

# Edinburgh College help youngsters to make a film



On Friday night there was a film premiere in Edinburgh at Edinburgh College where a BAFTA award-winning director has created a film with a group of young and unemployed Edinburgh 'scheme kids' to turn their life experiences into something creative.

Garry Fraser, who won the Scottish Newcomer BAFTA in filmmaking in 2013 and has had his own film, Everybody's Child, broadcast on the BBC, set up a course for young people from poverty-stricken areas in Edinburgh. Garry is the college's filmmaker in residence and ran the course as part of his role to try to engage the young people in positive activity.

Originally from the Muirhouse estate in Edinburgh, Garry was once involved in a life of crime and drug abuse. He managed to find his path out of addiction after realising his creative talents on the HND film course at Edinburgh College in 2006. Now, Garry is an internationally respected director, who is renowned for his gritty, real-life, urban documentaries set in Edinburgh.

The award-winning director has returned to Edinburgh College to share his experiences, expertise and passion for film with a group of young and unemployed people. The 24-week course began last summer to engage the group of 16 students at a time when they could slip into potentially dangerous activities.



The short drama, Journeys, is based on the real-life experiences of the teenagers, who were given full creative

control to write, edit and act in the story. The film delves into dark themes of domestic abuse, gang culture, knife crime and drug abuse, allowing them to express their own personal stories through newly learned skills in filmmaking.

Garry said: "Education saved my life. That's one of the reasons why I set up this course, to try to catch young people who are from a similar background to my own, before they find themselves involved in self-destructive lifestyles of gangs and drug abuse – to give them the option of a new route and a better future.

"The film has given the group a creative outlet to take their stories and turn these into something positive. It's been amazing to watch them all change from having little to no self-confidence, to being able to act on camera, take control of creative shots behind the scenes and even record the film's soundtrack. I'm proud of all of them for the enthusiasm, dedication and passion they have shown to the project and, most importantly, the steps they have now taken to continue on their path to a better future."

The project has been hailed as a success as six of the budding young creatives have now signed up for a Digital Media course at Edinburgh College, with four other students discovering an interest in the Brickwork course and one already enrolled on the Beauty Therapy course at the college. The filmmaking course helped the students to feel at home in the college, as many had never stepped foot in an educational environment prior to the course.

Ray McCowan, vice principal educational leadership at Edinburgh College, said: "Garry is a champion of further education and how it can turn people's lives around. The young people who have worked with Garry see him as a role model and he's been an inspiration to them all. The course has engaged the youngsters in education and already six of them have signed up for creative and practical courses.

“This is just one of the brilliant examples of the work the college is doing to engage with young and unemployed people on its doorstep. Colleges play a crucial role in reducing inequality and are a key route to allowing people from all backgrounds to a better life. We’re delighted that so many of the young people on the filmmaking course have now decided to start their journey with us on to many positive destinations.”

