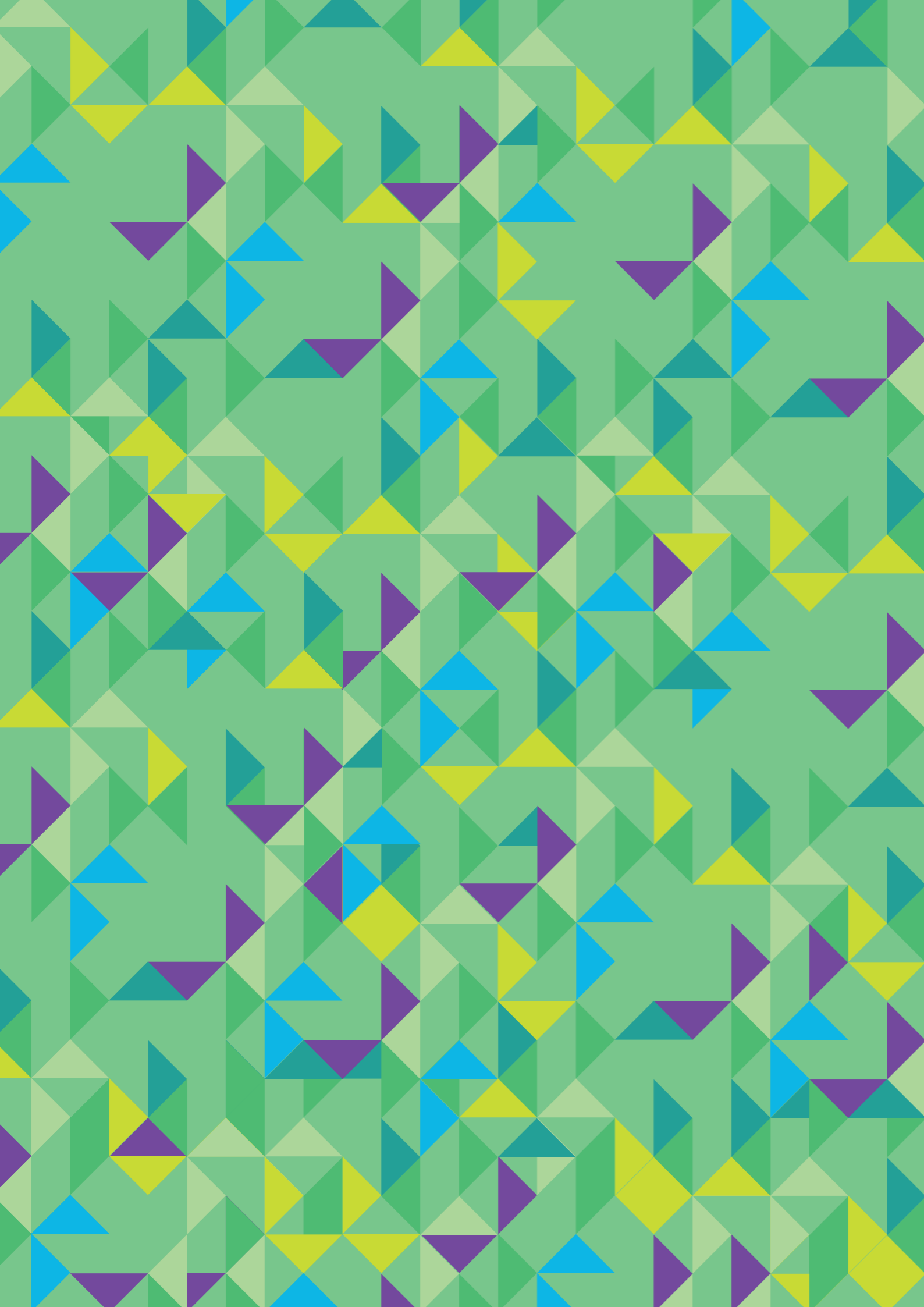# Share to Know

Furthering peer-to-peer and collaborative learning methods

SHARE TO KNOW

Furthering peer-to-peer and collaborative learning methods

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE SHARE TO KNOW PROJECT

Share to Know is a European exchange project that aims to further the use of peer-to-peer learning methodologies by educational institutions and other organisations/individuals working with young people. The exchange took place between three peer-to-peer learning practitioners from the United Kingdom, Sweden and Germany and was funded by the European Commission's Erasmus+ programme.

The high number of young people across Europe who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)[1] is a worrying indicator that formal education systems are failing to support young people to develop the skills and capabilities needed to get on in life and access further opportunities. Peer-to-peer learning shifts the power dynamic between 'learners' and 'teachers' and has been found to be effective at sustainably re-engaging young people who haven't had a positive experience of formal education institutions.[2] Through the Share to Know project we have explored the ways in which peer-to-peer learning experiences can support personal, social and professional development; this guide shares a range of examples and recommendations about how education and learning practitioners can apply and sustain peer-to-peer methods in their own work.

HOW THIS GUIDE WAS PRODUCED

Since 2015 the Share to Know partner organisations have participated in a process of exchange and prototyping: visiting each other's projects and transferring/testing methods or approaches that were learnt about during the exchange, back in the home context. Insights and learning from the exchange form the basis for this guide.

This guide is a condensed summary of the partnership's documentation and learning throughout the exchange process. For the full report, please visit www.sharetoknow.net

WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR

This guide is aimed at educators and others who are working with young people (specifically those not currently in formal education, training or employment) who want to develop their use of peer-to-peer methods. Practitioners who are already using peer-to-peer methods may also be interested in using the insights from this exchange to build on their own work and to compare their practice with that in other international and organisational contexts.

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THE SHARE TO KNOW PARTNERSHIP

The Share to Know Partnership was set up by three peer-to-peer learning organisations from Sweden, Germany and the UK with the aim of furthering the recommendations made on youth work and non-formal education in a report by the EU Commission's expert youth group.[3] These recommendations included: improving partnership working and cross-sector innovation, extending the evidence base for informal learning through impact analysis, and increasing understanding of informal learning by employers and formal learning institutions. The partnership complements existing European initiatives such the Salto Youth Resource Centre and REVEAL (the Research and Evaluation group for Validating, Evaluating and Assessing informal and non-formal Learning), and builds on the past work of initiatives such as the European Initiative for the Promotion of Informal Learning.

The Share to Know partners operate in very different cultural and organisational contexts. However all three have experienced peer-to-peer learning as a powerful approach that can reduce barriers to accessing education and development opportunities for young people. Our aim was to harness the diversity of experiences and backgrounds within the partnership in order to provide insights about how peer-to-peer learning methods can be effectively implemented in a wide range of contexts.

THE U

The U is a project at The Young Foundation, a research and action based institute that focuses on confronting inequalities. The Young Foundation works across the UK and internationally to create insight and innovations which put people at the heart of social change.

'The U has developed a unique kind of learning experience for communities. We operate in diverse communities around the UK and offer short learning sessions on useful topics like first aid, conflict resolution, and positivity. Participants gain practical skills during short, lively and fun learning sessions, which are usually delivered in community settings such as cafés, leisure centres and community halls. The sessions draw on exceptional resources from organisations like the British Red Cross and SLaM NHS Health Trust and are delivered by trained volunteers from the community. Therefore there are no 'experts' leading our learning sessions; we believe in the power of the collective knowledge that exists amongst all who are taking part, and encourage everyone to draw on their personal skills and experiences to support each other's learning and find out more about others who are living alongside them in their local neighbourhood.'

The U's approach to peer-to-peer learning can be characterised as a mix of informal and structured learning – whilst the sessions are designed with a fixed framework of activities for covering the core skills associated with each topic, participation in the activities themselves is self-led and highly dependent on social interaction and exchange between participants.

www.youngfoundation.org/projects/the-u/

STREET COLLEGE

Street College is a project at Gangway, an organisation that has been doing mobile outreach social work with young people in Berlin for the last 26 years.

'Street College is an innovative network for individual, autonomous education. A space where the interests of those who are determined to pursue their goals, are put forward. Professionals from various fields and young people with a diversity of skills work together in order to expand their abilities and establish new perspectives. Street College recruits experts from all specialisations as mentors and teachers – whether crafts and trades, culture, science or IT. At Street College, we turn the theory of demand & supply around: the students determine the course structure based on their interests and abilities. These can be film and photography courses, website and app programming, acting, dance and theatre, make-up, graphic design courses, stage design and cooking; or training in accounting, elocution, music production, building and engineering, individual coaching or training – everything is possible. The course locations are found everywhere – on the street, in a university or in a work place – and Street College continue to find and create new learning environments that are suitable for this made-to-measure approach to learning.'

