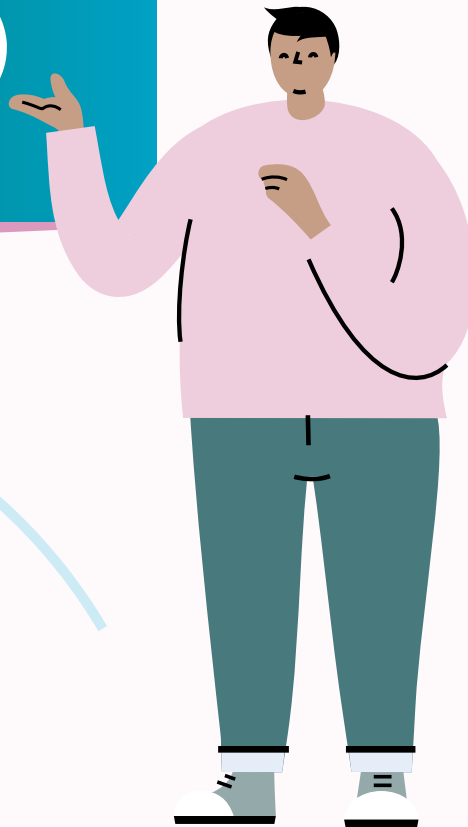




Peer
Education
Project



Mental Health
Foundation



Peer Educator Handbook

Your role and responsibilities
as a Peer Educator



Welcome to the Peer Education Project!

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What is the Peer Education Project?

The Peer Education Project is a school-based, mental health educational programme developed by the Mental Health Foundation.

Developed in 2015, the project aims to increase young people's knowledge and understanding of what mental health is, who they can speak to if they need support, and what they can do to look after their own mental health.

The Peer Education Project is based on a model whereby older pupils deliver key mental health lessons to younger pupils within the school. The idea behind this project is that the best people to teach young people about mental health are young people themselves.

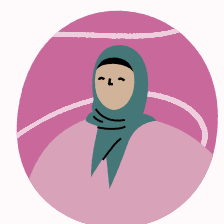
Research suggests that young people may be more likely to listen to health information if it comes from someone that they feel faces the same challenges in life as they do.



"I think it was easier that they were close to our age – they understood our feelings a bit more." Peer Learner

We hope that you will also find being a Peer Educator beneficial. Previous Peer Educators have told us that they would recommend that others take part in the project and demonstrated that they felt more confident in their knowledge of mental health topics.

"I realised after doing these sessions that I didn't know much about mental health. It really helped me personally, and it was rewarding – and fun." Peer Educator



Key terms



Project Lead

School staff leading the delivery of the project in the school.

Project Support Staff

Staff supporting the delivery of the project.

Peer Educators

Pupils trained by the Project Lead to deliver the lessons to younger pupils in the school.

Peer Learners

Pupils attending the lessons.



Key resources



The Peer Educator Training Series

Pre-prepared training plans and PowerPoints will support you to train your Peer Educators to deliver the lessons.

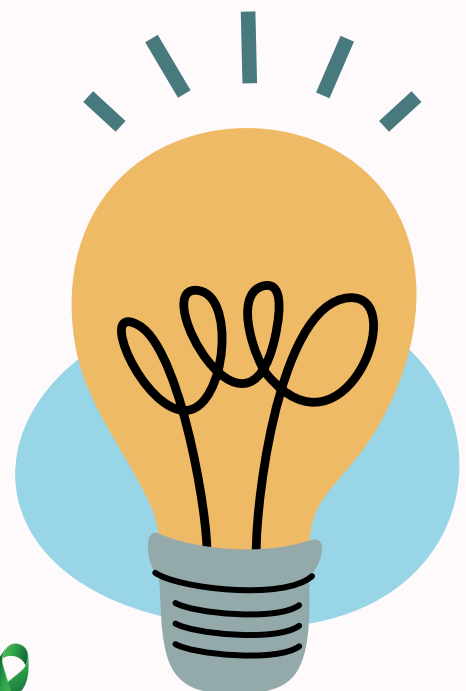
The Peer Educator Handbook

This handbook provides your Peer Educators with an overview of the project and their role and responsibilities.

The mental health lessons

Pre-prepared lesson plans, PowerPoint presentations and worksheets for your Peer Educators to use to deliver the mental health syllabus.

