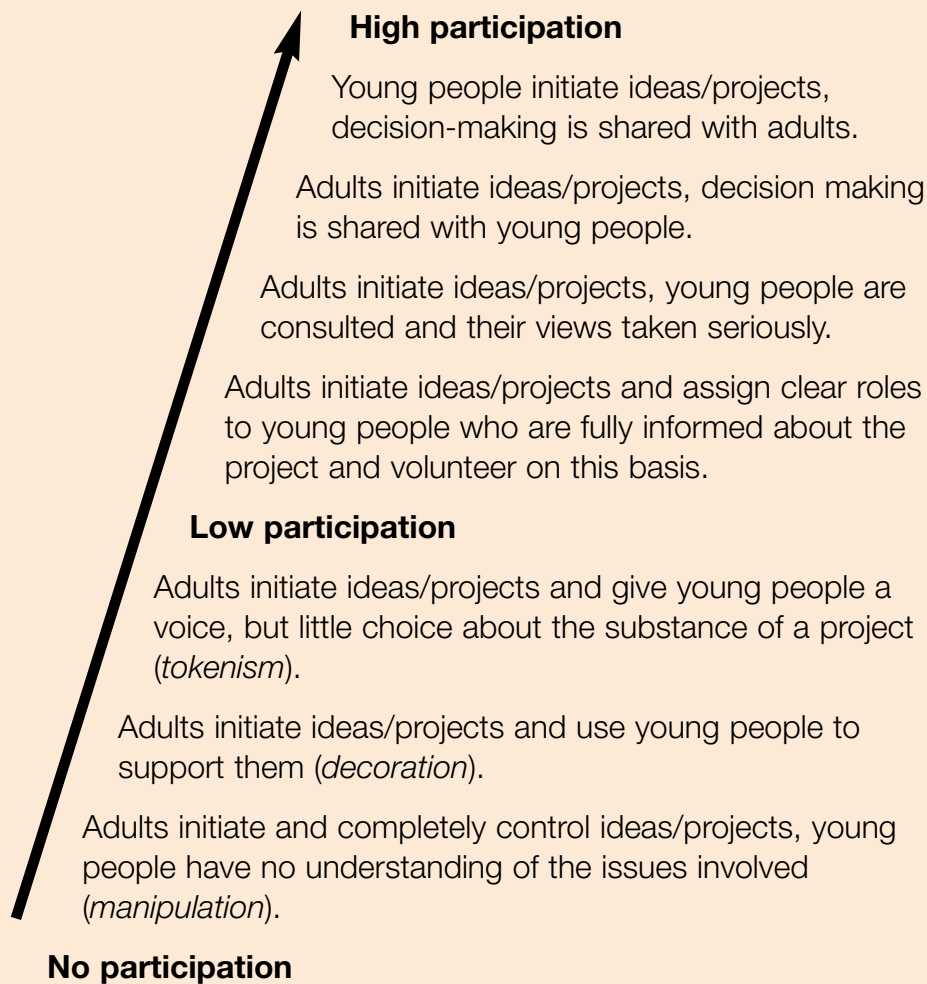
Lots of contextual factors will influence the level of involvement young people can have, these include:

- the practical constraints of the setting;

- the nature of relationships between adults and young people normally in the setting;
- by whom and how the project is funded;
- the ages, experiences and confidence of the young people involved; and,
- views of stakeholders.

Identifying the degree of involvement of young people in an activity can be depicted as a ladder of participation (see Box 3.5).

Box 3.5 Ladder of Participation



From Hart (1992)²⁸

Planning to monitor and evaluate progress

Monitoring and evaluation are key components of any project and should be built in right from the start.

Monitoring is an ongoing process which looks at how the project is progressing through recording events, numbers involved, numbers of sessions delivered etc. How this will be done needs to be considered at the outset. Alongside this, it is important that mechanisms for reflecting on, and responding to, changes are established.

Evaluation relates closely to the aims and objectives of the project. Evaluation should focus on the process of implementation, as well as its impact and outcomes. For further detail on evaluation see page 53.

How much will it cost?

It is important to begin calculating how much the project will cost in the planning stages. This will be something that funders and supporters will need to know. When estimating costs the following should be considered:

- Staffing. *Are extra posts needed or can existing staff be utilised?*
- Peer recruitment. *What advertising is needed? What time will be involved?*
- Training. *Will there be room hire, refreshments, training material and travel costs? Do staff time/locum payments/supply teacher costs need to be covered? What recompense is needed for peers?*
- Ongoing. *Will there be photocopying, postage or telephone costs? Is it necessary to compensate peer educators for their travel or childcare costs?*
- Evaluation. *Is payment of outside evaluators required or can existing staff time be used?*

Not all of these might need to be met by external funding. Some of the resources needed could be provided by local organisations. Projects that survive and prosper are often part of a larger organisation and are able to draw on their greater resources.

‘Apart from the fantastic name and the kids themselves, I think the reason we have been successful is that the project gets support from a number of sources. The FE college provide the premises free of charge, the health promotion department provide admin., computers and so on, and financial support, and they pay for my time to oversee the project.’

Project co-ordinator

How do we get funding?

Peer education projects are funded from a wide variety of sources, including the public sector, charities and commercial organisations. Projects may be able to access funds through:

- Neighbourhood Renewal Funds (NRF);
- Health or Education Action Zones (HAZ/EAZ);
- Primary Care Trusts (PCTs);
- the Local Education Authority (LEA);
- Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Local Implementation Funds (LIF);
- local businesses or charities;
- individual school budgets.

The Directory of Grant-making Trusts may be a useful resource and a local branch of Community Service Volunteers (CSV) may be able to offer advice.

Key Points

Project planning should involve the following:

- considering the rationale for the project;
- identifying the project's aims and objectives;
- developing a basic model for the project;
- developing a clear idea of how young people will be involved and what influence they will have;
- developing a process for monitoring and evaluation;
- estimating the costs of the project; and,
- considering sources of any additional funding which is needed.

Further reading

- Hart, R. (1992) Children's participation: from tokenism to citizenship. Innocenti Essays No. 4, New York: UNICEF.
- Fife Healthcare NHS Trust Health Promotion Department. Peer Education Project. Peer Education: Lessons learned from the Peer Education Project in Fife. www.fife-hpd.demon.co.uk.