Street College offers a highly flexible, responsive approach to Collaborative Learning* where the course topics are learner-determined, the learning process is open-ended, and meaningful education can take place in any setting.

www.streetcollege.de

*For more information about Street College's definition of Collaborative Learning, please see pages 16 – 17

ALMA FOLK HIGH SCHOOL

Alma Folk High School (Folkhögskola) is member of the Swedish Folk High School Association. Folk High Schools belong to the long established Swedish 'popular education' system that have traditionally focused on adult education, however they now offer a diverse range of learning opportunities with learners ranging from 16 – 60+ years. There are currently 154 Folk High Schools in Sweden, approx. 110 of which are linked to various social movements and non-profit associations, and approx. 40 are operated by county councils and regions. Folk High Schools are financed by grants from the state and county councils.

'Alma believes in an individual's power to shape their own life according to their own conditions. Alma works with a diverse range of learners including young adults who have decided to go back to school and migrants who are learning Swedish as a second language. We aim to enable people to achieve the certifications and qualifications that will allow them to pursue their next step in education or employment, but recognise that the learning journey and personal progress and development is just as important as the fixed outcomes that they are working towards.'

As a Folk High School, Alma works within a more traditional school environment with structured curriculum, lessons and employed teachers. However, their ethos is rooted in informal education and therefore peer-to-peer methods and approaches are integrated into the day-to-day activities in the classrooms.

www.alma.fhsk.se/

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'PEER-TO-PEER' LEARNING?

'Peer-to-peer learning' is, in its practice, equally widespread as it is vague; more or less synonymous with terms like peer-to-peer education, peer-to-peer teaching, peer-to-peer helping etc., it is also often used interchangeably with terms such as self-led learning, informal learning or collaborative learning. The Share to Know partnership began its exchange process with a mutual recognition amongst partners that peer-to-peer learning happens in many different ways, and can unintentionally exist as well as being deliberately brought into praxis.

The cultural and organisational diversity of the Share to Know partners (and of the learning methods they employ) made it necessary to develop a shared definition of peer-to-peer learning in order to be able to progress with a meaningful process of dialogue and exchange. We developed a definition for our understanding of peer-to-peer learning as:

'An interactive exchange that takes place at 'eye level' (or 'eye-to-eye'), which is based on trust in the knowledge and experiences of all involved parties. It is a connotative type of learning that consciously uses the social process to increase learning success, and is based on the needs of the learner.'[4]

THE 'CORE ELEMENTS' OF PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING

In addition to this definition, through the prototyping process the Share to Know partnership was able to identify a list of 'core elements' that we believe are essential to successfully implementing peer-to-peer learning methods in any context.

Collectively, these 7 core elements distil the fundamental pre-requisites and conditions necessary for peer-to-peer learning to happen.

Core elements	Significance
Teachers and learners are equals	In peer-to-peer learning, teachers and learners consider each other equal partners who both have different and important things to contribute to the learning process. This is a contrast to the teacher-learner power and knowledge hierarchy that exists in more traditional learning environments.
A 'safe' learning environment	Whilst the importance of a socially 'safe' environment (where all people feel able to be present and/or express themselves without fear of judgement, silencing or shaming) is central to all work with young people, it is a particularly important condition for peer-to-peer learning. This is because a process of mutual exchange requires trust between all parties.
Focusing on learner-interaction and exchange	'Peer-to-peer' refers to interaction and exchange between people. In peer-to-peer learning processes practitioners advocate that this social interactivity actively enhances the educational experience rather than distracting or detracting from it. This is because social interaction has the potential to increase both the relevance and memorability of the educational content, and also to make the process more empowering (offering greater ownership of the learning experience).
Educational offers are based on learner needs	Creating educational experiences that are based on the learners' self-identified needs and interests is fundamental to any peer-to-peer learning process, in order that participants are willing to participate meaningfully and fully.
Build on the knowledge, skills and experience that learners already have	Foundational to the peer-to-peer learning approach is the understanding that no-one is an 'empty vessel' waiting to be filled by an offer of education. All learners bring to the educational process their own experiences, knowledge and skills, and a genuine peer-to-peer learning process will seek to both draw from, and build on, this.
Learning is relationship-focussed work	In addition to social interactivity as part of the learning process, relationship building is itself an important element of peer-to-peer learning. Social relationships between the people who are learning with and from each other are a key enabler for a) engaging people in the learning process initially b) fully understanding what people's personal strengths and interests are and c) supporting people's longer-term goals and development.
The learning process is as important as the learning achievements	A central tenet of peer-to-peer learning is that how we learn is as important as what we are learning. This is especially true when working with NEET young people, because the experience of being valued as an active learner (i.e. being encouraged to recognise, draw from and share their knowledge and skills) can have a transformative effect on the participant's view of themselves and of what education processes are like.

In what follows, each section of this guide will introduce a range of processes and strategies for you to consider when implementing peer-to-peer learning in your own practice.

HOW DO YOUNG PEOPLE GET INVOLVED IN PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING?

Many organisations that use peer-to-peer approaches work with young people who face barriers to learning and employment opportunities, particularly within the formal education and advice systems. Whilst peer-to-peer learning methods offer a very different kind of experience, it's still important to consider a range of different strategies for engaging with young people in the first instance, and thinking about what needs to be done to make activities or courses as accessible, inclusive and relevant as possible.

COLLABORATION IN THE LOCAL NON-PROFIT AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Many organisations working in the field of peer-to-peer learning operate in the non-profit and voluntary sector. Co-operation with other local non-profit or voluntary organisations (for example through formal partnerships, sign-posting or advocacy) can be an important way to ensure that people who are potential beneficiaries of activities or courses find out about them, and feel confident to participate.

Step 1: Identifying relevant organisations
Find out about organisations in your area that work with your target group, and try to learn about any specific objectives or challenges they are currently working on.

Step 2: Establishing a relationship
Think about the ways in which your work could help their organisation to achieve their goals, or to explore a topic of mutual interest. Look for ways to tell your story in a compelling way: quotes from participants, inviting people to visit sessions, using a social impact flyer etc.

Step 3: Build trust and measure collective progress through joint evaluations
Regular and open communication is essential to ensure that the collaboration is working well for both organisations, and to address any challenges as they arise. Where possible, it is useful to undertake joint evaluation processes so that information about progress and impact is shared.

Collaboration with local non-profit and voluntary sector

Strategies for engaging young people in peer-to-peer learning

Direct outreach & open-market recruitment

Referral partnerships with public institutions & statutory services

Step 4: On-going evaluation and identifying future opportunities for collaboration
Monitor the overall progress that your organisations have made as a result of working together, and build on your shared experiences by identifying further topics or opportunities for joint working.

Case study: The U's collaboration with civil society organisations in Sutton, UK.

Collaboration with local youth services is vital for The U's offer of peer-to-peer learning opportunities to reach NEET young people. For this reason, The U invests a lot of effort into building partnerships. These partnerships are established through a combination of one-to-one relationship building, active promotion of the project through dissemination of our impact and evaluation data, and positive feedback about the project being informally shared by word-of-mouth. Important elements of successful partnerships are:

- Investing time in relationship building and maintaining interest/awareness of the partner organisation's wider work
- For the partner organisation to understand how The U's sessions contribute towards their own organisational mission and objectives
- For the partner organisation to build on and integrate The U session into their on-going programme and activities as much as possible, rather than seeing them as a separate 'add-on' or quick fix.

In the London Borough of Sutton, The U has worked successfully with a Housing Association that provides supported accommodation for young parents. The U adapted the existing course on supporting positive mental health so that it could be delivered for residents, and worked closely with the Housing Association's support staff to review communications and feedback throughout the delivery of the course.

DIRECT OUTREACH, OPEN MARKETING AND WORD OF MOUTH

Relying on other organisations to reach young people has its limitations. Developing a plan for open marketing and spreading the word of mouth is an important strategy if you want to reach beyond young people who are already participating in other mainstream services.

Step 1: Identify local marketing and communications channels that your target group is using
Think about where your target audience regularly gets their information from, i.e. online sources such as social networking sites and databases, and offline sources such as events, social spaces and key individuals.

