



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

Issued on behalf of the International Fund for Ireland

23rd August 2011

MAJOR NEW INITIATIVE TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE BOOST THEIR EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS

A major £2 million initiative to help young people boost their employment prospects – aimed initially at North Belfast - was launched by Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland.

The Youth Works education and training programme is aimed at young people aged 16-17 years and will provide a structured programme to help them re-engage with formal education and training in order to make a real difference to their long-term prospects for training and employment.

The £2 million initiative is funded by the International Fund for Ireland through the Sharing in Education Programme and managed by Youth Council NI on behalf of the Department of Education and the Fund.

Youth Works offers unemployed young people who are not undergoing education or training, and who live in communities that suffer from economic and social deprivation, the support needed to fulfil their potential.

A new partnership of organisations has been appointed to help roll out the 26-week full time pilot programme from the 19th September. 36 young people from North Belfast will participate.

The partnership delivering the programme is led by Include Youth along with: Challenge for Youth; Artillery Youth Centre and NI Alternatives. Following the completion of the pilot programme a second call for applications will be made for delivery agents to facilitate the programme in other locations across Northern Ireland.

Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, said: "This innovative programme is an excellent example of how we can - together with the Department of Education and Youth Council for Northern Ireland - provide an alternative opportunity for young people to build a better, more positive future. There are young people who are disengaged from education and employment and who need help to get them back on their feet, Youth Works will develop their skills and self

esteem so that we can not only improve their employability but facilitate integration, promote understanding and improve cross-community relations.

“We need to invest in our young people in order to drive real change in our communities and leave a positive legacy for generations to come. Programmes like this are at the heart of the Fund’s efforts to build a more shared and peaceful future for Northern Ireland and the southern border counties.”

Minister of Education John O’Dowd said: “Youth Works is an exciting new youth programme and represents a unique opportunity for young people aged 16 and 17 who are not in education, employment or training, and who have not yet achieved any formal qualifications to make a positive and long term difference to their employability and training prospects.

“Unfortunately too many young people still leave school with little or no qualifications and do not progress into employment, education or training. They often face real barriers to progressing in life and reaching their full potential. That is why my Department and the Fund have developed this programme, to help address the needs of these young people in a non-formal environment and help them to increase their personal development, leadership, entrepreneurship and employability.

“I would encourage young people in north Belfast to engage with the programme and take full advantage of the range of training and development opportunities available to them.”

Joe Hawkins, the recently appointed Project Manager for Youth Works, said: “This is a really strong opportunity for young people - from North Belfast in the first instance – to gain a recognised qualification that will enable them to progress to employment or further education, building a better future for themselves and indeed their community. The participants we are hoping to recruit are those that are most difficult to reach, have no or very low level qualifications and who consequently have few choices open to them. The pilot programme will start on 19th September and I would urge anyone who would like some more information to get in touch with Include Youth www.includeyouth.org.”

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* For further information on how to get involved with Youth Works please contact Claire Meenehan at Include Youth www.includeyouth.org Tel: 028 9031 1007

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