Section 4 Putting plans into action

All the initial planning will be of benefit when it comes to getting the project off the ground. At this point it will be necessary to:

- build partnerships;
- forge an organisational structure;
- firm up the action plan;
- recruit, select and train peer educators;
- consider the need to provide ongoing training and support; and,
- consider incentives for peer educators to remain involved.

How do we build partnerships?

Getting support for a peer education project at the beginning is important and can help ensure its long-term survival. The success of many peer education projects has been the collaboration between partners.

‘There have been peer initiatives co-run with a nurse and youth worker – it’s the combination that’s powerful.’

School nurse

When workers from different agencies are involved it automatically makes the project more widely known. It can also provide a context to make it easier for the project to ensure it meets need and reaches young people who do not benefit from existing provision.

Building alliances between different sectors depends on tapping into existing networks and identifying potentially key people. The Local Teenage Pregnancy Strategy is a good starting place. There will be many different agencies involved in implementing the strategy and a commitment to partnership working will underpin it. Broader multi-agency working groups may also be a source of potential partners.

What should our organisational structure look like?

Despite the value of these partnerships many peer education projects rely on the inspirational efforts of one or two key individuals, whose enthusiasm drives the project. These people are usually the project co-ordinator. They can be the crucial link between young people and the high level partner organisations. Box 4.1 sets out some of the skills and qualities needed in a co-ordinator²³.

Box 4.1

Skills and qualities needed by a project co-ordinator

- being able to relate well to young people;
- having the necessary insight and integrity to be able to deal with sensitive issues and to negotiate clear, and appropriate boundaries with young people;
- sensitivity to the organisational structures and constraints of the setting;
- diplomacy and liaison skills;
- excellent verbal and written communication skills; and,
- good organisational abilities.

From Fife Health Promotion Dept.²⁹

Careful consideration should be given to forming a small strategic group to act as a source of advice, continuity, and support for the project. This group will need a clearly defined role.

There are some other key people to get involved early on (see Box 4.2). In schools, projects need the support of senior management. Existing project co-ordinators advise going 'straight to the top' and trying to get the headteacher on board. This is best done by explaining clearly what the project will include, first by letter then in person by a visit.

Box 4.2

The project co-ordinator of **A PAUSE, Exeter** asked existing peer educators from another school to explain what their project involved to interested staff. Later the newly trained peer educators presented a demonstration session to governors and parents, which helped to reassure anyone with concerns, and gained support for the project.

If the project is to be part of SRE, the school will need to inform parents that the sessions are going to take place and give them the option to withdraw their child. Efforts to get parents on board with the project's objectives maybe of benefit. Existing project co-ordinators agree that it is important to have a key member of school staff (such as the PHSE co-ordinator) who is keen to see the project continue and who will take responsibility for it.

For projects with vulnerable groups of young people, such as those leaving care, joint working is essential.

What should our action plan look like?

The action plan ought to follow from the project aims and objectives and will be a list of the things that need to be done throughout the project, in the order they need to happen.

This might be worked out fairly loosely before funding has been secured but will need to be developed in more detail once it is in place. If the project co-ordinator or a steering group is drawing it up then there should be consultation with young people from the start. Their views about what responsibilities they want and what issues the project should address should have influence.

The timetable needs to be realistic. It should take into account young people's other commitments. It is very important that time, and opportunities, for all parties to reflect on the project are built into the plan. Peer education projects are dynamic and action plans might need to be revised. It is sensible to begin with modest ambitions and then review and reflect on this experience.

Against each task there should be some indication of who will take responsibility for it. The plan should include how peer educators will be recruited, how they will be trained, and how they be will supported.

How can we recruit peer educators?

There are many aspects to consider when planning to recruit young people as peer educators. The following may be useful pointers:

1. Recruitment processes need to be open and transparent. Failure to ensure this will breed resentment and undermine credibility.
2. Recruitment methods should be appropriate for the age of the young people being approached.
3. In schools, projects are often structured around year groupings, recruiting from and/or delivering to one year group. Alternatively they may recruit peer educators from an older year group to intervene lower down the school. Year 12 students may be an attractive group as they are likely to have credibility, may have some space

within their timetables to become involved, and may feel involvement will contribute to their personal development and/or career and educational aspirations.

4. It may be difficult to attract a broad range of young people. Muslim women, African-Caribbean young men, young fathers and young men in general tend to be underrepresented. In school-based programmes there may be a tendency for academically able young people, and those already involved in other activities, to come forward. The project needs to consider how it will attract a representative group of young people (see Box 4.3 for an example).
5. Young men may find it hard to volunteer because they feel it will be difficult to talk openly about sexual health issues. Approaching them in situations where they do not feel they risk being ridiculed by peers if they show interest, emphasising the important role young men can play in helping other young men and committing to incorporate their views may help.
6. Projects wanting to work with young people outside of the school setting should make contact with youth centres and outreach projects. The various venues where young people meet should be mapped and considered as potential locations for the intervention.
7. It is important to make sure that projects offer young people the opportunity to show an interest and explore what is involved before they make a commitment. They should be given the chance to discuss where they feel comfortable starting from in relation to discussing sexual matters. Cultural factors which affect young people's attitudes towards sex and relationships need to be considered at recruitment and during training.
8. Whether it is appropriate to match the characteristics of peer educators with those of the target group, for example ethnic group, faith or gender should be an important consideration.

'You also have to be sure that the peer education team knows how to work with pupils in your school. Do they match, do they know the language and do they understand the difference between knowing how to be with them and being in a position of authority? Not being the kids friend, but working as a mentor, as a youth worker.'

PHSE adviser

BOX 4.3

South Camden Community School

A year into running a school based SRE peer education project it was clear that it was proving difficult to recruit young Bengali women. In response, a theatre in education company was invited to perform a play about HIV/AIDS. At the end Bengali young women were eager to ask questions and as a result ten Muslim young women (some Somali, some Bengali) wanted to become involved in peer education.

Although they were initially nervous, these young women wanted to learn about sex and sexuality issues and they wanted to share this knowledge with other students. The issues they wanted to address included:

- What is sex and what happens when you have sex?
- What is contraception?
- Rape within marriage
- What is AIDS?
- What other health risks are there when you have sex?
- Abortion

Following training, the group went on to deliver workshops for younger pupils which were extremely well received.