Step 2: Identify clear messages about what you are offering, and specific action-points that people can take
Think about how your messages will connect with issues that are important to your target audience. Ideally the people who you are trying to appeal to should be involved in shaping these messages — getting feedback from even a small number of people can make a big difference. Action points such as 'sign-up on-line' or 'visit us at…' gives people guidance for getting involved.

Step 3: Implement your strategy by collaborating with others who can help to spread the word
Think about how your activities link in with other organisations or campaigns, and ask them to share your information through their channels. Provide the information in the format that's most useful/easiest for them, e.g. composing a ready-made tweet or blog post, or printing posters and flyers to disseminate.

Step 4: Maintain momentum
Have specific goals and milestones in mind that you can work towards (i.e. number of responses on social media, number of follow-ups from a poster campaign etc.), and keep track of which channels and messages have been most effective for you. Continue to ask for feedback from people who have seen your marketing materials, to learn about what is and isn't working.

Case study: Street College's experience with relationship-building and peer-promotion

At Street College we engage NEET young people by involving them in the process of deciding on topics for new courses. If a student has expressed an interest in a topic on which we have no existing courses, we post it on our Facebook page: 'Hi, are there other people interested in drawing?' If a sufficient number of people express an interest in the topic then we would start the process by organising a workshop with the interested students in order to find out, for example: their goals, their motivation, their existing knowledge and skills in this area. Having gathered this information we try to create a course that fits our students' needs. By discussing with our students about future Street College course topics we demonstrate the way in which Street College operates and we provide the opportunity for young people to express their interests, this sometimes encourages them to reach out to people who have not participated in our courses before.

Another strategy for reaching new participants is making sure that all our existing participants have a very positive experience. Our regular student surveys indicate that a lot of students find out about the Street College because they 'heard about it' from someone in their peer group. The people who had a positive experience at Street College often become informal 'ambassadors' for the Street College. Our website and Facebook page provide up-to-date information on our activities in order to encourage such new participants to get in touch with us, but it is the personal recommendation which is most important for recruiting new participants.

Once we have engaged the young people via a topic they are interested in, we then focus on opening up other activities to them as well. For example, one of our participants originally came to Street College because he wanted to record one of his songs. We offered him an opportunity to work on the lyrics with a teacher, to learn how to produce his music, to record and even shoot a video clip. In this way he ended up attending several courses at Street College.

RECEIVING REFERRALS THROUGH PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND STATUTORY SERVICES

In most countries there are public institutions that work with young people that are NEET, for example the job centre or social services. However, the range of support that is offered by these services is usually limited to formal approaches and focuses on the specific mainstream pathways to employment or training. Based on the effectiveness of peer-to-peer learning in engaging and supporting NEET young people, there's valuable opportunity for referral pathways to be established. However, there can also be significant barriers to establishing partnership relationships with public institutions and statutory services, due to the standardised protocols and regulations that such institutions are subject to and centralised decision-making processes.

Step 1: Identify the public institutions that have contact with the target group in your local area and find out what their goals are for working with them
Check for any formal regulations that they have on referring clients to external organisations, and look for information on whether they can provide funding for referrals. Think about whether your service can help them to achieve their goals.

Step 2: Identify individuals in the institution who work directly with the service beneficiaries, and also those who are responsible for making decisions about referrals or partnerships
Forming strong relationships with the staff who work directly with beneficiaries will be an important part of supporting effective referrals, once the partnership has been established.

Step 3: Develop a plan for getting in contact and establishing a relationship with the key individuals in the institution
Think about how you will demonstrate the positive impact your services provide and how this can support their goals.

Step 4: Once a referral partnership (formal or informal) has been established, focus on building trust in the process by putting quality over quantity, documenting the work and its impact, and maintaining regular and open communications
Keep evaluating the referral process and if something is not going as planned address it quickly, and in person, with the partners.

Step 5: Use your learning and evaluation to suggest appropriate developments to the current referral process, or potential areas of further partnership work between your organisations.

Case study: Alma's partnerships with the Swedish Job Centre and local authorities

The Swedish Job Centre, Social Services and local authorities support NEET young people to attend education programmes that can help them to re-engage with education, training and employment opportunities. At Alma, we have established referral partnerships with a number of different public agencies in order for potential students to be referred to our courses.

The most important step in the process of establishing relationships with public agencies is the establishment of direct, personal contact with the decision makers in the relevant departments. We started this process by inviting the representatives from the local job centres and local authorities to discussions on how to support NEET young people, and used the opportunity to showcase our approach. In these conversations it was crucial to emphasise how our offer can positively address the priorities identified by the public agency. As a result of this engagement strategy, we are now being invited to monthly meetings by the public agencies on the topics of education and NEET young people. Attending regular meetings has helped to ensure that there is a wide network of regional stakeholders who are familiar with our work.

Once the referral partnerships have been established the priority is to ensure the smooth operation of the referral processes. Currently local job centre administrators identify suitable candidates and refer them to Alma's offices, however we are in the process of trying to encourage job centre representatives to accompany group or individual visits to Alma when they are first referred, because this can make the transition less daunting.

One of the challenges of working with public agencies such as the job centre is the large size of such organisations. At the Swedish Job Centre there are very frequent personnel changes at the area manager level, so it can be hard for an external organisation to sustain relationships. Therefore, maintaining the regular, monthly meetings with the job centre is a critical opportunity to stay abreast of personnel changes and to establish new relationships where necessary.

USING PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING METHODS IN FORMAL EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

Peer-to-peer learning is often seen as a non-traditional, informal approach which does not fit well with formal, regulated educational environments. Strict curricula, tight schedules, classroom rules and traditional requirements for assessment and qualifications would seem to leave little space for the more flexible approaches of peer-to-peer learning. However, in this partnership, we explored how formal education institutions who seek to engage NEET young people could benefit from integrating peer-to-peer learning methods into their courses.

The following steps are a first-hand account of how the team from Alma Folk High School (Stockholm) engaged with the Share to Know prototyping process in order to develop new uses of peer-to-peer learning in their school.

Step 1: Get inspiration and identify specific ideas for how peer-to-peer learning methods can help to solve existing challenges in your courses

To begin the prototyping process Alma's team attended an exchange meeting with the other Share to Know partners in London, to experience The U's approach to peer-to-peer learning. The team identified two aspects of The U's approach that were of interest (see table below). These aspects were chosen because they were both very different from Alma's usual approach, and because they seemed to hold potential in solving some of the challenges Alma's teachers were experiencing when working with our 'hardest to reach' learners.

Step 2: Communicate with your teaching team and plan the implementation together

After returning from London, Alma's Share to Know team organised several sessions with their teachers based in Stockholm, in order to communicate what they had experienced at The U and explain how the prototyping process would help them to test out some of these new methods.

The teachers were very interested in these new approaches but important questions were also raised: some teachers felt unsure about whether methods from organisations that operate in such a different way to Folk High Schools could be implemented in their courses. They also expressed concerns that involvement in the Share to Know project would take too much time away from their regular teaching tasks. This raised an important understanding that if the teachers were to feel able and willing to introduce new methods into their work, they had to be able to see how these methods could help them to address an existing challenge (in this instance, raising the level of engagement amongst NEET young people).

As a result of this discussion, a smaller group of teachers who were particularly interested in these methods began to implement the prototype in their existing courses. This experience then generated further interest in the new peer-to-peer methods from the rest of the teaching staff.

Step 3: Identify a regular course or activity where it is possible and meaningful to test the new methods

In the discussion with the Alma teaching team it was decided that the prototyping would be done within the "Study Motivated Course preparing for Folk High School" (in Swedish "Studiemotiverande kurs" or SMF course), which is a preparatory course focused on motivating NEET young people to engage in more regular education courses at Alma. These young adults have not completed their regular school qualifications and are not currently involved in other employment or training. As this course is intended as an access point to other education opportunities, it is a good opportunity to engage people by using alternative, more informal learning methods.

Alma's prototype: which peer-to-peer methods did they test out?

