peer support

manual

A guide to setting up a peer listening project in education settings
contents

preface v

acknowledgements vii

introduction ix

section 1 peer support 1

1.1 What is peer support? 1
1.2 Models of peer support 2
1.3 Benefits of peer support 10
1.4 History of peer support 13

section 2 the peer listening model 15

2.1 The people 15
2.2 The peer listening drop-in service 17

section 3 setting up a peer listening service 21

3.1 Assessing need 21
3.2 Establishing aims and objectives 26
3.3 Methodology 27
3.4 Audit of pastoral care systems 28
3.5 Commitment 29
3.6 Resources 30
3.7 Accommodation 31

section 4 getting started 33

4.1 Public relations 33
4.2 Recruitment 42

section 5 setting up a training programme 57

5.1 Issues to consider 57
5.2 Peer listener training 62
5.3 Training programme 63
5.4 Staff support training 88
5.5 Receptionist training 91
5.6 Launching the service 96

section 6 monitoring and evaluation 99

6.1 Monitoring 99
6.2 Evaluation 106
6.3 Satisfaction with the service 112
6.4 Guidance on analysis and interpretation of data 126

conclusion 128

further reading 129
Index of case studies

1. Wanstead High School – an example of a peer listening service 4
2. Kingsbury High School – a playground peer support service 5
3. A Space / Kingsland School – an example of peer education 6
4. St Marylebone School for Girls – an example of peer tutoring 7
5. A Space / Kingsland School – an example of peer mentoring 8
6. City and Islington College – another example of peer mentoring 9
7. Kingsbury High School – some OFSTED inspection findings 14
8. St Marylebone School for Girls, peer support project aims and objectives 26
9. St Marylebone School for Girls - methodology, timetable and targets 27
10. Step-by-step development 28
11. Kingsbury High School – news bulletin about the peer support service 34
12. Involvement of parents/carers 39
13. Reasons for students taking part in the programme 45
14. St Angela’s Ursuline School - measuring against aims and objectives 108
Index of handouts

These handouts may be photocopied and distributed in schools and similar organisations.

1. Peer Support project 22-23
2. Peer Support project 24-25
3. Poster competition 36
4. Flyer to parents and carers 38
5. Parents’ questionnaire 40-41
6. Peer listener application form 46
7. Peer listener application form 47
8. Letter of acceptance for interview 48
9. Letter of refusal for interview 49
10. Peer listeners’ interview 50
11. Peer listeners’ interview 51-52
12. Receptionists’ interview 53
13. Letter of acceptance to train as a peer listener/receptionist 54
14. Letter of refusal to train as a peer listener/receptionist 55
15. Parental consent form 56
16. Training checklist 61
17. Peer listener contract 69
18. Confidentiality guidelines for peer listeners 70
19. Peer listeners’ confidentiality agreement 71
20. Peer listening referral log 101
21. Basic service user information 102
22. End-of-term monitoring report 103
23. Peer listening recording form 104
24. Issues brought to peer listeners 105
25. Peer listening training evaluation 110
26. Service user questionnaire 114
27. Questionnaire for the general school population 115
28. Peer listeners'/receptionists’ evaluation 117-118
29. Evaluation of peer support 119
30. Staff support team questionnaire 121-123
31. Questionnaire for staff, parents and governors 124
preface

This manual has been created as a tool for practitioners who wish to set up a peer listening project, one of the forms of peer support that you can set up in your school. The material has been drawn from the experience of setting up peer support projects in six secondary schools, a college of further education and a voluntary multi-disciplinary project attached to an inner-city school. The initial aim for the majority of the projects was to begin with a peer listening service. There are, of course, different models of peer support, these are explained in the first section of this manual. The evaluation of the Peer Support Programme at The Mental Health Foundation1 shows that projects will often go on to develop other models of peer support alongside peer listening.

Establishing a peer support project in your school alongside a comprehensive pastoral care system will promote a culture of positive mental health that is crucial to the social, emotional and intellectual development of children and young people. In England and Wales, this has been recognised by the government in The White Paper on Excellence in Schools (1997)2 and the Healthy Schools initiative. Schools can address components of Standard 3.5.1 in the National Healthy Schools Standard Guidance3 through the implementation of a peer support project.

The Scottish Executive is charting a parallel path for young people in Scotland, which can be seen in the 5–14 National Guidelines, The Structure and Balance of the Curriculum (2000)4 and Personal and Social Development 5–14 (1993)5. In addition, the Scottish Executive’s plan for the National Health Service in Scotland includes the creation of a Health Promoting Schools Unit with a key aim of bringing all schools into a health promotion model.


Schools across the United Kingdom have been developing peer support schemes over the last decade. By implementing a peer support project, the strengths and resources of young people can be developed to enrich not only their own lives but also those of the people they support and the wider community. The importance of supporting young people in developing their skills and becoming active and responsible citizens will be formally addressed in England in September 2002 when Citizenship will become part of the national curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4.
The following key skills for students, outlined in the framework for Citizenship, are addressed through implementing peer support projects:

- Developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities
- Preparing to play an active role as citizens
- Developing a healthy, safer lifestyle
- Developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people.

These concepts are also being explored in Scotland through a consultation paper, Education for Citizenship in Scotland (2001).

The aim of this manual is to provide a clear step-by-step guide to setting up a peer listening project. It is not so much a blueprint for setting up a project as a toolkit to help practitioners think through the implications of setting up a programme, using examples of implementation, training materials, evaluation and administration.

The examples included will, in some cases, refer to a year group and key stage structure that is not used in all parts of the UK. We outline the information below for your reference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>7</td>
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Key Stage 3 = Year Groups 7–9 11–14
Key Stage 4 = Year Groups 10–11 14–16
Key Stage 5 = Year Groups 12–13 16–18

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(5) Scottish Executive (1993) 5–14 National Guidelines: Personal and Social Development
(6) Northern Ireland (1992) Educational (Cross Curricular) Themes
(8) Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2000) Citizenship
(9) Learning and Teaching Scotland (2001) Education for Citizenship in Scotland
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The Peer Support Programme has been generously supported by The Bridge House Estates Trust Fund, The Goldsmiths’ Company, The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and J. Rothschild Assurance PLC.

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This manual is based on the findings of implementing peer support projects in six secondary schools, a voluntary organisation and a college of further education. It would not have been possible to produce this guide without the dedication, commitment and very hard work of the project co-ordinators, staff and students. Special thanks go to:

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- The readers of the final draft of this manual
The Mental Health Foundation would like to give a special mention to the organisation Include, to staff and students at Wembley High School, and to Wendy Hampton, counsellor and trainer at Relate, with whom the author worked for several years in the implementation of peer support programmes. This experience informed the work of the Peer Support Programme at The Mental Health Foundation and this manual.

Jo Scherer-Thompson

Peer Support and Schools Project Manager
The Mental Health Foundation
March 2002
This manual comprises six sections. You can refer to each section independently, though to gain most benefit you should make yourself familiar with the contents of the whole manual. Some sections include numbered handouts and uncompleted (blank) questionnaires that may be freely photocopied for distribution in schools and similar organisations. All other material is copyright of The Mental Health Foundation.

Section 1 explains the meaning of the general term ‘peer support’ and then describes five models: peer listening, mediation, education, tutoring, and mentoring. All are illustrated by actual case studies. Specific benefits of peer support are listed, and there is information about the history of peer support principles.

Section 2 gives an overview of the peer listening model, describing the roles of the various participants, the administrative systems, and supervision.

A step-by-step guide to starting a peer listening service is the subject of Section 3. Questionnaires are provided for assessing the need for such a service. Sample aims and objectives are listed, with methodology, timetable and targets from an actual case. Also discussed are pastoral care, staff commitment, resources and accommodation.

Section 4 is in two parts. The first is about public relations, publicity and presentation to staff, students and parents/carers, with a poster idea and questionnaire. The second part is a detailed guide to recruitment of supporting staff and students, with application and consent forms, interview guidelines and sample letters.

Section 5 discusses training issues in detail and then presents course materials for peer listeners and receptionists, with advice on staff support and project launch.

Section 6 deals with monitoring and evaluation from the point of view of all those concerned. Many feedback questionnaires are provided, including the Mental Health Foundation Peer Support Programme follow-up questionnaire. The manual concludes with a further reading list.
section I peer support

1.1 what is peer support?

In general terms, peer support is a form of student help. It builds on students’ natural willingness and ability to turn to their peers to discuss concerns, worries and problems. Setting up a peer support service involves recruiting and training students in basic communication skills so that they may support their peers with confidence and skill. Trained students or ‘peer supporters’ can then listen to and support their peers, enabling them to reach a solution to whatever problem has caused them difficulty.

In this manual, peer support will be used as an umbrella term to include the different models of peer support that can be established. Many efforts have been made to describe the various models and the different roles that peer supporters may take on. Taking into consideration the fact that there are elements in a peer supporter’s role that cross the boundaries between different models of peer support, it is helpful to look at the descriptions of the models outlined below.

Peer support can be applied to a broad age range, and be set up to deal with different issues. This manual concentrates on how students of secondary school age can help each other in a variety of situations, whether during the transition from primary to secondary school, in the classroom during tutorial or PSHE sessions, in a ‘drop-in’ listening service, in the playground or in a workshop. All of these interventions aim to provide a community where students feel it is safe to talk and where they will be listened to, thus building on the recognition that the mental health needs of children and young people are intrinsic to achieving their personal, social and academic potential.

It is essential to recognise that a peer support service does not take the place of professional support services from within a school or external agencies, but offers a supporting and preventative service, reducing the likelihood of a student’s problem escalating to a crisis.

The training needs of peer supporters will vary according to the level of support they offer their peers. This is looked at further in Section 5.
1.2 models of peer support

**Figure 1** Models of peer support

**peer mentoring**
A peer supporter acts as a positive role model on a one-to-one basis or in a classroom. Peer mentors may also be seen as ‘buddies’ or ‘befrienders’.

**peer listening**
Peer supporters run a ‘drop-in’ service, offering their peers a confidential listening service, often on a one-to-one basis.

**peer mediation**
Peer supporters are trained in conflict resolution strategies; they may be peer educators to others in acquiring these strategies, or may act as mediators in the playground or in response to bullying situations.

**peer tutoring**
A peer supporter supports a peer with reading or other areas of academic work.

**peer education**
Peer supporters are trained in a particular subject area, e.g. drugs or bullying and deliver training to their peers.
Peer Listening

Peer listening is the model of peer support that is explored in depth in this manual. Peer listening is sometimes referred to as peer counselling, but the latter term is now used less often, owing to concerns that it was misleading and implies that students were 'counsellors'. This, in turn, has led to resistance among staff in accepting the idea of a peer support system. The term peer counselling may also give students the mistaken idea that their peers are running a 'counselling service'. In this manual, therefore, the term peer listening is used to describe this model of peer support.

A peer supporter who offers a listening service is a student who has been trained in counselling skills that include active listening, verbal and non-verbal communication, confidentiality and problem solving. Training is covered in more detail in Section 5.

Peer supporters who have completed the training satisfactorily may then go on to offer support to their peers on a formal basis, in an identified room, available at specific times of day, where a student can talk to a peer listener in confidence (see Section 5, where the issue of confidentiality is discussed in more detail). It is essential that staff members are trained to support peer listeners and to offer a debriefing role, so that peer listeners do not become stressed themselves, or are not left to deal with situations that are inappropriate for them to be involved with. This is discussed in more detail in Section 5.

Peer Mediation

Conflict resolution is another name for peer mediation. Peer mediators are trained specifically in conflict resolution skills. They help students find solutions to disputes in formal and informal situations. It is unusual to find a school or organisation adopting just a peer mediation model, though such a model is often part of a fuller peer support programme.

Case study 2 shows an example of how a school developed from providing a formal peer listening drop-in service to setting up a more informal model of peer mediation. Peer mediators are available to students in the playground during break and lunchtime. They may intervene in situations where a student is isolated and withdrawn, or where an incident of bullying is taking place; or they may be approached by any student who is experiencing a difficulty. The peer listener who has received a comprehensive training programme will have the skills to listen to, support and guide a peer, whether in a formal or an informal situation. The example in case study 3 illustrates how students who were originally trained in listening skills to operate a peer listening drop-in service were using their peer listener skills as peer mediators in the playground.
case study 1
Wanstead High School – an example of a peer listening service

Wanstead High School set up a peer listening service with the aim of fostering a greater sense of calm, security and confidence within its pupils. The objectives of the service were to:

- Offer a peer listening service via a drop-in scheme
- Increase awareness about mental health by visiting assemblies and talking to staff
- Improve the well-being of pupils by offering them another layer of support
- Through intensive training, increase the listening skills of a number of sixth-formers.

The training of the peer listeners was provided by a senior social worker and his colleague from the Borough’s Child and Family Consultation Service (Loxford Hall). Volunteer students were recruited from the sixth form. Training took place over two days, followed by six ‘twilight’ sessions spread over the subsequent eight weeks.

During the first year of working with The Mental Health Foundation, the peer listening drop-in service operated three times a week in a room adjacent to the sixth-form office. A rota for ‘staffing’ the drop-ins was organised by the peer listeners. Two peer listeners were on duty three days a week at lunchtime. In addition, six peer listeners were attached to Years 7, 8 and 9 to deal with specific referrals. They visited assemblies and year groups on a regular basis, so students became familiar with them.

Each peer listener was attached to an experienced member of the staff support team, with whom they met frequently to discuss any problems or issues that had arisen from their role as a peer listener.

The peer listeners also met with the project co-ordinator every three weeks to discuss general issues related to the scheme.

The scheme evolved further during its second year. In addition to the peer listening service, each Year 7 tutor group was allocated a specific peer listener who visited the tutor group on a weekly basis, befriending them, listening to them read, and checking homework diaries.

Evaluation feedback from users of the service included the following:

- Friends tend to encourage them to use the service
- They don’t necessarily look for the peer support worker attached to their year or tutor group but visit the drop-in whenever they can
- They all found the scheme friendly
- They were grateful for the opportunity to talk, either quite deeply at the drop-ins or less formally in tutor groups or corridors with someone other than a friend or teacher. They talked about a sense of freedom to discuss whatever they wanted.
As with other forms of peer support, a clear definition of peer education is difficult to identify as different practitioners will define the role in different ways. The British Youth Council\(^{(10)}\) have approached this problem by describing the different components of most peer education projects. The factors making up such a project will generally include a group of peers of similar age, status and background to the people to whom they are delivering material. The issues peer educators are trained to deal with will differ, but may include mental health, sexual health, conflict resolution, and raising awareness about bullying.

\(^{(10)}\) Vallance, C. Peer Education. The British Youth Council’s Manual for Setting up a Participative Project. London: British Youth Council
Peer tutoring is a model whereby a peer supporter aids a peer, whether of the same age or younger, with his or her academic and social learning. The support offered by the peer tutor can be cross-curricular and take the form of paired reading or paired writing. This model of peer support can operate as part of a range of peer support interventions in a school or on its own. Benefits for the peer supporter include increased confidence, consolidation of the peer supporter’s own learning, and development of social skills.

According to research by Topping and Ehly\(^\text{11}\) (as cited in Cowie and Wallace\(^\text{12}\)),

“... in one study synthesising the results of over 1000 pairings, it was found that the average paired reader gained 4.2 months in reading age for accuracy and 5.4 months for comprehension.”

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peer mentoring

This model has two subdivisions, though the boundaries between them are sometimes difficult to define. An example of a ‘buddy’ system is one in which students who have received training are attached to a new intake group (form or year) and act as a friend, mentor and guide to ease new students into the school environment. This usually occurs at the start of the school year and has the added advantage of building up awareness and trust of the school’s peer supporters. The example in case study 5 highlights how peer supporters can take on the roles of both peer education and peer mentoring.

Another aspect of peer mentoring is that of a positive role model, involving a long-term commitment between the mentor and mentee, ranging from one term to one year. The peer mentor is linked to a mentee and has the role of befriender, listener and mediator.
case study 5  
A Space / Kingsland School – an example of peer mentoring

The aims of the A Space project and peer supporters’ duties as peer educators are described in case study 3.

