

THE **GRIT**  
Experience  
*Courage & Endurance*





# The GRIT Experience

The Gerry Rogan Initiative Trust (GRIT) was set up in recognition that many young people face a range of barriers to progress in their lives and are at risk of dropping out of their training programmes. GRIT exists to promote the needs of this group and to provide a means of supporting them to achieve their potential. It is a charitable body run by a Board of Trustees that have extensive experience in meeting the needs of young people or addressing the factors that restrict their potential.

GRIT was set up in honour of Gerry Rogan who died prematurely in 2003. The Trust reflects Gerry's dedication to working with young people, including those who may have fallen through the cracks of the education and training system. The Trust seeks to provide a unique support structure for these young people. Established to promote Gerry's belief that all young people, if given appropriate encouragement and support, have the potential to take their place in the world, the primary focus of GRIT is to ensure that young people are provided with quality assistance that addresses their unique needs.

In pursuit of this primary aim GRIT was successful in receiving funding support from International Fund for Ireland and Dept for Social Development in 2007 to deliver a series of intensive personal development residentials (The GRIT Experience) for young people (aged 16-24), to enable them to review the life choices that they have made in the past and to consider different life choices that will help them realise their potential in the future. Over the four year pilot phase (April 2008 - March 2012) 270 young people will have been supported by The GRIT Experience. GRIT's partner in the delivery of the pilot programme has been Opportunity Youth.

Young people who have participated on these residentials have been strong in their praise of the process and have agreed that the "time out" involved in reviewing their own personal situations including meeting other young people as well as mentors and speakers from different backgrounds has made them think about the changing society in which they live and the role that they can play in it. Referral Organisations have also voiced their endorsement of the programme for their young trainees/clients and have been keen to have had further young people selected to participate.



# GRIT Experience



*What some of the young people on a GRIT Experience have said.*

**"IT WAS GOOD MEETING NEW PEOPLE FROM ALL DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS AND LEARNED THERE'S MORE THAN LIFE THAN TAKING DRUGS."**

"Life maps- this was very interesting to hear about other people's lives and what they have been through, I got to know them better as a person! Some people had it tough and listening to what they have to say and respect them all 100%"

**"Neil that was talking to us was sound and more less saying if there is anything out there we want to do the only thing you can do is go for it and give it 100% and achieve your goal and do your best"**

"It is good to listen to someone who has been down the road I'm going"

**"I learnt that there is more to life than drink and drugs like family. Enjoyed playing football and met new people."**

"I don't hang around with the same crowd any more because they always got into fights"

"I haven't touched drugs since the programme"

**"Got to know everyone, got a good game of football that was level crack, the staff gave us a good talk and it give me a different look at life"**

"I know I want to do childcare so I have changed my course so I can do it"

**"I haven't missed a single day since the (GRIT) programme, and I just hope I can get a job at the end of it"**

"One thing that I thought before I came down here- was it going to be good crack or shit then when I sat down and had to listen to Marty and all and I took it all in and it all makes sense."

"Truthfully I thought it was not gonna be any good but I like the leaders Marty and David and we actually had good crack and played football and I met new people and the leaders are very easy going and it is quiet and it gives you time to think about your life and what you want to do in life"

"I don't drink any more during the week, only at weekends"

**"I have learned how to go out and have a good night without drink or drugs"**

"I have wised up, and know I am responsible for what I do"

**"I have grown up a lot"**

***"GRIT made me more confident in all aspects of my life"***

***"I appreciate everyone and everything a lot more now"***



# RESPECT For Self RESPECT For Others

One of the most important foundations of *The GRIT Experience* is that it is based on having the utmost respect for the young people who take part and shows them how to respect others and themselves. It gives them hope, and shows them how they are responsible for their own life choices. It also gives them opportunities to try new activities, and gives them an opportunity to achieve, often for the first time in their lives. *The GRIT Experience* is delivered by a very experienced team from Opportunity Youth who work with a range of specialist providers including Xplore Outdoors and the Belfast Activity Centre. They have a strong background in working with young people, and their ethos is very positive.