From Brodala and Mulligan, 1999³⁰

9. There are a number of innovative methods of recruiting peer educators.

They include:

- inviting a drama group to make a presentation about an issue, then inviting young people to get involved in workshops to develop their own presentation or play; and,
- launching a competition to make a poster or website image/slogan for an event such as World AIDS Day and inviting young people to participate in disseminating the results.

More conventional methods include:

- making an introductory presentation to a group of young people; and,
- using notice boards, assemblies, newsletters and word of mouth to attract young people.

10. The timing of recruitment is also important. It is inappropriate to begin a recruitment process when there is no scope to follow through with training soon after, as this can diminish enthusiasm. School based projects need to plan their timetable around students' academic and other commitments.

'It's so important to plan it all out. Last year we recruited towards the end of the Easter term, which in retrospect was far too late. The students [6th formers] simply weren't available during the summer term for delivery of the project because of the AS exams. Now our time line is better spaced.'

Project co-ordinator

11. The numbers of young people involved in projects varies widely according to, amongst other things, the scope of the project and size of the group of potential recruits. A group needs to be large enough to develop an identity and to be able to provide some mutual support for members. The size may increase or decrease during certain periods e.g. exam times. It is important to consider the capacity of the project to train new recruits. It is best for no more than 20 young people to be trained at any one time. Established peer educators may contribute to the training of new recruits. There may be limits to the number of young people who can be involved due to funding constraints. For support and security peer educators tend to work in pairs or small groups.

How should we select peer educators?

Not every young person has the necessary skills and attributes to be a good peer educator. Box 4.4 gives a list of 'desirable' qualities. Project co-ordinators, teachers, other adults, existing peer educators and other young people can all be involved in drawing up selection criteria and methods.

'Teachers have to feel confident with the peer educators - that they won't go too far and that the work is age appropriate. I sat in on the lessons first and now I feel confident to leave them alone.'

PHSE adviser



Box 4.4

Qualities of a good peer educator

- respect for other people and their confidences
- ability to listen to their views
- a sense of commitment and responsibility
- determination to make things work
- a degree of self confidence and self awareness
- the ability to give and receive constructive feedback
- creative thinking and openness to ideas
- ability to work in a team
- ability to work with groups
- good communication and interpersonal skills
- enthusiastic approach
- a sense of humour
- an interest in the topic and/or methods used by the project
e.g. video production and drama

Selection might be about choosing the best possible candidates but careful thought should be given before anyone is excluded. Young people who, at the outset, appear least likely to possess the qualities required may, with training, reveal hidden attributes (see Box 4.5). A young person who does not appear to possess all the necessary skills but is enthusiastic and committed to developing them, should be given the opportunity. Within schools, consideration should be given to encouraging participation from those who are less successful in academic work or who have

behavioural problems. There may be a need to build their confidence so they can take an active part in the sessions.

‘We found that the best peer educators tend to be the ones who have a balance between being clever and caring but also having that status among the peer group, the ‘street cred.’ Too much of one and not enough of the other and it tends not to work...’

Health promotion manager

Box 4.5

The **Young Women’s Outreach Project** in Gateshead does not exclude any young mother wishing to become involved and has found that many of the young women, previously classified as low achievers in school, perform very well when given the opportunity and appropriate support.

What training do peer educators need?

It is essential that peer educators are given a well-constructed and comprehensive training programme. It may be resource, time and effort intensive but it is a crucial investment.

Box 4.6 sets out what should be essential elements of the training programme and some of the questions it should answer.



Box 4.6

Elements of peer educator training

Understanding the role of a peer educator and the project

- the principles, aims and objectives of peer education
 - What is the project's rationale?*
 - What roles are young people expected to fulfil?*
 - How much of their time might they need to give to it?*
- the values and role of the organising/funding agencies
 - Which agencies are sponsoring the project?*
- boundaries and responsibilities: legal and ethical considerations
 - What responsibilities do they have for child protection issues?*
 - What support can they expect?*
 - What are the groundrules for maintaining confidentiality?*

Acquiring relevant sexual health knowledge

- information about reproduction, contraception, local sexual health services, legal issues, STIs, sexuality
 - What skills do people need to manage relationships?*
 - What skills do people need to protect their sexual health?*
 - How can people have safer sex?*
 - How can they access sexual health services?*

Working through personal values and attitudes

- understanding and accepting one's own values, beliefs and lifestyle
- understanding how other people's values, beliefs and lifestyles affect their relationships and behaviour
 - How does gender, ethnicity and faith affect attitudes and views?*
 - How do gender roles affect communication between partners?*
 - How does prejudice and discrimination have an impact?*
 - How do people talk about sex?*

Developing skills to educate other young people

- learning to communicate their knowledge and to develop the skills of targeted young people



Young people and project staff may identify other aspects, which they feel should be included. The guidance on SRE in schools (DfEE, 2000; OFSTED, 2002) will be relevant references here for advice about topics to cover in peer educator training. This will also help ensure compatibility with teacher-led provision.

An initial local needs assessment could usefully inform the programme, for example, if it identified a lack of knowledge about local sexual health services. A more in-depth survey (see Box 4.7 for a list of possible methods) could be undertaken to gather information from the young people with whom the peer educators are likely to work. This will provide details of the kinds of issues of interest to them and the areas where they need more information (Box 4.8 gives an example). Careful consideration should be given to making sure responses are treated in confidence. The recruits themselves could participate in a needs assessment process to help identify their training needs. Time needs to be set aside for discussion and analysis of the results. Done well the needs assessment may help develop a sense of shared ownership of the project.

Box 4.7

Ways of finding out about young people's needs

- focus group discussions led by peer educators or teachers;
- a presentation followed by discussion with a question box left in the room;
- a presentation by peer educators leading to each individual in the group completing a questionnaire; or,
- a presentation by peer educators followed by small group discussions.

Box 4.8

A school-based needs assessment

Trainee peer educators were invited to visit the tutor groups with whom they would be working before the programme began in order to 'break the ice'. Unsure about how to use the time, their trainers suggested that they work with small groups of students to undertake a needs assessment. The trainees made their own plans for each tutor group which included a short questionnaire, a 'suggestion box' in which students could place anonymous questions about sexual matters, a voting game and an interview schedule. The visits to the tutor groups lasted 15 minutes.

