

Bexley teens campaign against smoking

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Two school mentors are so shocked at the level of young people smoking in Bexley they are creating a film to encourage them to stub out the ash.

Michelle Tiley, 17, who attends Erith School, and Dominic Pimlott, 16, of Beths Grammar School, will take to classrooms across the borough with their powerful anti-smoking message.

Working with Fixers, the national movement of young people fixing the future, they have developed a puppet show to persuade pupils from an early age that smoking is not cool.

Dominic said: "All of the campaigns about anti-smoking we have seen are aimed at adults and older generations.

"We were trying to come up with an idea to catch the attention of young people, and with the help of Fixers, we came up with the idea of a puppet show."

Michelle added: "As a youth mentor, I see people who are 11 years old starting to smoke. When I ask them why they smoke, they tell me because their friends are doing it and because they think it is cool.

"We hope our project will help young people realise how important life is."

A report about their Fixers campaign will feature on ITV News London on Thursday, May 9, from 6pm. Jo Woodvine from the Stop Smoking Service believes young people are more prone to the addictive nature of chemicals in cigarettes.

She said: "Every year, 157,000 young people between the ages of 11-15 start smoking.

"When people start smoking young, they are far more susceptible to developing chest infections, coughing, wheezing and they can go on to developing potential serious diseases."

Fixers is a charity which supports 16 to 25 year olds across the UK to take action and change things for the better, addressing any issue they feel strongly about.

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

The award-winning Fixers project has already supported over 7,400 young people to have an authentic voice in their community.

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

Fixers is a project of the Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT).

"Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea... an idea given a voice by some 7,400 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."

One photo attached. Captions:

1. Fixers with anti-smoking puppets

For images, interviews or more information, please contact Maggie Morgan in the Fixers Communications Team by email maggie@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:

www.fixers.org.uk

[www.twitter.com/FixersUK](https://twitter.com/FixersUK)

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 7,400 young people across the UK have become Fixers and created 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.

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