

# Section 6

## Step by Step How to start a peer group education programme

This section is meant to be a tool for people to use as a pointer in implementing a programme of peer group education. As part of any programme initial training should be provided to deepen the awareness about issues like stereotypes, prejudice, human rights and interdependence. In Sections 8 and 9 you will find methods for training including a number of case studies on how to implement a peer group education programme according to the specific needs of your field of work.

The following steps are put in the form of questions that should be raised during the preparation and implementation process of the programme. We have included a summary of the main parts in a checklist in page 53.

### ***6.1. Preparation and designing the programme***

- **What are the aims and objectives of the programme?**
- **What would you like to achieve with it?**
- **What are the issues you wish to tackle?**
- **Have you clearly limited the area of issues to a realistic work load?**
- **Who is the target group of your programme? (see also 2. Recruitment)**
- **Where will the project take place? How will the peer educators get access?**

This should include physical access, via public transport or through car sharing or minibus services to ensure that programmes are open to young people from all geographical areas whether that be in a rural or urban community. Often the expenses of travel can be a barrier to some young people who can't rely on parents who own cars or are able to transport young people.

- **What is the methodology of your programme and which working methods are suitable to reach the aims and the target group?**
- **What is demanded of the trainers and peer educators?**
- **How much time and energy will they have to invest in the programme?**
- **What training materials will you need for the programme?**

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*Intolerance is the opposite of tolerance. People do not tolerate things that are different, for example clothes, musical taste, hair style, religion, sexual orientation and so on. I think those people do not tolerate others that are different because they don't have the courage to be original. They envy the others and they are not really themselves.*

Anna, 19 years, Poland

Efforts should be made to eliminate training materials and teaching strategies that rely solely on the written word or didactic teaching methods. You may have to develop training materials for specific groups. Also in the contact with parents communication should go beyond written leaflets.

### **What financial resources will you require to implement your programme?**

An important consideration for any programme should be the resources required, whether they be for training activities, for transport or expenses, publicity materials, meeting places etc.. Funding can bring with it the potential for developing exciting and innovative work. Financial limitations shouldn't limit the creativity to develop low-cost by highly effective activities and de-centralised structures. Additional funding might be easier to find once the programme is known and accepted. It is important to look for support from different sources. For example established private funding, using free materials and services, public funding, etc. Sponsorship should only be accepted if the interests of the sponsor will not interfere with the aims of the project.)

## **6.2. Recruitment**

### **What should be the profile of the peer educators?**

The profile of the peer educators should not be adult defined. It is suggested that any selection process be guided by a 'person specification' even if very general (e.g. the young person should be aged 16-18, and have good communication skills and a broad understanding of the issues). Academic achievement and adult defined status may omit those who's status is based on personal popularity or athletic achievement. By incorporating disenfranchised youth particular target groups of young people and issues, can be more effectively reached and addressed. Define the age group based on target group, decisions about age group will have to be balanced with the topics or issues being discussed. For some issues the target age group may need to be very precise for example work with students (18 to 20 years) or work with younger teenagers (14 to 16 years). The basic rule is, however, that peer educators should be close in age to the target group.

### **How should the team of peer educators be composed?**

The composition of the group should respect male/female balance, ethnic mix, disability, religion, sexual orientation. Young people may be recruited from a variety of settings to represent a particular target group. It is vital that the young people in the team can relate to



the young people of the target group. Personal experiences and knowledge in questions like tolerance and intolerance build the basis for the communication with the target group.

### **What do the 'peer educators' get out of it?**

In the phase of setting up a peer educators team, interested young people should have information about what they will gain from being involved in the programme. This could be done by distributing leaflets with positive statements of young people formerly involved in peer group projects or by inviting those young people for a discussion.

*Potential arguments that might motivate young people to get involved in a project:*

- you can have a voice in creating a society that is more tolerant
- you can help to solve problems that affect you
- you will become more confident and assertive
- you will learn how to speak to a public
- you can improve your communication skills
- you'll become a positive community role model for other young people
- you will develop your leadership potential
- you get to relate to young people on your own level
- you get to make new friends.
- you can let people in power know your point of view.
- you can have fun!

### **Having an agreement?**

You might consider having a contract or agreement with the peer educators, where they sign to commit themselves for the duration of the project. It may be that a peer group education project takes place within a school term or 'education years' so that young people can commit themselves for particular periods. A **Support Agreement** can also include the name, address, telephone number of a supportive contact person and times when he or she can be contacted.

### **Incentives - To pay or not to pay?**

To pay or not to pay? When building a team of group peer educators, incentives may be important-from free food, seminars, residential weekends, media exposure, academic credits or money. For some young people volunteering may not be an option because of economic pressure to earn money for themselves or the family. An hourly wage could make it financially possible for young people to commit their time to peer group education programmes. Incen-

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tives can take many forms; either as payment for time and expenses or for acknowledgement of the learning experience, some education authorities are able to give credits for learning. Payment is a very sensitive question and should be considered carefully in discussion with every one involved in the project. The basic rule is, however, that all steps should be taken, that young people's involvement **does not cost them money**.