The peer educators met with the trainer to debrief on the sessions. Some approaches had worked well, especially the questionnaire and 'suggestion box'. Some groups had engaged, others they had found difficult to control. But as a result the peer educators were less nervous about the forthcoming sessions and had found useful ideas about topics and concerns to include in them.

Talking about sexual matters can touch on people's deep-seated beliefs, values and attitudes. It is important to work through these and provide an opportunity to promote appreciation of the likely differences between their own and the views of the young people they will work with. Groups of peer educators may feel that others will hold negative expectations of, and certain beliefs about, them and it is important to bring these out into the open. For example, young mothers may feel others will see them as having 'made a mistake' and expect them to present themselves as examples of 'what not to do'.



The training programme should provide opportunity for new recruits to explore their concerns about the contexts in which they will work. They might be apprehensive about initiating conversations with other young people or feel uncomfortable in some environments, for example, a young mother may feel uneasy about going into schools, or a young man uncertain about working in a youth club in a part of town he rarely visits. Some young people may feel nervous about progressing directly to making presentations or working with groups and relish opportunities to develop their confidence initially through supporting those delivering sessions e.g. by producing materials.

Peer education training should work hard to increase young people's confidence and develop their ability to transfer knowledge and skills to other young people in effective ways. Training often involves getting peer educators to practice these skills with each other and anticipation of what issues will be raised when they work with other young people. Many training programmes provide opportunities to practice making lesson plans, leading and facilitating large and small group activities and to develop resources. In some cases a training programme will incorporate production of a specific resource such as a play, video, teaching pack or series of posters.

What training methods should be used?

Peer education training usually utilises methods that are widely used in good SRE. Active learning and participatory methods should form the basis of the approach. Techniques used by existing projects include:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Role-play | Asks the group to simulate or re-enact a scenario. Enables particular skills to be tested out or the dynamics within a situation to be understood. It helps to bridge the gap between theory and practice and is useful when exploring attitudes and behaviour. |
| Freeze frame | Is used in role-play when the characters stop and describe how they are feeling, and the audience is asked how it feels and what it thinks will happen next. |
| Action replay | Is used in role-play and involves a scene being replayed, with the players holding different attitudes or behaving differently. |
| Character circle | Is a role-play activity where one person sits in the centre of a circle and each member of the circle assumes a character relating to them e.g. their mother or boyfriend. |
| Brainstorming | Can stimulate participants to think creatively. An individual or group is asked to think laterally about a subject or an issue. The task must be open-ended with no set answer. |

Open discussion	Depends for its success on the skill of the facilitator, who must ensure that the discussion does not get bogged down in irrelevant topics, must stop a few highly articulate people from dominating it, bring out quiet, shy individuals and move on to another subject when appropriate.
Questionnaires	Are useful in making explicit to participants their views and attitudes. Simple questionnaires can be designed to stimulate discussion.
Case-studies	Are written scenarios that require some analytical and problem-solving skills. The group has to identify the key issues and suggest possible strategies for action. The value of a case study is that the problem is set in a real-life situation and requires practical application of the participants' ideas. They also develop team-working and communication skills.
Quizzes	Bring pace to the training. They are useful for checking information and can be done either individually or in groups. They can show, if used in a non-threatening way, that participants may not know as much as they think they do.
Drawings and cartoons	No matter how basic, can often illustrate beliefs and attitudes in a very effective way. When words or labels are added, the group can build up a vocabulary and the drawings can form the basis of a discussion.
Videos	Can be used to impart new knowledge, to broaden the spectrum of participants' ideas and to illustrate skills. They can break up more intensive learning activities, but they should only be used when they meet a specific training objective and the learning points should be reinforced afterwards.
Games	Are effective in the practical application of information and concepts. They range from specific timed tasks to complex multi-task problems that can be used competitively between groups or to generate ideas for group discussions. A wide range of published games, designed for this topic area are available, from simple card games to complex board games.

Many SRE training packs and resource materials contain activities that use these techniques and methods.

How should the training be structured?

Initial peer educator training is usually fairly intensive and for most projects comprises several sessions. A substantial period together as a group is seen as beneficial and this often takes the form of a weekend residential course (see Box 4.9 for an example). Training programmes that take place over several weeks are useful to:

- develop group cohesion;
- maintain contact and cohesion; and,
- filter out those less committed to the project.

In contrast, concentrated training programmes:

- have more flexibility;
- more mobility; and,
- are more likely to retain recruits with chaotic lifestyles.

Structuring the training programme is best done with the support of an experienced sexual health trainer, who will know how long is usually required to cover specific topics. If peer educators are contributing to the training they will need time to develop materials and plans.

Box 4.9

The **A PAUSE programme** trains young people aged 16 and 17 to become peer educators. They deliver a closely prescribed programme of four sessions to year 9 students. Their training programme runs over two days and its aims include:

- enabling peer educators to clarify their personal understanding of sex and relationships and contraception;
- enabling peer educators to generate the confidence and self-efficacy beliefs to carry their work from the training days into the classroom; and,
- helping peer educators refine the skills involved in presenting their lessons, in particular working as a member of a team, leading classroom discussion and managing role play.

The two days include drama activities, a sex knowledge quiz, games, discussion around contraception and STIs, classroom management techniques and time to work through the session scripts and planning how to take the project forward. A set of ground rules for the training days are established. Opportunity is provided at the end of each day to review activities and learning. Refreshments are provided throughout.



Peer education training events are often held in community settings but resources will influence choice of venue. Projects have used local business facilities, church halls, youth facilities, sports and leisure centres, social clubs, hotels, Education or Health Authority facilities and premises belonging to local charities. In schools there may be an alternative to using a classroom, such as an adjoining youth club.

‘The room should be comfortable and light with enough space and no restrictions on eating, food and drink must be provided.’

Project co-ordinator

Who should provide the training?

Training should have some input from the project co-ordinator and other stakeholders, but could also usefully involve contributions from sexual health specialists, teachers, youth workers, community representatives including parents and faith groups, drama and arts workers and trained peer educators. Project finances will have an impact on who can be involved but many education and health professionals are able to play a part within the remit of their job.

The need for ongoing training and support

It is a managerial responsibility to ensure that each peer educator is equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge. The initial training programme begins this process, but ongoing support is crucial to the success of the project and the wellbeing of the young person. Research shows that peer educators are usually very positive about their initial training but as they gather experience they may

need support with issues like classroom management (in the context of schools) or handling questions from young people.

