



# **Mentoring** **in Peer Education**

**MENTORING SCHEME FOR MENTORS  
SUPPORTING PEER EDUCATORS  
(FROM MARGINALISED BACKGROUNDS)**

# IMPRESSUM

Author: **Simona Muršec**

Contributor: **Mateja Morič**

Proofreading: **Shona MacKenzie**

Designer: **Masar Tawfeeq**

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# FOREWORD

This mentoring scheme was developed within the project Rainbow Peer Forces, a cooperation partnership in youth that took place from 2022 until 2024 in six countries - Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Czech Republic, Romania and Lithuania. The project itself was a unique journey to introduce the concept and practice of peer education into the youth work practice of the six partner organisations, all working with LGBTIQ+ youth. Rainbow Peer Forces also had the ambition to develop a series of tools to support other youth and LGBTIQ+ organisations throughout Europe to incorporate peer education into their organisational practice.

Peer education, as it was understood by the project partners, is an educational approach where individuals from similar backgrounds and realities provide information, support, and guidance to help their peers make informed and reflective decisions about their lives.

So, in order to incorporate this new approach in youth work settings and youth organisations, the partners developed a manual about peer education, a series of resources for organisations and peer educators themselves and finally the Mentoring scheme for Mentors supporting Peer Educators (*from marginalised backgrounds*).

The development of the mentoring scheme was based on the mentoring scheme for (European Solidarity Corps) volunteers of Ljubljana Pride Association and the practices tested during the project with groups of young LGBTIQ+ peer educators. It is designed in a way to specifically support ORGANISATIONS and MENTORS of (young) people, who decide to act as peer educators and are personally affected by the experiences of marginalisation due to their identity or background. However, it can be used by any organisation or mentor, even if the peer educators they want to support do not have such backgrounds.

# MENTORING SCHEME

## FOR MENTORS SUPPORTING PEER EDUCATORS

(FROM MARGINALISED BACKGROUNDS)

### WHO IS THIS MENTORING SCHEME INTENDED FOR?

Youth Workers, non-formal education trainers, coordinators of peer educators and all those engaging in mentoring support for Peer Educators within an organisation or long-term peer education based project.

For professionalised and/or volunteer Mentors of Peer Educators who are well versed in non-formal education theory and practice or hold other equivalent pedagogical background. Mentors of Peer Educators thus should themselves be active within educational work and have sound experience with pedagogical approaches.

### WHO IS A MENTOR OF PEER EDUCATORS ?

A Mentor of Peer Educators is a person designated by the organisation who provides individual and/or group mentoring support for Peer Educators within the organisation or on long-term peer education based projects.

The role of the Mentor is to support the Peer Educator(s) in their work and learning process, as well as with personal support for the Peer Educators with challenging situations they will encounter in their role.

## WHO IS A PEER EDUCATOR ?

A person who supports people from similar backgrounds and realities to make informed and reflected decisions about their lives by providing them with information and experience.

A person who facilitates a dialogue between equals that involves members of a particular group educating others of the same group. They are the best person to disseminate new information and knowledge to the group members and can become a role model to others by “practicing what they preach”. Since they are from the same group, they can empathise and understand the emotions, thoughts, feelings, language of the peers, and, therefore, relate better.

**THIS MENTORING SCHEME FOCUSES ON PEER EDUCATORS WHO ARE AT THE SAME TIME YOUNG PEOPLE AND THUS TAKES INTO CONSIDERATION PARTICULAR NEEDS AND VULNERABILITIES THAT COME WITH AGE IN INTERSECTION WITH MARGINALISED POSITIONS OF THE PEER EDUCATOR THEMSELVES.**

# AREAS OF MENTORING SUPPORT

## A. MENTORING FOR "THE WORK"

supporting Peer Educators in the area of implementing Peer Education in the field.

## B. MENTORING FOR LEARNING

supporting Peer Educators in planning, monitoring and assessing their own learning and gaining new competencies.

## C. PERSONAL SUPPORT MENTORING

supporting Peer Educators in difficult situations, with ethical dilemmas and with managing their own well-being within the role and work of Peer Education.

# A. MENTORING FOR “THE WORK”:

Peer Educators are not professionals in a given field, they are not trainers or youth workers themselves, they are not experts and do not hold all the knowledge of a given topic. However, often they are the ones who will be listened to by the target audience because the audience trusts them. A Peer Educator is a person who cares about a topic, they care about their peers learning more about that topic and they care about affecting some positive change with their engagement.

So, in order for a Peer Educator to be able to engage in peer education effectively and safely, they need some support.

