

News

Mentoring, a tool to progress equal opportunities and to fight against social exclusion



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To support formerly supervised youngsters during their emancipation process is one of the tasks done by the Association Punt de Referència.

[Jalal El Amri](#) is 21 years old, he studies **Social Integration**, and he is working and doing his internship in an association. He met his mentor Maria Àngels when he was 17, through the Association [Punt de Referència](#). Jalal explains that she introduced him to **Catalan culture** and supported him in all his academic, personal and professional projects. Maria Àngels, Jalal says, welcomed him in her home and made him feel “like a member of her family”.

Formerly supervised youngsters are boys and girls who have partially spent their childhood and/or adolescence in a youth detention centre and have to emancipate when coming of age. The way to emancipation is not an easy one, as [Punt de Referència](#) explains. Many of them reach the majority age completely by themselves, far away from their families, short of money and with very few future opportunities.

The organisation **Punt de Referència** cares for **young people aged 17 to 23**, accompanying and supporting them when they leave the **Juvenile Centres**. When they face this challenge at majority age, counting on somebody as a reference point to lean on may tip the scale of their future in one or the other direction.

The relationship between people who voluntarily offer individual support and a person at risk of **social exclusion** is known as **mentoring**. The aim is to help the mentored people on their journey and thus to facilitate their personal and/or professional development.

The North American report by Tierney, **Grossman and Resch** (2000) concluded that youngsters who count on a mentor were less likely to take up drug abuse (46%) and alcohol consumption (27%). It also showed that they were less likely to commit physical violence or to skip school. The mentored kids feel more self-confident, develop more positively and establish positive relationships to close friends and relatives.

Punt de Referència has [three main programs](#) to progress towards equal opportunities: Mentoring by a relative or a

person as a reference point, mentoring based on home-oriented measures and mentoring through **educational support**. They are all based on the **voluntary participation** of people who accompany and advise these youngsters on their way to adult life.

According to the [annual report](#) 2013, the association supported 177 youngsters from all over **Catalonia**. A high number of them came from the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa, and the most common age was 20 to 22 years.

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