Box 4.10 offers advice about this process. The levels of support that are needed will vary from one individual to another. Adequate supervision time should be made available to encourage and develop a peer educator. Providing opportunities for peer educators to meet together to share experiences and offer peer support will develop the team and individual abilities.

Box 4.10

Guidelines for supporting peer educators:

- project managers need to make themselves available and accessible;
- regular team and one-to-one meetings should take place;
- a mentoring system should be established where new recruits work alongside more experienced peer educators or members of staff; and,
- a two way process that encourages peer educators to actively participate in their own development should be promoted.

Peer educators should:

- understand the need to refer contentious issues to project management;
- recognise their need for support; and,
- be able to ask for support when it is required.

From Newitt et al. (2000)³¹

How will we maintain the involvement of peer educators?

How the project will motivate young people to stay involved with it over time needs to be considered. Offering a broad range of opportunities for personal development, degrees of involvement, and a variety of roles can maintain commitment. Projects ought to provide opportunities for peer educators to develop their role and focus their skills and interests, as they become more experienced. Dropout can be minimised by being clear about what being a peer educator will involve, its rewards, challenges, and expectations of them. Putting potential recruits in contact with existing peer educators may be a good way of providing them with an accurate and honest picture of what it will be like.

Incentives may help retention and acknowledge the effort peer educators put into projects. New friendships, personal development and experience, and new learning are cited by peer educators as rewards for their involvement. To encourage this, projects can incorporate social events and facilitate use of their experiences as supporting evidence for qualifications and job applications.



Peer education can contribute to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and Key Skills programmes and can be recognised as part of the curriculum in health and social care, drama and the performing arts. If the provision of an NVQ is not possible other award schemes should be considered. For some young people who become peer educators this may be the first time they have achieved something and this needs to be recognised.

‘Many of the young women who come to us have had a history of failure in school and have felt excluded from the educational system and denied reward and advancement. We try to make up for that by awarding them certificates of achievement as they progress through the course and acquire new skills and we celebrate these transitions with award ceremonies.’

Project co-ordinator

Financial incentives are controversial among those working in peer education. Some believe that ‘true’ peer education is done by grassroots volunteers and should not involve payment. Others feel that peer educators should be properly reimbursed for their work. Often this is not a necessary consideration, as projects do not have the financial resources to pay peer educators. The majority of community based projects pay expenses such as travel or childcare. In addition they may fund occasional social events or outings.

In rare instances peer educators may be employed by projects. In some areas such as Northern Ireland peer education has developed to such a degree that some projects offer full or part-time paid employment to young people (see Newitt et al., 2002³² for more detail).

‘Where funders don’t want to give young people cash, we give them special food or take them away for the weekend (training) or give them vouchers – we ask them what they want. Particularly when working with vulnerable young people especially those over 17, there is an issue about whether they should be paid to do it because it is work.’

Project co-ordinator

Note

It is important to remember that in some instances it will be appropriate for a project to have a limited life span, for instance if it was set up to deal with a single current issue.

Key Points

- Securing partnerships can provide a range of support for the project.
- The co-ordinator has a key role in the potential success of the project, finding someone with the right qualities and skills should be a priority.
- A detailed action plan and realistic timetable are essential.
- Selection of peer educators needs to be open and transparent.
- Efforts should be made to attract a wide group to participate. Young people who do not at first appear to have the necessary attributes should be given the opportunity to undertake the training.
- The training programme should be comprehensive, providing everything that young people need to equip them for involvement.
- There are a wide variety of training methods, but all of them should use active learning and participatory techniques.
- Peer educators need to be supported for the duration of their involvement with the project; project staff need to be accessible.

Further reading

- Brodala, A. and Mulligan, J. (1999) *The PeerAid book: approaches to setting up and running young people's peer education projects*. London: CSV.
- Newitt, K., Karp, M., McClure, A., Cowan, Y. and Ross, C. (2000) *Peer education in the new millennium: guidelines for practice*. Belfast: Eastern Health and Social Services Board.

Section 5 Implementing the project

This is the phase where peer educators apply the knowledge, skills and understanding, developed through their training, to undertake peer education activities. What work is undertaken, when and where it is done will reflect the approach being taken (see page 8 for a more detailed description). This should have been determined at the outset of the project and will have influenced action planning all the way through.

Many peer education projects are **educational** in approach, these will usually take place in schools or other formal settings. The peer education activities have to fit in with existing curricula and activities. They usually take the form of 'lessons' involving a combination of didactic teaching and active learning methods.

Projects based around **outreach** activities tend to be less formal. Projects in sexual health clinics or youth centres often use this approach and activities are likely to include providing information and/or support but not formal teaching.

Projects that adopt the **diffusional** approach rely on new ideas and information spreading via existing social networks. Activity tends to be less obvious, information generally spreads by word of mouth or through posters, leaflets, radio and other broadcasting media.

Projects that adopt the **community-based** approach may incorporate all the above activities. Because the aim is to influence a community, information might be disseminated through the organisations which have come together to support the project. Trainers might receive training through the project, or sexual health promotion may be incorporated into business, leisure and community activities. The peer educators are the initial agents for change but may draw in others, through their connections within the community.

Some projects make interventions in a number of different settings and adopt a range of approaches (see Box 5.1 for an example).



Box 5.1

Gateshead Young Women's Outreach Project uses a variety of methods to adapt their message to the context in which they are working. They have been involved in:

- delivering sessions to groups of young people in informal settings, such as an existing community project or a community centre;
- presenting question and answer 'chat show' sessions in schools. Young mothers are supported by project staff to run these, their babies also attend;
- writing a play in collaboration with a playwright, over a few weeks. The resulting drama piece was performed by the young women at a range of venues, including a young women's night at the local civic centre. During the workshop element of the evening, young women from the audience were invited on stage to take part in open discussions with the characters; and,
- working with a women's theatre company to create characters. The characters were then integrated into a play by the company who performed it locally on a number of occasions.

Peer education activities

When developing a peer education intervention, it is important to consider how the setting and the approach will fit together. In all settings peer educators should be supported to develop an approach and select activities which are appropriate, will not cause offence, and will not deter young people from engaging with them and the issues. Box 5.2 presents a list of some of the possible activities peer educators

can incorporate in their work. Box 5.3 gives an example of how one project combined these.

