

The Young Leaders project



Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) has been awarded a grant of almost £1.5 million by the Big Lottery Fund to establish 'Young Leaders', a peer led sex and relationships education (SRE) project for young people across England. The three year project will be launched in April 2007 and will be directed entirely by the young people involved.

The Young Leaders project is a peer-led Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) project for young people across England, and is a preventative response to the escalating rates of HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) amongst young people in the UK.

THT consulted 120 young people from diverse backgrounds to develop the project and it is based on their views about what kind of SRE they need, who is best placed to deliver it, and how they would like to increase their knowledge and skills in this area. It will aim to support young people to:

- Increase their knowledge of sexual health and wellbeing
- Increase their skills in negotiating and managing sexual health and relationships
- Develop their skills to implement and manage their own projects
- Increase their vocational and practical skills
- Make a positive contribution to their community

Boards of young people will be recruited in seven regions across England, to establish and manage a grant programme to support SRE projects created by other young people. The regional boards will be supported by a national board of 14 young people, comprising two elected members of each of the regional boards. The national board will ensure a co-ordinated national approach for the whole project. Board members will receive comprehensive training and will work towards achieving recognised Open College Network (OCN) qualifications.

Young people aged 13-18 who are living, working or studying in the seven regions and belong to a youth organisation will be encouraged to apply to their regional board for a grant to run projects around SRE issues. The involvement of young people from hard to reach groups who are disproportionately affected by sexual ill-health, such as young people from minority ethnic groups, gay and bisexual young men, will be particularly encouraged. Young people will be required to demonstrate how their projects meet basic grant criteria decided by the board members and meet the overall aim of increasing their own and their peers' knowledge around SRE.

A total of five grant rounds will take place over three years in each region, and successful applicants will be offered a grant to run their own project. Successful applicants will be required to manage all aspects of the project including planning, delivery and evaluation, and they will be offered training from their peers on the regional boards to help them deliver their project. The young people THT consulted in developing this project identified a wide range of potential SRE projects including: improvised theatre, educational events, training for teachers and parents delivered by

young people, creating new, more relevant information resources for their peers (both online and in print), local radio discussions and mystery shopping of sexual health services.

The overall theme for this project is to increase young people's knowledge about sexual health and empower them to make informed and healthy decisions around sex and relationships, whilst supporting them to develop life skills which will help their transition to adulthood. The key to this lies in peer education and in enabling young people to develop and manage their own projects, rather than simply taking part in those implemented by adult sexual health professionals or in formal education settings.

A total of nine staff will be recruited to oversee the Young Leaders Project. A Project Manager and an Accreditation & Learning Officer will be based at THT's headquarters in London, and a Participation Officer will be employed to co-ordinate the project in each of the seven regions the project will cover. These include London, the South East, the South West, the Eastern region, the North West, Yorkshire and Humberside,