The additional duties taken on by peer supporters in this project that could be described as providing a ‘buddying’ role are as follows:

- Getting to know students transferring from Year 6 to Year 7 by attending students’ and parents’ meetings
- Wearing badges during the day at school so that Year 7 students can seek them out and ask for help and support
- Co-facilitating the lunchtime drop-in at A Space for Year 7 students
- Co-facilitating the sports club with younger students
- Co-facilitating the workshop with Year 6 to Year 7 students on the themes of making the transition from primary to secondary school and the emotions involved.

The benefits are illustrated by these examples of feedback:

“I talked to Esther [peer support worker] in the group when I was still in Year 6. It was good. She knew what it was like to leave primary school. I was frightened and I didn’t want to go but she said it would be alright.”

“I like coming to A Space at lunch because there are games to play and people to talk to. It feels safe. I like that it’s just for Year 7’s. I was scared at first, being at Kingsland, but it’s good to have somewhere just for us to go. I see Simon [peer support worker] around the school sometimes and it’s good that I know an older student. Once he showed me to my class because I was lost.”
The peer support models illustrated highlight the diverse ways in which it can enhance the education environment, for both project users and the wider community as well as the peer supporters themselves. Which peer support service you choose to implement will be guided by the needs analysis (see Section 3.1), the aims and objectives of your project, and the resources available to co-ordinate the project. The experience of many projects is the need to be flexible in your work, review progress and adapt your project according to the monitoring and evaluation material you collate. The latter is covered in detail in Section 6.

Case Study 6
City and Islington College – another example of peer mentoring

City and Islington is a college of further education that has tried to implement a peer mentoring scheme by training GNVQ Intermediate-level students in communication skills and then pairing them with identified Foundation-level GNVQ students. Effort was made to match students in terms of character. For example, a very shy student was matched with a confident but quiet volunteer; a very extrovert volunteer was matched with a more outgoing but disorganised supportee. The students shared experiences such as difficulties with work, relationships with tutors and peers, loneliness, disorganisation and personal fears and anxieties. Rooms were identified in college where supporter and supportee could meet. Although this resource was available, students usually met in more informal situations. Benefits of the scheme were reported by both supporters and supportees. These included learning useful skills (volunteers) and feeling safer and valued (supportees). The following contract was developed to outline the role the peer mentoring relationship could offer. The peer support volunteers agree to support peer supportees by:

- Meeting with them on a weekly basis
- Being active listeners
- Asking constructive questions that help the supportee to clarify issues and problems, and arrive at their own solutions and plans of action
- Establishing the boundaries of confidentiality with the supportee
- Referring the supportee on to counselling services, or tutorial support where appropriate
- Gaining supervision from key staff
- Gaining support from their peers (other peer supporter volunteers)
- Keeping all support confidential
- Keeping a log of key issues and actions without disclosing names.
section 1 peer support

1.3 benefits of peer support

feedback from the Mental Health Foundation peer support programme

"Through feedback and evaluation the peer support project is obviously an effective project"
School project co-ordinator

The following quotes have been taken from the follow-up questionnaires distributed to peer supporters and staff in the seven projects that took part in The Mental Health Foundation’s Peer Support Programme at the end of the two-year period.

benefits to the peer supporters

“For peer supporters it has helped build confidence and self-esteem.”
Member of staff

“As part of the training I had the chance to build up my own self-esteem and confidence”
Peer supporter

“I have learned how to listen to people in a way in which they feel supported”
Peer supporter

“Gave me the opportunity to contribute to the school”
Peer supporter

“... has helped me to get used to talking to other people and feeling more comfortable”
Peer supporter

benefits to students in the school

“Students know there is someone who they can turn to”
Peer supporter

“It helped sort out their problems and realise that things sometimes aren’t so bad”
Peer supporter

“I felt that those students who used it felt that it was worthwhile”
Peer supporter
“Even those who did not use the service seemed to appreciate the fact that we were there”
Peer supporter

“Many staff have noticed a reduction in younger students’ problems up to a certain level of complexity”
Member of staff

“It has encouraged younger pupils to unburden themselves to older pupils”
Member of staff

“Pupils now feel listened to”
Member of staff

“It has enabled students to have an outlet before situations have got out of hand”
Member of staff

“Enrichment of the life of the school”
Member of staff

benefits to staff in the school

“Raised awareness – the need for adult and student support workers. Addresses the issue of emotional well-being and that this has to be addressed for the fulfilment of students’ potential – academically, socially and nurturing their maturity”
Member of staff

“Helped those staff involved with their listening skills and ability to be aware of pupils’ emotional needs”
Member of staff

“It has certainly made teachers aware of students’ potential to help one another”
Member of staff

“The staff are more aware of the problems students encounter and are far better equipped to deal with the problems”
Peer supporter

“It has taken some of the pressure off them”
Peer supporter
benefits to parents/carers

“Parents/carers are more aware of some of the pressures facing young people, especially at times of change like the transition from primary to secondary. In general, assumptions about mental health and emotional well-being were challenged and new thinking evolved”

Member of staff

“They have become more confident in seeking help or asking staff for advice. Created a better dialogue”

Member of staff

some further research outcomes

Research carried out by Naylor and Cowie\(^\text{13}\) highlighted the following benefits of peer support in challenging bullying.

- **To users of the service:** Knowing that there is ‘someone who listens’, ‘the strength to overcome the problem’ and that it ‘shows that somebody cares’
- **To the students:** Acquiring social skills, including listening skills, and increased self-esteem
- **To the school community:** Enhances the school ethos as a caring school; bullying is reduced and teachers are freed to do other things.

OFSTED and other school inspectors in the UK who have been inspecting schools with peer support systems have been positive about such projects.

Research by Konet\(^\text{14}\) as cited in Cowie and Sharp\(^\text{15}\) found that befriending schemes enabled students to talk about their feelings, that peer supporters learned how to support their peers who were experiencing difficulties, and that peer helpers gained confidence and self-esteem and qualities in leadership.

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1.4 history of peer support

Peer support is a relatively new concept in this country. However, in Canada and the USA, peer support in its various forms has been a widely recognised and utilised resource that has been developing since the 1960s.

Research undertaken in Canada by Carr\(^{16}\) and Guerette\(^{17}\) concluded that:

“only a minority of students ever go to see counsellors. Most students, when experiencing some kind of personal concern, rely primarily on their friends as sources of help”.

Similarly, research in the USA demonstrated that:

“friends remain the number one in-school resource for students considering personal decisions, job plans, and how far to go with formal education”.

Research carried out by The Mental Health Foundation\(^{18}\) highlighted similar outcomes. A sample of 99 students who were recruited to train as peer supporters from six peer support projects across London completed a baseline questionnaire. These students were asked to whom students turn for help.

The first choice was clearly turning to a friend, while using counselling services or speaking to a social worker was a clear last choice. A concerning outcome of the questionnaire was that the students’ highest rating after speaking to a friend was not speaking to anyone. This result was highlighted in the follow-up questionnaire distributed to peer supporters, where:

- 84% thought a student would be the first person a student would turn to for support
- 15% thought a student would turn to no-one as a first choice if they had a problem.


Peer support programmes have been developed in North America and more recently the United Kingdom to such an extent that peer supporters, with adequate training, can help their peers with the following issues:

- Bullying
- School non-attendance
- Bereavement
- Divorce
- Peer relationship problems
- Conflict with parents/carers
- Substance abuse prevention
- Aids awareness programmes
- Sexual health awareness
- Peer tutoring
- Helping students in their transition from primary to secondary school.

In the USA, peer support is a widely accepted and valued resource whereby students’ natural assets are recognised, built upon, and welcomed as an additional part of the pastoral care system. In the UK the importance and benefits of peer support are becoming realised. Recognition by school inspectors of the impact peer support services can make to students in the school community is illustrated in the example below.

case study 7
Kingsbury High School – some OFSTED inspection findings

The following quotations are taken from the January 2000 OFSTED report. (For a description of this school’s peer support scheme, refer to case study 2.)

Personal development and relationships: “This is a particular strength of the school. Pupils have very positive relationships with each other and with teachers …”

“Pupils are willing to share and show their feelings, knowing these will be respected”

“The mutually supportive and respectful atmosphere in classes allows pupils to speak their intimate and personal ideas safely”

The work of the peer support project that forms part of the school’s anti-bullying policy is evident in the comment made by parents and carers: “… the anti-bullying policy is excellent …”. 
The aim of this manual is to illustrate the processes involved when setting up a peer support project. It focuses on implementing the peer listening model of peer support. This is not because it carries any greater importance than the other interventions, but because it includes processes that can be adapted for most models of peer support. Students who undergo training to be peer listeners will feel equipped to take on the roles of peer mentor, buddy, peer tutor and peer mediator with only a small amount of extra training needed for the additional roles they can take on.

The peer listening model highlighted in this manual draws on the experience of several London projects implementing such a service. The school will be referred to as the base for this work, but the processes can be easily adapted to your particular setting.

This section aims to provide a structure for the running of a peer listening service. There are elements you may wish to use or disregard. For example, in this manual, in addition to peer supporters, a group of students are trained to be receptionists. Some projects use this model, while others use peer supporters to carry out this function. It is for you to decide how the system will work best within your setting.

2.1 the people

The different groups of people that are needed to run a service consist of the following:

- Project co-ordinator
- Peer listeners
- Receptionists
- Staff support team.

project co-ordinator

The project co-ordinator should be a designated member of staff, and preferably a member of the senior management team. This will help the project to be seen as high-profile with a high priority in the school’s development plan. It is possible for the project co-ordinator to be from an external agency. However, this can produce
problems, as resistance from staff may be higher, it is harder for an external person to gain entry to the school’s infrastructure, and it may not be seen as high-profile. In terms of sustainability it is more helpful to build up the necessary skills within the staff group.

The role of co-ordinator is to oversee all aspects of the project. This will include:

- Initial negotiation with all aspects of the school community
- Public relations work
- Recruiting students and staff
- Either training or co-ordinating the training programme
- Co-ordinating regular student and staff support group meetings
- Monitoring and evaluating the project.

Once the staff support team is established, these responsibilities can and should be delegated to the different staff support team members working with the co-ordinator.

**peer listeners**

Students are trained in basic counselling skills to become peer listeners. Training is covered in more detail in Section 5. Most schools recruit students from Years 11–13 to take on the role of peer listener. Sometimes students who are considered to be mature enough will be trained in the Easter term of Year 10. It is important to have student representation from the whole school community. If the school is co-educational, it is helpful to target boys to be trained, since boys tend to be under-represented in a group of peer supporters.

**receptionists**

In addition to training peer supporters, you may wish to consider training another group of students as receptionists. Their role is to welcome any student who has a question about the service and to make appointments for students who wish to see a peer listener. Receptionists can take it in turns to be on duty four to five days a week during lunch hours in the specified peer support project room. The training of receptionists is covered in Section 5.5.
**staff support team**

It is vital that peer listeners have adequate support from the school teaching staff. This can be achieved by recruiting a team of staff to work with the project co-ordinator. The size of the team will depend on the regularity of the service, but a team of four to six support staff will ensure that the duties involved do not take up too much of any individual's time.

It is important to establish a training programme for staff. Since the role that members of staff play as educators is quite different from their role as a support team member, the training process should help to work through any difficulties that may arise from managing this.

Having completed training (see section 5.3), the staff involved must decide to what extent each wishes to be part of the team and how much time they are able to give the project. Once the service has been launched, regular staff support meetings need to be held to discuss the development of the project, on-going business, evaluation and further training.

A central role for the staff support team will be to debrief and support the peer listeners. Debriefing sessions ensure that peer listeners are able to discuss any concerns they may have in confidence. It is essential that the confidentiality of this is maintained if the project is to be successful, and that all students trust that their names will not be shared with the staff support team (or anyone else) unless there is a risk to a student's health and safety. The debriefing role is discussed in more detail in section 5.3.

### 2.2 the peer listening drop-in service

You will need to decide how often a drop-service should operate. This will partly be determined by the number of peer listeners and staff support team members available. It is most usual for the service to operate at lunchtimes in a room identified for the project. You may decide to have two peer listeners on duty each day the service is open. You may also decide to operate a system where you have receptionists on duty in the room who can answer queries and make appointments for students to see a peer listener.
Receptionists and/or peer supporters can complete the administrative systems you set up for the project (see below and Section 6). They must ensure that all records are locked away in a secure filing cabinet. Access should be strictly limited to the project co-ordinator and if necessary to members of the staff support team.

**administrative systems**

You may prefer to use a system that uses less paperwork than the one outlined below and in Section 6. Whatever system you choose, it should provide the information you need to monitor and evaluate the project, provide confidentiality to students using the project, and enable the project to be accountable for its work. It is essential that access to records is kept to a bare minimum and that information about students using the service is kept confidential. It must never be used by staff not involved in the project for the purpose of gaining information about particular students.

Examples of administration forms for use in your project are given in Section 6.

**supervision**

As emphasised in Section 2.1, an essential component of a peer support project is the support of the staff. In this section the different areas of supervision are explored. Each project will need to decide the best method by which the project co-ordinator and peer listeners can be supported.

**project co-ordinator**

The role of the project co-ordinator is discussed in Section 2.1. The supervision of the project co-ordinator will depend on that person’s skills, the aims and objectives of the service, and whether the project co-ordinator is a member of staff or from an external agency. The line manager of the project co-ordinator should offer on-going support. If supervision is needed in relation to issues raised by the students, it may be appropriate to consult staff with counselling training or an external agency experienced in counselling young people.

It is important that in the running of such an innovative project there is opportunity for supervision so that the complexities and developments of the project can be discussed with a supervisor.
peer listeners

“Have regular debriefing sessions with peer supporters – once a week is ideal with either the project co-ordinator or another member of staff who does have the time to have the debriefings when arranged and will not cancel frequently owing to time constraints”

School project co-ordinator

The initial training programme for peer listeners is described in Section 5. Once it has been completed and successful students have become peer listeners, a system whereby they can be regularly supervised and debriefed needs to be set up. Supervision ensures that a peer listener is not left to cope with any issues that should not concern him or her, as well as enabling the staff support team to be aware of the problems raised by students and to see that they have been dealt with appropriately.

Peer listeners may be offered supervision by a variety of methods. Examples are:

- Each peer listener meets a named member of the staff support team on a regular basis to discuss the work. The frequency of these meetings will depend on how often a peer listener sees a service user. Fortnightly may suffice in most cases. More immediate access to this named member or to another member of the staff support team must always be available in case the peer listener needs to discuss a particular problem urgently.

- A duty rota system is set up where peer listeners can debrief with a named member of the staff support team each day they see a service user.

- Peer listeners keep a diary, ensuring confidentiality of service users is maintained. They bring their cases to group supervision (taken by a member of the staff support team) on a regular basis – again fortnightly would offer good support. This method provides the opportunity for shared learning and on-going training. Specific cases should be discussed in such a way that the identity of the service user is kept confidential to the peer listener.

Set up a method of supervision that will work best for your school. It is, however, vital that support sessions are given priority and are held on a regular basis, and that the peer supporters always know who to turn to in case of an emergency.

Receptionists should also be aware of a named member of the support team they can call on if they have any difficulties.
development meetings

In addition to a supervision process, you may also find it helpful to have developmental meetings involving peer listeners, receptionists and representatives of the staff support team. These can be used to discuss strategy for the project, policy, publicity and any development ideas. They also serve to build up a group identity. The roles of chair and minutes secretary at these meetings can be rotated, thus developing skills in these areas also. Minutes should be distributed to all members of the project, including those who are absent from the meeting and original copies kept in an easily accessible file.
Before setting up a peer listening project, you will need to:

- Assess the specific need for the service within your education setting
- Establish clear aims and objectives for the project
- Establish the level of commitment to the project from the school’s staff, students, parents and governors
- Ensure financial support for the project and arrange the necessary facilities for operating the service.

3.1 assessing need

It is important to establish the needs of the students, staff and school community and design a peer support service that can meet those needs. In identifying these needs the following may be helpful:

- To understand the context of the project, refer to any recent school inspection reports for the strengths and weaknesses in the school and the current school development plan.