Box 5.2

Possible activities for peer educators

- Making presentations
- Making and showing videos
- Holding question and answer sessions
- Using interactive games and quizzes
- Performing drama and role-play
- Holding group discussions
- Having conversations
- Performing street theatre
- Making and distributing leaflets and booklets
- Condom demonstrations and distribution
- Making radio and television broadcasts
- Writing articles and newsletters
- Designing and making T-shirts, quilts, cushions and other textiles
- Holding meetings
- Training trainers
- Team teaching with teachers



The form, content and methods used will also need to reflect characteristics of the targeted group and the interaction between that group and their environment. There may be a number of aspects to take account of and challenges encountered on route, the following section describes just some of these.



‘It’s better as an active subject, like the lesson where you put the condom on a cucumber ... is better than doing written work ...’

Young person

Challenges and considerations

Limitations of the setting

In some settings the peer educators will have little or no choice about whom, how and where they will work e.g. their session may have to fit within the time of a single school lesson. In some settings young people may find it very difficult to be open and honest about their sexual health needs. In response peer educators will need to engage with them in less direct and less personal ways. Projects should negotiate to obtain the best conditions under which to deliver their work as possible e.g. ensuring they have sufficient time for discussion of issues raised during a session and the best available space.

Box 5.3

Peer educators involved in the **Swindon Peer Education Project** have used a range of activities in their school-based work:

- All peer educators have introduced themselves in school assemblies. Some wear badges to identify themselves. They have contributed to assemblies which have been to publicise World AIDS Day and to give facts about drugs and alcohol. They have presented role-plays about teenage pregnancy, such as what to do in an emergency situation and other topics.
- Some schools have established a drop-in facility for students, with strong support from headteachers and governors. A room has been set aside. During one or two lunch hours each week it is staffed by peer educators offering information on local services.
- Peer education sessions delivered during PSHE lessons have integrated a lot of active group work. They have been very popular with students.
- Peer educators are also responding informally to students' questions about sex, drugs and alcohol both in and out of school.

Length of intervention

It is important to secure enough time in order for a peer education intervention to be coherent and useful. There is no clear research evidence for what constitutes an appropriate period over which a project should run. A valuable review of research on school based SRE³³ suggested that to be effective programmes need to last 'a sufficient length of time (i.e. more than a few hours)', but we need to remember that peer education should be just one element of the total SRE programme that young people receive. Teachers and peer educators with A PAUSE in Waltham Forest feel that sessions do not work if they are less than an hour. Those working with London Brook feel it is important to be flexible, you might plan a six week programme but the young people might need longer "it's about supporting the young people to achieve their objectives, not just yours".

One off sessions may be appropriate if there is a simple message to be communicated, for example, if the sole aim is to promote a local service, but a single session will usually be insufficient to incorporate discussion of all the issues that will have been raised.

Mixed levels of knowledge

In all settings projects will need to think about how they deal with working with groups with mixed levels of sexual knowledge and experience (see Box 5.4). A key concern needs to be to provide 'age and stage' appropriate education. To do this, the group's range of knowledge and their levels of maturity should be assessed.

Box 5.4

Year 9 peer educators working with **Swindon Peer Education Project** to deliver sessions within a school setting, considered splitting groups by levels of sexual experience. They decided that this was not appropriate as it could result in stigma, both towards the more experienced and the inexperienced. Together peer educators and teachers concluded that early sexual experience rarely inferred any greater understanding or maturity. Instead, they decided to set a ground rule that group discussions should prohibit any recounting or questioning of individuals' sexual experience.



Mixed gender groups

Group discussions with single gender groups are likely to yield different responses from discussions with mixed gender groups. Some young people feel more comfortable in single gender environments when discussing sensitive issues, while others feel that mixed gender groups tend to lead to more mature and reflective discussion. Mixed sessions provide opportunities to learn about and rehearse interactions with the other gender. Currently there is no evidence that peer education approaches are more or less successful when conducted with single gender rather than mixed gender groups, either way it is important to consider how the content of

sessions will meet the needs of both groups. If there is a choice as to whether to have single or mixed gender sessions, consideration should be given to existing group dynamics and levels of maturity. Some projects opt to combine both: splitting the group for some elements of the session, but bringing them back together for others.

‘...you get to hear the views of boys as well – you know both sides’.

Young person

Adult presence

Projects need to consider the role that adults should play during peer interventions. Adults could remain in the session to offer assistance if needed and/or for health and safety reasons. Without them, the peer educators may find managing a group challenging. However, their presence may lessen young people’s willingness to be open and may detract from young people having control over the intervention.

‘Sometimes you get one or two in the group who get stupid and try to muck it up by asking really stupid questions or whispering things to make people laugh. That’s when you need help to stop it from going badly wrong. Having both boys and girls in the group helps though – it makes the discussion more normal.’

Peer educator

Key Points

- In deciding the form and content of the peer education intervention, there will be need to consider characteristics of the targeted group and the environment in which it will be delivered.
- Projects should negotiate to obtain the best conditions as possible in which to deliver their work e.g. ensuring they have sufficient length of time and the best possible space.
- Projects need to consider how they deal with mixed levels of sexual knowledge and experience and mixed gender groups.
- There are a wide range of activities which can be incorporated into the project.

Further reading

- Brodala, A. and Mulligan, J. (1999) *The PeerAid book: approaches to setting up and running young people's peer education projects*. London: CSV.
- Svenson, G. (1998) *European guidelines for youth AIDS peer education*. European Commission. www.europeer.lu.se

Section 6 Evaluating progress

What is evaluation?

Evaluation is the process of collecting information in order to determine if the project has met its aims and objectives. As well as showing if a project had its expected impact it can reveal if it had unexpected outcomes. It can also be about exploring how the process of implementation worked out.

Good evaluation not only provides an understanding of whether a project is 'working', but also involves people in reflecting on its progress and outcomes, which is essential for taking the project forward. The results can be used to improve practice and may be shared with other projects to inform their work. Importantly evaluation can provide funders with evidence of the project's success and encourage them to continue investing funds.

Evaluation should not be a 'strait-jacket' which prevents a project from developing in interesting ways as a response to changing circumstances. There is no one way of conducting evaluation or one way of measuring success. Different approaches yield different insights, but some are better than others at providing answers to specific types of questions. To inform decisions, it may be appropriate to involve someone with evaluation experience in this phase of the project.

