

# Peer power

**Lois Marshall** describes Scottish developments in peer education.

**T**he Scottish Peer Education Network (SPEN) is a national support network for both professionals and young people involved in peer education. One of the great strengths of peer education is that young people can choose to participate in all areas, from design to delivery. This means that the delivery methods and the content of the sessions change with young peoples' ideas and needs so they remain relevant and up to date.

Peer education empowers young people to become active participants in education. Peer education addresses the factors affecting how and why young people adopt new behaviours

and attitudes. Recent research from Cardiff and Bristol Universities (ASSIST trial) has demonstrated its success in preventing smoking amongst young people.

The achievements of many of these peer educators are genuinely inspiring. Many have been in difficult situations themselves, but have still been able to be an inspiration to others.

**Lois Marshall is Network Development Officer with SPEN.**

SPEN is funded by the Scottish Government and is based at Fast Forward.

[go ▶](#) for more on SPEN.

[go ▶](#) for more on ASSIST.

**The best part of being a peer educator was in the school sessions when I got to tell my story and the young people could ask questions, coz they used to ask if it was true that if you get pregnant you just get a house, and I could tell them the truth and what it was really like being a young mum.**

Belinda Lang, 17, Relationship Skills Peer Educator with the Respond project.

## All sorts

People are often amazed at the wide range of peer education projects among SPEN members:

LGBT Youth's Green Light has trained ten peer leaders to design and deliver their own workshop on supporting someone if they 'come out'. Green Light Leaders have been helping to deliver workshops to school classes and youth groups across Scotland.  
[go ▶](#) for more.

The Woodcraft Folk's Powerpod project trains young people in energy issues and peer education. They then run workshops and activities dealing with climate change and renewable energy in primary schools, festivals and youth groups using the Powerpod – a renewable energy trailer that can be used for making solar popcorn and wind powered music. [go ▶](#) for more.

Fast Forward was established in 1987 to provide drug education and prevention with young people. Since then it has become one of Scotland's leading agencies concerned with the promotion of young people's health and well-being. Current work includes peer education in rural Scotland; a national training post delivering substance awareness to part time and volunteer youth workers; a project working with BME communities in Edinburgh; and an integrated sexual health and substance use programme in secondary school and community settings. [go ▶](#) for more.