Method	Description	Reflection from Alma
Using 'mirroring' as a method to encourage learner participation	When questions are raised by a learner, the teacher does not answer directly themselves but instead opens up the question to suggestions from the wider group.	"We were impressed to see that this created a lot of discussions amongst participants and also helped build their confidence, because the learners were the ones who were providing input into the session. The facilitators maintained their role by keeping the group on track in terms of time and content, mediating any potential conflicts and clarifying any information that was not accurate. In this way the role of the facilitators was actually more challenging and required more preparation than in a typical lesson, because you have to be able to be flexible and responsive to whatever arises."
Structuring high-energy, 90-minute sessions	The U sessions are designed to guide participants through a series of structured but highly interactive activities, enabling them to become immersed in the learning content within a short period of time.	"The Alma team was very interested in the format of The U sessions, which are thoroughly structured and involve a lot of hands-on, interactive and self-guided activities for the learners. The sessions have an energising effect and it was hard not to get enthusiastic and involved. We felt that integrating shorter, more energetic sessions at the beginning of a course could help to motivate learners and also support team-building within the group."

Learners participating in an SMF course at Alma

Step 4: Create a specific and detailed lesson plan that incorporates the chosen peer-to-peer methods into the course

In order to prototype the chosen peer-to-peer learning methods in the SMF courses, the Alma team developed three new sessions based on the method of Aggression Replacement Training (ART): communication training, anger management training and conflict management training. ART is a prevention programme for young people (predominantly between the ages of 12–20) who have had difficulty with anger management or developing social skills. The new peer-to-peer methods were integrated into the design of these sessions, which were then delivered once a week from January to April 2016. This timeframe was considered a long-enough period to test the new approach thoroughly and provide a solid basis for the evaluating the new methods' impact.

Step 5: Reflect on the progress with learners and teachers

At Alma, the evaluation of the prototype courses found that the learners were more motivated from the peer-to-peer lessons than previous groups had been from the regular sessions. The following quotes are feedback from participants about the sessions:

"I came to the lesson even though I first thought I would go home after lunch. I felt motivated to go on until the last lesson and I learned things from the other students today"

"I was in a bad mood [when I arrived for the course], but now I am happy that I participated and I think I was active in the lesson. Everyone was so good at the role-play – [a] fun way of learning new things!"

The teachers who tested these new approaches reported positive results from the use of the peer-to-peer learning methods. They found that the learners had a stronger relationship with each other, which fostered a greater sense of belonging and supported an increase in their confidence. One of the Alma teachers commented:

"I believe it means a lot [to the learners] be part of a [social] group, you learn from each other. I do not believe that all learning process is from the teacher to the learner, but between learner to learner. The [members of the] group in SMF have helped each other with different tasks and also with [finding the right] words when someone was talking. In peer-to-peer education, reflection and feedback is an important tool and this is something we have worked with in the group. I believe that [the use of the] peer-to-peer education methods has raised the learner's confidence. I can see how they feel safer with each other and that they learn more when they collaborate and help each other".

Our evaluation shows that the use of peer-to-peer learning elements in our courses has positively impacted the learners at Alma in terms of self-confidence and future plans. One example is Kimberly, a participant in the peer-to-peer SMF course, who had previously been excluded from education and did not want to go back to school. Since attending Alma's SMF course, she has been studying intensely and now aims to take her high-school exams. Her parents call her progress a 'miracle' and external stakeholders from the local authority, who had worked with Kimberly before, have reacted in a similar way. Kimberly described her situation and her experience in the SMF course in the following way:

"Because I did not feel well when I was younger I could not complete elementary school and I have not been able to catch up with school since then. The Job Agency asked me if I would like to try the SMF course at Alma and I said yes. It worked really well as there were a lot of different people from different backgrounds. As we were doing group work we became a good team and there was mutual respect amongst the learners. I feel better now and see a lot of possibilities. I feel I can study what I want. I will definitely want to start university to become a nurse."

Step 6: Use your evaluation findings to identify key learnings and next steps in the process of introducing peer-to-peer learning methods in your organisation

As a result of the prototyping process, Alma has developed a new method for working with NEET young people in the form of the lessons on communication, anger management and conflict management. Alma has also adopted a new, shorter course format which is delivered over 3 weeks, as opposed to the normal SMF courses, which last six weeks. In this course, the peer-to-peer learning methods are used to facilitate a higher level of interaction within the sessions and are demonstrating positive results in terms of self-confidence, on-going engagement and motivation to learn.

One of the remaining questions is whether the peer-to-peer methods that were successfully implemented in this prototype could now work in other Alma courses beyond SMF (the SMF curriculum is more flexible than the General Course curriculum, making it easier to integrate new approaches). However, the positive results that have been achieved so far provide encouragement for staff to continue to explore how peer-to-peer learning methods could also be implemented within a more tightly planned schedule.

USING PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING METHODS IN INFORMAL EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

Informal education settings (for example youth work organisations or other projects working with NEET young people) seem a natural place for peer-to-peer learning methods to be used because they are not as regulated in their activities by curriculums, rules and regulations. However, the preconditions for successful peer-to-peer learning to happen are not necessarily easy to create simply because the education setting is informal.

The following steps are an account of how the team from Street College (Berlin) engaged with the prototyping process in order to develop new uses and strengthen the existing use of peer-to-peer learning methods in their work.

Step 1: Find out what type of peer-to-peer learning fits best with your organisations' principles and aims

After the meeting in London, the Street College Share to Know team reported on their experiences and insights to all the teachers and social workers at Street College. They discussed the question of where and how peer-to-peer learning was taking place in their current programme of courses. From the discussion it emerged that there were different understandings of 'peer-to-peer education' and 'peer-to-peer learning', which highlighted the need to develop a shared understanding of what was meant by these terms. This determined the first step in the prototyping: to research the different models of peer-to-peer learning and to find out which ones had been found to work particularly with NEET young people and also fit with the Street College philosophy. Our research identified three main types of peer-to-peer learning, which are described on the page opposite.

At the Street College we often used the peer-multipliers approach, for example when former learners then begin to teach a course at Street College. In our experience, to make this approach work, the peer-multipliers or teachers require professional accompaniment and backing from a social worker or more experienced teacher for a long period of time.

The model that works best with our participants (and which also complies most directly with our philosophy and mission statement) is the voluntary and self-determined peer-to-peer learning – we prefer to call this 'collaborative learning'.

1. Peers as information transmission belts

This model is often used when there is a clear message that is supposed to be passed on from a client to a specific audience, for example a public health agency that wants to promote particular information to pregnant teenagers. In these situations the 'client' (e.g. workers at the public health agency) may not have the social legitimacy or trusted relationships that are needed to effectively pass on this information, therefore they choose to work with 'peers' of their target group (e.g. other young parents) to communicate the desired message.

This is understood as the 'transmission belt' model of peer-learning. In this model, the peer-educators are usually trained by the client in specific information or skills or may even be formally accredited, and it is common for them to be paid for their service. Depending on the way in which this model is implemented, it is not necessarily consistent with all of the 'core elements' of peer-to-peer learning as defined by the Share to Know partnership. For example, the educational offer might be based on the client's expectations about what the target audience needs to know, rather than needs expressed by the learners themselves.

**Diagram 1: The model of 'peers as transmission belts'**

2. Peers as multipliers

According to this approach, 'peer-multipliers' are people who have direct access to, and connection with, the target audience as a result of shared personal, cultural or socio-economic characteristics. These characteristics might be a common 'language' (i.e. slang, body language, rituals etc.), shared life experiences and/or matching cultural identities.

The peer multipliers approach is based on the ability of individuals to gain extensive access to a particular audience, in an authentic way.

The knowledge or skills conveyed under this model are often less detailed or technical than in the 'peers as transmission belt' model, and adapted rather than merely replicated by the peer multipliers, so that the information can be communicated in a way that is most natural or familiar for that audience.

Diagram 2: The model of 'peers as multipliers'
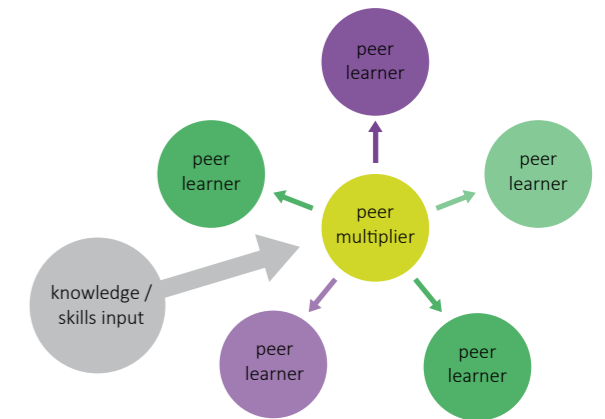
3. The model of voluntary and self-determined peer-to-peer learning

Whereas the previous two models covered some but not necessarily all of the core elements of peer-to-peer learning as defined by the Share to Know partnership, this model engages with all elements. Voluntary and self-determined peer-to-peer learning can be defined as a learning process that is a two-way exchange between teachers and learners, an active exchange amongst equals at 'eye level'. This exchange is based on the 'teachers' and 'learners' having a shared confidence in the knowledge and experience of all those involved. This is a meaning-oriented learning style that consciously uses the social process to increase learner achievement, and is driven by the needs and interests of participants.