In addition to the key project resources, the Mental Health Foundation offers [additional resources](#) such as pre-prepared assemblies plans and PowerPoint slides, as well as guides for pupils, staff and caregivers on a range of different mental health topics.



What are the benefits of taking part?

By taking part in the Peer Education Project as a Peer Educator, you can:

- Improve your public speaking and leadership skills.
- Increase your self-confidence and esteem.
- Gain greater knowledge about mental health and other related topics.
- Improve your organisation skills.

Your experience as a Peer Educator can be also used to strengthen your CV and personal statement for future work and study.



What will you be responsible for?

As a Peer Educator, you will be responsible for:

- Attending and engaging in the training sessions delivered by school staff.
- Preparing and delivering the mental health lessons to younger pupils.
- Speaking to school staff about any concerns raised in lessons from younger pupils, other Peer Educators or regarding your own wellbeing.



Safeguarding



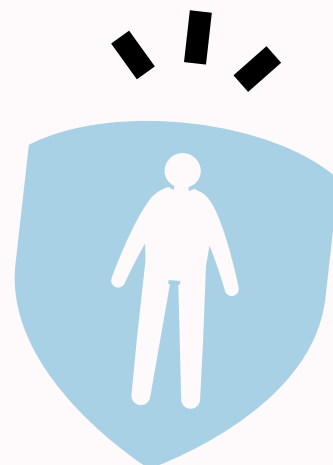
You will also be responsible for passing on any safeguarding concerns to a responsible adult within school.

Safeguarding is defined as protecting the health, wellbeing, and human rights of individuals. We all have a part to play in keeping ourselves, and others, safe. Sometimes it may feel difficult to share information about someone or a situation we are concerned about with a trusted adult. However, by sharing all concerns, trusted adults have the information to understand and identify what support is needed.

If a pupil tells you something that is a safeguarding concern, they may ask that you keep things that they say secret. It's very important that you let them know that you can't keep concerns to yourself. It may be uncomfortable but be clear to them that you are worried, and you will pass on what they have told you. Let them know that you will only tell those who need to know and can help, such as the School Project Lead.

Read [advice](#) on how to support a young person in the moment if they share a safeguarding concern.

In the Peer Educator training, you will explore your role and responsibilities in more depth.



What will you teach?



The Peer Education Project has five core mental health, activity-based lessons covering:

- **Mental health and the mental health spectrum.**

This lesson explores how mental health is something we all have, consisting of our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. It explains how mental health can be shown as a spectrum, and can change over time, and in response to different factors and experiences.

- **The risk and protective factors for mental health.**

This lesson explores the risk and protective factors to mental health. It uses a bucket analogy to help pupils understand how unhelpful factors can gradually build up, but there are helpful factors that can be put in place to prevent our mental health bucket from overflowing.

- **The 5 Ways to Wellbeing or the 8 Tips for Good Mental Health.**

This lesson provides tips for protecting and improving mental health and wellbeing.

- **Creating a mental health and wellbeing toolkit.**

This lesson explores the ways to support our own mental health when we are not feeling at our best, both in the moment and if we continue to feel not at their best.



- **Building a support network.**

This lesson explores the importance of relationships to mental health, and the ways to support each other. It highlights how our experiences and the interactions with others, begin to build our support network, which will be individual to each person.

There are additional lessons on related mental health topics, which the school may also want you to deliver. These topics include:

- **Body Image: How we think and feel about our bodies**
- **Healthy Relationships: Understanding our relationship with ourselves**
- **Healthy Relationships: Understanding our relationships with our peers**
- **Kindness: Why kindness matters**
- **Loneliness: Finding our connections to feel less lonely**
- **Nature: Connecting with the world around us**
- **Sleep: Finding our confidence with sleep**



Each lesson follows this structure:

- **Welcome**
- **Being in the moment**
An activity to relax and focus the mind.
- **Building connections**
An ice breaker related to the lesson topic, to connect with others.
- **Introducing the topic**
A 10-minute introduction to the topic.
- **Learning through activity**
Activities to explore the topic in more detail.
- **Reflecting on the learning**
Time to reflect on the lesson, both individually and collectively as a class.
- **Being in the moment**

The school may choose to use pre-prepared alternative lesson activities, instead of some of the activities listed in the main structure, to allow for more in-depth discussions on the topic.