## **WITH GETTING TRAINED** (outside of the scope of mentoring)<sup>1</sup>

- They need to be trained in what peer education is and what it is not in order to understand their role and its limits.
- They need to be trained in the topic and issues they want to work on as Peer Educators as they will serve as the main information provider to their peers, so they need to uphold a high standard of accuracy, ethics and accountability to the content they provide and the way they provide it.
- They need to be trained in the methodology of peer education, in effective, creative and motivating ways how they can get the content across to their peers.

<sup>1</sup> LJUBLJANA PRIDE ASSOCIATION DEVELOPED A SPECIALISED TRAINING COURSE ABOUT PEER EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE INTERESTED TO BECOME PEER EDUCATORS. THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF POSSIBLE TRAINING ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT PEER EDUCATORS. FOR MORE DETAILS PLEASE REFER TO THE MANUAL ON PEER EDUCATION PUBLISHED BY THE PROJECT PARTNERS OF RAINBOW PEER FORCES.





**A MENTOR IS NOT RESPONSIBLE TO TRAIN THE PEER EDUCATOR IN THE ABOVE AREAS, THE ORGANISATION SHOULD TAKE CARE OF THAT WITH THE SUPPORT OF YOUTH WORKERS OR TRAINERS. MENTORS CAN OF COURSE BE A PART OF THE TRAINING PROCESS BUT THE AREAS OF BASIC TRAINING FOR PEER EDUCATORS AND THE MENTORING PROCESS ARE NOT THE SAME.**

## **WITH GETTING MENTORING**

Peer Educators need mentoring support throughout the process of them implementing peer education. They need a space to reflect on their work, approaches, dilemmas, outreach, etc. Mentoring in this area can take several forms:

- Mentoring can take the form of supporting the Peer Educator(s) in reflecting on their work, getting feedback and acting as a sounding board from an external person - a mentor. This approach is less hands on and is good for people who are independent and can benefit from regular reflection and some guidance.
- Mentoring can also be very hands-on, where a mentor provides job shadowing or other opportunities for the Peer Educator to gain new competences and experience in order to be better equipped as a Peer Educator. This is a good approach for people with less experience or less independence and can really serve them in skill building and confidence building.
- Mentoring can also take the form of coaching in cases where a Peer Educator would clearly express the need to develop in a specific area, want to overcome a specific challenge or grow in a specific way. For example, if a Peer Educator would struggle a lot with stage fright or fear of speaking in public, coaching through that particular challenge could help them significantly to be able to perform better as a Peer Educator where communication and providing information to peers is at its core.

## **B. MENTORING FOR LEARNING:**

The field of mentoring for learning support includes planned and regular reflection of the learning process, setting learning goals and dealing with learning challenges, as well as verbalising new experiences and knowledge in the formal framework of competences. The mentor therefore supports and encourages the Peer Educator(s) in developing their own learning goals, establishing a personal learning plan or path and deciding on main steps or milestones to achieve their learning goals.

The mentor plans and implements regular meetings, creates a space for reflecting on learning and supports the Peer Educator(s) learning process with their knowledge, competences and adequate mentoring tools. In addition, the mentor supports the Peer Educator(s) in articulating the newly acquired competences and helps them translate the gained knowledge, skills and attitudes into the language of competences. The mentor might use tools like the YouthPass or other national non-formal education recognition tools and support the Peer Educators in structuring their learning within those frameworks if relevant.

A learning support mentor must have and use the following knowledge and skills in their work:

## KNOWLEDGE

- Good knowledge of mentoring theories and techniques.
- Good knowledge of learning processes, setting up learning objectives and planning a learning process for others.
- Excellent knowledge of the theories of learning, including learning styles and learning to learn concepts.
- Knowledge of non-formal education methodologies.

## SKILLS

- The ability to apply participatory non-formal education based methodology and diverse methods to the mentoring process.
- Skills to create and maintain a space for reflection of one's learning process, monitor the learning and guide the mentored person in adapting their learning objectives.
- Excellent communication skills, including the ability to provide feedback.
- Providing the mentored person - *the Peer Educator* - with insight into the different teaching / learning techniques that they might use themselves with the people they engage in peer education with.

## C. PERSONAL SUPPORT MENTORING:

The area of personal support mentoring includes identifying the specific needs for personal support via regular check-ins with the Peer Educator(s) as well as checking-in on their general well-being. The mentor engages in a process of creating a safe space for the Peer Educator(s) to share the challenges they encounter and in particular the emotional impact those have on them. If the mentor engages in personal support via a group process, then methodological approaches of supervision can be applied, thus enabling the group of Peer Educators to also offer support to each other.