Diagram 3: The model of voluntary and self-determined peer-to-peer learning
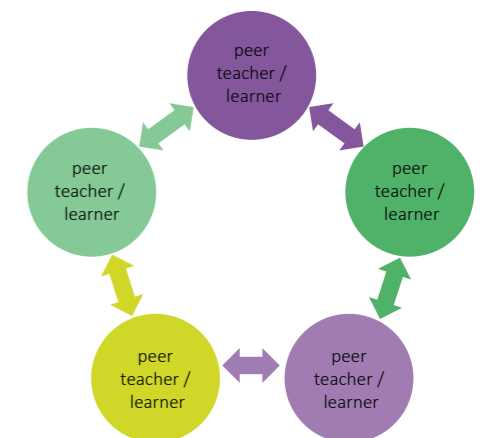
Step 2: Work out your aims and the plan for introducing (or strengthening) peer-to-peer methods to the young people you're working with

In addition to all the social challenges our learners face, at Street College we are especially concerned about the large number of our participants who can no longer obtain, or want to obtain, formal qualifications in the traditional educational system, which leaves them with very few entry points into mainstream society. Nevertheless, in our courses we see that these are talented young people, whose strengths are unrecognised or undeveloped. Most of the people we work with at Street College received no support at certain pivotal moments in their lives and, along the way, lost their innate joy of learning. We have found that the most powerful approach for working with them and engaging them with peer-to-peer learning is through forming personal connections and relationships. The least effective approach for working with this target group is using 'obvious' educational methods such as icebreaker games and group work activities, which young people associate with the more formal educational settings that they have come to reject.

Step 3: Identify the necessary pre-requisites for successful peer-to-peer learning to happen in your courses

In our experience, for peer-to-peer learning processes to be successful the coaches/trainers need to actively practice a culture of recognition and acknowledgement towards the learners and take on more of a facilitator and supporter role rather than that of a teacher. One practical example of this is our approach to identifying and understanding the skills, capabilities and interests of our participants when they first join our courses – this is a key part of building a meaningful relationship with participants.

Attending the Share to Know meeting in London helped us become more aware of the peer-to-peer methods we were already using, but were not necessarily aware of, or did not think about specifically as a peer-to-peer 'method'. This inspired us to focus our prototyping process on:
1. Becoming more conscious of the peer-to-peer learning processes already happening in our courses
2. Focussing on the development of peer-to-peer learning methods/collaborative learning processes in the training that Street College provides for its teachers

Step 4: Identify the peer-to-peer methods your teachers might already be using and build on those to identify further development needs

When we presented our experiences and insights from The U session and the discussions at the meeting in London, the Street College teachers were very hesitant towards the idea of adopting any of The U's methods – they did not feel it was appropriate to simply adopt the methods from other contexts. Therefore we decided to engage them in a discussion about which peer-to-peer learning methods and core elements they were already using, and which other ones they might find useful to introduce into their courses.

The Street College team started the prototyping process with a stock-take of the peer-to-peer pedagogical methods already being used by our staff. We did this by conducting interviews with all the Street College teachers — we asked them about common peer-to-peer learning methods, and whether they were using them in their courses already and if not, why not.

The table on the following page is a summary of their responses.

Step 5: Focus teacher training on preparing your teachers for using peer-to-peer learning methods

The stock-take of the existing use of peer-to-peer learning methods highlighted that many peer-to-peer learning methods were already in practice. However, in some cases the teachers were not aware of these as being specific approaches or methods, having instead adopted them on the basis of their practical experience of 'what works' with the students. We therefore decided to focus on peer-to-peer learning methods more directly in our regular teacher training.

Street College has developed its own approach to training its teachers in collaborative learning. Instead of conducting formal training events, our aim is to make the training sessions feel more like retreats with a lot of space for peer-to-peer exchange and (self-) reflection. The only input the facilitators give at the beginning are some questions and a short definition of collaborative learning to discuss amongst the participants. In this way we are encouraging the teachers to experience the peer-to-peer learning methods themselves.

One example of how this works was for central parts of the training programme schedule to be left open and without a pre-determined topic. The teachers were only provided with a schedule, telling them the amount of time available and the designated room for the session. In the beginning

Street College's prototype: stock-take of peer-to-peer methods being used

Method	Description	Reflection from Street College teachers
Introductory activities and relationship-building (peer-to-peer core elements: a safe learning environment and learning as relationship-focussed work)	Beginning the course with short activities that encourage learners to interact and to get to know each other	The Street College teachers acknowledge the importance of supporting relationship-building between teachers and learners as well as between the learners at the beginning of a course. But our teachers consider informal chats as the most effective approach to building up those relationships, rather than planning structured activities.
Asking about participant's existing skills or knowledge throughout the learning process (peer-to-peer core element: building on existing knowledge/skills)	The course content is shaped and/or lead by the knowledge and interests that participants already have	The advantage of this approach is that the teachers do not have to generate interest in the topic because the learners are self-motivated from the start of the courses. This allows the teachers to focus on facilitating the learning process itself rather than having to focus on motivating the learners. Sometimes the interests of the learners change during the courses. In those cases, the Street College teachers assist them in discovering what it is they would like to learn instead.
Learners presenting their work (peer-to-peer core element: focusing on learner interaction and exchange)	Throughout or at the end of the course, participants have opportunities to present or share their work with others	Because, at Street College, the learners choose the courses themselves, they are often very proud and keen to show the results of their work. Their main audience are the other learners, making this a very important social learning experience. Teachers need to facilitate these presentations carefully in order to ensure it becomes a positive experience for all learners and to avoid potential conflicts.
Reflection (peer-to-peer core element: learning process as important as achievements)	Having the opportunity to specifically think about what your experience of the learning process has been like: what has gone well, what has been challenging, what you enjoyed and why etc.	Reflection by the learners and teachers about the experience of the course is a crucial element of peer-to-peer learning at Street College. It emphasises the value of the learning process in itself in contrast to valuing merely the final achievements. Also, a well-facilitated reflection can help to build the learners' self-confidence and encourage exchange and interaction.

we realised how hard it was for all involved, especially the training facilitators, not to follow a leader or to try to be a leader in these sessions. After an initial phase of confusion and orientation, some teachers started talking about topics they were interested in – and the collaborative learning process started. With time, more and more topics were suggested for discussion. At the end of the teacher training all participants received the mission to observe and reflect on their experiences during their upcoming courses with regards to collaborative learning process. At the next reflection meeting with all the teachers we will ask them to share and discuss these experiences.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS WITH EMPLOYERS AND FURTHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Many employers and further education providers rely on certifications and qualifications from formal education institutions as a basis for making decisions in their recruitment or application processes. For some peer-to-peer providers this presents the challenge of how to ensure that the skills, knowledge and capabilities that have been acquired by their learners are sufficiently understood and recognised by these stakeholders, in order that they can support effective transitions for their learners into employment or further education courses.

This section presents a range of scenarios that demonstrate how peer-to-peer learning providers can take steps to support effective relationships with employers and formal education providers.

FORMAL EDUCATION PROVIDERS

The following examples are taken from a Swedish context, where informal education providers such as Folk High Schools are closely integrated with the mainstream education system (including being inspected and supervised by the relevant educational authorities).

Providing learners with a standardised, nationally recognised qualification

As the example of the Alma General Course in Sweden demonstrates, supporting peer-to-peer learning students to work towards, and obtain, a nationally recognized qualification can provide an effective pathway for them to re-enter the formal education sector. However, obtaining the licensing to offer such a qualification and adhering to its pedagogical requirements can create significant organisational and administrative demands for peer-to-peer learning providers, and is likely to be a suitable option only for larger, established organisations.