Tips on delivering a great lesson



Be prepared:



Work with your co-Peer Educator to plan each lesson, deciding who will lead the different activities. It is useful to discuss what will happen if one of you is feeling worried, nervous or in need of a break from teaching for any reason.



Practise the lessons by speaking the content out loud. This will increase your confidence and familiarity with the lesson content.



Make some notes about what you want to say. Try to use “keywords” or prompts, rather than writing your notes in full sentences. This will help you speak more naturally and avoid reading from the page.



Think about the smaller details of running the lessons. How will you put the Peer Learners into groups? How will you decide which Peer Learner will answer a question? How will you get the class’s attention back after an activity? During your training you may wish to seek advice from the School Project Lead.



Explore the resources listed in the further information section of this handbook to increase your general knowledge of the topic area. Doing further reading will help you to feel more informed and ready to teach.



Speak with the class teacher prior to the lesson to find out more about the class you will be delivering the lessons to, and any tips they have.



Managing the classroom:



Learning the Peer Learners' names is essential and part of building a good and strong relationship with them. It's not easy though! You could use sticky name labels in the first few lessons.



If possible, be at the door to welcome the class when they arrive. Try to position yourself almost in the door and encourage them to come in single file. This will calm them down. If the Peer Learners are in the classroom already, walk in confidently, smile and greet the class with a loud, clear, and upbeat voice.



Discuss with the Peer Learners the ways of working together over the lessons. This is a key section at the start of each lesson, to remind pupils of the agreed ways of working together.



Use the whole classroom – walk around the class when talking and avoid the temptation to stay glued to one spot. You might even stand next to someone who is being disruptive – it tends to make them stop.



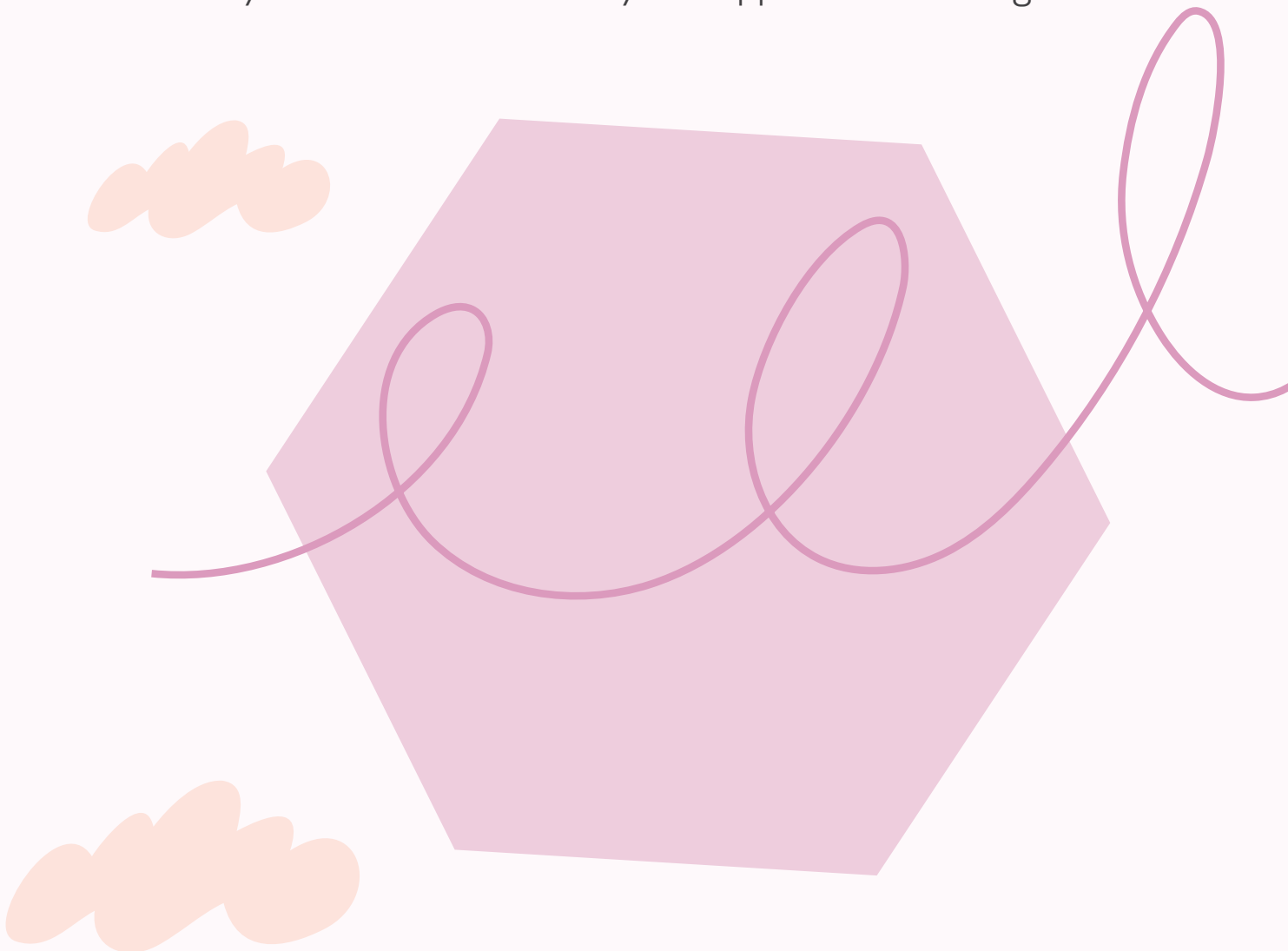
Provide clear instructions:



