



## L8R Online Peer Mentoring Programme

### Information and F.A.Q's

We started the L8R Peer Mentor programme to give young participants the chance to hear directly from 16-25 year olds about their experience of the key themes of L8R – teenage pregnancy & parenthood, sex & relationships, peer pressure, bullying, etc. At the same time our training gives an opportunity for a number of 16-25 year olds to train in the skills needed to be an online peer mentor: listening, empathising, articulating their own experience, making responsible intervention in debates, referring young people to appropriate help agencies, learning online & pc skills, etc.

#### ***Where Do The Mentors Come From?***

The mentors come from a variety of backgrounds and projects. Part of the value of an internet community is that it has the potential to allow participants to hear from mentors that have both the same, and different, experiences to them. The following gives an idea of the sites where we have trained mentors in the last 3 years:

St Bonaventures Sixth Form	Newham
Youth Parliament	West Sussex
Lewisham College	Lewisham
Kickstart	Southwark
Southwark College	Southwark
The Doorway Youth Project	Liverpool
Young Mothers Centre	Plymouth
Young Parents Project	Waltham Forest
Youth Action	Flintshire
Young Mothers Group	Waltham Forest

Our current mentors come from:

Young Potential	Nottingham
Leaps & Bounds Youth Project	Dudley
Harlow Youth Council	Essex
Youth Offending Team	Liverpool

#### ***What is the Training Course?***

The L8R Peer Mentoring training programme is an eight one and half hour session course with additional research and homework assignments. It is led by our mentor programme leader Will Daniel-Braham (see below). Participants have

the opportunity to opt out of the project during training, and in turn the project workers or facilitators are assessing the Peer Mentors involvement and capability. Our training course has been consistently refined in the light of experience since 2004 when we first started this programme. We are currently in the process of setting up ASDAN Accreditation, which will be available by Spring 2009. Contact us for more information on this.

### ***Who Runs the L8R Peer Mentor Programme?***

The mentor programme is led by Will Daniel-Braham. Will is a training consultant with 20 years experience of working with and training young people. He runs his own training consultancy and designs and delivers training courses for people who work with young people. For the past ten years he has been working with a National Organisation called 'Youth at Risk' and has been training Volunteers, Life Coaches, Staff, Professionals and young people from a wide variety of backgrounds. He is also a trained psychotherapist with the Metanoia Institute and runs a small practise from his office in East London.

### ***What About Supervision?***

Mentors are always supervised when online by a member of the L8R Mentor team. Mentors have a debrief after each session and are set up for the session ahead. In addition a member of the L8R core team is always online during sessions. These requirements are part of our contract with the local agencies taking part.

### ***Are Mentors & Trainers Police Checked?***

Mentors themselves are not always police checked because it is often not practical in the time available. However all local agencies verify in their contract with us that the trainers are police checked and available for the duration of the online project. The project workers are responsible for vetting young people to make sure they are appropriate to be involved in the project, and the L8R mentoring team always maintain close contact with the local workers.

### ***Is The Site Safe?***

Yes. No-one can get onto the L8R site to vote, post messages or take part in live chat unless they are part of an agency such as a school, Pupil Referral Unit, Youth Centre etc, that is signed up to take part in L8R and therefore known to us and traceable. The Peer Mentor live chat is effectively a closed community and is also highly supervised – see above.

### ***What About Child Protection?***

The supervising project workers will deal with any issues of Child Protection that may arise through the mentoring process – e.g. disclosures. They would contact the relevant authorities and, due to the nature of the security of the site, would be able to identify the group from which the person came.

### ***What Is The Mentors Role?***

Our contract with local agencies specifies that the mentors are there as advocates, to share their experience and lead discussion, and not as counsellors. We also specify that trainees understand they should not give out factual information on sensitive issues – eg legal age for sex, or period within which you can legally have an abortion – but refer users to other agencies for information.

### ***How Are Mentors Selected?***

In general our priority is to train young people who have the most need – this might be young parents, or young people in youth offending teams, or in excluded programmes. As can be seen from the list above, we usually end up working with a broad spread of groups representing a range of opportunity and ability. The age range is usually 16-25.

We also prioritise groups in areas where we have local partnerships. Apart from this, the Peer Mentors are self selected from groups all around the country. A member of the L8R team presents the project to youth workers and group workers who in turn offer the project to their users who in turn choose to take part. We work mainly, but not exclusively, with groups who have no previous experience of mentoring, so as to develop new people and create new opportunities for young people who may not have been exposed to this kind of work in the past.

### ***What About Graduate Mentors?***

We run a programme of training volunteer graduate mentors to be moderators on the L8R forums, to take on more responsibility and intervene in user debates to offer positive messages where appropriate. Graduates also deliver online mentoring sessions for us when we have a specific need or demand that cannot be accommodated by our trained mentors. Most recently some of our graduate mentors are also part of our Youth Editors group who edit the L8R characters social network pages.

### ***Where Does The Funding Come From?***

The L8R Project as a whole has been funded by a mix of funds since it's launch, eg the Big Lottery, the DH, the DCSF, European Social Fund 'Equal' Programme, London Councils, BBC Education, and a broad range of some 22 national Local Authority and Primary Care Trust partners. Hi8us South, which produces L8R, is a not-for-profit company, part of Hi8us Projects, a national registered charity.

### ***Some Feedback:***

*"I think it's an absolutely brilliant idea, because in terms of Citizenship and the PSHE curriculum, they are interacting with other young people across the country on issues that are important to them."* Lou Minhinnick, Youth Worker, Plymouth, speaking about L8r peer mentoring.

**[www.l8r.uk.net](http://www.l8r.uk.net)**