For more information about the Folk School General Course and the certification it offers see here: https://www.folkhogskola.nu/globalassets/documents/folkhogskola_eng_engelska.pdf

Building links with higher education institutions and lobbying for admission quotas for NEET young people

In Sweden, higher education providers are legally required to offer a certain percentage of their places to students from the Folk High Schools. However, given the limited number of the spaces, competition is very high. Staff at Alma build relationships with guidance counselors at local universities and colleges, which helps them to be aware of specific entrance criteria or requirements and provide their young people with the best opportunity of making a strong application. In addition to this, staff at the local colleges and universities become more aware of Alma's work and have the opportunity to develop a better understanding about the skills and capabilities that students develop there and the value of peer-to-peer learning and other informal educational processes.

EMPLOYERS

Relationships between employers and informal education providers are usually established on a case-by-case basis, often facilitated by personal relationships or specific labour market initiatives. Alma Folk High School has built up relationships with a range of employers by participating in a labour market project that focused on supporting people who have experienced long-term unemployment to become prepared for the workplace, and then matching them with suitable placements. Alma have identified the following steps in the process of establishing successful partnerships and placements with employers.

Step 1: Setting up a dedicated 'job team' that focuses on supporting learners into jobs

Relationship-building with both the employers and the young people is critical to being able to secure good placements and make appropriate matches. Therefore, having individuals who can focus on this process and maintain relationships (rather than having several different members of staff overseeing different stages of the process) is hugely valuable, enabling continuity, trust and clear communication.

Step 2: Identify and build relationships with smaller, local employers

Small, local businesses can be more receptive to hosting developmental work placement schemes than larger national or international businesses, which are more likely to have their own strategic corporate social responsibility plans already established. In the right circumstances, smaller businesses may also be able to offer more flexibility in how the young person is hosted for the work placement: the small scale of operations makes it easier to adapt roles and responsibilities in order to make the most of individuals' unique strengths and interests.

Step 3: Identify suitable candidates from your learners to participate in a trial phase

Once job openings have been identified, the job team can collaborate with teaching staff to identify suitable candidates. Having a checklist with criteria for confirming whether a particular learner is ready for regular employment is useful. This checklist can include questions about the learner's level of punctuality, reliability in turning up for work as well their social, communication and team working skills. During this process, the job team can also identify the limitations and special support needs of the learners in order to confirm which jobs might be suitable for them and which ones not.

Step 4: Preparing the learners for the job interviews

Rather than running a formal interview, it's preferable for the job team to set up a facilitated, face-to-face meeting between the employer and the applicant, and for a member of the job team to also be present. Employers should be provided with relevant details about the young person's background beforehand. If the 'interview' goes well, a trial period can be agreed so that both the employer and the new employee have an opportunity to assess whether the placement is a good fit in practice.

Step 5: Supporting employers and learners once the employment is ongoing

Small and medium-sized enterprises do not usually have the resources to provide a lot of extra induction or training to employees who might need additional support. Therefore, once the employment trial has begun the job team should be pro-active about remaining in contact with both the employer and their former student, in case additional support is needed or there are any problems that need to be mediated.

AWARDING INDEPENDENT DIPLOMAS

In Germany, the experience of peer-to-peer learning providers is that many employers, particularly those recruiting for low-skilled jobs, still do not consider the various interpersonal and 'soft' skills developed by peer-to-peer learning as being valuable in comparison with other indications of achievement or quality, such as school grades and formal qualifications.

Peer-to-peer learning providers therefore need to find ways to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of these skills to the modern labour market and to provide learners with tools to present their skills and knowledge in a clear and relevant way. By

developing such tools, peer-to-peer providers can contribute to increasing the wider understanding of the value of peer-to-peer learning amongst employers and in the workplace.

In response to this challenge, Street College is currently prototyping a new type of diploma for the participants of its peer-to-peer learning courses. The aim of this diploma is for employers (and other audiences) to develop a more holistic insight about the learners: about their skills and knowledge but also their progress and learning journey. As part of this prototype, the Street College team have also been thinking about ways to focus on the skills and capabilities that are particularly valuable in the modern workplace, and that are developed or acquired in peer-to-peer learning processes.

How does the Street College diploma work?

After having attended a number of Street College courses, learners can request to receive a Street College diploma. The diploma consists of two parts: the first part describes the conventional knowledge and capacities that the learner acquired in the Street College courses. The second part is what distinguishes it from other diplomas – it describes the strengths and unique qualities of the learner. In this, it provides a detailed overview for the reader about the learner's potential to cope with different workplace situations and challenges. The content for this qualitative insight is based on assessments provided by the three following tools.

Qualitative assessment tool 1 – Gallup strengths finder

The framework for the first part of the diploma is based on several established learner assessment tools. One tool for the identification of personal strengths is the Gallup 'Strengths finder' (Gallup, 2016). The Strengths finder uses a framework of 34 strengths, themes or talents (such as adaptability, communication, discipline, empathy, positivity and responsibility) to create a profile of an individual. For the purpose of the diploma, we focus on the top five strengths that are identified for each learner.

Qualitative assessment tool 2 – evaluation questionnaires

Another assessment tool used at Street College is an evaluation questionnaire, which learners and teachers complete at different stages of the courses (learners at the beginning, and both learners and teachers at the end of every course). These questionnaires focus on the impact of the peer-to-peer approach on the participants, from the perspective of the teachers and the learners. When compiling the diploma, the Street College team use quotes from the evaluation questionnaire to illustrate key aspects of the overall personality of the participant, in their own words and in the words of their teachers.

Qualitative assessment tool 3 – educational Masterplan

The third qualitative assessment tool Street College uses is an educational 'Masterplan', which is set up when learners first join the Street College with the aim of recording the learner's progress towards personal goals and the impact of external events and challenges, as well as the milestones and successes that have been achieved. The Masterplan is updated regularly by the participants themselves as well as their tutors.

For the diploma, the results from the questionnaires, the educational Masterplan and the Gallup Strengths finder are combined to create an overall picture of the learner's talents, abilities, characteristics, achievements and their learning journey with the Street College. The different tools complement each other, with the questionnaire highlighting the peer-to-peer related skills, the Masterplan documenting the learning journey and the Strengths Finder showcasing the personal characteristics of the learners. Together with the description of the skills and knowledge of the learners, the qualitative information drawn from these different tools provide a much richer and more comprehensive picture of the learners than commonly provided by similar documents.

WORKING WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

In the UK, The U's learning sessions have proven to be a very effective tool for engaging with people who have not a had a positive experience of other more formal learning approaches, or who do not consider that kind of learning to be 'for them'. However, as a short-term learning experience The U doesn't have the opportunity to directly support participants onto other formal learning pathways, in the way that an institution like Alma Folk High School does. Instead, The U focuses on collaborating with other organisations whose remit does include facilitating pathways to employment and further education, and aims to connect or signpost their participants to these services.

The following steps describe The U's experiencing of establishing collaborative working relationships with relevant stakeholder organisations, whose role is to provide longer-term support and advice for people who are looking for employment or further education opportunities.

Step 1: Deliver peer-to-peer learning sessions in close cooperation with partner organisations, and tailor your approach to meet specific needs

The U often tailors their session delivery (i.e. adapting the length, structure and content of sessions) in order to meet the support needs of particular groups of people who are accessing other services: for example people with long-term health conditions or young parents. We have found that the experience of peer-to-peer learning is often quite different from other support or training sessions that are being offered, and the partner organisation has the opportunity to witness first-hand the positive outcomes and added value that can be achieved by integrating a peer-to-peer learning offer into their programme.

Step 2: Invite staff/representatives from the partner organisations to participate directly in the peer-to-peer sessions

Because of the social nature of peer-to-peer learning, participating in sessions can often lead to the development of social relationships between participants and a greater understanding and insight about others' lives. Support staff who are working with partner organisations have given feedback that their experience of participating in peer-to-peer sessions helped them to gain a better picture of the people who they're working with, which then helps them to work more effectively on finding appropriate work or education opportunities that will be a good fit.

Step 3: Encouraging partner organisations to adopt peer-to-peer learning approaches in their own work

Depending on the results from the previous steps, some partner organisations become interested in how they can integrate more peer-to-peer approaches into their own work and activities. This is a great opportunity to build on the initial experience of delivering The U's independent short sessions and look for opportunities to continue to nurture the skills and capabilities of the learners using peer-to-peer approaches, whilst they are continuing with their search for further education or employment.