- In assessing the needs of the students whom the project is aiming to support, it is helpful to distribute a questionnaire to ascertain which are the main issues that concern students. Such a questionnaire was produced at St Angela’s Ursuline School (handout 1) and Kingsbury High School (handout 2). Other methods of assessing need include holding group discussions during tutorial or PSHE periods, at staff meetings and at senior management meetings.

- In the light of the assessment, clarify the exact aims and objectives for your project. What particular issues are to be dealt with by the proposed peer support project? Which model(s) of peer support do you intend to introduce?

The questionnaire shown in handout 2 was developed and used by Kingsbury High School when setting up their peer support project to address the problem of bullying. The research aimed to assess the level of bullying in the school and whether students thought a peer support project could help address the problem alongside the school’s anti-bullying policy and other pastoral care initiatives.
peer support project

As a result of this project, we will soon have a team of trained peer supporters who will be accessible to all students. This will run confidential drop-in sessions for anyone who has a problem, is stressed, or just needs a good listener.

To help us with our training, we need some idea of the things that bother you! We need you to answer the following questions, but we don’t need your name, only your year group.

1. Which year group are you in?

2. Would you describe yourself as having:
   a. lots of friends – I’m very popular
   b. a small group of friends that I stick with
   c. one special friend – my best friend
   d. no close friends really

3. What kind of things from the list below upset you or cause you stress or make you depressed? (Write 1 next to the most stressful, 2 next to the next, etc. If there are some we haven’t thought of, write them on at the bottom.)

   a. Arguments with friends
   b. Arguments with brothers or sisters
   c. Arguments with parents/carers
   d. Parents/carers not letting me do things
   e. Homework too hard/takes too long
   f. Worry about SATs/GCSE/exam targets
   g. Bullying from other pupils
   h. Pressure from teachers
   i. Wanting to be like others (clothes, behaviour)
   j. Wanting to be liked/admired
   k. Wanting to be thinner/larger/eating problems
   l. Pressure from boy/girl friend
   m. Fear of getting/being pregnant
   n. Health problems
   o. __________________________
   p. __________________________
4. If you have a problem or are worried about something, who are you most likely to talk to about it? (If you choose more than one from the list, write 1 next to the most likely, 2 next to the next, etc.)

   a. My mum (or female carer)
   b. My dad (or male carer)
   c. A sister or brother
   d. Another relative/carer (say whom)
   e. My best friend
   f. One of my friends
   g. My boy/girl friend
   h. Any teacher
   i. A teacher I have already confided in
   j. I phone a helpline, e.g. Childline
   k. Someone at church
   l. A counsellor I already know
   m. My diary
   n. I have no-one I can talk to
   o. Anyone else (please specify) __________________________

5. Please cross out what does not apply, so as to give us your views on this project:

   a. I would feel comfortable talking to a peer supporter: yes / no
   b. I would prefer peer supporters to be based: in school / out of school
   c. It is important to be able to: just drop-in / make an appointment
   d. I would prefer a peer supporter to be someone I: already know / don’t know
   e. I would like to talk in a room which is: like an office / less formal

6. Please add any comments you wish to make in the space below.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
peer support project

Please answer the following questions about your bullying experiences. We would appreciate it if you would give honest answers – these will be totally confidential.

1. Please tick if you are a boy □ or a girl □

2. Do you consider that you have been bullied? yes □ no □

3. Was the bully/bullies boy(s) □ or girl(s) □ or both □

4. How did you react to the bullying?
   - It upset me badly □
   - It upset me a little □
   - It did not upset me □

5. Where did the bullying happen?
   - At school:
     - in the field □
     - in the playground □
     - in the classroom □
     - in the dining hall □
   - Out of school □
   - Somewhere else (please say where) ____________________________

6. When did the bullying happen?
   - Before school □
   - During school □
   - After school □
7. Have you ever bullied anyone? yes □ no □

7a. If yes, why do you think you have bullied?
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

8. What do you think about the idea of a bullying support team being set up at school, run mainly by older students and supported by the teachers?
Very good idea □
Good idea □
Terrible idea □
Not bothered □

9. Would you attend if bullied? yes □ no □ don’t know □

10. Do you think there is a problem with bullying in this school? yes □ no □ not sure □

Please add any comments you wish to make in the space below.
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.
3.2 establishing aims and objectives

“Have clear aims and objectives”

“Be ready to adjust aims and objectives in the light of monitoring data”

School project co-ordinator

Having assessed the needs of the students in your school, and consulted with staff, you are ready to establish your project’s aims and objectives. You must be realistic about what the project can achieve. By setting clear aims and objectives, you will find it easier to evaluate the project and amend it in line with evaluation outcomes (see Section 6).

The original aims and objectives of the peer support project at St Marylebone School for Girls are outlined in Case Study 8. Through a survey, eating disorders and low self-image were identified as a problem for a significant number of pupils.

case study 8
St Marylebone School for Girls, peer support project aims and objectives

Aims

This project, working through a core group of GNVQ Health & Social Care students and A-level Psychology students, aims to promote good mental health practice by raising awareness of issues through peer support, using all the available relevant agencies.

Objectives

- To raise awareness of good mental health practice through teaching, whole-school events, staff and parent training, visiting speakers, research and debate.
- To work through the identified mental health issues with the core group, as part of the GNVQ course in Health & Social Care.
- To work with A-level Psychology students to present information relating to the issues to groups in the school through GNVQ, PSE, Religious Studies and Tutor time.
- To establish, through questionnaires drawn up by the core group and through individual interviews, a target group of pupils with whom peer support will be established.
- To produce, with the support of all the available and relevant agencies, educational material, which is age-appropriate and accessible, on eating disorders and mental health well-being.
- To ensure that all pupils from all ethnic groups and faiths and of all abilities are included in the project.
Having set out your aims and objectives, set out the methodology for achieving them with a timeline. This will give you the structure you need to carry your ideas forward, to engage support from the senior management team and staff and, if necessary, to apply for external funding. Try to be realistic about what you can achieve, and be aware of the time that will be necessary to co-ordinate the programme.

### case study 9

**St Marylebone School for Girls - methodology, timetable and targets**

(to meet the aims and objectives outlined in case study 8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year plan 1998–2000</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 1998</td>
<td>Introduce Year 10 GNVQ to the idea of peer support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1998</td>
<td>Develop peer support in sixth form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1998</td>
<td>Match sixth-formers to Year 7’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1998</td>
<td>Prepare GNVQ students for training programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1999</td>
<td>Develop peer supporters’ training scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1999</td>
<td>Begin weekly training programme for GNVQ students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan questionnaire for collecting information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer support training by CSV for sixth form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1999</td>
<td>Questionnaire edited by staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administer questionnaire to Years 7, 8 and 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Feel Good Factor’ launch and promotion for Years 7 and 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March–April 1999</td>
<td>Launch competition for Feel Good Factor logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1999</td>
<td>Questionnaire results and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Announce winners of logo competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feel Good Factor parents’ evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Launch song competition to promote Feel Good Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Announce winners of song competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1999</td>
<td>Launch song lyrics competition to promote Feel Good Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Announce winners of song lyrics competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1999</td>
<td>Feel Good Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1999</td>
<td>Start peer support programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1999</td>
<td>Raise awareness of peer support programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1999</td>
<td>Year assemblies to raise profile of Feel Good Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2000</td>
<td>Start creation of WebPages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2000</td>
<td>WebPages to Mental Health Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feel Good Factor parents’ evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2000</td>
<td>Create posters and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2000</td>
<td>Feel Good Factor presentations on curriculum days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2000</td>
<td>Recruit new peer supporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feel Good Factor parents’ evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2000</td>
<td>Start new training and planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2000</td>
<td>Evaluate and plan for continuing programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Be careful not to commit yourself to unrealistic time scales or targets. It takes time for a peer support project to be implemented and have a widespread effect on the culture of a school. It is often helpful to start with a small target group, for example training students in Years 10 and 12 to support students in the transition from primary to secondary school.

### Case Study 10

**Step-by-Step Development**

The experience of trying to establish a peer listening model of intervention proved difficult at the A Space out-of-school learning centre based at Kingsland school. At the end of the two-year programme with The Mental Health Foundation the following recommendation was made by the co-ordinator of the project.

“A Space recommends that a ‘buddying’ or ‘befriending’ culture is started as a foundation on which to build. Training students to work with new Year 7’s offers much scope for ‘hands on’ work. For example, Year 7 support buddies can be assigned to particular year groups, co-run a lunchtime drop-in with adult support, supervise games in the playground, speak at assemblies, assist at parents’ evenings, visit local primaries to talk about the Year 6/7 transfer, help out with after-school sports groups and so forth. We found the possibilities were many and that peer supporters enjoyed having a range of roles to choose from. If students join a peer support programme while in Year 8, by the time they reach Year 10 they are more prepared for a training which can incorporate counselling and therapeutic support work skills. At A Space, the cascade model was replaced by a building-block model which worked much more effectively.”

### 3.4 Audit of Pastoral Care Systems

- **What existing resources are there to support students in your school?**
- **Who are the key members of the pastoral care system in your school?**
- **Which are the key agencies that support students in your school?**

Ensure that staff are fully informed and involved. Peer support systems may appear threatening to staff who provide support for students already. It is helpful to consult with as broad a range of staff as possible, both to engage them with the project and to support its implementation. There may be staff who have the appropriate skills to train peer supporters within the school. There is also the possibility that staff from external agencies will provide training and support, for example the education welfare officer, child and family consultation service, behaviour support team or outreach youth worker.
3.5 commitment

“The senior management of the school must be in favour of the principle of peer support. It may also be pertinent to get support from the school governors.”

School project co-ordinator

Commitment is vital from the:

- Senior management team
- Staff
- Parent–Teacher Association and governors
- Students
- Parents and carers

At the outset the school’s senior management team should present the peer support project for discussion and debate to establish whether staff are in favour and willing to support the project. Staff may need several meetings and opportunities to discuss the proposed peer support project before an implementation plan can be agreed.

Similar discussions will need to take place with the Board of Governors, the Parent–Teacher Association and the School Council.

Initial presentations and discussions with the student group will give an indication of the level of interest and commitment to the project. It is important that students are involved from a very early stage in the implementation plan and that they have a part to play in developing and tailoring the service to the individual school.

The need for commitment and consensus at this stage cannot be overstated. Every effort should be made to introduce the project sensitively and effectively to ensure the full support of all concerned.

“Support from senior management team is crucial at the outset”

School project co-ordinator
Financial support should be fully agreed prior to the launch of the project and should be secured for at least two years from implementation.

The cost incurred will vary from project to project. Training costs can be high if you use external trainers. The average funds awarded to projects involved in The Mental Health Foundation’s Peer Support Programme amounted to £3760 over two years.

As a general guide to costs, you should consider:

- **Staff give an initial introduction to their tutor groups about the project**
- **Project manager/co-ordinator** – salary (responsibility point) or extra time costs
- **Training costs** – room hire, catering, trainer fees
- **Administrative costs** – photocopying, telephone, fax, word-processing, typing
- **Publicity and stationary**
- **Information materials** – books, videos
- **Staff time for training** – as ‘debriefers’ to the peer supporters, and to take on responsibilities to help co-ordinate the project.

It would reflect a strong vote of confidence in the project if the school were able to meet at least some of the initial project costs. You could approach the Parent–Teacher Association and Board of Governors for partial funding. This would help engage commitment and enhance opportunity for sustainability for the project. Other sources for funding could be through Standard Funds, Barclays New Futures, the Healthy Schools Initiative or local corporate companies. You should include in your financial plan some fundraising initiatives to provide continuing support to the project.
3.7 accommodation

In costing the project, remember that it needs a base in the school. At best this would be a room designated for the purpose, with telephone, filing space, desk, and space for at least three people. To give the peer support service an identity, it would be preferable if the students themselves could furnish the room with comfortable chairs, and provide posters and information leaflets that can be handed to students. A secure filing cabinet is the minimum requirement if the project is to be co-ordinated from within the school.

If a special room is not available, a particular room should simply be allocated for support sessions at the agreed times.

Whether the room is reserved or shared with other activities, think about how easy it is to find and also how private it is. Students are more likely to use a service that is not situated by a main corridor or in a room where they can be seen or heard by other students or by staff. On the other hand, problems could be caused if the room is so inaccessible that it is hard for students to reach it. This may be because they cannot find it, or school policy does not allow students access to all parts of the school during break and/or lunchtime. Siting a room in a fairly innocuous setting, such as near the learning support unit or school library, allows pupils a degree of safety and confidentiality, in that other people might assume they are visiting the area for reasons other than seeing a peer listener. The same room should, ideally, be used throughout the project, so that everyone becomes familiar with it.

“Have a room for the drop-in, one that will be free of other uses when required by the peer supporters, and make it very clear to all staff when the peer supporters will be using it”

School project co-ordinator
section 3 setting up a peer listening service
section 4  getting started

This section aims to guide you through the process of recruiting students and staff in preparation for their training to be involved in the project.

Once you are clear about exactly why the project is needed, and have established that there is a genuine commitment from the school community and secured the necessary resources, you are ready to proceed.

You will now need to consider the following:

- Public relations
- Recruitment
- Training (see Section 5)
- Administrative systems and setting up the service (see Section 6).

4.1 public relations

“Keep the publicity and profile high with staff through staff briefings and school bulletins”

School project co-ordinator

staff

It is vital that all members of staff have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of the project, and that they feel fully committed and involved. The peer support service needs to be accepted by the whole school if it is to be successful.

You will have had some early discussions with staff in order to introduce the ideas of peer support and to identify interested members of staff. Make sure you keep staff informed as you put the service in place.
Try to establish methods of communication with staff from the outset. You could consider:

- Using a particular coloured paper for all information about the project
- Headed paper using the project’s logo
- A project folder in all registers to place information for dissemination to students
- Regular announcements at morning briefing sessions
- Regular articles in staff bulletins
- Regular articles in the school newsletter.

Concentrate on up-to-date progress reports and on key achievements. You could ask some students to write about the peer support training and the skills they have acquired. Ask the staff group for their views on how the service is progressing and perhaps for suggestions as to how some of the issues raised around the project could be integrated into elements of the curriculum.

**case study 11**

**Kingsbury High School – news bulletin about the peer support service**

As part of the peer support programme at this school, peer supporters are trained in assertiveness skills and carry out workshops in assertiveness skills with students. Students may self-refer to the project, or staff may refer students they feel would benefit from the project. The programme has now developed so that more students can benefit from learning these skills. Some of the activities in the assertiveness workshops are delivered to Year 7 students through tutorial period or PSHE curriculum.

**students**

You need to let students know about the project to:

- Recruit peer supporters and receptionists
- Publicise the service.

Students are undoubtedly the best judges of what will be effective communication and what will not work. Consulting and involving students in designing and producing your publicity will make sure that it is innovative, relevant and effective.
The following are some of the many ways of communicating with the whole student group.

- Staff give an initial introduction to their tutor groups about the project
- Peer supporters and staff deliver presentations in assemblies on a rolling timetable
- Peer supporters deliver workshops in tutorial period or in PSHE lessons on a rolling timetable
- Run a poster competition to advertise and raise the profile of the project (see Handout 3 for an example)
- Place posters and leaflets around the school
- Submit articles written by students about the peer support project for the school magazine
- Peer supporters produce a peer support newsletter
- Place information about the project in the school brochure
- Involve the local press in the launch of your project and major development news.

The aim is to ensure that the whole school community is aware of the service, whether or not they are directly involved.

Be open to all suggestions! One student involved in a peer support project suggested that the most appropriate place for material advertising a peer support service was inside toilet cubicles. Place advertising material in a variety of venues that will attract attention and show that the project has a high status within the school community.