The personal support mentor needs to be able to recognise specific needs manifesting in relation to the Peer Educators marginalised position or identity (*LGBTIQ+ identity, belonging to a racialised group, facing different abilities, mental health vulnerability or any other effects of being affected directly by systems of oppression*). The personal support mentor needs to be aware of the effects of minority stress<sup>2</sup> and the specific consequences it has on marginalised youth - in case the Peer Educators themselves belong to marginalised groups and communities. The process of personal support mentoring should thus be supporting the Peer Educator in building their own resilience, as well as understanding personal boundaries, emotional and physical safety and developing skills and mechanisms that will allow them not to burn out, not to get too emotionally attached or affected by the topics, relationships and goals they aim to achieve with the peer education they practice.

<sup>2</sup>MINORITY STRESS IS CHRONIC STRESS, IT REFERS TO THE UNIQUE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL STRESSORS EXPERIENCED BY MEMBERS OF MARGINALISED GROUPS IN SOCIETY. THESE STRESSORS STEM FROM DISCRIMINATION, PREJUDICE, AND SYSTEMIC INEQUALITIES THEY FACE BECAUSE OF PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES SUCH AS ETHNICITY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, OR OTHER ASPECTS THAT IDENTIFY THEM AS PART OF A MINORITY GROUP. (PREVENTION OF LGBTIQ+ YOUTH HOMELESSNESS - MANUAL FOR YOUTH WORKERS; AVAILABLE HERE: [HTTPS://LJUBLJANAPRIDE.ORG/EN/PUBLICATIONS/](https://ljubljanapride.org/en/publications/))

The space for personal support mentoring needs to be maintained regularly, no less than 2x a month, to ensure challenging situations can be addressed promptly.

A personal support mentor must have and use the following knowledge and skills in their work:

## KNOWLEDGE

- Knowledge of creating a safe space for the mentored persons.
- The understanding of minority stress and its effects on marginalised groups<sup>3</sup>.
- The understanding of power relations and impact of systems of oppression<sup>4</sup> on young people, especially those from marginalised communities and backgrounds.
- Good knowledge of the field of mentoring, mentoring techniques and methodologies, knowledge of supervision, intervision and other related methodology is a plus.
- Knowledge of where to reach out to professionalised support in the area of mental health crisis to support the mentored persons in case of a mental health crisis with correct information - a personal support mentor IS NOT a therapist, they ARE NOT a psychiatrist and are not expected to offer therapy to the mentored person.

However, the mentor should be able to create a safe space where mental health related issues might come to the surface and in such situations it is important that the mentor can direct the person in need to other trained professionals.

<sup>3</sup> FOR FURTHER READING ON MINORITY STRESS PLEASE SEE PAGES 12-14 OF THE MANUAL: PREVENTION OF LGBTIQ+ YOUTH HOMELESSNESS- MANUAL FOR YOUTH WORKERS; AVAILABLE HERE: [HTTPS://LJUBLJANAPRIDE.ORG/EN/PUBLICATIONS/](https://ljubljanapride.org/en/publications/)

<sup>4</sup> FOR FURTHER READING ON SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION PLEASE SEE CHAPTER 2.2 OF THE MANUAL: TRANSFORMING HATE IN YOUTH SETTINGS- AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL AND PRACTICE MANUAL FOR THOSE WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE; AVAILABLE HERE: [HTTPS://LJUBLJANAPRIDE.ORG/EN/PUBLICATIONS/](https://ljubljanapride.org/en/publications/)

## SKILLS

- Excellent mentoring skills, with prior experience and a good array of methodological approaches to adapt to different people/groups.
- Planning skills, making sure the personal support meetings are implemented and up-kept regularly (no less than bi-weekly).
- Communication skills, with great emphasis on active listening skills - a good mentor is not there to give advice or provide solutions, but rather supports the young person in the process of finding their own solutions and tactics.
- Providing feedback, a lot of personal support can be implemented by feedback techniques, questioning and other communication based techniques.
- Development of mutual trust and methods to establish and maintain a safe space.
- Creativity and motivation for maintaining the process of personal support mentoring over longer periods of time.
- The capacity to recognise when the challenges that peer educator(s) face go beyond the knowledge of the mentor and act accordingly.



WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO EMPHASIZE IS THAT WE ARE NOT LOOKING FOR THE ULTIMATE MENTOR - ONE PERSON WHO CAN DO IT ALL - IT IS MOST LIKELY THAT THE ABOVE AREAS OF MENTORING WILL BE COVERED BY SEVERAL DIFFERENT PEOPLE. WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT IS TO BUILD A PROCESS WHERE THE PEER EDUCATORS RECEIVE SUPPORT IN ALL 3 AREAS.