EVALUATING PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING METHODS

For almost all organisations and institutions that have an educational mission, measuring outcomes and evaluating progress is a central aspect of the work. This is usually driven both by an internal desire to understand what has been effective and inform the further development of practice and, by external requirements, to evidence the success of the approach (to funders, educational authorities, potential students etc.).

There are some evaluation challenges that are common to many educational initiatives working with young people (and specifically NEET young people). One example of this is that young people are often engaged with a wide range of formal services and institutions (as well as any additional involvement with informal or voluntary projects), and it can be difficult to demonstrate that a specific social or educational outcome was influenced or caused by a particular experience. This is particularly true when trying to evidence longer-term outcomes. In addition to this, there might be wider circumstances in a young person's life that make it difficult for them to engage in a consistent, sustained way, meaning that their learning progress is often disrupted.

Much research has been undertaken into the development of frameworks for evaluating developmental outcomes for young people;[5] the Share to Know partnership did not have the remit to comprehensively build on this body of work. Instead, we chose to focus the purpose of the prototype and exchange process on developing frameworks that specifically explore the ways in which the process of peer-to-peer learning has an effect on learners.

This section presents two frameworks, one of which was developed by a short-term peer-to-peer learning intervention (The U) and one by a longer-term peer-to-peer educational programme (Street College).

MEASURING IMPACT OF A SHORT-TERM PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING INTERVENTION

The term 'short-term learning interventions' refers to interventions where the contact between participants and educational teams is planned to be either one-off or limited to a small number of encounters. Short-term interventions focus on providing a positive, intense and eye-opening educational experience that provides an impetus for further change or opportunities.

The following text describes The U's process for developing an evaluation framework in this context.

Formulating a theory of change for short-term peer-to-peer learning interventions

Formulating a theory of change is the first step for developing an evaluation framework.

A theory of change is a tool that allows you to comprehensively describe the need you are trying to address, the changes you want to make (your outcomes), and what you plan to do (your activities).[6]

The U's theory of change is based on the desire to foster 'bridging' social capital[7] in neighbourhoods (particularly diverse, rapidly changing communities in urban areas), because social capital has been linked with a range of social outcomes including community resilience and wellbeing.[8] The U aims to help people in neighbourhoods learn useful skills (such as first aid or managing everyday conflict) whilst also having the opportunity to meet and get to know others who live in their community. Therefore, using peer-to-peer activities (an inherently social model of learning) is an appropriate way of facilitating these outcomes.

The U's theory of change provides a basis for choosing relevant indicators for the evaluation process: the evaluation should assess i) whether the sessions have been successful in teaching useful skills ii) whether participants would feel willing and confident to use these skills in their community, if the need arose and iii) whether participants formed new social connections during the learning sessions

Developing appropriate evaluation processes and methods

The U has used a combination of approaches to collect data to evidence their theory of change. Below are short descriptions of some of these approaches.

Individual feedback (quantitative)

E.g. Feedback forms or posters that contain specific, structured questioning such as 'before and after' assessments, closed questions and ranking or rating questions. Some benefits of this kind of feedback approach are that it can be relatively quick for participants to complete (increasing the likelihood that they will provide feedback) and it creates a consistent set of data that you can quantify (i.e. '82% of participants reported that they learnt a new skill during the session'). This kind of feedback is therefore useful for capturing evidence about specific, measurable short-term outcomes that can be subjectively assessed by the participant immediately after they have completed the session.

For The U, impact indicators that are useful to assess using this approach include: whether or not the participant enjoyed taking part (assessing the quality of the experience); whether or not they feel like they acquired new knowledge or skills (assessing the effectiveness of the educational methods); whether or not they feel confident and willing to use these skills in their community (assessing whether the learning experience has improved their sense of personal agency on that topic); and whether or not they met new people when they attended the session (assessing whether or not the sessions are successful at bringing new groups of people together). As part of the Share to Know exchange, The U also began to include feedback questions that specifically explored the impact and effectiveness of peer-to-peer methods, for example 'Do you feel like you learnt anything from the other participants in today's session?' and 'Did you feel able and willing to make contributions to the session?'

In addition to the closed, specific questions that generate quantifiable data, it can be very useful to include some open questions that provide participants with the opportunity to make additional comments to explain their responses and provide you with a deeper understanding about their experience.

Informal or anecdotal feedback (qualitative)

While capturing data on quantitative indicators such as those described above is a vital piece of the evaluation picture, other significant indicators of personal progress and development can be hard to capture using these methods. This is why it is important to also consider collecting qualitative feedback from informal encounters such as chats before/after the session or during breaks. These kind of informal insights can be very useful in illustrating the effect of the peer-to-peer learning experience, for example if participants make comments about feeling welcome, respected or valued and talk about how this affected their ability to learn. When feedback is given informally but feels significant to capture for evaluation purposes, it is important for our facilitators to check with the person who made that comment whether they are happy for it to be used in this way (and anonymised if appropriate).

Anecdotal feedback can be very insightful when gathered not only from the learners themselves, but also from other stakeholders who have an insight into that person's progress and development. For example, other teachers or support workers may notice a shift in someone's confidence, behaviour or communication. The insights from such relationships can provide a valuable opportunity to illustrate the way that peer-to-peer learning experiences can have a wider effect on somebody's life, beyond their participation in the session itself.

Focus groups

Focus groups are a method for generating deeper feedback and reflection about a particular experience or topic. This method is time-consuming for participants and requires more preparation from the organiser, but is effective if used strategically to gain deeper insights at key stages of the project, for example when developing or testing a new method. Because of

the deliberative, exploratory nature of focus group conversations (and the fact that they provide a collective insight rather than isolating individual experience) they can be a very useful way to gather insights about the specific impact of peer-to-peer learning processes upon learning outcomes.

Post-project evaluation

Whilst a short-term intervention is likely to be very limited in the extent to which it can (or is required to) demonstrate longer-term outcomes, many projects will want to explore indicators of the impact of their intervention after it has been completed. The U uses an online survey 3 months after the project has completed in order to gather a better insight about how the skills and social connections that were fostered during our peer-to-peer learning sessions had a longer-term or lasting effect on participant's lives. The benefit of this approach is that we have been able to gather evidence of the ways in which our learning sessions have contributed to building new social relationships in neighbourhoods, and have been successful in enabling people to be more active on a range of topics related to personal wellbeing, community development and social action. The limitations are that we have found it difficult to get a representative percentage of participants to respond to the survey, and the awareness that respondents are a self-selecting group.

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF A LONG-TERM PEER-TO-PEER INTERVENTION

Longer-term initiatives often include a much stronger focus upon building the foundations for a substantial relationship between the participants and the educational teams, with an emphasis on building trust. This provides greater scope for evaluating the ways in which the intervention had an impact not just in terms of the immediate learning outcomes, but also in terms of personal and social development and any further educational or employment pathways that the young person has taken as a result of the initiative.

The following text describes Street College's process for developing an evaluation framework in this context.

Formulating a theory of change for long-term peer-to-peer learning interventions

Street College defines education as '*a dynamic concept that centres on the processes by which a person develops spiritual, cultural and practical abilities, expands their personal and social competencies and achieves personal autonomy and self-responsibility*'.

Our key priority is therefore to focus on capturing the learners' personal, inherent motivations and drivers (in order to find out what they want

to learn and what skills they want to develop), and then working to support them to achieve those aspirations. Because of this, learning outcomes are highly individualised and 'success' can look very different amongst Street College learners. Specifically, re-entering the formal education system is just one of the possible outcomes for Street College participants in this open-ended-results model, which values the process as much as the eventual results.

In the context of working with NEET young people, this means that Street College's aims are focused on facilitating the personal development of the participants in order to build their self-confidence and motivation to engage meaningfully with the society around them.

Developing evaluation structures and tools
Facilitating reflection is central to the way that Street College optimises the learning process and captures outcomes. This applies to everyone involved: teachers as well as learners.

Using external evaluators to conduct a 360-evaluation
One option for conducting a thorough evaluation with all stakeholders is to commission external evaluators to develop questionnaires and conduct independent research. This qualitative monitoring can be supplemented by the quantitative analysis of the demographic data of participants and the core data on course attendance.

When undertaking 1-1 questionnaires or semi-structured interviews we have found that it is important for interviewers to be familiar with the background of the interviewees, and to be able to explain or rephrase the interview questions if necessary. If the questionnaires are being used with different groups, the questions need to be adapted to reflect the perspectives of the different participants, teachers and social workers.

