

include  
**YOUTH**

# Getting the 'Right' Youth Justice

...engaging with the findings of  
the review of the Youth Justice  
System in Northern Ireland

Welcome  
Debbie Watters, Include Youth Board Member

Conference  
**REPORT**

## Welcome – Debbie Watters, Include Youth Board Member

Deborah, Assistant Director at Northern Ireland Alternatives, has been involved in the area of justice work, peace building and youth work for the past 20 years. She trained as a youth worker in the late 1980's and has worked as a restorative justice practitioner for the past 15 years including the management of the first restorative justice programme in the USA from 1993-1997. Deborah has been involved with the development of restorative justice initiatives in Northern Ireland since 1997 and played a key role in transferring her learnings from the USA into the Northern Ireland context. She is currently the Assistant Director of Northern Ireland Alternatives, a community-based restorative justice programme operating at a grassroots level in North/West Belfast, East Belfast, South Belfast and Bangor which works closely with young people and adults involved in crime, anti-social behaviour and interface violence.

Deborah is actively involved in training in restorative practices and mediation both within local communities, schools, universities and statutory agencies and has provided training, consultancy and presentations/lectures at a local, regional and international level. She is currently a Board Member of the Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice at QUB and Include Youth and is an Independent Member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

“ Good morning everyone. We are going to make a start to the annual Include Youth conference, Getting the right youth justice system and you are all very welcome here this morning.

My name is Debbie Watters and I am a member of the board of Include Youth, I have the honour of being a member of the board of Include Youth and I am going to chairing the conference this morning and handing over to Phil Scraton this afternoon, the Chair of the Include Youth board.

So I want to start by saying a very big welcome to everyone that has come along today. This is something very different that Include Youth is attempting to do today, we are attempting today to have a conversation around a specific piece of work and most of you are here today because you have an interest in the youth justice system, you have an interest in the report that has gone out for consultation, and we are here today just to explore that a bit more.

It is an important day folks, and I want to say one of the reasons why it is important is because of the diversity of the audience here today. Include Youth are very pleased that today in the audience we have decision makers, we have senior managers, we have practitioners, we have young people, and we want to give a special welcome to two members of the Review Team, we have John Graham here today and we have Kathleen Marshall with us today and you will hear a little bit more from them later.

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Include Youth has invested a lot in this piece of work and as you know Include Youth has had 30 years of experience in the field of youth justice. That's experience that we want to use today in terms of how we move this process forward.

One of the key messages that we want to get out this morning and this afternoon is that youth justice doesn't just belong to the Department of Justice, youth justice belongs to everyone. The lives of young people are cross cutting throughout all government departments. So that's why it is exciting for us today to have people here from different departments and different arenas of work.

Today we want to generate debate, we want you to be able to have healthy, open conversations with each other and that's one of the reasons that we have the workshops or the discussions this afternoon. Not everyone has signed up to the discussions yet, so can I urge you and I will mention again just before break, that we need you during the break to sign up to the areas of discussion that you have the most interest in. There is a table of Include Youth workers out in the reception area who will nab you and bully you, in a very restorative way obviously, into signing up for different discussions and workshops.

Before we go any further, I have forgotten about the really boring stuff, which is the housekeeping, and I need to say that there are going to be no fire drills today that we are aware of so if you hear the fire alarm you have to move quite quickly, it is genuine. There are two fire exits in this room, over here, and the toilets as you know are just out through the double doors to the back and lunch is going to be served in the reception area at the back as well.

I am going to just very briefly run you through the program for today because you have your conference pack in front of you and I think it is quite self-explanatory. After I am finished we are going to hand over to Matt from Include Youth and some young people, and Edel Quinn is going to talk to us a little bit about Include Youth's vision for a child rights compliant youth justice system, what should that look like, and then we are going to have a break and then we are going to hear from John and Kathleen, members of the Review Team, and then we are going to have an opportunity for responding to that.

Folks, today we want everyone to have a voice but in allowing everyone to have a voice we are also conscious that we need to keep you to time. So as the Chair, I am going to be quite tight with time and I am going to keep the speakers to time and I hope I don't come across as rude. I am going to keep the workshop facilitators to time, and it is very key for us that we get the business done as we plan to do as well as allowing people to engage in healthy debate.

Something which is totally new to me are the tweet seats at the back. Have you seen the tweet seats? There is going to be tweeting throughout the day, okay, and if you want to tweet

we would like you to use the tweet seats, (I am going to keep saying that throughout the day) the tweet seats at the back, so if you want to use your phone, the last two rows on this side. If you want to use your phone, if you want to use your laptop, please move to those seats at the back. What we don't want is the tweeting to interrupt other people's attendance. There are people at the front laughing with my obsession with tweeting and tweet seats, but if you want to tweet, move to the seats at the back and make use of those.

We are going to move now to changes needed to the youth justice system and before I invite Matt, Daryl, David, Mick and Sam up to speak, I want to read a little bit out of the report of the Review Team. These are some of the words of the authors of the Review Team and I think they should be at the core of everything that we do today:

"It was the young people and their families we spoke to that left the most vivid and lasting memories. Their stories provided graphic and sometimes quite disturbing insights into the nature of the criminal justice system and how they experience it. In many ways this report is a tribute to them".

We have some young people here today who want to tell you their story and we really hope it forms the foundation of the business that we do today. This is why we are here. We are here today to help make the lives of young people in Northern Ireland and the lives of young people involved in the criminal justice system better.

On that note I am going to hand over to Matt from Include Youth to introduce his team. ”