Publicity is an essential component to the success of your programme. It is easy to overlook this aspect of project development and sustainment. Without a publicity programme that is put in place at least every half-term, students and staff may forget about all the support you can offer through the project!
**poster competition**

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS TO PROMOTE THE **peer support project**

THE COMPETITION IS OPEN TO ANY STUDENT AT [name of school]

Produce an A4 size poster (which can be enlarged)
Use a maximum of three colours

- Design a logo for the project
- Think of a name for the project
- Include your project name and logo in your poster design
- Include days/times of the service: Mon, Wed, Fri, lunchtimes
- Include who to contact.

**prizes will be awarded**

**for the winning entries**

**CLOSING DATE:** ...........................................

A few simple ideas to get you started:

“*We are here for you*”       “*Come and talk in confidence*”

“A helping hand”   “A listening ear”
parents / carers

“It is very important that the pupils and parents are aware of the project and how it will work. This could be done through the school’s handbook, or an evening to show the parents what is being done. The work of the project could be incorporated into the school’s pastoral system, for example, recommending that bullied pupils could, if they want to, be referred to an assertiveness skills workshop run by the peer workers”

School project co-ordinator

Try to involve parents and carers from the beginning. Discussion with the Parent-Teacher Association during the earliest stage will give the project co-ordinator the opportunity to share information about the project, enabling parents to voice any early concerns and ask any questions. Once the project is underway, an informative letter should be sent to all parents/carers of students at the school (see handout 4). It may be helpful to hold an open evening so that any questions may be answered and remaining concerns allayed.
the peer support project

the aim of the project

Young people most often turn to their friends if they are having a problem. However, not all students have a friend to turn to. Even if you have a friend, it sometimes feels better to talk to someone you don’t know. The aim of this project is to give students another place they can go to if they have a problem, where it can be discussed in confidence and dealt with in a preventative way, so that each student can achieve their maximum potential.

what is peer support?

It is a first-aid, confidential, listening service run by pupils for pupils at the school. The peer listeners are pupils who have been professionally trained and who will have the support of members of staff and the peer support co-ordinator as back-up. The service will involve a small number of pupils trained as peer listeners and receptionists, and those pupils using the service for help with a problem. It will run alongside all the support systems already available as part of the pastoral care system in the school.

would you like to know more, or to be involved?

There will be a parents’ forum at ____________________________
on ________________________, when we will welcome any questions regarding the service, and supply you with more information should you require it.

We look forward to meeting you and to your involvement in the programme.
case study 12

Involvement of parents/carers

This example concerns St Marylebone School for Girls (see case study 9 for the aims and objectives of this project).

Parents’ evenings

Parents were invited to attend three interactive evenings where different aspects of mental health issues were identified and discussed. Presentations by peer supporters were included where they reflected on real experiences. Parents were encouraged to participate by raising their own concerns and discussing ways of dealing with fears and misconceptions. Parents were shown role-plays that emphasised the importance of listening to young people and responding in ways that could lead to satisfactory resolutions in most situations.

The first evening raised general issues to do with mental health, identification, active listening, raising self-esteem and where to go for help if needed. The second focused on mental health and substance use and abuse. The third evening covered issues to do with sexual identity, sexuality and sexual activity and their possible effects on mental health.

Parents’ evening questionnaires

The questionnaire illustrated in handout 5 was distributed to parents during parents’ evenings.

The first question, asking parents what they understood about the term ‘mental health issues’, showed that parents already had a profound understanding of the term. They highlighted concepts of self-esteem, one’s emotions, feelings, state of mind, factors concerning positive well-being, and psychological issues. Some associated the term with extreme or uncontrollable behaviour. Others felt that it was an umbrella term for anything that affects one’s outlook on life, relationships with others, stress, depression and other mental illness.

We asked parents to identify from a given list if they had experienced any symptoms that may be associated with mental stress. The symptoms that were most commonly identified were sleeplessness, anxiety, headaches, and unexpected loss of temper. When asked if their child had shown any symptoms, they identified headaches, anxiety, and unexpected loss of temper.

Parents were asked to select adjectives that best described their daughter. The results showed that those who attended appeared to know their daughters well and were very positive.

All the parents who attended found the evenings useful. They found the sharing of information and discussion activities most useful. They also appreciated the outside speakers that we invited.
parents’ questionnaire

1. What do you understand by the term ‘mental health issues’?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. Have you ever had any of the following? (Please tick)
   - Anxiety
   - Unexpected loss of temper
   - Crying for unusual reasons
   - Loss of appetite
   - Unusual increase in appetite
   - Unusual amount of sweating
   - Palpitations
   - Sleeplessness
   - Headaches

3. Has your daughter ever had any of the following? (Please tick)
   - Anxiety
   - Unexpected loss of temper
   - Crying for unusual reasons
   - Loss of appetite
   - Unusual increase in appetite
   - Unusual amount of sweating
   - Palpitations
   - Sleeplessness
   - Headaches

4. If a member of your family had mental health issues, would you feel comfortable talking to someone outside the family about it?  yes [ ]  no [ ]
5. Does your family eat daily meals together  
   yes ☐ no ☐

6. Would you describe the meals that your daughter eats at home as healthy  
   yes ☐ no ☐

7. Would you describe the meals that your daughter eats outside the home as healthy  
   yes ☐ no ☐

8. Who would you say your daughter talks to the most about personal issues

9. How would you describe your daughter? (Please tick)
   - Sensitive ☐ Shy ☐
   - Caring ☐ Lonley ☐
   - Extrovert ☐ Bossy ☐
   - Fun-loving ☐ Patient ☐
   - Friendly ☐ Impatient ☐
   - Clever ☐ Confident ☐
   - Not very clever ☐ Unconfident ☐

10. Do you have clear expectations of what your daughter will be when she is older?  
    yes ☐ no ☐

11. Are there strict rules that your daughter should follow?  
    yes ☐ no ☐

12. Do you think you daughter would ask for help if she needed it?  
    yes ☐ no ☐

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.
4.2 recruitment

**senior management representative**

Identify a member of the senior management team to liaise and take responsibility for school policy and implementation of the project on behalf of the school. The appointed person should be aware of the time commitment necessary to work in partnership with the project co-ordinator (see Section 2.1). In the initial stages this will mean at least a weekly meeting.

**staff support team**

You will need to recruit a team of staff, to work with the project co-ordinator to support the peer supporters and establish the support service. Their role will include being available to peer supporters for supervision and debriefing sessions and helping to co-ordinate the project (see Section 2). Remember to involve non-teaching staff in your recruitment drive. It is vital that all members of the team take part in the training as described in Section 5. Although staff will be volunteering to participate on a voluntary basis, it is helpful to point out the benefits to their own professional development and those outlined in Section 1.

“It is helpful if as many staff (including non-teaching staff) know about the project as possible. However, a small but supportive team of teachers needs to be involved in the setting up of a peer support project.”

“You will need bundles of energy but a dedicated team of staff each with their own area of responsibility within the project will allow the project to diversify. Ideally it will be the peer workers themselves that will direct and lead the project. This may take time ... but be patient!”

**School project co-ordinator**

**students**

Initial discussion begins with presentations of the project in school assemblies. It is important to make pupils aware of the aims of the project. After encouraging initial interest, further presentations in assemblies are needed in order to recruit applicants for training as peer listeners and receptionists.

Students can be involved at the outset in publicising the project with posters and through assemblies and PSHE lessons.
The implementation plan should specify which year groups are to be targeted for training in the project.

**The recruitment process is as follows:**

1. Advertise the opportunity to train as peer supporters or receptionists in assemblies and tutor groups in the year groups you are targeting.

2. Disseminate application forms with a closing date (see handouts 6 and 7).

3. Shortlist applicants and set interview dates.

4. Distribute letters regarding interviews (see handouts 8 and 9).

5. Set criteria for interview selection.

6. Interview candidates (see handouts 10, 11 and 12).

7. Select successful candidates and inform all candidates of the results from interviews (see handouts 13 and 14).

8. Issue parental permission forms for all successful candidates (see handout 15).

A comprehensive recruitment process is important in helping to identify the reasons why students are applying to be a peer listener or receptionist. It clarifies their understanding of what the project aims to achieve, and assesses how they can best contribute to the project. The process also helps students appreciate the responsibility involved in being part of the project and the commitment needed to take part in the training programme and subsequently offer support to their peers.

Try to include as many students as possible in the project. Ensure that the students involved represent the school community, for example in relation to gender, ethnicity, range of academic abilities and social background.

“The students came from a wide variety of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. In addition, they had a range of academic abilities. One of the sixth form volunteers had a statement of special educational need and was able to provide invaluable support to a Year 8 student who had similar needs.”

**School project co-ordinator**

Be aware of other roles that students can take on if it is felt their skills are not suited to being a receptionist or peer listener. (This may be at the interview stage, or during or after training has been completed.) These include the important roles of producing publicity materials, carrying out administrative tasks for the project, being involved in
public relations work, producing a newsletter or fundraising. It is essential that the
service is inclusive for all students, whether offering or receiving support. This is to
ensure that all roles within the service are equally valued and recognised.

**interview questions**

Examples of interview questions are illustrated in handouts 10–12. It is important that
the interview is carried out with sensitivity and in a manner that will help the student
relax. All interviewees should be asked the same questions and treated equally.

**parental consent**

Parental permission must be sought when a student is offered a place on a training
course to become a receptionist or peer listener. See handout 15 for an example.
CASE STUDY 13
Reasons for students taking part in the programme

The Mental Health Foundation carried out some baseline research\(^\text{(19)}\) with staff and students at the start of the two-year peer support programme. Students were asked why they wished to take part in the programme. The bar chart highlights the outcomes.

Other reasons given by students include:

- Offering support to younger students who might not want to approach a member of staff
- Students wished there had been a peer support system in place for them when they were younger
- Students wanted to develop their skills in listening and communication.

---

peer listener application form

Name: ____________________________________   Gender: male / female
Address: ____________________________________________________________
__________________________________________   Postcode: ________________
Class: ._____________________________________   Year: ____________________

1. What do you think the peer listening service is for?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. Who do you think the peer listening service is for?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3. Why do you want to become a peer listener?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

4. What skills can you offer as a peer listener?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

5. Are you prepared to attend all _________ training sessions?    yes □  no □
Training sessions will be held on ________________________________

I agree to return the attached parental consent form to ____________________ by
__________if I am invited to take part in the training course to be a peer listener.

Student's signature: ____________________________________________________

Application forms must be handed in to ___________________________ by
________________________
You will be informed of the outcome of your application by ____________________________
Interviews will be held on ________________________________
peer listener application form

What will be expected of you:

- Be prepared to attend a training course.
- Work with a team of others to set up the peer support group.
- Work with a team of others to manage and run the peer support group.
- Give up one lunch break per week.
- Monitor and evaluate the work you do.
- Meet with your support worker regularly.

If you are still interested in joining, please complete the application form below as soon as possible.

Brief interviews will be held in ________________________________

Name ___________________________  Form _______________________

Why would you like to join the peer support service?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Return this completed form to _____________________by ________________
[Name of school]

Dear

Thank you for applying to be a peer listener / receptionist in the peer listening project at ________________________________ School.

I would like to invite you to come for an interview in Room __________ on _________________ at _________________.

If you have any problems with this interview time, please contact the peer listening project co-ordinator as soon as possible so that an alternative time can be arranged.

Thank you for showing an interest in the peer listening project. We look forward to talking with you at your interview.

Yours sincerely

Peer listening project co-ordinator
Dear

I am sorry to let you know that on this occasion you have not been short-listed for an interview to train as a peer listener / receptionist.

I would like to thank you for your interest in the project and would be pleased to meet with you to talk about other ways in which you could be involved. If you would like to discuss this please come and see me at any time. Once again, thanks for your interest.

Yours sincerely

Peer listening project co-ordinator
**handout 10 peer listeners’ interview**

**interview questions**

1. What interested you in applying for this post?

2. What skills do you think you have that will make you a good peer listener?

3. What do you understand by peer listening?

4. What are your own personal interests?

5. Can you give an example of when someone has come and spoken with you about a problem in or out of school?

6. How did you deal with the situation?

7. How do you think you would manage keeping information confidential?

8. If you are successful in this interview, are you prepared to give up lunch breaks / evenings / Saturdays over the next few weeks?

9. What do you think your friends will think if you are successful in becoming a peer listener?

10. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?
**interview questions**

Name of student ____________________________   Form __________________

Date _________   Time _________ Interviewer(s) __________________________

1. What other community commitments are you involved in?
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

2. Have you ever bullied or been bullied?
   ______________________________________________________________________

3. Can you empathise with:
   a bully? yes no
   someone bullied? yes no

4. Do you feel you can express yourself clearly? yes no

5. Have you read the confidentiality statement? yes no
   What do you think it means?
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

6. Will you agree to keep the confidentiality statement? yes no

7. Would you be available on the following days and times to attend training sessions?
   (date and time)
   ______________________________________________________________________ yes no
   ______________________________________________________________________ yes no
   If you cannot attend these sessions, when do you have free time on your timetable?
   Day(s) and time(s): __________________________________________________
8. Would you be prepared to give up one lunch break per week to manage or run the peer support group?  
   yes □ no □

9. Would you be prepared to meet with your support teacher on a regular basis to discuss your casework?  
   yes □ no □

10. Only ___________ candidates interviewed can be selected for the initial training. Further training of other students will take place later in the term.

    However, we will need candidates for the following tasks:
    
    • Publicity
    • Public relations
    • Fund raising
    • Developing worksheets
    • Getting information from the Internet
    • Setting up a website for the peer support project
    • Setting up a regular peer support news sheet.

    Would you be interested in helping in any of these ways?  
    yes □ no □
**interview questions**

1. What interested you in applying for this post?

2. What skills do you think you have that will make you a good receptionist?

3. What do you understand by peer listening?

4. What are your own personal interests?

5. Can you give an example of when someone has come and spoken with you about a problem, in or out of school?

6. How did you deal with the situation?

7. How do you think you will manage keeping information confidential?

8. If you are successful in this interview, are you prepared to give up at least _____ lunch breaks over the next few weeks?

9. What do you think your friends will think if you are successful in becoming a receptionist?
Dear

Thank you for attending the interview this week. I am pleased to tell you that you have been selected to train as a peer listener/receptionist.

Please ask your parent/carer to complete the parental consent form enclosed and return it to Room ________________ by ________________.

The dates for training sessions are as follows, and it is essential that you come to all the training sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Time</th>
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If you have any difficulties with the above dates, or have any questions or doubts about doing the training, please come and see me in room __________ by __________.

I look forward to seeing you again.

Yours sincerely

Peer support project co-ordinator
Dear

Thank you for applying for the post of peer listener/receptionist for the peer listening project. Unfortunately, due to the large number of applicants for these posts you have not been successful in your application this time.

I would, however, like to keep your application on record for future reference and when further vacancies become available we will of course consider you again. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your interest in the peer listening project and I do hope that you will continue to support the project.

Yours sincerely

Peer support project co-ordinator
Dear

I am pleased to inform you that your son/daughter ________________________ has been chosen by ______________________________________ School to undertake training as a peer listener/receptionist in the peer listening programme.

In order to commence training, please fill in the consent form below and return to the school by _________________

Thank you.

-----------------------------------

parental consent form

Name of student: _____________________________________________________

Address  ____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

I, the undersigned, give permission for my son/daughter to undertake training as a peer listener/receptionist at ____________________________ School.

Signed: _____________________________

PARENT/GUARDIAN

Date: ______________________________
section 5 setting up a training programme

This section looks at the requirements for training students to become peer listeners and receptionists, and for the staff involved to support the peer listeners. It includes the process, the planning and some of the materials for delivering a training programme in peer listening skills. In this section the trainer will be referred to as female and in the singular for ease of writing.

5.1 issues to consider

- What are the objectives of your training programme?
- Who will deliver the training programme?
- What should you include in your training programme?
- How many students should be trained at the same time?
- For how long will the training take place?
- When will the training programme take place?
- Where will the training programme take place?
- How will the students be assessed?
- How will the training programme be evaluated?

It may be helpful to look at each of these questions in turn.

Q. What are the objectives of your training programme?

Having been through the needs analysis process, the objectives of your programme should be clear. Training for peer listeners will need to be on-going, but the initial programme will need to ensure that students are taught the basic skills in peer listening.