Examples of the general question topics that have been used in this approach are:

1. The knowledge and competences gained by the participants
2. The personal development of the participants
3. The atmosphere in the group and the communication
4. The structure and organisation of the course
5. The teachers and their competence
6. Desires/aims/prospects for the future
7. Potential for improvement (facilities, communications, support, frame conditions)

With regards to the experience of peer-to-peer learning in the courses, the questionnaire can include questions on what the participants learned from each other, whether they had influence on the conditions and the speed of learning and whether they accomplished something as a group. Also, the teachers could be asked whether they learned something from the participants, whether the surrounding conditions of learning were helpful and if it was possible to fulfil the specific needs of the learners.

Peer-feedback-questionnaire (PFQ)
The peer-feedback-questionnaire is an evaluation tool that is applied in a group setting and was developed to assess the positive characteristics of each individual participant and to provide them with more insights about themselves. Every group member has to answer the questions of the PFQ for another group member. In this way the group's knowledge is captured about every participant. The results are summarised by the teachers in a way that highlights the positive features and characteristics of each participant. The completion of PFQs in a group setting also has the effect of strengthening the team bonding, which provides another key condition for successful collaborative learning.

Masterplan
Another tool for recording and documenting the longer-term personal development process of the participants throughout their attendance of peer-to-peer learning courses is the 'Masterplan'. A description of the Masterplan tool can be found on page 22.

Using the results from the evaluation
The data from these evaluation tools is used to create an on-going record of student progress, and help teachers to maintain their awareness of each individual learner's progress, particular needs or motivational contexts. The evaluation data can also be used to generate peer-contributions for the Street College diploma. In particular, Street College have found that the qualitative data has been useful in enabling them to create a more detailed and holistic picture of participants' development, which can be used to offer a rich yet concise illustration of an individual's strengths and progress, for the participants themselves as well as for future teachers or employers.

An overview of outcomes from The U's projects

WE HAVE WORKED IN **10 COMMUNITIES,**

COLLABORATING WITH OVER **230** LOCAL ORGANISATIONS, CLUBS & BUSINESSES

AND HAVE TRAINED... **132 VOLUNTEERS**

TO DELIVER

Positivity · Networking · Give & Take · Be a Lifesaver · Youth Enterprise · 90 MINUTES

389 SESSIONS

TO OVER **2,800** ATTENDEES

94% of people who attended 'Be a Lifesaver' felt more confident to act in a medical emergency

87% of people attending 'Practising Positivity' felt more confident to manage their own happiness

92% of people who attended 'Give and Take' felt more confident to handle everyday disagreements

PARTICIPANTS MAKE SMALL COMMITMENTS TO DO **GREAT** THINGS LIKE...

CHAT 201 people pledged to chat to a neighbour

SHARE 375 people pledged to share a skill they learnt

HELP 192 people pledged to lend a hand to someone

DO 246 people pledged to do something new locally

AND THIS IS WHAT THEY SAID.

"I got to learn that there are amazing people in my community who care just as much as I do about making a difference" - Guest, Maidstone 2013

"Everyone I spoke to who attended the sessions said that they found them enjoyable, fun, interactive and that they learnt new skills... It has really helped them to reduce their isolation and learn some life skills" - Local partner, Barking & Dagenham 2014

"I was intrigued when I heard about The U, and being the oldest person there around all these young people who were so enthusiastic - well, it fired me with enthusiasm too! - Host, Sutton 2011

CASE STUDIES: FUNDING MODELS FOR PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING

There are different options for getting funding for peer-to-peer learning work with young people. The following case studies provide 3 examples of the ways that peer-to-peer learning has been funded in the German, Swedish and UK context.

Funding case study 1: Project grant-funding for cultural education (Germany)

Funding source:
Private foundations or public grants for cultural education projects.

Type of funding and criteria:
Usually partial project grant funding, co-funding from other sources is often required. Projects have to produce cultural 'products' or outputs such as performances with defined target audiences, using relevant educational methods and they have to relate to a topic of current relevance either in terms of the topic, or in terms of the target audience of the project.

Relevance to peer-to-peer learning:
This type of funding does not usually specifically aim to fund peer-to-peer learning, because it is outcomes focused rather than process/methods focused. Therefore it is important to highlight how peer-to-peer learning methods will enhance your ability to achieve the programme's goals, e.g. using previous evaluation data to illustrate the development of specific capabilities (resilience, independence, creativity etc.) or outcomes (further education or employment pathways).

Challenges of this type of funding:
'Reactive' project development – having to adapt the project idea to the varying goals of the different funders or having to generate a new project idea every time. There can be pressure to propose something 'new' or 'innovative', rather than developing your work based on a cumulative and comprehensive understanding of the needs of the group that you are working with. This kind of funding can also lead to a focus on one-off interventions rather than supporting ongoing, longer-term support programmes.

One way of trying to address this challenge has been to engage and build relationships with funders more strategically, to try and shape their understanding of the issue that that want to fund. Street College regularly presents at events and conferences on youth issues, where potential funders are present.

Opportunities:
In Germany we are noticing a shift in the cultural education sector, in favour of supporting projects that are designed to be open-ended and outcomes (rather than outputs) focused, and which can demonstrate a high level of participation in all aspects of how the project is designed and delivered. These criteria would favour peer-to-peer approaches. Whilst the move towards these types of projects is commendable, funders also need to be aware of the time-frame implications of this kind of work, and should be supportive of the need for flexibility in testing and adapting peer-to-peer and participatory methods in order for them to work in an authentic way.

Funding case study 2: Public sector contracts or commissioning for getting NEET young people back into education (Sweden)

Funding source:
Regional job centres and/or local authorities, through public procurement announcements.

Type of funding and criteria:
Grant funding is typically allocated per participant or per course. There is no long-term funding arrangement, funding decisions are taken on a course-by-course basis and reviewed based on evaluation of demand and budgets. Legal or constitutional structures are usually specified in the procurement guidelines, which determine what kind of institutions can apply.

Relevance to peer-to-peer learning:
The funding is awarded on the basis of the number of participants and the educational results achieved. The fact that peer-to-peer learning methods are applied consistently in our courses does not play a formal role in the decision to award the funding, however the integration of peer-to-peer and informal methods into their pedagogy is a widely recognised and accepted part of the Folk High School approach.

Challenges of this type of funding:
This funding is only a 'top-up' funding for the education courses provided, and does not cover the full cost of delivery. In addition, because the funding is awarded on a case-by-case or course-by-course basis, it tends to fluctuate significantly. For example the number of young people being referred to the courses by the local Job Center is currently declining, because more young people are choosing to do apprenticeships instead.

Funding case study 3: funding for local community cohesion or development programmes (UK)

Funding source:
Local authorities, housing associations or other public sector bodies with responsibility for specific neighbourhoods.

Type of funding and criteria:
Contracts or commissioning, often the result of proactive business development with relevant commissioning institutions (e.g. open proposals, personal recommendations or professional networks). The success in securing contracts has been based on a number of elements such as the reputation of The Young Foundation, a focus on innovation and our ability to demonstrate impact with in both quantitative and qualitative terms (evaluation data and personal stories).
In terms of delivery, each contract includes a number of targets such numbers of volunteers and participants. Whilst the funding itself is not usually conditional on achieving the targets, the organisation's reputation and ability to secure further contracts does rely on this.

Relevance to peer-to-peer learning:
The goals of this funding are usually defined in terms of broad outcomes related to building personal capacity, skills, social networks and confidence with a certain target audience. Sometimes the funders value the peer-to-peer approach, and at other times hardly understand it at all.
Nevertheless, we do highlight the peer-to-peer learning approach as an important part of our work and the funders who do value this are particularly interested in the effectiveness of the approach with groups they categorise as 'hard-to-reach' – i.e. NEETs, people who are unemployed, ethnic minorities.

Challenges of this type of funding:
Most of our contracts have come from local authorities, but the project was initially launched as the UK government embarked on its long period of austerity, drastically reducing local government funding. There has been real interest and support for our project, but this type of work is easy to characterize as a 'nice to have' rather than as an essential service, and in times of such constrained budgets, developing 'soft skills' in a community is not always seen as a priority. However, making the case for resilience and capacity building – which are the foundations for reducing pressure on public services – is an important aspect of our ongoing conversations with funders.

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