Peer Learners might not understand new concepts straight away. You may need to repeat important points several times (perhaps across multiple lessons) before they are fully understood.



Peer Learners will learn in different ways, so you may need to explain some things in multiple ways (e.g. using words and images). Check with your School Project Lead or the class teacher to see if they have a way that the class usually demonstrates if they understand new information. It's often helpful to do this when starting a new activity to make sure everyone is clear on what they are supposed to be doing.



Ask questions:



Asking questions is a useful way to check how much the Peer Learners have listened and understood. Keep in mind that closed questions aren't always a good way to check understanding – pupils will tend to just say “yes” if you simply ask “Did you understand?”. Open-ended questions are more useful prompts for discussions, such as “Can you tell us a bit more about this?” or “How did you feel about that?”. Specific questions can also be helpful – “What did you find interesting, difficult, surprising, etc.?”



It can take time to feel comfortable with silence from the class after you have asked a question. Long pauses give the Peer Learners time to think. The Peer Learners probably won't find the silence as awkward as you do because they'll be busy thinking. On the other hand, if the Peer Learners seem to have not understood something, try rephrasing the question or use prompts.



Be honest with your knowledge:



It is OK not to know. There are many activities in lessons where the Peer Learners are encouraged to ask questions. Sometimes, they might ask questions that you do not know the answer to, or about a topic that you think needs a more detailed answer than you can give. It is ok to say that you don't know an answer. No-one knows everything. It's much better to say you don't know and that you'll go away and find out the answer, than to say something you're not sure of. Depending on the question, this might be something the class can research together.



It's also ok if Peer Learners disagree. Remember, mental health is subjective, which means we all have different experiences and viewpoints. It's ok (even a good thing) for Peer Learners to express their different opinions. If you get a question you don't feel comfortable with, you can talk to the class teacher during the lesson about how to respond or meet with the School Project Lead after the lesson to talk about it.



Mind your language:



When talking about mental health, it's important to be thoughtful about the language we use. Using outdated language can increase stigma around mental health. However, the Peer Learners you are teaching may never have talked about mental health before and may not always get the language right.



Try to find a balance between "policing" what they say and correcting important mistakes. For example, if a Peer Learner uses out of date language, you might gently correct them, by saying something like: "We tend to say 'a person experiencing a mental health problem' nowadays, rather than 'mentally ill'. It helps us remember that their mental health problem is not the only thing about them".



If a Peer Learner is making obviously inappropriate or inflammatory comments about the topic, you should be more firm. The teacher in the room is always there to support you if this is challenging.



Be adaptable:



The lesson plans are there to guide you in delivering each topic to the Peer Learners. However, lessons don't always go exactly to plan. That's ok. You may find that Peer Learners want to spend more time on one activity than another. The important thing is that the Peer Learners are engaged in the topic.