Evaluation should only be carried out if it meets the following criteria:

Utility	if it will be useful to an audience
Feasibility	if it is feasible to conduct it in political, practical and cost-effectiveness terms
Propriety	if it can be demonstrated that it will be carried out fairly and ethically
Technical adequacy	if it will be carried out with technical skill and sensitivity

An evaluation will focus on one or more of the following three aspects (see Box 6.1 for an example):

Process

Ongoing process evaluation provides a valuable tool with which to review the way a project operates and where improvements should be made. Each part of the project, from the needs assessment and planning stage onwards, can be evaluated. The focus may be on the quality of relationships with partner organisations, how the

peer educator training programme is received by new recruits or how satisfied the target young people are with their interactions with peer educators.

Where a project has been a short lived one, it may make sense to carry out process evaluation rather than assess any longer term impact.

Impact

Here evaluation would focus on the immediate impact of the work. What short-term gains have been made? This may be whether the intervention has influenced the target group's knowledge, attitudes or levels of self-esteem.

Outcome

Outcome evaluation is where the longer-term results of the work are assessed. If the aim of the project is to increase use of health services amongst targeted young people, has this been achieved? If it has then the project is unlikely to be able to claim that it was solely responsible, but you can suggest there may have been a relationship. The overall aim of the project might be to reduce the rate of teenage conceptions but it would be difficult to demonstrate the part one project plays in achieving this outcome; instead evaluation could assess specific steps towards this.

Box 6.1

The **A PAUSE** project carries out process, impact and outcome evaluations:

Process The peer education sessions delivered to Year 9 students are evaluated after each session to see if there are ways to improve them for the future.

Impact & Outcome A questionnaire delivered to all students in Year 11 provides data for comparing self-reported knowledge, beliefs and behaviour of young people who have and have not received A PAUSE. It provides evidence of any differences the project has made as the intervention group can be compared to young people in other schools that are matched for socio-demographic and educational factors.

(see Mellanby et al., 1995³⁴ for more details)

Selecting evaluation indicators

Indicators are the data that will 'indicate' success or failure in meeting the project's objectives. Evaluation indicators should be determined by project aims and objectives. Realistic indicators need to be identified for each. The more specific they are the better.

Process indicators may include levels of satisfaction or the numbers of young people who attend sessions. Impact indicators maybe changes in knowledge and attitudes. Outcome indicators could be levels of skill or self-reported behaviour amongst the target group.

With regard to impacts on behaviour, it is important to remember that most young people are not sexually active in their early teenage years and so impact on behaviour would be difficult to ascertain. Instead the evaluation might measure intentions and expectations about how they will behave in future.

Collecting information

Having decided what to measure, information needs to be collected before the intervention begins, this provides *baseline* data. The same information should then be collected after the intervention to show any changes that have occurred. Additionally it may be possible to compare the intervention group with another group who did not receive the intervention (*comparison group*).

Many different methods can be used to collect information (see Box 6.2). Evaluation of a peer education project will probably make use of both *quantitative* (numerical data, for example, the number of young people who received peer education sessions and levels of satisfaction) and *qualitative* (cannot be reduced to numbers, for example, peer educators' reasons for joining the project) methods.

Before deciding on an evaluation plan, it is necessary to check that it will be possible to collect the desired information and carry out the research. It should be straightforward to collect information on the numbers of people involved in each session, but more difficult to measure knowledge, attitudes and intentions.

It is also important to use evaluation processes that are commensurate with the size and activity of the project. There is no point in setting out to undertake an evaluation that takes more time and effort than implementing the project itself. It is also crucial to consider how the confidentiality of people contributing to an evaluation will be maintained. It is extremely important to guarantee anonymity for the respondents taking part in the evaluation. Confidentiality is particularly important when dealing with sensitive issues such as those related to sexual health.

Box 6.2

Research tools

- Monitoring and recording systems
- Questionnaires
- Individual interviews
- Focus groups
- Case studies
- Document analysis
- Observation
- Graffiti walls

Involving young people in evaluation

Young people can be involved at every stage of an evaluation from the initial design, based on objectives and indicators they have helped to identify, to the dissemination of findings. They may be trained to carry out interviews and administer questionnaires (see Box 6.3). They can also participate in the implementation of any recommendations arising from the evaluation.

Box 6.3

Save the Children UK instigated a participatory research project to explore the experience of young people leaving care in five projects across England. The research was carried out by young people who were themselves recent care leavers. These young people were given control of the research process and carried out the interviews. Throughout project staff and an adult researcher supported them, and responsibility for project administration lay with a youth worker. Residential meetings provided a forum for:

- sharing experiences, first of being in care and later of doing the research;
- providing peer support; and,
- making group decisions on matters such as research methodology, analysis and how to disseminate findings.

Participatory appraisal is an approach where participants analyse and appraise their own situation. Young people acting as peer educators can discuss what they hope to get out of the project and set their own personal goals at the start of their involvement. At regular intervals during, and at the end of the project, they can look back at these to see how much they have achieved. This can be done individually with the project manager or as a group. The emphasis is on allowing young people to feel free to identify and explore their own concerns. Unlike most research, there are no predetermined questions and the process is flexible so that issues brought up during the research process can be followed through. This is particularly appropriate for sensitive subjects such as sexual health and relationships.

Sources of publications and resources on participatory approaches to evaluation are given on page 63.

Presenting your findings

Evaluation results should be presented in an accessible form for stakeholders of the project, including peer educators, other young people, funders, partners and policy makers. The form of reporting may include a written report, a newsletter, verbal presentations at meetings, media articles and press releases. A dissemination strategy should be decided at the outset and should be informed by young people. It is crucial to build in time to reflect on the implications of the evaluation findings for the future direction of the project.

Key Points

- Evaluation is the process of collecting information in order to determine if the project has met its aims and objectives.
- Good evaluation provides an understanding of whether a project is working and provides opportunity to reflect on progress.
- Evaluation can focus upon process, impact and/or outcomes.
- It may be appropriate to involve someone with evaluation experience and expertise to inform the design of the evaluation.
- There are a number of tools that can be used to collect baseline and post-intervention data.
- Young people can be involved in all stages of the evaluation.
- A strategy for disseminating the findings of the evaluation needs to be decided at the outset.