Supplementary training may then be given in specific subject areas according to the needs of the school, for example bullying, assertiveness training, bereavement, eating disorders, depression or drug misuse. The learning process will be continued not only through training but also through individual supervision and group meetings.
Q. Who will deliver your training programme?

In order to ensure that the students are well prepared for this very responsible role, it is essential that training is provided by a suitably qualified staff member in your school or that an external professional agency is commissioned to carry out the training. Staff in your school who may be appropriate to train peer supporters include a school social worker or counsellor, an education welfare officer or a staff member trained in counselling. Professional external agencies that offer such training include Relate and The Samaritans. The University of Surrey – Roehampton offers ‘The Certificate in Peer Support’ to adults who want to establish a peer support system within their educational establishment. Other training providers can be viewed on: www.mentalhealth.org.uk/peer/peertrainers.htm

It is important that the project co-ordinator and training provider are both clear about the expected outcomes of training, and the skills base the students will need in order to carry out their roles in supporting their peers.

Q. How many students should be trained at the same time?

When deciding how many students to train, consider how many days the support service will be open to offer a listening service and therefore how many peer listeners will be needed on duty each day. This might be determined by the availability of your room for peer listening, as well as the availability of staff to support peer listeners if necessary.

A further consideration is the fact that a number of students may decide on completion of training that they do not wish to be peer listeners, or the trainer(s) may decide that a student does not have the necessary skills to be a peer listener.

If, as a result of the above, you decide to train more than 10–12 students, two trainers will need to be involved. An optimum number for a single trainer is 10–12 students.

Q. How long will the training course be?

To give the students adequate time to form a group identity, be introduced to basic counselling skills and role-play support sessions, and deal with the issues of boundaries and confidentiality, it is helpful to have 14–21 hours of training. The ideal is a full day’s training programme off-site, with further ‘twilight’ sessions to help students assimilate new information and enhance their learning. This would also demonstrate that staff attribute high status to the project.
Q. When will the training take place?

If your scheme is delivered outside an accredited course, it is best to avoid withdrawing students from lessons on a regular basis. An exception may be for a full day’s training programme if this can be agreed through your senior management team. ‘Twilight’ training sessions can be run after school or at the weekend. If your peer listening service is being implemented through a GNVQ Health and Social care course, training can be delivered in curriculum time.

Q. Where will the training take place?

You will need a room large enough to enable the group to split into subgroups for exercises and role-plays. It is important that the group is not interrupted.

Q. How will the students be assessed?

You should plan at the outset how you are going to assess each student’s suitability to be a peer listener. The recruitment process will be an initial point for assessment, and further assessment can be made during and after the training period. It is helpful for the student to carry out a self-evaluation prior to the trainer’s evaluation. A student will often recognise for themselves any lack in appropriate skills and either identify the need for further training or decide they do not wish to be a peer listener.

This can be a helpful process in itself and can be more productive than a trainer informing a student that he or she is not suitable to be a peer listener. You might also discuss with the student, at this point, other ways of being involved in the project.

It is essential that students are informed of the assessment process at the interviewing stage. This will help them self-evaluate their skills as a peer listener throughout the training process and make your expectations of the student clearer.

Q. How will your training programme be evaluated?

You will need to plan your training evaluation process before you begin the training programme. During the last session of the training course it is important to carry out an evaluation. This will help in assessing the success of your training programme and how skilled your students are feeling, and give you ideas as to changes that may be helpful in the future.
Q. What should you include in your training programme?

The content of your training programme will need to be determined by the aims and objectives of the service being set up. However, central to all training will be the need to equip peer supporters and the staff support team with the necessary counselling skills to perform their task of listening to and supporting students coming to them.

The basic skills of counselling are as follows:

- Active listening
- Incorporating verbal and non-verbal communication
- Paraphrasing
- Reflecting
- Open/closed questions
- Empathy
- Summarising
- Problem solving
- Decision making.

Receptionists will need to become acquainted with some basic communication skills. They will need to feel confident in carrying out all administrative duties necessary for appointments to be made. Refer to Section 5.4 for a comprehensive training course for receptionists.

**using role-play and the need to de-role**

The exercises in the training sections refer to the use of role-play. You can explain to students that a role-play is very much like acting a part in a play. In getting into role the student should try and see the world from the point of view of the character she is playing – but try not to get too carried away! The student needs to remember that the other people in the role-play are only playing out their role.

You should keep to the time limits set at the beginning of the role-play. Always ensure that someone is present who is not in role to act as a time keeper and monitor.

When the role-play is finished you will need to ask the students to de-role. This involves the student saying how the role-play was for her, and then getting out of character by saying who she is, and that she is not the character in the role-play.
training checklist

Before commencing training, you should address the following:

- Information regarding peer support and the service you are setting up should be sent to parents and permission gained for students to undertake the training programme.

- Each student should have a schedule of the training dates and venues.

- Each student should be aware of the time commitment and the necessity to attend every training session in order to complete the course.

- It is useful to have two trainers delivering the training programme. If two trainers are running the course, be clear about respective roles and responsibilities.

- Students need to be aware of how you are going to assess them and the possible outcomes if the student or trainer feels that the student does not have the necessary skills to be a peer listener.
5.2 peer listener training

The training course outlined in this section illustrates the essential areas to cover in preparing students to take on the role of being a peer listener. The time scales will vary according to the number of students and trainers in the group.

The course includes training in basic counselling skills, which also provides a helpful foundation for students to take on the roles of a peer mentor, mediator or befriender.

It would be helpful for any professional who wishes to deliver such a programme to refer to the comprehensive training guides in the bibliography of this manual.

Further training for peer listeners will be determined by the specific objectives of your peer listening service. For example, if you are setting up a project specifically to address bullying, awareness training in this area will be necessary.

Figure 2. Areas to cover in training to be a peer listener.
5.3 training programme

course outline

session 1
Getting to know each other
Ground rules
Introduction to peer listening

session 2 (full day)
What is peer listening?
Egan's 3-stage model
Qualities of a peer listener
Confidentiality
Introduction to peer listening skills

session 3 (full day)
Structure of the peer listening session
The peer listening session

session 4
The role of the staff support team
Administrative systems
More peer listening role-play

session 5
Staff and students work together
More role-play

session 6
More role-play
Assessment
Evaluation
session 1 (2 hours)

aims of the session

1. Group members to be introduced to each other and to begin the process of forming a group identity.
2. Establish the ground rules for the group.
3. Give students a clear understanding of the goals of the training programme.
4. Give students a clear understanding of peer listening.

exercise 1 (10 minutes)
Ask the group members to sit in a circle. Introduce yourself and explain that in order to begin to get to know each other the students are going to do the following exercise. Start by saying your name and something you enjoy doing in your spare time. Then ask the person on your left or right to do the same, and continue the process around the circle until all members have had a turn.

exercise 2 (30 minutes)
Explain that the group will be working together for the next few weeks, and that it is important to establish an agreed set of ground rules to which all members will adhere, so that the group feel they can be open and honest with each other and work effectively together.

On a flipchart, write up suggestions for ground rules made by group members and then make any additions as necessary.

All members should understand and agree on the ground rules and abide by them.

Put up the ground rules in each training session and refer to them if a group member is contradicting them.

The ground rules may be amended at a later stage should it be felt necessary.
The rules need to include:

- Confidentiality – what is discussed is to be kept within the group
- Respect – group members must listen to and respect their peers’ points of view. Any challenges should be made constructively, without apportioning personal criticism.

**Exercise 3 (10 minutes)**
Distribute and talk through the outline of the training programme.

**Exercise 4 (40 minutes)**
On a flipchart, brainstorm what group members understand by the term ‘peer listening’. Once the brainstorm has been completed, discuss each idea in turn. On completion of the exercise, introduce any areas that were missed or correct any misunderstandings.

Use this time to brainstorm which issues group members think are most likely to be brought to the service. It is important for students to know that referral to a professional person or agency may be appropriate in some cases.

A discussion as to which issues would be appropriate or inappropriate for a peer listener to deal with is important at this stage. Discuss how the decision for a referral would be reached, and how it could be made.

**Exercise 5 (15 minutes)**
Explain the roles of a peer listener, a receptionist, and the staff support team.

*End the session with an opportunity for questions.*
session 2 (full day)

aims of the session

1. Group members to start to get to know each other and form a group identity.
2. Ensure that group members understand what peer listening is.
3. Introduce Egan’s 3-stage model of counselling.
4. Examine the qualities necessary to be a peer listener.
5. Discuss confidentiality.
6. Introduce peer listening skills.

Helpful texts for materials covering topics discussed in this section, are Egan’s The Skilled Helper20 and Inskipp’s Counselling: The Trainer’s Handbook21.

exercise 1 (20 minutes)
Split the group members into pairs, one member of each pair being denoted A and the other B. A tells B two things that she or he has felt positive about during the last week. When that has been completed (say 3 minutes), B repeats the process by telling A two things that he or she felt positive about. Reconvene the group in a circle and ask each member to introduce their partner to the group and share the two things their partner felt positive about.

Explain at the start of the exercise that members should only divulge information that they are happy for the whole group to hear. Also, ensure that each group member pairs up with someone they do not know or are not friendly with.

exercise 2 (20 minutes)
Brainstorm: ‘What is counselling?’ Write up ideas on a flipchart.

Discuss each idea and clarify what counselling is, and how it differs from other forms of helping. It is important to discuss how peer listeners do not and must not take on the role of a professional counsellor. The role of a peer listener is to be a ‘first-aid’ support to their peers by listening to them and helping them to identify solutions to a particular problem. They are not there to give advice or offer solutions to the problem. The peer listener is there primarily to listen, and if necessary to help the service user find their own solutions to the problem through active listening and problem-solving techniques that will be practised in the training programme.

exercise 3 (15 minutes)
Discuss the 3-stage skills model of counselling as outlined by Egan in The Skilled Helper. This will help the students understand the process through which they will be listening to their peers and the structure within which they will be offering support. In summary, the model takes the peer listener through the stages of:

1. Exploring the problem with the service user.
2. Understanding – helping the service user to reach a more objective understanding of himself or herself and the situation, thereby creating a new perspective and possibilities for change.
3. Acting – helping the service user to identify possible courses of action and their consequences, and finally to decide on action to be taken and how to carry it out.

exercise 4 (30 minutes)

Qualities of a peer listener:
Ask group members to think of a time when they had a problem and to whom they turned to discuss it. Then ask them to write down which qualities in that person made them want to share the problem with them (5 minutes). Write all these qualities together on a flipchart and discuss each idea, ensuring that all essential areas are covered. These will include being:

- A good listener
- Non-judgemental
- Genuine
- Empathic – able to put oneself in the position of the service user
- Accepting – respecting the service user and their views. Peer listeners need to be aware of their own values and prejudices and not bring them into the peer listening relationship.

Continue by brainstorming the qualities in a person that would stop group members from confiding in them, and write these up on the flipchart.

break (20 minutes)
exercise 5 (60 minutes)

Boundaries – Guidelines for confidentiality

The following guidelines are offered as suggestions, not a prescribed list of how to deal with the issue of confidentiality for your project.

A great deal of work should be done to ensure that the policy adheres to school and education department rules, while remaining flexible enough to offer a degree of confidentiality to young people who may wish to use the peer support service.

A good suggestion is to have a policy that both staff and pupils have drafted for the entire school, not just the peer listening scheme, and display it openly.

One of the essential ingredients for ensuring the success of a peer listening project is an understanding that the service is confidential. The absolute importance of this must be stressed to all students and staff during training.

As well as the need for confidentiality, it is equally important that peer listeners are clear about the boundaries within which they can help their peers and to what extent confidentiality can be maintained.

The guidelines given here and in handout 18 are intended to help students understand those boundaries. They make it clear, for example, that if either the service user’s or anyone else’s health or safety is at risk, then confidentiality will need to be broken.

During role-play in training sessions it is important for students to practise scenarios in which confidentiality needs to be broken. They need to practise explaining to the service user, in a sensitive way, that they will need to seek help from a member of the staff support team, or other member of staff if that is preferable to the service user.

Peer listeners are trained to discuss the issue of confidentiality and when this may need to be broken at the start of a session, before the service user has had the opportunity to share the problem. This helps to protect the peer listener from being in a situation where a service user may trust that they can disclose information, for example physical abuse, and that the peer listener will not tell anyone. This process also prevents the service user from feeling that her trust has been betrayed. The boundaries of confidentiality are therefore clear for both the peer listener and service user.

All students who complete training successfully are asked to sign a contract reinforcing the need for confidentiality to be maintained (see handout 17). Details of the practical work in exercise 5 follow handout 19.
peer listener contract

I, _______________________________________________, hereby agree that I will respect the following procedures to retain my position as a peer listener at: __________________________________________ School.

(Please sign name after each statement)

I will respect the code of confidentiality in a listening session, and in the peer listening room.

_____________________________________________ Signature

I will respect usage of my lunch pass.

_____________________________________________ Signature

I understand that, in failing to honour this contract, I may be asked to give up my duties as a peer listener.

_____________________________________________ Signature

Date: ________________________________________
confidentiality guidelines

1. You need to establish a verbal agreement on confidentiality with the young person who has come to see you (see handout 19).

2. You will need to explain to the young person that confidentiality will have to be broken when:
   - The young person’s personal health or safety is at risk.
   - Another person’s health or safety is at risk.

3. You will need to explain to the young person that also in the following situations confidentiality will have to be broken:
   - Disclosure or evidence of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect
   - Threatened suicide
   - Drug misuse that may be life-threatening
   - Pregnancy under the age of 16.

4. What you will need to do if confidentiality has to be broken:
   - Discuss with the young person the need to break confidentiality, and encourage him or her to speak to the project co-ordinator (or another member of the staff support team) themselves. You can offer your support by going with the young person to talk to the staff member.
   - You will need to discuss the situation with the project co-ordinator (or member of the staff support team) as soon as possible. You will need to do this even if the young person who told you about the problem does not want to be there.
   - The project co-ordinator will decide what action is required and who needs to be informed. If you are in any doubt please refer to your school’s child protection guidelines.
   - All of the above should be recorded by the project co-ordinator.
   - You and/or the project co-ordinator should discuss any action taken with the young person involved.
   - If you feel able to, and the young person would like it, you should continue to support the young person after any action has been taken.
verbal confidentiality agreement

I would like to reassure you that what you tell me will remain confidential. This means that I will not talk to anyone outside this room about what you tell me, in such a way that your identity would be known.

Any discussion that I might have with a member of the support team will not include your name, unless there is a particular need to break confidentiality.

I would like to go through these confidentiality guidelines with you to explain what I mean.
For exercise 5, distribute the confidentiality guidelines (handout 18 & 19). These guidelines need to be discussed openly, ensuring that students have a clear understanding of the boundaries of their work and the importance of never promising to keep a secret or information confidential when asked to do so by a service user. The remit in which confidentiality will need to be broken may alter in different settings according to policies and procedures. Your school’s child protection guidelines must always be adhered to.

Go through the guidelines and discuss with the group any circumstances in which confidentiality will need to be broken.

The group can go on to brainstorm situations that they think may be presented to them by service users. Put these up on a flipchart. Discuss each situation in turn and consider whether confidentiality would need to be broken or not.

It is helpful to draw up some role-play situations where confidentiality would need to be broken, so that the peer listener can practise how to draw the session to a close most sensitively, and can encourage the service user to speak to a chosen member of staff who will need to deal with the matter in the most appropriate manner. (This could be done in later training sessions when students have had the opportunity to practise the peer listening skills outlined later in the training programme.) The peer listener can offer to support the service user in approaching a staff member, but must make it clear to the service user that if the latter does not want to talk to a staff member, the peer listener might be obliged to do so.

**exercise 6 (5 minutes)**

Explain that the skills necessary for a peer listener to engage with a service user and enable the service user to explore his or her situation are as follows:

- **Attention-giving**
- **Listening**
- **Active listening, which includes:**
  - reflecting
  - paraphrasing
  - being empathic
  - summarising
  - focusing (helping the service user clarify what the issues are).

