   

Date: 13 October 2015

The inaugural Transitional Justice Grassroots Programme, bespoke training from Transitional Justice Institute (TJI), Ulster University & Ashton Community Trust through its Bridge of Hope department has launched.

The highly innovative community-academic training programme began on 30 September, and will see trainees learning how to effectively deliver the *Transitional Justice Grassroots Toolkit* to individuals and communities moving out of conflict.

The training comprises of two undergraduate modules and a theory to practice residential. The first module involves debate, reflection and completion of the *Grassroots Toolkit* and the second module focuses on the teacher training required to deliver the *Grassroots Toolkit.* A residential in January 2016 completes the programme.

Head of Victims & Mental Health Services at Ashton Community Trust Irene Sherry has warmly welcomed trainees to the programme and said:

“Our partnership with the Transitional Justice Institute has been an exciting and innovative journey. This training programme is so new and unique that we are delighted to see it come to fruition after months of planning and recruiting. Credit must go to all our partners and supporters of this work and the Victims & Survivors Service who have funded this work since we first started. I’m delighted to welcome the very first cohort of Toolkit Trainees to Ulster University and I’m positive they will enjoy this first class experiential learning process.”

The Victims & Survivors Service, on behalf of the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister are funding the training programme. The Political Settlements Research Programme (PRSP) is also a supporter of the partnership. Eilish Rooney, TJI Senior Lecturer, has supported this work since inception and has authored four booklets: *Transitional Justice Grassroots Engagement* (2012); *Transitional Justice Grassroots Toolkit* (2012); *Transitional Justice Grassroots Toolkit User’s Guide* (2014) and the forthcoming *Transitional Justice Grassroots Toolkit Trainer’s Manual*.

Director of TJI and Professor of Human Rights and Constitutional Law Rory O’Connell said:

“The Transitional Justice Institute is honoured to be involved in this project with our partners in Bridge of Hope. As a research institute, TJI adopts an action-oriented research strategy which involves working closely with our partners at local, national and international level so as to deliver on our research and education objectives and to serve the community. Thanks to this approach, TJI is ranked first for impact in law in the UK’s Research Excellence Framework 2014. Our work with Bridge of Hope, spearheaded by Eilish Rooney, is a perfect expression of our approach to research. Eilish’s work is one of a number of our projects where TJI research is supported through the Political Settlements Research Programme. We are delighted to welcome this cohort of students to TJI and the University.” ENDS

Notes to editors:

From 2011 Bridge of Hope and the TJI have worked to build a programme that empowers local people to explore how individual lives and societies are changed by conflict and transition.

To date the work has been delivered to over 120 people living within areas as diverse as Falls, Shankill, Mount Vernon, Tigers Bay and New Lodge. It has also been successfully delivered on a cross community context as well as a gender basis. It is now also available to students undertaking the BSc Hons Community Development degree at UU. Materials published as a resource to the programme have attracted attention from Syria, Kenya and other conflict zones around the world and the programme itself was recently described as ‘inspirational’ by a leading human rights NGO in Zimbabwe.

Updates about the course will be posted on a range of social media outlets:

Twitter: Ashton Community Trust @ashtoncommtrust & Transitional Justice Institute @TJI\_

Facebook: [Bridge of Hope](https://www.facebook.com/bridgeofhope.org?fref=ts) & [Transitional Justice Institute](https://www.facebook.com/TransititionalJusticeInstitute?fref=ts)

Web: [www.thebridgeofhope.org](http://www.thebridgeofhope.org) and [www.ulster.ac.uk/transitionaljustice](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/transitionaljustice)

For more information on the Transitional Justice Grassroots Programme contact Ashton Community Trust Head of Victims & Mental Health Services Irene Sherry 028 9074 6737.

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For more details about the Victims & Survivors Service see [www.victimsservice.org](http://www.victimsservice.org)

 For more details about the Political Settlements Research Programme

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