*The GRIT Experience* is a cross community programme, and has given young people the opportunity to mix with others from different backgrounds and cultures. Often this is the first time they have had this opportunity in a non-hostile environment. The programme embeds peace and reconciliation throughout its programme and expects its participants to give and receive total respect to and from others, regardless of background.

## Why has GRIT been successful?

*The GRIT Experience* is a unique programme which has really worked for young people. There are other activity based programmes available for young people, but none that provide the level of depth and personal development. The uniqueness of GRIT is the depth of personal exploration of the barriers to growth coupled with the experience of the staff team to deal with these enormous issues during the programmes and the follow up mentoring. Young people find it enjoyable but challenging and rewarding. The programme delivery team is very strong, and offers great support both on the initial one week GRIT Experience and then during the follow up mentoring meetings after this week. However, they also challenge the young people, and work to make them understand that every decision has consequences, positive or negative. The GRIT programme has had a lot of success with the large majority of participants still in training and has helped young people achieve progress in their personal lives, giving them hope and raising their aspirations. It has empowered young disadvantaged people to make better life choices, to set their goals higher, and to achieve.



To put your name forward or to recommend one of your young people for a place on a GRIT Experience contact:

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## Assessment of GRIT External Evaluators Fitzpatrick & Associates ( June 2010)

*“GRIT is a very strong programme of personal development. The young people are challenged physically, emotionally and socially throughout the selection day, and the five day residential. However, they are also supported, nurtured and encouraged to believe in themselves and their ability to make better life choices”*

“GRIT shows the young people respect, and shows them how to respect others and themselves. It gives them hope, and shows them how they are responsible for their own life choices. It also gives them opportunities to try new activities, and gives them an opportunity to achieve, often for the first time in their lives”.

“The GRIT Programme has shown to positively change participants’ attitudes and encourage a “can-do” attitude where previously many participants didn’t believe they were worthy or capable of achieving their goals in life”.

## Deloitte (April 2012)

*“The GRIT Experience has succeeded in reaching and engaging the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people from different communities across Northern Ireland.... the initiative has encouraged the young people to think more positively about their futures and provide the confidence and life skills to cope with unexpected events and to challenge themselves in reaching their full potential”*

“Given the impact of the intervention, the challenge of youth unemployment and NEETs and the potential costs to society, a Social Return on Investment analysis found the £270,000 invested in delivering GRIT Experience Phase 2 gave a return of £1.2 million”.

“We recommend that the GRIT Experience be one of the options availed of by Government as it responds to the challenge of a growing NEETs population, in particular the most marginalized”.













# STATEMENTS about The GRIT Experience

"The resounding success of the GRIT Experience 2 is testament to the importance of supporting initiatives which ensure the most marginalised of our young people are given opportunities to fulfil their potential. This work takes on even greater significance by challenging attitudes and behaviours which negatively impact on community relations. The challenge is now for policy makers to assess the impacts of the GRIT Experience 2, and consider the potential for mainstreaming the very successful delivery mechanism which underpins the initiative."

Dr Adrian Johnston, Chairman, International Fund for Ireland

The positive outcomes of the GRIT Experience 2 cannot be fully measured by statistics but will transpire in the positive effect it has had on the young people's lives. This initiative has played a vital role in providing support to young people to help them realise their potential in all aspects of life, whilst developing the ethos of shared communities where people learn, live and work together.

Michael McAvoy, Deputy Director, Department for Social Development

**"There are challenges; it is not easy for the young people, but with a bit of support, the change process can be implemented and acknowledged. When young people slip up, just as we do many, many times in our life — we are no different; we are just a wee bit older — we help them to get back on track and apply the learning from that experience. That is what GRIT is about; it is about courage and endurance".**

Stephen Barr- Opportunity Youth GRIT Experience Manager

"As a compassionate society we cannot continue to allow whole generations of young people to become unemployable. If we want our economy to grow we cannot afford to allow it to happen. This problem affects every area of government spending in Northern Ireland and we know it does not have to be this way".