These topics are dealt with in the remaining exercises in this session.
exercise 7 (20 minutes)

Attention-giving

Explain that in order for a peer listener to create an environment in which the service user will feel safe enough to discuss their problem, the initial introduction phase is crucial. The peer listener will need to do the following:

1. Prepare a quiet room where there will be no interruptions.
2. Place two chairs of the same size and height, facing each other and approximately four feet apart.

In order to communicate that the peer listener is listening fully to the service user, it is important that she sits facing the service user, leans slightly forward with hands resting open on her lap, keeps eye contact and does not move around or fidget.

As an exercise to illustrate these points and introduce listening skills, ask the group members to split into pairs, A and B, as in Exercise 1 earlier in this session. A is the service user and B is the peer listener. A tells B about something she enjoyed doing at school recently (2 minutes). B does not listen but does not leave the seat.

The trainer asks all the A’s for feedback as to how they feel, and asks them to identify what B was doing to convey the message that they were uninterested and not listening. Write all the responses on a flipchart.

Roles are then switched but this time the peer listener listens attentively to the service user. The trainer then asks for feedback as to how the service user is feeling and what the peer listener was doing to convey that she was listening attentively. Write these responses on a flipchart.

Use this opportunity to talk about non-verbal communication and how peer listeners need to be aware of their body language and the messages they convey to the service user without even talking.

lunch (60 minutes)
exercise 8 (30 minutes)

**Asking questions**

Explain that an essential part of the peer listening process is knowing when and how to ask questions that will facilitate the process. The peer listener needs to help the service user to explore the situation, identify the problem, gain a deeper understanding of the situation, and decide on what action needs to be taken.

Explain that to facilitate the conversation the peer listener will need to ask open-ended questions, that is, questions that cannot be answered with a yes or no or a one-word answer. The latter are known as closed questions. Open questions that will lead to a service user disclosing more information are questions that begin with:

- What .......... ?
- When .......... ?
- Where .......... ?
- Who .......... ?
- How .......... ?

Avoid questions beginning with ‘why’, as they can give the impression that the peer listener thinks or feels that the service user is to blame for a course of action or for their feelings.

Explain that peer listeners need to be sensitive to the circumstances in which it is helpful to ask questions and/or give feedback. Reassure the group that during this early stage in the learning process students may find themselves interrupting the service user inappropriately, or ask too many questions, or ask two questions at a time, or not feel comfortable with a silence and therefore ask questions too quickly.

As an exercise in asking open-ended questions, ask the group to split into groups of three. A is the peer listener, B is the service user and C is the observer. A spends two minutes talking to B about her hobbies, using both open-ended and closed questions. B then feeds back which questions helped her open up and explore the subject and which closed the conversation down. C notes down these examples of open-ended and closed questions and can then offer any additional information about the questioning process she observed. Repeat the exercise so that each student has a turn being the peer listener, service user and observer. At the end of the exercise ask the groups to feed back their examples of open-ended and closed questions and write them on a flipchart.
exercise 9 (30 minutes)

Listening

Explain that listening attentively is one of the most essential skills in peer listening. In order to listen attentively, the peer listener needs to:

1. Concentrate on what is being said
2. Listen to how it is being said
3. Listen to the feelings that are behind what is being said.

The peer listener needs to be aware of what can get in the way of listening attentively so that such obstacles can be avoided. These include:

1. Thinking of how to respond to what is being said
2. Trying to think of a solution
3. Asking too many questions
4. Passing judgement on the service user or on what is being said
5. Making assumptions about what is being said

This exercise involves students giving feedback about other students in front of the whole group. If you feel that the students are not ready for this open discussion and may find the exercise threatening, you can adapt it so that feedback is given only between the two students carrying out the exercise. They could then, as a dyad, give feedback to the whole group concerning the things that made them feel listened or not listened to.

Ask the group members to split into different pairs, with one person being a service user and the other a peer listener. Each service user talks for three minutes about a problem they have had recently (something they feel comfortable discussing in a group learning exercise). The trainer stops the conversation after three minutes and asks the service users whether they felt the peer listeners were listening attentively.

Ask each service user to identify what the peer listener was doing to indicate she was listening attentively. Write these responses on a flipchart. If the service user did not feel listened to, ask him or her what the peer listener could have done to improve those skills. Ask the rest of the group for additional ideas. Roles are reversed and the exercise is repeated.
exercise 10 (30 minutes)

Reflecting

Explain that reflecting is when the peer listener responds to what is being said by the service user by picking up the feelings behind what is being said and reflecting that back to the service user. This process will encourage the service user to discuss her feelings further. For example:

Service user: “I came home yesterday and found my sister had taken my new jumper again. She keeps doing it and never gets told off.”

Peer listener: “It sounds as though you’re feeling angry.”

Write a series of statements (prepared in advance), similar to the example from the service user given above, on a flipchart. Ask group members to split into pairs and to identify the feelings behind what is being said in each statement and a response that could be given to the service user that reflects the feelings behind what is being said. The group come back together and share their ideas.

break (15 minutes)

exercise 11 (30 minutes)

Paraphrasing

Explain that paraphrasing is the process whereby the peer listener identifies the most important content of what is being said in a statement, puts this into her own words and feeds it back to the service user in a concise form. By doing this, the service user knows that she is being listened to and will be encouraged to talk further. This process also helps the service user clarify what the problem is. For example:

Service user: “I get home from school and I’ve loads of homework to do, and then I have to help with the dinner and with putting my baby sister to bed, and then I have to go to bed.”

Peer listener: “It seems that you have very little free time after school.”

Ask group members to split into threes. A is the service user, B is the peer listener, and C is an observer. A tells B about what she did over the weekend (5 minutes). B listens attentively and uses skills in open questioning, reflecting and paraphrasing to help A move on in the discussion. C observes the process and notes down each time she hears an open question, reflecting comment and/or some paraphrasing. At the end of five minutes the observer feeds back her findings to A and B. The group come together and discuss the outcome and any difficulties. Roles can then be rotated so that each student has a turn in each of the roles.
exercise 12 (35 minutes)

Empathy

Explain that listening in an empathic way means that the peer listener has to put herself in the position of the service user, understand the problem from the user’s viewpoint and be able to convey that understanding to the service user in her response. In giving an empathic response, the peer listener will give feedback that relates both to the feelings being expressed and to the content of what is being said, in such a way that the service user knows the peer listener understands him or her. For example:

Service user: “I just can’t cope any more. My GCSE exams are in two months time and my parents are on my back all the time. I feel that if I don’t get really high grades I’ll have failed. I can’t concentrate, I’ve been skipping lessons, and it all feels out of control.”

Peer listener: “It sounds as though this is a very difficult and stressful time and you are feeling under a lot of pressure, which is making things even worse.”

The first part of this exercise aims to display simple examples of:

- Identification
- Sympathy
- Lack of sympathy
- Empathy.

Work through the following examples of each of the above with the group:

- Identification: “I understand because the same sort of thing has happened to me.”
- Sympathy: “I don’t think that’s very fair of him.”
- Lack of sympathy: “Couldn’t you have done something to sort it out?”
- Empathy: “Let’s explore what that means for you.”

In groups of three, with each person taking a turn to be a service user, a peer listener and an observer, work through the following scenarios identifying empathy, sympathy, lack of sympathy, or identification in each of the possible responses. Discuss your own reactions to each of the responses. What might you have said in each situation?
The main points to elicit are as follows:

- **Our own experiences are not enough to make us an effective helper.**
- **Our experiences can make us able or unable to identify and/or sympathise.**
- **Responses based on sympathy and identification rely on the peer listener’s feelings, not the service user’s feelings.**
- **Peer listeners can make helpful responses to service users using empathy.**
- **The purpose of a peer listener’s empathic response is to demonstrate to the service user that her or his feelings have been appreciated.**
The second part of this exercise is empathy practice. Ask the group to split into pairs and take turns in being the peer listener and service user. Ask the service users to talk for three minutes about something light but to include an element of emotion when talking, for example holiday delays but had a good time in the end, TV programmes, moving house, etc. Peer listeners should respond appropriately, referring to the service user’s feelings. After three minutes the service user can feed back to the peer listener the responses she felt were empathic. Repeat the exercise with the students reversing roles.

**Exercise 13 (20 minutes)**

*Summarising*

Explain that summarising is similar to paraphrasing, except that the peer listener reflects back to the service user what has been said in a number of statements. In paraphrasing, the peer listener reflects back what was said in one statement. In summarising, she brings together the main points that have been expressed to her, which may also include the feelings that have been described to her.

This process ensures that the peer listener has really understood what she has been told, gives the service user the opportunity to correct her, and helps the service user have a clearer perspective of his or her situation.

As an exercise, divide the group into pairs with one student taking on the role of peer listener and the other that of service user. The service user talks for three minutes about a recent school problem. At the end of three minutes the peer listener summarises to the service user what she heard.

The service user then tells the peer listener whether she thinks it is a true summary of what was said and feeds back anything that may have been missed out. Repeat the exercise with the roles reversed. Ask the group for feedback and discuss what the difficulties were and what helped.

*End the session with an opportunity for questions.*
session 3 (2 hours 10 minutes)

aims of the session

1. Introduce students to Stage 3 in the peer listening process – action.
2. Discuss the structure of the peer listening session.
3. Students to practise counselling skills in the context of a peer listening session.

exercise 1 (10 minutes)
A short exercise to recap on the peer listening skills discussed in the last session.
Using a flipchart, ask students to identify the different aspects of active listening and the meaning of each example.

exercise 2 (10 minutes)
Clarify that it is not the role of a peer listener to give advice or tell the service user what to do. By using active listening skills, peer listeners will have learnt how to listen attentively to the students using the service. In some situations this may be all the peer listener will need to do in order to help and support the service user. In others it will be necessary for the peer listener to take the service user through the process of problem solving, in order for the service user to clarify what action he or she wants to take in working towards a solution to the problem. This is referred to as Stage 3 in the peer listening process.

Summarise the peer listening process as follows:

Stage 1 Exploration
During this stage the peer listener starts to build a relationship with the service user and helps her to explore the problem by using active listening skills. This process will lead on to the next stage.

Stage 2 Understanding
During this stage the service user is helped to see the problem from a more objective viewpoint. This can lead to a greater understanding of the situation and the service user can begin to identify goals to work towards.
Stage 3 Action:

- The peer listener helps the service user to think about possible courses of action to reach the identified goals.
- The consequences of different courses of action are considered and the service user is helped to identify which course of action would lead to the identified goal.
- It can be helpful for the service user to have one or two clear tasks to try following on from the session. These tasks will be a step towards enabling the service user to reach her goals.
- This can then be evaluated at a subsequent session.

exercise 3 (10 minutes)
This exercise is about the structure of the listening session. Clarify that the students will have up to, say, 30 minutes in each session with the service user (this may need to be altered according to the time constraints of the school day). During these 30 minutes there will need to be a clear beginning, middle and end to the session. In summary, the session will need to be structured as follows:

- Prepare the room in advance, ensuring privacy and avoidance of interruptions
- Introduce yourself and specify the length of the session.
- Discuss confidentiality
- Explore the problem, using active listening skills
- Help the service user to identify his or her goals
- Talk through possible courses of action and their consequences
- Identify tasks if appropriate
- Establish whether the service user needs or would like a further appointment
- End the session.
exercise 4 (10 minutes)
The students will now need a lot of opportunity to practise being a peer listener and to go through a whole support session with a service user. It may be helpful to summarise with the students all the components of what is needed to conduct a session.

On a flipchart brainstorm the following:

- Qualities of a peer listener (being non-judgemental, valuing the service user, and being a good and empathic listener need to be part of this discussion)
- The role of the peer listener
- Confidentiality
- Setting up the peer listening session
- Active listening skills
- Open and closed questions
- The three stages of a peer listening session.

exercise 5 (90 minutes)
This exercise involves students taking turns in being peer listeners and service users in different role-play situations.

Below are examples of role-plays that can be put on separate cards. Trainers can produce further material for role-plays in accordance with issues that are likely to be brought to a peer listener in a particular school. These issues may have been highlighted in your needs analysis, as discussed in Section 3.

Each time a role-play takes place, give the service user a different role to play and ensure that those students taking on the role of the service user 'de-role' at the end of the exercise.

It is important to include a wide variety of role-plays during the course of the training so that the students have the opportunity of experiencing different problems and emotions that might be presented to them.
Ask for two volunteers. One student plays the part of the peer listener and the other the part of the service user. Ask the service user to go outside the room and present her with a role-play scenario. Ask the peer listener to set up the room for a listening session. The rest of the group sit in a circle around the role-play. Try to give each student at least two opportunities to be a peer listener and a service user during the remaining training sessions. These training sessions will be important in your assessment of each student's suitability to be a peer listener. Try to ensure that the peer listener works within the time constraints she would have in a real listening session, and that the session is ended properly.

If the peer listener gets stuck during the role-play, stop the session and ask the observers for suggestions as to how to move the session on. At the end of each role-play ask the service user for feedback and focus on how helpful the process was, whether she felt listened to and whether the session had provided the support that was being sought. Then ask the peer listener how she felt the session went and in which areas it would be helpful to have further ideas on how to proceed. Ensure that the issue of confidentiality is discussed and students recognise when it may be necessary to break confidentiality. Also note when it may be appropriate for a service user to be referred to a professional agency.

Role-plays

1. You are 15. You are new to the school and have recently moved into the area. You cannot keep up with the work and have no friends at the school. You are feeling really low. You think the easiest way out is to start truanting.

2. You are 12. There are three students who keep laughing at you and teasing you because you wear glasses. You feel really upset and do not know who to turn to.

3. You are 14. You think you are pregnant and feel terrified. You do not want to tell your parents and you are not sure if it is safe to talk to a peer listener.

4. You are 16. Your exams are in three months’ time. You are panicking because you cannot concentrate on your work. Your parents are getting on your nerves. You feel like dropping out of school.

5. There is a bunch of boys selling cannabis at the school gates. You are not sure whether to buy some and try it.

End the session with an opportunity for questions.
session 4 (2 hours)

**aims of the session**

1. Explain the role of the staff support team.
2. Explain all the administrative systems and recording forms.
3. Give all students more practice in listening.

**exercise 1 (10 minutes)**
Explain the support and supervision systems that you want to set up in your school. An explanation of how the staff support team debrief peer listeners is covered in the staff training at the end of this section.

Arrange for your next training session to involve both students and staff.

**exercise 2 (20 minutes)**
Introduce the recording form (see handout 23) that you will use in your project to briefly record the content of the listening session. Explain all the administrative systems that you will use in your project (see Sections 2 and 6).

**exercise 3 (90 minutes)**
Continue with role-plays as described in Session 3 and develop more role-plays to meet the needs of the students in your school that were identified in your needs analysis.
session 5 (2 hours)

aims of the session

1. Staff members and students to be introduced to each other and begin to get to know one another.

2. Staff support team and students to experience the process of a listening session and then a debriefing session. (See Section 5.3 for an explanation of debriefing.)

exercise 1 (5 minutes)
Outline the aims of this session. Explain that in order for staff and students to get to know each other a little better and help move away from the staff–student relationship, you will introduce the following exercise.

Introduce yourself by name as you wish to be known by group members. (How staff members will want to be addressed by the students will vary.)

Alongside your name, state two ways in which you hope the peer listening service will affect the school community. Go round the circle asking group members to do the same, or ask for volunteers to start the process. Ensure that all group members contribute.

exercise 2 (optional) (20 minutes)
Depending on the ratio of staff to students, divide the group so that one staff member is with at least two students. Give each group a large sheet of paper and a marker.

Each group spends five minutes brainstorming ideas for raising awareness about the project across the school. All agreed ideas are written on the paper. Each group elects a spokesperson to feed back the ideas to the whole group. The whole group come together and the spokespersons give their feedback. Write the ideas up on a flipchart and suggest that this material could be used to outline the public relations work for the project by students and staff at a later date. Engaging both staff and peer listeners in this process will help both groups to feel joint ownership of the project.
**exercise 3 (95 minutes)**

Ask for volunteers to be a peer listener, a service user and a staff member who will debrief the peer listener after the listening session. Ask the peer listener to set up the chairs for a session. The service user goes with the trainer who will give the service user a role-play situation to act out. The rest of the group sit around the role-play. The listening session is enacted for 10 to 15 minutes.

