



Opportunity Youth

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

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Ljubljana, Slovenia 22/23Feb 2007

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**

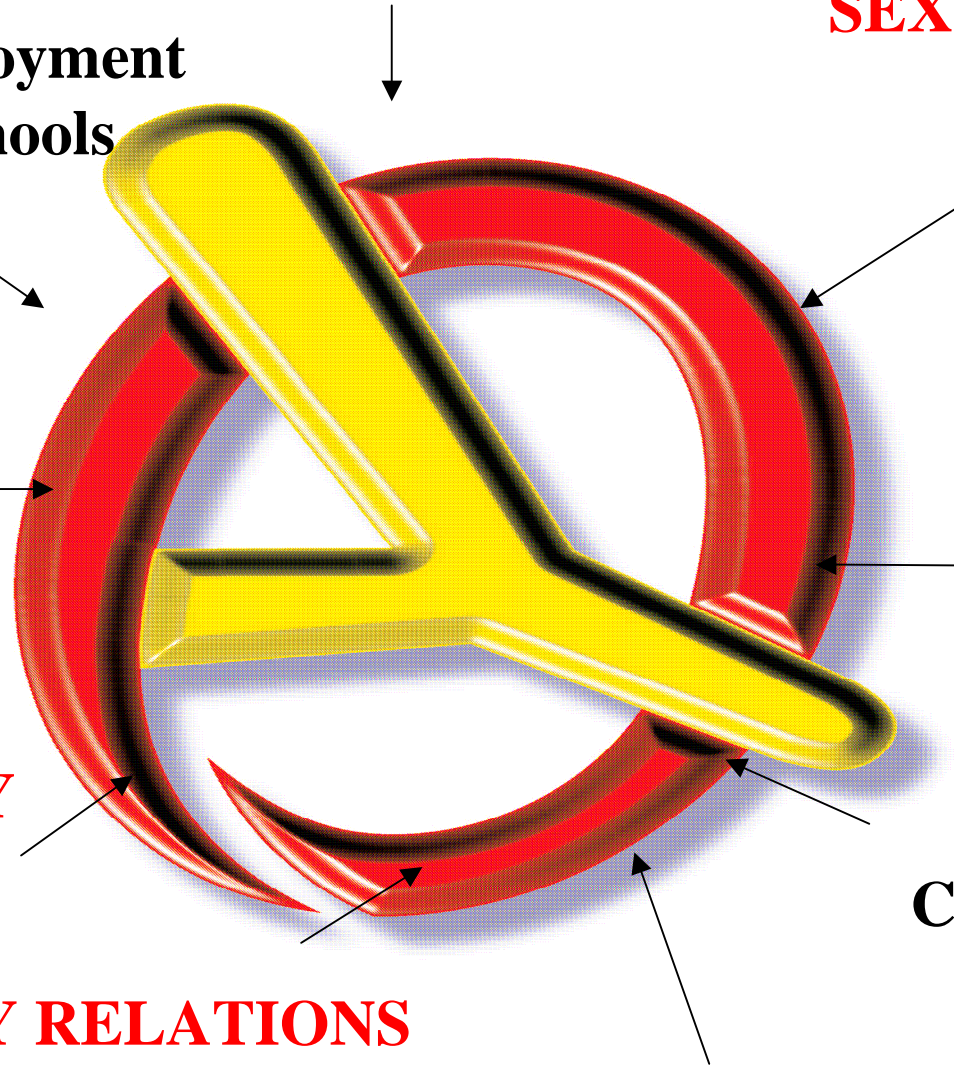
**DRUG AND
ALCOHOL**

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**

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Any Questions?

