

Acting for jobs; Norwich youth theatre company set up by young people, for young people

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Concerned by the lack of work experience and job opportunities in Norwich, a group of young people have set up their own theatre company and gained themselves new skills.

Led by Fixer Rachel Wearmouth, 21, the group worked with Fixers, a national movement of young people 'fixing the future', to create their first play and staff the theatre company with volunteers.

"When I was younger I had an eating disorder, which took me out of my studies," says Rachel.

"I haven't been able to gain as many qualifications, and so it is really hard for employers to take a chance on me because my CV doesn't show my abilities.

"It completely destroyed my confidence not getting a job. Fixers has given us the opportunity to set up TheaTeers, which is run completely by young people. By setting up this company we've actually managed to create our own work experience.

"Through this I've realised that I really can do things, and to know that I've changed other people's lives as well, it's extremely satisfying."

A report about their campaign will feature on ITV News Anglia on Thursday 6 June from 6pm.

Fixer Will Houlton, 20, who took on the role of finance manager, has been unemployed for 15 months. "I've applied for 600 jobs unsuccessfully. Hope starts to drain a bit but you have to keep trying to stay positive otherwise you're not going to get a job at all.

"Having this on my CV will really give me a step forward into getting a career placement."

Fixer Rob Glover, 24, has also been unemployed for around a year. "Finding work experience is very, very difficult.

"Without it, it means I don't gain that experience and as time goes by, the longer I'm not employed and not doing anything, I'm less likely to get a job. It's a vicious circle.

"I was stage manager and I've learnt a lot of organisational skills. I've learnt a lot about working on your own initiative. I haven't done anything like this before so it was entirely new for me."

The group have had positive feedback from their first performance of their play, called 'every which way....but where?', which follows the story of a young girl named Kate. Faced with the prospect of unemployment, she evaluates her options in life including university, being jobless, or trying to gain employment.

One audience member said: "I find it very inspiring to see people getting hold of their own futures and taking it into their own hands because sometimes it's really hard to get anyone else to believe in you, so you have to believe in yourself." While another commented: "I've realised now that I need to get out there and get some experience myself rather than waiting around for something to happen."

Fixers is a charity which supports thousands of young people across the UK to take action and change things for the better, addressing any issue they feel strongly about.

How each Fixer tackles an issue is up to them – as long as they benefit someone else.

The award-winning Fixers project has already supported 7,700 young people across the UK to have an authentic voice in their community.

Now, thanks to a grant from the Big Lottery Fund, Fixers aims to work with a further 20,000 young people over the next three years.

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Fixers is a project of the Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT), a charity that brings together mainstream broadcasters, public and voluntary sector services, and viewers.

"Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea... an idea given a voice by 7,700 young people over the past five years," says Margo Horsley, Chief Executive of PSBT.

"They have reached thousands of people with their work, on a national stage as well as in and around where they live. They choose the full array of social and health issues facing society today and set about making their mark. Fixers are always courageous and their ideas can be challenging and life-changing, not just for themselves."

Peter Ainsworth, Big Lottery Fund UK Chair, said: "The Big Lottery Fund is extremely proud to be supporting Fixers to engage with more young people to change things for the better. Fixers has a tremendous potential – one young person's initial idea can be transformed into reality, spread across a community and make a positive influence on a wide range of people. There are thousands of young people campaigning to make improvements in their neighbourhoods and Fixers provides a platform to highlight their voluntary work and many achievements."

For images, interviews or more information, please contact Sue Meaden in the Fixers Communications Team by email sue@fixers.org.uk or phone 01962 810970.

There are lots more stories about young people doing great things on the Fixers website, Twitter and Facebook pages:

<http://www.fixers.org.uk>

<http://www.twitter.com/FixersUK>

<http://www.facebook.com/FixersUK>

Notes to editors:

- Fixers started in England in 2008. Now with a £7.2 million grant from the Big Lottery Fund, Fixers is extending into Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. To date, over 7,700 young people across the UK have become Fixers and created over 900 projects.
- The Public Service Broadcasting Trust is a charity that brings together mainstream broadcasters, public and voluntary sector services, and viewers.
- The Big Lottery Fund (BIG), the largest distributor of National Lottery good cause funding, is responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised for good causes by the National Lottery.
- BIG is committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need and has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since June 2004. The Fund was formally established by Parliament on 1 December 2006.
- Since the National Lottery began in 1994, 28p from every pound spent by the public has gone to good causes. As a result, over £29 billion has now been raised and more than 383,000 grants awarded across arts, sport, heritage, charities, health, education and the environment.

Company Contact:

Fixers

T. 01962810970

E. sarahj@fixers.org.uk

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