



# Opportunity Youth

**PEER EDUCATION AND MENTORING -**  
**assisting and supporting young people**  
**to construct a positive tomorrow**

**Anne-Marie McClure, Chief Executive**  
**Opportunity Youth, Northern Ireland**

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# Northern Ireland Context (1)

- Northern Ireland provides the world with a very unusual educational profile
- **Achievement?: 70.1% Grammar School pupils progress directly into Higher Education**
- **Failure?: 4.8% leave school with no formal qualifications whatsoever**  
Of which 34.8% gravitate into vocational training  
18.7% progress immediately into unemployment,  
6.6% move into destinations unknown – this collective group of inactive young people, aged 16-17 years, are better known as Status 0  
(Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency [NISRA], 2002)
- **Sporadic periods of unemployment among young people is positively correlated to ongoing vulnerability and impacts considerably on their future experience and expectations of the labour market**  
(Furlong & Cappell, 2004)
- In Northern Ireland the current unemployment rate of young people aged 18-24 years is 11.6%. This is 6.7 percentage points higher than the rate for all ages which is 4.9%  
(NISRA, 2004)

# Northern Ireland Context (2)

- *'The link between youth unemployment and **social exclusion** has been clearly established; an **inability to find a job** creates a sense of **vulnerability, uselessness and idleness** among young people and can heighten the attraction of engaging in **illegal activities**. For many young people today, being without work means being without a chance to work themselves out of **poverty**. In addition, an individual's previous **unemployment experience** has been proven to have implications for **future employment chances**.'*

*(International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2004)*

- In Northern Ireland there is a significant link between medium to long spells of Status 0 in pre-18 year olds and the likelihood of continued **socially excluding** spells of non-participation in young adulthood. Young people also become **unenthusiastic** about their future chances in the labour market and as a result become **less appealing** to prospective employers. The **probability** of these young people **experiencing long-term unemployment or inactivity** as adults is all the more likely. Policy makers are urged by academics to address this issue by **better catering for their diverse and individual needs in education and training terms**

*(McVicar, 2000)*

***13 YEARS of  
OPPORTUNITY YOUTH***



opportunity **youth**



*Helping young people to make the most of life's  
opportunities and be the best they can be .*

**SUCCESS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP**

# Opportunity Youth

- Est. 1993
- Product of 2 year Assessment of Need
- Peer education/peer mentoring/advocacy methodology determined by the 400 young people who took part
- To support young people into meaningful employment
- Local interagency project developed into regional voluntary sector youth organisation



# Opportunity Youth

- Holistic approach
- Realising potential
- Promoting sense of achievement
- Dealing with the barriers to progression
- Assisting and supporting young people to construct for themselves a positive tomorrow
- 11 Awards
- 13 Positive Evaluations



**CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

**SCHOOLS**

Switch onto Employment  
Community in Schools

**SEXUAL HEALTH  
SERVICES**

Men Only  
Youth Advice

**TRAINING &  
EMPLOYMENT**

Jobskills Access

**YOUTH  
JUSTICE**

**COMMUNITY  
PROVISION**

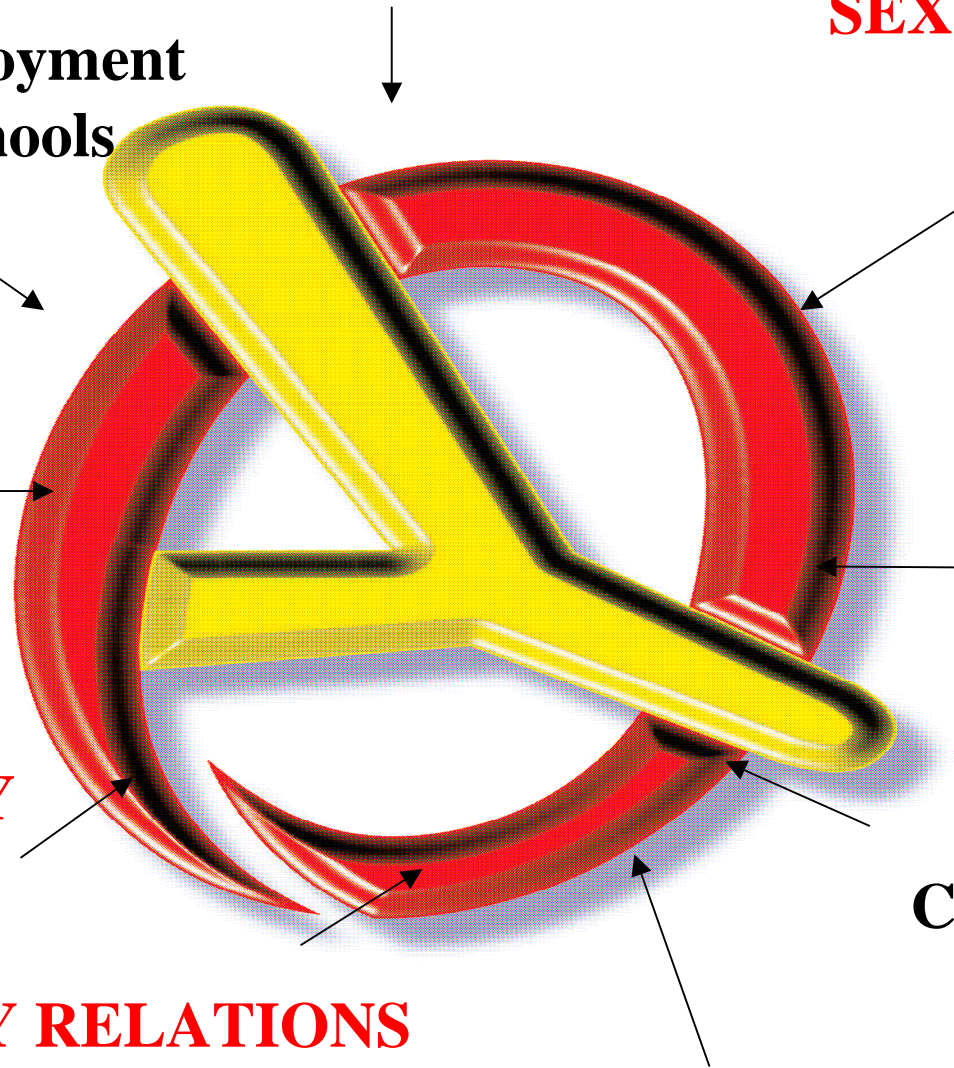
**DRUG AND  
ALCOHOL**

CHILL Project  
Lifematters

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

**MENTAL HEALTH**

24/7 Self Harm/Suicide Prevention



# Opportunity **Youth**

HOW?

- Peer Education
- Mentoring
- Intensive challenging residential experiences
- Assisting, supporting but also **insisting**





# How and Why Peer Education Works

- Committed
- Shared experience
- Use of positive peer influence
- Young people enjoy learning and developing
- Professional attitude – formal approach delivered in non formal manner
- Permission and ownership of process by each individual young person paramount



**Peer Education, Mentoring and Advocacy**  
works because it is young people who  
**know the experience** working closely with  
and supporting other young people **going**  
**through the experience**



# Opportunity Youth

- Outcomes
  - ✓ Young people across all services and programmes progress
  - ✓ Distance travelled demonstrated
  - ✓ 90% of young people complete and achieve OCN accreditation
  - ✓ Young people assisted and supported to construct a positive tomorrow



# Opportunity Youth

**Opportunity Youth** is committed to a long-term holistic approach to working with young people. Each of which have the right to their stake hold in society.

We are convinced that an approach which incorporates **prevention, intervention and reintegration** is the most productive way of achieving sustained behavioural change



# Opportunity Youth

*“Young People’s needs should be treated as **priority** as the consequences of a blighted generation of young people will last for at least 60 years”*

(Aston & Seymour, 1992, *The New Public Health*, O.U.P)



# Opportunity Youth

*Website:* [www.opportunity-youth.org](http://www.opportunity-youth.org)

*Email:* [info@opportunity-youth.org](mailto:info@opportunity-youth.org)

*Phone:* 44 28 90435810



**Any Questions?**