# THE MENTORING PROCESS

## MENTORING AGREEMENT

Before the start of the mentoring process, it is important to agree on and sign a mentoring contract or agreement between the mentor and the organisation. This contract or agreement should cover the key rights, responsibilities and tasks of the mentor. The mentor should also receive an onboarding or training from the organisation before the start of the mentoring, allowing them to get a good insight into the peer education framework the organisation or project is implementing.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Before the mentoring starts a needs assessment needs to be conducted, both within the organisation - what the organisation needs from the mentoring process - and with the Peer Educators, so the mentoring process can be tailored to the needs of those whom it is supposed to support. Needs assessment is a recurring process and needs should be checked periodically throughout the mentoring.

## MONITORING

Throughout the mentoring process, the mentor regularly reflects on their own work, both alone and with other organisational staff involved with the peer education programme or project.

## TRAINING

The mentor is personally committed to learning and further training in their own mentoring skills, both within the opportunities the organisation offers internally, as well as via external training opportunities.

## EVALUATION

Regular evaluation of the mentoring process needs to take place. Special emphasis needs to be given to collect the feedback and evaluation of the mentoring process and the work of the mentor from the participants - the Peer Educators. Safe and anonymous options to submit feedback are important and need to be made available to Peer Educators by the organisation. In case of violation of professional mentoring standards a transparent complaints procedure should be in place.



# HOW TO CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT WHEN WE HAVE LIMITED RESOURCES

For many organisations when building up a pool of Peer Educators, or even just testing if peer education is an approach they want to develop and work through, it might be unrealistic to have a very well-trained group of mentors available to step in and support the Peer Educators from day one. On the other hand, even if we do have well versed mentors and mentoring processes in place, an additional support mechanism is always a good option to have available. So, as we are working with Peer Educators who want to support other young people, we can also create a supportive environment where the Peer Educators themselves offer peer support to each other.

## PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT FOR PEER EDUCATORS

When we work with Peer Educators we might work one-on-one with them. For example, we have a young person who wants to engage as a peer educator and we offer them the necessary support to receive the training and then also mentoring to support them while implementing the peer education interventions. If this is the case then the only option we have is a one-on-one approach. However, often we might opt to work with a group of peer educators, even having the ambition to create a pool of Peer Educators. In this case a peer-to-peer group support mechanism can be structured into the whole process of supporting the group and consequentially its individual members.

## FOR EXAMPLE

Ljubljana Pride Association published a call for young LGBTIQ+ people who were interested in becoming Peer Educators. The young people answering the call had to attend a training about peer education, where they got an in-depth insight into what peer education is, and what it is not. Then those interested to become Peer Educators became part of a “*group of peer educators*” and Ljubljana Pride Association offered this group a vast array of support mechanisms.

They received monthly skills-building workshops and mini trainings to gain more skills for implementing peer education activities. They received one-on-one mentoring support. They received opportunities to practice peer education activities within the pre-planned activities of the association, sometimes with the support of non-formal education trainers. They also received other types of support by the association’s youth workers and pool of non-formal education trainers, including financial support to create peer education materials.

However, one crucial element of support is that each month the group of peer educators meets for a reflection and evaluation meeting. This meeting is organised by the youth worker, but the purpose of it is that peer educators can share amongst themselves how their activities went in the past month, what they are struggling with, what they would like to have happen differently in the next peer education activities and so on, so that the group becomes an informal support space. Within this space a supportive environment is upheld, the peer educators share ideas with each other on how the problems and issues could be solved together and they create a sense of community.

In a way the Peer Educators enter into a process that resembles an intervision and even though it is not conducted in a professionalised way, it has a similar effect. The individual Peer Educator feels supported with “*work-related*” challenges, they feel supported on the emotional level and they build the sense of identity and belonging to a community - of Peer Educators. This process is also very beneficial for group dynamics, the quality of peer education implemented and for upholding the motivation of the young people to stay engaged.

What is important is that the organisation can directly impact the peer-to-peer support for Peer Educators by creating a supportive environment for Peer Educators to be able to share and support each other. What is relevant to consider is that this type of support needs the support of a youth worker or non-formal education trainer, who are well versed in setting up safer and supportive processes and spaces for young people from marginalised backgrounds. At the same time the group will most likely offer a lot of support to the individual members and as a consequence the individual members will have less needs for individually tailored one-on-one mentoring.

## **CONCLUSION**

We hope this concise manual will support youth organisations with setting up their own peer education activities and especially their organisational mentoring processes. If you found any of the content inspiring and would like to know more, please contact Ljubljana Pride Association or any of the partners of Peer Rainbow Forces for further materials and insights.



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