The peer listener ends the session as practised in previous training sessions and then goes to debrief with the staff support team member for 10 minutes. The peer listener completes the recording sheet (see Section 6).

Ask the peer listener, service user and staff member to reflect on how they felt in their role. Invite any further ideas from the rest of the group. Ask the service user to de-role and get another group of volunteers to enact another role-play. If possible, divide up the group to ensure that each staff member has an opportunity to debrief a peer listener.

Repeat the exercise with new volunteers in the time available for the training session.

At the end of the session, ask whether there are any questions and decide with the group whether a further session of a similar content would be helpful.
**session 6 (2 hours)**

**aims of the session**

1. Provide the opportunity to practise more role-play
2. Discuss with each student in turn how they assess themselves in relation to becoming a peer listener
3. Evaluate the training course
4. Identify further training needs.

Divide the group into pairs or threes to continue with practising role-plays (exercise 2) while you speak to each of the students (exercise 1).

**exercise 1 (60 minutes)**

Discuss with each student in turn the following issues:

- How she feels about taking on the role of peer listener
- Whether she feels she has the skills and/or has received sufficient training to take on the role of peer listener
- Whether she would like more training or a different role within the service.

Once all students have been interviewed, let them know by which date they will be informed as to whether you assess them as ready to take on the role of peer listener.

**exercise 2 (90 minutes)**

Provide more scenarios for role-play if this has been identified as necessary.

Role-plays to follow the same structure as described in earlier training sessions.

**exercise 3 (15 minutes)**

Ask students to complete an evaluation of the training programme (see Section 6.2 for an example).

**exercise 4 (15 minutes)**

Thank the students for their commitment and hard work throughout the training course. Tell them of a date for the presentation ceremony of certificates for all students who have completed the training programme. Leave time for any questions and farewells.
You will need to assess, together with the volunteer staff group, the training they will need to be able to carry out their role. Early in the implementation process, an agreement as to when staff will have time to undertake such training must be reached.

The contents of a training programme for staff can follow a similar format to that for the peer listeners, but need to include their role in debriefing the peer listeners after listening sessions. It is essential that a component of the training programme is set aside for the staff support team and students to undertake some training together.

The training programme should include the following:

- **What is peer listening?**
- **Role of the peer listening service**
- **Role of the staff support team**
- **Confidentiality guidelines**
- **Basic peer listening skills as identified in the peer listener training programme**
- **The peer listening model used by the students**
- **How to debrief the peer listeners**
- **Referral procedures**
- **Administration procedures.**

The time needed to train the staff will depend on the needs of the group and how much experience in peer listening the staff team already possess. As a guide, at least 10 hours’ training will be necessary.
Debriefing

This aspect of staff training is crucial to ensure that:

- The staff support team feel comfortable and skilled in supporting the peer listeners
- Peer listeners feel comfortable in sharing with the support staff how they feel after a listening session
- Peer listeners discuss the content of the session in a confidential manner and get any necessary guidance on how to deal with a situation.

The trainer needs to explain that in order to debrief the peer listener the staff member needs to listen attentively and ensure the following process has taken place:

- The peer listener has had the opportunity to give a summary of the listening session to the staff member while observing the confidentiality guidelines (see Handout 17)
- The peer listener has had the opportunity to say how she feels following the session
- The peer listener is not carrying any anxiety following the session
- The peer listener has had the opportunity to discuss with the staff member ideas on how to take a case forward, what action has been agreed and goals that have been identified. Staff members may need to assess with the peer listener if referral to an outside agency is appropriate
- The peer listener has completed any necessary recording forms (see Section 6).

It is important that the staff support members use their counselling skills in supporting the peer listeners, and encourage the peer listeners to think through ideas on how to help their service users rather than telling them what to do.
5.5 receptionist training

Figure 3. Areas to cover in training to be a receptionist.

**Preliminaries**

Before the training programme begins, make sure that students know what is expected of them and the commitment they will need to finish the training.

At this point, discuss the fact that the students will be asked to evaluate their own suitability for the post of receptionist once the training is complete. Explain the process of assessment by the trainer, and emphasise that it will always be possible to find an alternative role in the project for any student who is not successful in the training.

**Training methods**

Try to combine training methods and use both information-giving and experiential exercises. Include some ice-breaker exercises, brainstorming exercises and role-plays.

**training programme for receptionists**

The time scale for the receptionists’ training programme that follows allows for the training of 12 students with one trainer. The programme takes place over five sessions, each lasting 45 minutes. End each session with an opportunity for questions.
session 1 (45 minutes)

aims of the session

1. Group members to be introduced to each other and to begin the process of forming a group identity.
2. Enable the students to understand the aims of the peer listening service.
3. Examine the role of the receptionist.

exercise 1 (10 minutes)
Group members sit in a circle. Go round the circle and ask each member to say their name and something about it. This could be in relation to whether they like or dislike their name, by what name they would like to be referred to in the group, or even the origin of their name. It is often helpful for the trainer to start the exercise.

exercise 2 (10 minutes)
Ask the group to brainstorm the question ‘what is peer listening?’ and write all the responses on a flipchart. Once the brainstorm has been completed, discuss each idea in turn. On completion of the exercise, introduce any areas that were missed and correct any misunderstandings about the service.

exercise 3 (5 minutes)
Explain the roles of a peer listener and the staff support team.

exercise 4 (5 minutes)
Ask the group to brainstorm the question ‘what is the role of a receptionist?’ and write all the responses on a flipchart. Discuss the points raised.

exercise 5 (10 minutes)
Ask the group to divide into pairs, preferably with someone they do not know very well. Ask each pair to discuss ‘what is the role of the receptionist in a peer listening service?’ and write down their ideas (5 minutes). The group come back together. A spokesperson from each pair then feeds back their ideas to the whole group. Write these on the flipchart and discuss them (5 minutes).

It is important to emphasise that the role of the receptionist is not to counsel a potential service user, but to facilitate her to make an appointment to see a peer listener, or to give the student any relevant information.
session 2 (45 minutes)

aims of the session

1. Introduce the skills necessary to be a receptionist.
2. Discuss the confidentiality guidelines (see Handout 17) and stress the importance of confidentiality.

exercise 1 (5 minutes)
Recap on the previous session and answer any questions.

exercise 2 (25 minutes)
Ask the group to brainstorm ‘What are the skills necessary to be a receptionist in the peer listening service?’ and write all the responses on a flipchart. Discuss each idea in turn with the group. Ensure that those listed below are included.

- Receptionists are welcoming. Discuss and/or brainstorm verbal and non-verbal forms of communication and how these forms of communication may affect the potential service user.
- Receptionists are efficient. Discuss and/or brainstorm what the receptionist will need to do to be efficient, for example to be punctual, neat and tidy when making appointments, to maintain and use the diary and to follow procedures.
- Be positive, sensitive, non-judgemental and confident.
- Be able to deal with an emotional student.
- Be able to set priorities for oneself.
- Respect the potential service user and the need for confidentiality.
- Be able to deal with a situation where a student displays challenging behaviour.

exercise 3 (10 minutes)
Distribute the confidentiality guidelines (see Handout 17). Discuss them with the group, clarify what confidentiality means, and emphasise the need to respect it at all times (see Section 5.3, Session 2, exercise 5).
session 3 (45 minutes)

aims of the session

1. Introduce all the administrative forms (see Section 6).
2. Give students experience in the role of the receptionist.

exercise 1 (5 minutes)
Recap on the previous session and answer any questions.

exercise 2 (10 minutes)
Introduce each form in turn and answer any questions.

exercise 3 (30 minutes)
Explain what a role-play is.

Divide the group into two equal groups. Explain to one group that each of them will take on the role of a receptionist waiting in an identified room to make an appointment for a student. Explain to the other group that each of them will take on the role of a potential service user. Give each student in the latter group a slip of paper bearing a different brief; for example, one may be hesitant about using the service, another may be feeling very upset, and so on.

Ask each student from one group to pair up with a student from the other group, preferably someone they do not know well. Ask each ‘service user’ to go and see their partner and enact making an appointment (3 minutes). Ask the ‘receptionists’ to use the forms introduced earlier in the session.

When the task has been completed, ask each potential service user in turn how they found the experience, what helped them feel confident in their receptionist and the service, and for any changes they think would be helpful for the receptionist to make (10 minutes). Repeat this process with the receptionists. Ask the students to repeat the exercise but this time reversing the roles so that receptionists become potential service users and vice versa.

exercise 4
Collect in all forms so that any mistakes or misunderstandings can be discussed at the next session.
session 4 (45 minutes)

aims of the session

1. Reinforce the skills learnt by the students.
2. Deliver a clear understanding of all the administrative procedures.

exercise 1 (15 minutes)
Recap on the previous session, answer any questions and give feedback on the completion of the set of forms used in the role-play during Session 3, including any suggestions for modifying the form.

exercise 2 (25 minutes)
Repeat the role-play performed in Session 3, but give the potential service users a different brief so that as many situations as possible can be experienced by the students.
session 5 (45 minutes)

aims of the session

1. Establish whether the students feel confident to go forward and be receptionists.
2. Provide the opportunity for student self-evaluation in relation to becoming a receptionist.

exercise 1 (15 minutes)
Recap on the whole course and answer any questions or concerns.

exercise 2 (25 minutes)
Interview each student individually, establishing how they assess themselves in relation to the receptionist’s task. Students can practise role-play when not being interviewed.

exercise 3 (5 minutes)
Ask all the students to complete a training evaluation form (adapt the peer listeners’ evaluation form in Section 6.2). Tell the students when they will know whether they have been accepted to be receptionists. All successful students are asked to sign a contract (adapt the peer listener contract in Section 5.2).

Arrange a presentation ceremony to award certificates to all students who have completed the training course.
section 5  setting up a training programme

5.6 launching the service

It is important, both to the recognition of the students’ commitment to the project and to the status of the project within the school, to hold an official launch.

Much work will have been done before you arrive at this stage. By now, you will have completed the following tasks:

- Identify the project co-ordinator
- Assess the needs of the students in your school – to include student participation
- Establish the aims and objectives of your project
- Carry out an audit of the pastoral care systems in your school
- Draw up the project implementation plan
- Ensure that you have the commitment of governors, senior management, staff, students, parents and carers
- Establish that you have the resources necessary for project implementation
- Launch your public relations plan
- Commission your training providers and plan your training programme
- Recruit students for training
- Deliver the training programme
- Appoint peer listeners and receptionists.

The launch of the project can combine the presentation of certificates to peer listeners and receptionists with a public relations exercise. If you decide to target specific year groups to receive support from the peer listeners, it would be appropriate to hold an assembly with those year groups. It is helpful to launch the project at the beginning of a school term so that the momentum can be built on throughout the term.
The assembly can serve as a helpful platform to tell students about the service that will be offered, how it will operate, confidentiality issues and matters that may be brought to the service, and to identify who the peer listeners are. You could involve governors, the head and deputy head teachers, important members of the local community (e.g. the mayor), parents and the local press in the launch.

The importance the school gives to the project will be symbolised in the launch process. This will serve as a beginning to the important role that public relations will serve in the subsequent success of your project. (See Section 4.1 regarding public relations.)
section 5 setting up a training programme
Monitoring and evaluation may not feel like a priority when you are first setting up a peer support project. It is, however, a necessary process if you are going to be able to assess whether the project is meeting its objectives and the needs of the students for whom it has been set up. The process may feel less of a burden if it is simplified by drawing up systems where data is collated systematically.

The process will help you in reviewing and developing the service in line with the evaluation outcomes. It is helpful to gain different perspectives in your evaluations so that a broad view is obtained. This will be looked at in more detail later in the section.

Monitoring and evaluation data will also provide you with evidence of the benefits of the service, which will help you both in funding applications and in addressing concerns that may be expressed by people both within and external to the school community.

Monitoring and evaluation should be planned from the beginning of the implementation process in order to ensure that any necessary information can be collected. It may be helpful to separate the two processes of monitoring and evaluation, although there will of course be some overlap.

### 6.1 monitoring

The administrative systems illustrated in this section are not prescriptive and should be adapted to meet the needs of your project. Monitoring refers to the systematic collation of information that can include the following:

- Numbers of students who apply to be peer listeners
- Demographic information about the students both providing and using the service, for example age, gender, ethnicity, year group
- Numbers of students who receive training
- Numbers of students who complete training
- Numbers of students who go on to be peer listeners and receptionists
- Numbers of students using the service
- Issues that service users raise in sessions.
monitoring forms

If you use a receptionist system, it is possible for receptionists to record basic details when a student drops in to see a peer listener. Otherwise the peer listener can document the monitoring information. The following forms will help monitor your project.

1. Peer listening referral log (handout 20). To maintain confidentiality, each service user should be given a reference number that is then used on all paperwork.

2. Making appointments. You may decide to have a simple appointments system for peer listeners available to service a drop-in. Receptionists or peer listeners could operate the system. Appointment cards can be given to students (using reference number instead of student name) if they are not going to see a peer listener straight away or if they want to make a follow-up time to see the peer listener.

3. Basic service user information (handout 21). If you do not record basic information at the time of the appointment, the peer listener can do this at the time of the support session. It is helpful to record such information so that you can effectively monitor the use of the service and identify any emerging patterns.

4. Monitoring forms for each term (handout 22). This system will help the project co-ordinator obtain monitoring information in a systematic and time-efficient manner.

5. Recording support sessions (handout 23). A simple form can be completed after every support session using the reference number allocated (see Handout 20). This records the problem brought to the session by the student, the action taken or suggested, and any general comments. It can be used as a basis for discussion in a debriefing session between a peer listener and a member of the staff support team. It can also be used to provide an analysis of the nature of problems (see Handout 24) brought to the support service for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

6. Issues brought to peer listeners (handout 24). This recording form can be used to monitor the problems that have been presented to peer listeners. It will provide helpful evaluation material in relation to checking whether these problems relate to those initially identified in your needs analysis, and your aims and objectives for the project. It will also help in evolving training needs that can be addressed when planning your training programme.

Storing information

All information about support sessions or appointments must be kept securely in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality. Access should be strictly controlled.
**CONFIDENTIAL**

**peer listening referral log**

This form can be used to give a student a reference number

*It must be locked away at all times*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ref. no.</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Peer listener</th>
<th>Date</th>
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Peer listening project

Gender (please circle): male / female

Have you used the peer listening service before? yes / no

Do you wish to see the same peer listener (if possible)? yes / no

Please state the name of your previous peer listener: _____________________

Information on this form is confidential to the people involved in running the service unless there are circumstances in which confidentiality needs to be broken. This will be discussed between you and your peer listener.
Peer listening project: end-of-term report

Month: __________________________ Date: __________________________

Number of appointments made: __________________________

Total number of students seen: __________________________

Number of male students seen: __________________________

Number of female students seen: __________________________

Number of service users in:

Yr 7 ______ Yr 8 ______ Yr 9 ______ Yr 10 ______ Yr 11 ______

Ethnic origins of service users (numbers):

AB Asian – Bangladeshi
AC Asian – Chinese
AI Asian – Indian
AO Asian – any other group
AP Asian – Pakistani
BA Black – African
BC Black – Caribbean
BR Black – any other group
WI White – Irish
WR White – any other group
WU White – UK

Others - please specify _____________________________________________
# CONFIDENTIAL

**PEER LISTENING SERVICE**

## Recording Form

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Class</th>
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<tr>
<th>Ref. no.</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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</table>

**Problem**

- **Action**

- **Comments**

- **Peer listener**
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<tr>
<th>Year group(s)</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
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<td>Other problems</td>
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6.2 evaluation

There are several ways in which evaluation will help you in developing your project. Continuous evaluation is not only useful in determining the quality of service offered by peer listeners, but it also enables you to:

- Evaluate whether the project is meeting its aims and objectives
- Identify and resolve problems in the project
- Evaluate the training of peer listeners and members of the staff support team
- Evaluate the benefits of the service for peer listeners, service users, staff and the whole school community
- Plan future developments in the light of evaluative feedback
- Demonstrate the efficiency of the service, both qualitatively and quantitatively
- Promote your service
- Confirm areas of good practice.