Reflect on your experiences:

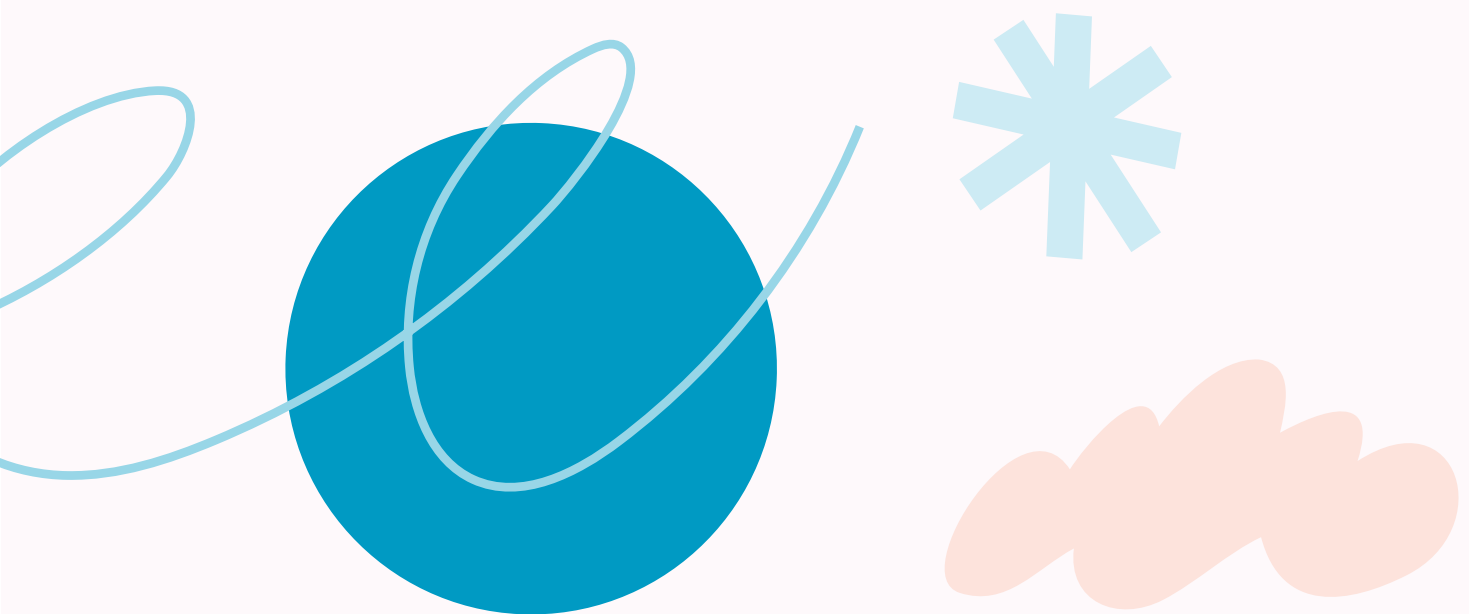


During the lessons, if you feel comfortable to, share with the Peer Learners your own experiences and tips. A strength of the project is younger pupils learning from the experiences of older pupils, who would have more recently been through similar experiences such as starting a new school.

Self-reflect post lesson:



Use the Peer Educator reflection sheet at the end of each lesson to reflect on how lesson delivery went, and any learnings you can take forward for the next lesson.



Check-in:



Schedule time in after each lesson to check-in with your co-Peer Educators to reflect on the lesson together, especially your feelings on leading the lesson and the content covered.



Check-in with the School Project Lead, who can help you with any worries you have about the lessons, your class, or your relationship with your co-Peer Educator.



Further information

The Mental Health Foundation

A range of top tips for young people exploring different mental health topics such as body image, loneliness, and sleep

Young Minds

A range of information resources to support young people in understanding more about how they are feeling and get information about a mental health condition or find out what support is available to them.

Anna Freud

A range of self-care activities to guide young people in looking after their mental health and wellbeing.

The Mix

The Mix offers online information as well as helpline support to under-25s about anything that's troubling them.

Email: via their [online contact form](#)

Call: **0808 808 4994** (free)

Telephone services available 4pm – 11pm everyday.

Text: **THEMIX to 85258**

The text service is free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK.

One-to-one chat: Free [1-2-1 webchat service](#)

The webchat is available 4pm – 11pm, Monday to Saturday.

Childline

A support service for anyone under 19 in need of support.

Call: **08001111** (free)

Telephone services available 24-hours a day, every day.

Young people can [sign up](#) for a free Childline locker (real name or email address not needed) to use Childline's free [1-2-1 counsellor chat](#) and email support service.

Shout

A support text service, available 24-hours a day, every day.

Text: **SHOUT to 85258**





[mentalhealth.org.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

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