Further reading

- Health Development Agency (forthcoming). An Evaluation Resource to Support the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. London: HDA.
- Brodala, A. and Mulligan, J. (1999) The PeerAid book: Approaches to setting up and running young people's peer education projects. London: CSV Education for Citizenship and the IBIS Trust (see chapter 11).
- Svenson, G. and collaborators (1998) European Guidelines for Youth AIDS Peer Education. Luxembourg: European Commission. (see chapter 5).
- Cohen, J. and Emanuel J. (1998) Positive Participation: consulting and involving young people in health-related work: a planning and training resource. London: HEA.
- Warwick, I., Fines, C., and Toft, M. (1998) Health Promotion with Young People: an introductory guide to evaluation. London: HEA.
- Pretty, J., Guijt, J., Thompson, J., and Scoones, I. (1995) Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainer's Guide. IIED.

Section 7 Checklist for project development

This checklist sets out the main phases involved in developing and implementing a peer education project and tasks that must be completed. Each of these aspects has been discussed in this guide.

Planning for success

- Identify local needs and issues
- Establish a rationale for the project
- Set aims and objectives
- Decide what type of peer education approach to adopt
- Develop a basic model for the project
- Consider how young people will be involved
- Plan a framework to monitor and evaluate project progress
- Estimate costs
- Secure funding

Putting plans into action

- Build inter-agency partnerships
- Propose a management/co-ordination structure
- Draw up a precise action plan
- Develop and implement a recruitment strategy for peer educators
- Develop and implement selection criteria
- Develop and implement a training programme
- Provide ongoing training and support
- Provide incentives for peer educators to stay involved

Implementing the project

- Plan peer education activities
- Consider the need to match the intervention to the setting and target group

Evaluating progress

- Draw up an evaluation plan
- Consider how young people will be involved in evaluation
- Collect evaluation data
- Decide on a dissemination strategy for evaluation findings
- Reflect on findings

Section 8 Additional help

Useful Resources

Relevant guidance from the Teenage Pregnancy Unit

- A guide to involving young people in teenage pregnancy work (2001)
- Best practice guidance on the provision of effective contraception and advice services for young people (2001)
- Working together: Connexions and teenage pregnancy (2001)

All of these are available to download from www.teenagepregnancy.gov.uk

Resources from the Sex Education Forum

Forum factsheets:

- Supporting the needs of boys and young men in sex and relationships education (no.11)
- Effective learning – approaches to teaching sex education (no.12)
- Teaching sex and relationships education in secondary schools (no.16)
- Peer education approaches to sex and relationships education (no.20)
- Taking the initiative – positive guidance on sex and relationships education for secondary schools (no.23)
- Ensuring entitlement -sex and relationships education for disabled children (no.26)
- The framework for sex and relationships education

The following SRE resource lists:

- resources for primary schools
- resources for secondary schools

Available to download from www.ncb.org.uk

Research reviews:

- Young people's sexual attitudes and behaviour
- Teenage pregnancy and parenthood

These are available from the library at the National Children's Bureau for £2.00 each.

Ibis Trust/CSV

- The PeerAid book: approaches to setting up and running young people's peer education projects. Amanda Brodala and Jim Mulligan. Published by CSV, London 1999.

The book presents a realistic, non-prescriptive approach to running young people's peer education projects. There are case studies from 35 schools, guidelines on setting up a PeerAid project and advice on training and evaluation.

£22.98 inc. p&p available from CSV Education, 237 Pentonville Road, London N1 9NJ, tel: 0207 643 1314, email: education@csv.org.uk.

British Youth Council

- Peer Education Manual

A comprehensive guide to setting up and running a peer education project.

£10.00 non members, £7.50 BYC members available from Publications, The British Youth Council, 2 Plough Yard, Shoreditch High Street, London EC2A 3LP. www.byc.org.uk/index.html

UNAIDS Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

- Peer education and HIV/AIDS: Concepts, Uses and Challenges

Available to download from www.unaids.org

Useful contacts

- A PAUSE
Tel: 01392 403146
Email: apause@exeter.ac.uk
Web: www.ex.ac.uk/sshs/apause
Post: A PAUSE, Department of Child Health, School of Postgraduate
Medicine & Health Sciences, Church Lane, Heavitree, Exeter EX2 5SQ
- IBIS Trust
The Trust provide services and support to school-based peer education projects and in developing new approaches.
Tel: 01494 794 483
Fax: 01494 794 339
E-mail: ibtrust@global-net.co.uk
Post: 1-3 Market Square, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 1HG
- Sex Education Forum
The Forum's helpline is available Monday to Friday 9.30- 5.00
Tel: 020 7843 6052
Email: sexedforum@ncb.org.uk
Web: www.ncb.org.uk
Post: Sex Education Forum, National Children's Bureau, 8 Wakley Street,
London, EC1V 7QE

Sources of further information on participatory approaches:

- Hull and East Yorkshire Participatory Appraisal Network 01482 883783
- Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex 01723 606261
- International Institute for Environment and Development 0207 388 2117

Useful websites

- Teenage Pregnancy Unit www.teenagepregnancyunit.gov.uk
Up to date news on the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, source of guidance documents, statistical information and research reports.
- Europeer www.europeer.lu.se
European Commission sponsored site providing guidance documents, research findings, project examples and useful bibliographies.

- Peer Support Forum www.ncb.org.uk
Childline, Mental Health Foundation and National Children's Bureau partnership to offer support to those working to offer peer support in schools. Source of good practice guidance, training information and details of how to become a member of the Forum.
- Sex Education Forum www.ncb.org.uk/sexed.htm
Information about the Forum's activities, policy updates, publications, research reports and membership information.
- Fife Peer Education Project www.fife-hpd.demon.co.uk
Detailed report on the learning from a three-year sexual health and drug peer education programme established by Fife Health Promotion Department. The report charts the project from set up through to evaluation findings.
- Isle of Wight Student Health Advisors www.shag.org.uk
Award winning website for the SHAG project in the Isle of Wight. Useful example of how a peer education project can integrate IT.
- Peer Education Network www.youthhiv.org/community/pen/index.cfm
New American site to provide support to sexual health peer educators. The site is hosted by Advocates for Youth who campaign for better sex education.
- National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy www.teenpregnancy.org
American site providing information and resources to support teenage pregnancy prevention interventions. Includes the fact sheet 'Involving Youth in Teen Pregnancy Prevention'.

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