### **6.3. Peer Group Leaders or Coaches**

#### **Who helps with the training?**

Working through an appropriate training co-ordinator may be important for some programmes. The person responsible for training, supporting and recruiting the peer group should have an understanding of young people, i.e. as a youth or community worker or representative of a youth organisation or agency. For many peer group education projects this is planned by an individual who is ultimately responsible for the programme. He/she should have a clear understanding of potential peer educators, their training and support needs. Most important this person needs to have a sound belief in the potential of young people. This leader or coach has a role which is to support, to motivate, to initiate and to assist the young people, when necessary. Eventually the leader or coach should withdraw from his/her role and give over the leadership entirely to the young people. (See also Section 7: 12 points for the supportive and non-authoritarian coach)

### **6.4. Support systems for peer group educators**

#### **Which support system will you require?**

Peer educators may be dealing with difficult, sensitive and sometimes controversial subjects and situations which can put added pressures on the young person both in practical terms and emotionally especially with a programme dealing with racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. Dealing with situations and incidents which may be challenging and difficult can put pressure on young people. Practical problems like other commitments and difficulties with transport can also bring added pressure. Building support structures before embarking on a peer group education programme is especially important. Support can be built into the agreement or contract. Support can be offered in a number of ways, through consultation meetings and regular discussion groups, less formal conversation on the telephone after a difficult session, constructive feedback after sessions or training courses. Parents, teachers and other persons of confidence can be another useful support structure; keeping them informed will help encourage young people's involvement.



## SUPPORT AGREEMENT

Name of peer group educator .....

Address .....

Meetings are held at .....

on .....

The co-ordinator of the programme is .....

They are based at .....

Their telephone number is.....

Your named support person is.....

She/He can help you with practical problems (transport, childcare etc.)  
or emotional advice, support

.....

Their telephone number is.....

You can contact them between ..... and

.....

Their address is.....

.....

Peer Educator, Support Person and Parent/Guardian can be given a copy of this Support Document

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*Racism for me means foreigner-hating skin heads, violence, cowardliness not courage, gang fights, ignorance, people with a lack of self-esteem. They must at least have something to be proud of. At least 'I am white, I am Swedish'. The world would be a better place without them. If they don't change they should better build their own world, on the moon.*

Carla, 19 years,  
Chile/Peru/Sweden

It may be important for some groups that an adult within the participants setting is identified as being willing to support or help the individuals as, when and if required. This person could be a volunteer, full or part time youth worker.

## 6.5. Ownership and Management

### Who is the boss?

Young people are the bosses of the project. They will be in control of their activities. A management structure can be implemented to facilitate feed-back and communication, this can be a group made up of people who are offering support, the peer group educators themselves, funders, etc.



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## **6.6. Review and Evaluation**

### **Do we reflect on and evaluate our action?**

Evaluation and review should be an on going process. Peer group trainers and peer educators should be brought together to evaluate

- a) their training
- b) their fieldwork
- c) their personal development.

Evaluation should attempt to monitor any increase in knowledge. This can be done by using simple questionnaires before the sessions begin and again at the end or a short review session where basic information like numbers attending, issues raised and problems encountered can be documented. From these evaluations the peer leader should be able to form a developmental plan for their group. Evaluation of young people's own training should also highlight their own personal training needs.

Evaluation should be useful both to the educators themselves and to organisations or individuals involved in the programme they should help to guide the project. As pressures on resources are often limited funders will be keen to see how projects develop. There might be considerable pressure to measure the effects of programmes in a quantitative way, by keeping records of numbers attending, contacts made and resources used some conclusions may be drawn about value for money and cost effectiveness of peer group education.



## STEP BY STEP CHECKLIST

### *Some things to think about*

- *Setting your aims and objectives*  
Who do you plan to work with and what do you plan to do?
- *Recruitment*  
What do they get out of it?
- *Do you need an agreement or a contract?*
- *What methods will you use?*  
Video, Discussion, Role Play, Presentations, Lessons ... etc.
- *Do you need funding?*
- *Training of the peer group educators*
- *Leaders and Coaches*  
What is their role?
- *Support Systems*  
Power, Ownership and Management ... Will the young people be in control?
- *How will you review, document and evaluate your programme?*
- *Working with the media*

There are many ways to organise yourselves against racism and intolerance and for human rights. **Compass** contains a very useful series of hints and reflections about getting into action in the section **Taking Action**. See also the section on **Campaigns, Action, Projects, Publicity** [C/4] in **Alien 93**.

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