The extent to which you will be able to carry out evaluation will depend on time and resources. Examples given in this section are based on using questionnaires as tools for collating information. In order to make use of the information collected in questionnaires, some guidance on how to analyse and interpret descriptive data is given in Section 6.4. You may decide that you would rather use a diverse methodology for collecting data. For example, you may choose to have discussion groups with peer supporters and members of the staff support team. For the general school population, you could ask peer supporters to carry out interviews with the students about whether they know about the project and whether they would use it. This would be best done using a random sample, for example by picking every nth person from the register for each class, and doing this openly so that everyone knows that the people interviewed have been selected at random, not because they have used the system.

It is important to involve the peer listeners in deciding how and when you will carry out your evaluation systems. They can help you devise the monitoring and evaluation systems you will use in your school. Once your systems have been established, it is important that you review them on a regular basis, for example at the end of each term.
The schools involved in The Mental Health Foundation's Peer Support Programme used a combination of evaluation systems and found the process informative, essential for development and even enjoyable!

This section provides you with examples of evaluation material in relation to the following:

- Peer listeners' perceptions after being involved in providing a peer support service
- Members of the staff support team after being involved in the peer support service
- Peer listeners' evaluation of their training
- Service users’ experience of the peer support service
- Students in the general school population (may include service users and students who have not used the service)
- Peer listeners' and receptionists’ evaluation of the service
- Staff not involved in the project
- School governors
- Parents/carers.

**Measuring against objectives**

In planning an evaluation of the service, you should consider your aims and objectives. For example, if the service is intended to reduce incidents of bullying in a school, you will need to collect information about the number of incidents reported to staff before and after the introduction of the service to the school. It is also helpful to collect staff and students’ perceptions of bullying before and after the implementation of your project.

If you are looking to reduce non-attendance, you should discuss with the staff team the best way of comparing attendance figures before the service is in operation and then once the service is up and running.
case study 14
St Angela's Ursuline School - measuring against aims and objectives

This is an illustration of how the school measured the outcomes against one of the aims and objectives for the project.

The key aim of the project was to enhance the profile of mental health awareness needs within the context of a successful inner-city school.

Alongside other aims and objectives it intended to:

- Develop practical strategies for stress management
- Enable all those involved in the project to be aware of the early signs of stress and feel empowered to act upon these signs.

The monitoring data collected by the school illustrated the following outcomes.

Outcome results

Of the 48 service users seen by peer listeners during the course of a year:

- Fourteen went on to have a learning mentor from the Excellence in Cities programme, showing that a peer support programme can help with early identification of issues.
- Two service users moved on to outside counselling and other professional help.
- Three service users had input from the school's Learning Support Unit, mainly on organisation of coursework.
- The other 29 service users resolved the issues involved with the peer listeners.

During the operation of the project, the Heads of Year for Years 7, 8 and 9 all reported a fall in the number of students coming to them with what may be characterised as petty problems with peers.

During the same period, the Excellence in Cities mentoring programme took on 20 students that the peer supporters had not worked with.

These outcomes illustrate how the project successfully met its aim to raise awareness about the early signs of stress, and provide strategies for support through peer support and via school structures and external agencies where appropriate.
training evaluation

An essential factor in whether your project will be successful is the training that the peer listeners receive. This has been covered in detail in Section 5. An evaluation of the training is crucial so you know if the students feel confident to take on the role of peer listener, the strengths and weaknesses of the training programme and what changes may be necessary.

When monitoring and evaluating a peer listening service, the key problems are:

- **How to maintain confidentiality when recording personal details or conducting satisfaction surveys**

- **How to avoid presenting service users with offputting amounts of paperwork.**

The example in handout 25 was used by Wanstead High School.
evaluation of training for peer listeners

It would be of great value to further training courses if you could take a few minutes to complete the following questionnaire. Your feedback will help us evaluate what has been most helpful in the training and what else it may be useful to include in future courses.

1. Which parts of the course did you find most helpful?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

2. Which parts of the course did you most enjoy?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

3. Do you feel the training equipped you with the skills necessary to be a peer listener?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

4. If your answer to the above question was ‘no’, what else do you think should be included in the course?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

5. What changes, if any, would you suggest making to the course?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

6. Do you have any comments to make regarding the length of the sessions, and the number of sessions you had in your training?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
7. On a scale of 0 – 10, where 0 is low and 10 is high, at which number would you rate your satisfaction with the training?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>poor</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. Would you like more training?  Yes □ No □

9. If you would, when would you like it, and what areas would you like to cover?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

10. Any other comments? (Please continue overleaf if necessary)

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
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Thank you for your help
section 6 monitoring and evaluation

6.3 satisfaction with the service

Clearly, of particular relevance is the effect the service has had on:

- Service users
- Peer listeners and receptionists
- The general student population
- Staff and governors
- Parents/carers.

Service users

Questionnaires can be used to determine the levels of satisfaction for this group of students. Confidentiality needs to be considered in assessing the views of users of the service, as does the level of documentation involved in making an appointment and attending a support session.

Different methods of collecting service user information include issuing a feedback form at a time the peer listener feels is most appropriate. You might also consider asking all students in the school to participate in a self-selecting survey, which would also preserve confidentiality.

The issue of confidentiality

Recognising the sensitivity of the issues, service users will probably be reluctant to answer direct questions about their use of the service. It may be better to allow them to feed back this information anonymously. The peer listener could hand out forms at the end of her work with the student, and a box be put in a safe place used by peer listeners and receptionists where completed forms can be placed.

Alternatively, a form could be handed to the service user at the end of the first session (bearing in mind she may not want or need to come for a further session), asking her to complete and return the form when she feels it is most appropriate to do so.
Feedback as part of a research exercise

If you feel the individual method of feedback will not work, you can obtain feedback through devising an anonymous questionnaire about the project for one or more whole year groups. The questionnaire can incorporate questions about whether a student has used the service or would want to use the service and satisfaction with the service.

The examples in handouts 26 and 27 were used by Wanstead High School.
service user questionnaire

As you have just used the peer support scheme, we would like you to help us make the scheme as useful as possible by providing the following information.

Date:   Year group:   Gender:   M  F

1. How did you find out about the scheme?
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

2. Did you see a peer support worker on your own or with a friend(s)?
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

3. Whose idea was it to visit the scheme (yours, parent, teacher, friend, etc.)?
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

4. Did you see the peer support worker attached to your tutor group? Yes  No
   __________________________________________________

5. How many times have you used the scheme?
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

6. How long (approximately) did you spend with the peer support worker?
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

7. Please comment on how you found the scheme (friendly, helpful, etc.)
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

8. Any suggestions as to how we can improve the scheme?
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

ALL INFORMATION GIVEN WILL BE TREATED CONFIDENTIALLY
playground questionnaire

1. Have you heard of the school’s peer support scheme?
   No     move on to next pupil
   Yes     move on to question 2

2. What do you know about the peer support scheme?
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

3. Have you talked to any of the peer support workers?
   Yes     move on to question 4
   No     move on to question 5

4. What issues did you discuss?
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

5. What issues do you think pupils of your age might discuss?
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

6. Do you think that it is a good idea?
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

Thank you for your help
peer listeners and receptionists

Central to the effectiveness of your project will be the peer listeners and receptionists running the service. It is essential to create a system where these students have the opportunity to actively contribute to the project’s development and take responsibility to instigate change. There will be opportunity for this through the development meetings and supervision sessions you set up (Section 2.2). A further systematic way of collating information is through questionnaires. It is helpful to go through this process at least once a year. Handout 28 gives an example of an evaluation form.

the general student population

It is important to also gather information from students not actively involved in the service also. You will need to know whether the service is known about in all year groups that you are targeting, understand how the service is perceived, know it makes a difference to students who have not actively used the service but may want to in the future, and hear about any suggestions for change.

This process is time-consuming and you may decide to carry out this work with a few students in each year group through discussion groups, for example in PSHE lessons, or by using questionnaires. Handout 29 gives an example used by Kingsbury High School with all students in Key Stage 3.
peer listening project evaluation

Please tick correct box:

- I am a receptionist
- I am a peer listener
- I am involved in some other way in running the project

1. Have you enjoyed being involved in the peer support service? Yes [ ] No [ ]

1a. If yes, please try to name the things you have enjoyed.
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

1b. If no, please try to explain why.
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. What do you think is working well in the project?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3. How do you think the project is helping students at __________ School?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
4. What changes has this brought about?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

5. What changes, if any, do you think we need to make in the project next term?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

6. Are you happy with the:
   appointment system       Yes □       No □
   support meetings         Yes □       No □

What changes, if any, would you suggest?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

7. What ideas do you have for advertising the project next term?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

8. Any other comments
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Thank you for filling out this form. It will greatly help in future planning for this exciting project.

                        Peer listening co-ordinator

Name: ____________________________________________
(You do not have to state your name if you do not want to)
evaluation of peer support

1. Have you heard of peer support? Yes  No

2. What is peer support?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3. When does peer support take place?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

4. Where does peer support take place?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

5. Do you think peer support is a useful service? Yes  No

6. Would you use peer support? Yes  No

7. Do you think bullying is a problem at the school? Yes  No

8. What else could the school do to help pupils who are bullied?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Thank you for completing this questionnaire
section 6  monitoring and evaluation

staff, governors and parents

There are two groups of staff whose feedback will be valuable to you. The staff involved in the scheme will have important feedback in relation to their experience in the project, the role they have taken on with peer listeners and/or receptionists, and issues affecting students experiencing difficulties and seeking the support of peer listeners. It is crucial that the staff support team feel central to the operation of the project, and it is important to involve them in the evaluative process and include their ideas in project development.

The second group of staff, those not directly involved in the project, will be valuable in helping you understand the profile of the project in the school, see what difference it has made, and whether it is known about, valued and understood. All these perceptions will help you meet the needs of students in your community. Handout 30 gives an example of a staff support team questionnaire.

Involving governors in your evaluation will help raise the profile of the project and give you information as to how they perceive the project and wish to input into its development. The process may also help you gain funds for the project's continuity as part of the school development plan.

Parental feedback may be more difficult to ascertain. Involving parents/carers at the start of a project is discussed in Section 4. One way to gain feedback would be to send a questionnaire to the parents of students in the year groups targeted to be involved in the project. Handout 31 is adapted from the questionnaire to staff, parents and governors used at Kingsbury High School.
peer listening service
- staff support team evaluation

This questionnaire is to be completed by members of the staff support team. The aim is to obtain views as to how the service is meeting the needs of students and evaluate how the staff support team is operating.

A. Your involvement

1. What has your involvement been in the project?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. For how long have you been involved in the project?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

B. The students

1. Which aspects of the service do you feel are working well?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. What, if any, do you feel are the main problems in the service?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3. Do you feel the appointment system is effective? If not, what changes would you make?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
4. Would you suggest any changes for the project for next term? If so, what are they?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

5. Which aspects of public relations have worked well?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

6. What ideas do you have for public relations for next term?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

C. The staff

1. What have been the positive aspects of being part of the staff support team?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. What changes, if any, would you suggest in order to enable the team to work more effectively?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

3. How often do you feel the team should meet?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
4. What areas need discussion next term in team meetings?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

5. Are you satisfied with the content of the team meetings? If not, what suggestions do you have to make the meetings more productive for you?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

6. Are you prepared to continue in the staff support team next term? Yes □ No □

7. If so, please indicate which days are best for you to be on duty.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

8. Would you like more training? If so, in which areas?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

9. Any other comments?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this and for your support and work in the project. It is much appreciated!

.............................
Peer listening co-ordinator

Name: ________________________________
evaluation of peer support,
the peer-led anti-bullying support group

1. Have you heard of peer support? Yes ☐ No ☐

2. Who do you think pupils will turn to if they are being bullied?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3. On a scale of 0–10, how would you rate the bullying that goes on at the school? Please circle your answer.

none a lot
0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

4. What difference, if any, do you think the peer support group has made to the students at the school?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

5a. Do you have any concerns about the peer support project? Yes ☐ No ☐

5b. If you do have concerns, please state what they are.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
6. Do you think the peer support project should continue?  
   Yes ☐  No ☐

7. If not, please explain your reasons.
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

8. Please write down any suggestions you have that could improve the current peer support project.
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.
6.4 guidance on analysis and interpretation of data

Questionnaires allow the collection of different types of information, which are amenable to different types of analysis. Two types of data are available from the questions shown in the example questionnaires – quantitative data (can be reduced to categories and numbers) and qualitative data (such as opinions, attitudes, suggestions and themes). If you adapt the questionnaires to suit your site, it is likely that they will also produce either or both of these types of information. Therefore, a brief summary of how to analyse and interpret each of them is given below. For further information, please refer to an introductory statistics or research methods book (e.g. Breakwell, D.M. (2000) Research Methods in Psychology. London, UK: Sage or Howell, D.L. (1997) Statistical Methods in Social Research. London, UK: Duxbury or The DIY Guide to Survivor Research (1999). London: The Mental Health Foundation.).

quantitative data

Demographic information and questions with answers that can be categorised are best described as quantitative data. The simplest way to deal with such data is to assign a number to a given response category and then input each respondent’s numerical value into a spreadsheet (such as Microsoft Excel or Lotus 1-2-3).

For example:

5. Do you think that peer support is a useful service?  

The ‘Yes’ category would be assigned a numerical value of 1 and the ‘No’ category would be assigned a value of 2. A similar categorisation process could be used with respondent gender (with 1 = male and 2 = female) or ethnicity (with a numerical value assigned to each of the 12 ethnic groups mentioned). Then each respondent’s response to that question would be entered into a spreadsheet as a number, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>respondent ref. no.</th>
<th>q5.</th>
<th>gender</th>
<th>ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From here, you can examine the responses from the questionnaires to understand different aspects of the information you have collected. Frequency data would tell you how many respondents reported that they think that the peer support service is useful. All spreadsheet packages should also provide the percentage of this figure. By looking at the responses, it may seem that males and females show different patterns of response.

**qualitative data**

This is the sort of information that is not easily amenable to categorisation. It is often offered in response to open-ended questions that ask the respondent's feelings or opinions about a particular issue. It is different to but equally useful as quantitative data and may be useful to explore prior to examining the quantitative data. One of the most common methods of analysing qualitative data is to examine it for common themes or patterns of responses offered by respondents. These may fall into different areas or may be differentiated according to a certain group characteristic. For example, one theme may be bullying. The qualitative data may reveal that older young people have an opinion about bullying (e.g. "it happens more amongst boys") that conflicts with an opinion of younger people (e.g. "it happens more between different ethnic groups"). Qualitative data can therefore be used to identify issues that are less identifiable with a quantitative approach.
This manual draws on the experience of six schools, one voluntary organisation and one college of further education in implementing peer support projects.

Peer support offers a clear strategy for involving students and staff in creating an environment in which students are enabled to achieve their academic potential by promoting mental health and improve social and emotional literacy. The effects of peer support reverberate throughout a school so that peer supporters, service users, staff and the whole school population benefit. The range of outcomes can include improved self-esteem and confidence for peer supporters, additional pastoral care for students, raised awareness about the problems that cause students stress, early intervention to support students, and a reduction in problems that staff have to deal with.

Central to the success of any peer support service is the strong commitment from senior managers, staff and students to make it succeed. Questions will be raised and concerns aired about such a scheme. You will need to listen to all of these when planning your project. This manual aims to provide you with the tools to take you through the stages of considering how a peer support project can benefit your school, to implementing, monitoring and evaluating the project. It is an exciting journey that can make a real difference. Good luck!
further reading


Contains valuable information on peer support projects nationwide


Peer Support Briefing. London: The Mental Health Foundation.

Peer Support Project website www.mentalhealth.org.uk/peer/
The Mental Health Foundation


