

Stephanie O'Rourke

I was at a point where I thought my life wasn't going anywhere. Then I heard about the Springboard course, it seemed like a brilliant opportunity and an experience of a lifetime. I worked as a volunteer in Youth Work in my area for years and it was always something I wanted to do but with having no Leaving Cert I wasn't sure how to get qualifications to help me get into Youth Work full time. So this course seemed like such a good opportunity not only for the qualifications but what I really needed to turn my life around and also a chance to meet new people from all different backgrounds to gain confidence, live away from home and to learn more about different cultures

Everything we covered was so useful and relevant to youth work and getting us ready for the overseas phase. I think the group bonded brilliantly and very quickly. The residentials were really good and helped us get to know each other a lot better. My placement overseas was in an orphanage outside Cape Town in an area beside a community. 15 children live there who have been taken out of their homes because of various dangerous situations. I learned so much that will stay with me forever. I learned not to take anything in life for granted especially the small things. These children are so happy and content with so little. They're the happiest children I've ever met and they've taught me so much. Seapoint and Cape Town is amazing. Best place I've ever been

I've gained so much confidence since starting this programme. I have no problem speaking out in front of groups or anything anymore.

I learned more about different cultures and background in the past few months than I have in my lifetime! The course made me realise never go by stereotypes etc. I will always wait to get to know people for who they are not where they are from or what religion they are. I have made such close friends from all races, backgrounds, religions and cultures. The course really opens your eyes to a bigger world.

Everyone at Springboard is so helpful and supportive. They help us with everything they can and are always there when we need them. I know if I ever need anything I'll always be able to go back for support or help.

I really think it's so important for these programmes to keep running as for me it has turned my whole life around. It has been the most amazing eye-opening experience of my life and definitely changed me for the better. The courses help you develop more as a person. I would definitely recommend this programme to anyone. It's the best thing I have ever done and I have learned so much that will stay with me forever. I think its a great opportunity for any young person to be a part of and will change their lives forever. I'm going to carry on volunteering and looking for full-time youth work. I'd like to work with an older age range and work with cross community projects to gain more experience. Hopefully in September I'll get into college in either Dublin or Belfast to try and get a degree in youth and community work and take it from there.