(Therese Rogan- Chairperson GRIT)

*"If we can do it for the 'creme de la creme' why can't we do the same for the kids at the bottom of the social ladder?"*

(Thérèse Rogan-Chairperson GRIT)

## Endorsements from Referral Organisations

"I feel the GRIT Experience is an excellent programme and wish I could get more of my young people on it on a regular basis"

**"The Grit Experience addresses the needs of the individual trainee and gives them confidence and motivation as well as an insight into themselves and their personal qualities"**

"I would definitely consider GRIT again and hope that they would consider us for referrals. In Neighbourhood Renewal area's there is a real need for this type of work to be done with young people"



“The Grit project complements our mainstream provision and projects as it enables many of the participants to enhance their life and social skills. Mainstream education due to curriculum demands sometimes focuses more on hard achievements rather than the soft.”

**“The three young men that we referred came back buzzing from the residential experience. They were able to make new friends from areas/ communities they would not normally socialise in/with. They came back more focused on what they wanted to achieve in their lives. The young people had a visible confidence boost, feeling more comfortable in sharing things with the group and speaking out”**

*“Our young person benefitted greatly from GRIT, he suffers extreme anxiety and finds it difficult to interact with other. Social Services, did not think he would complete full five days but he did complete the full residential. He had the opportunity to be faced with challenges and deal with them in a positive manner and learn coping skills for the future”*

“XXX benefited greatly from GRIT, it helped him to stop taking drugs. He has gained an insight into residential work and now wants to pursue a career in Youth Work. He has now completed two OCN Qualifications relevant to Youth Work”

**“As a referral contact for GRIT I feel the programme was an excellent opportunity for the young person I referred... The benefits it brought to the young man I referred included confidence development; improvement in self-esteem; opportunity to participate in outdoor and team activities and skills in communication and interaction”.**

## How GRIT has helped some Young People...

**“Without the GRIT Experience my life would have taken a very different path. I learned so much about myself and am looking to a positive future for me and my family. Without GRIT I don't think I would still be here.”**

**“GRIT came at the right time – my behaviour was getting worse again and I was spiralling out of control”.**

“Without GRIT I would have had no reason to stop the drugs and self-harming and it's as simple as this - if it wasn't for GRIT I'd either be dead, in jail or in hospital”.

**“I learned how to deal with things more easily, for example, if I get stressed out now I write it down and take time to think through it rather than fly off the handle. I also know there are people out there who want to help me and I'm not dealing with things by myself”**





# How GRIT Has Helped Some Young People....

## **"GRIT has made me want to do more things with my future"**

*"I learnt to believe in yourself and that you can do anything you want – just put your mind to it"*

**"I felt that GRIT was life changing and the best experience. Found it a very powerful programme"**

**"Yes, as from now my life is going to change for the better, and the thing\* that I had in my life is away and I am so happy"**

(\* ref to life map issue)

**"I learned about my self-esteem and how to be part of a group. I enjoyed GRIT because it helped me get back on the right track"**

**"I learnt to always be yourself and to always try some thing before you say you cant do it."**

*"I changed my training course to something that I wanted to do not just something that my friends were in – I have made new friends and met new people. I learnt to be more confident in myself and to have more respect for myself and other people"*

*"I have overcome my fears and it will help me change things in my life...I would like to be a nursery teacher"*

*"I learnt to always be yourself and to always try some thing before you say you cant do it."*

**"learnt not to judge a book by its cover to listen more to what people have to say and to have more confidence in my self"**

**"It stops us stereotyping before getting to know people personally because we don't know what people have been through in the past until we open up to each other"**

**"It was a great experience...it has made me see things differently now. I can do what I set my mind to. It has made me want to do something with my life"**

*"It helped me to wise up and stop complaining and just get on with it"*

*"I'll go out more instead of staying in my room. Also if something is bothering me I'll talk about it"*

*"I would like to be doing something good with my life...I think I will change things, and I don't think I would have had the courage to do it without GRIT"*

**"Confidence for me was very hard to do but with the right people I was able to achieve that. I learnt tons of things in the GRIT programme that was very hard but fun to do like the time we went camping. I was never good at that stuff but the GRIT programme taught me never to be afraid"**

**"I would like to be doing something good with my life...I think I will change things, and I don't think I would have had the courage to do it without GRIT"**

**"It has made me think about things I have done in the past and now I realise I want to do things different"**



GRIT Trustees:

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Deirdre Fitzpatrick  
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