Campaign to smash human trafficking in Sheffield

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A Sheffield ‘Fixer’ is campaigning to expose the plight of women who have been trafficked into the UK sex trade, and are given just 45 days in a safe house if they escape.

Law student Leanne Dodson, 24, is working with Fixers, the national movement of young people ‘fixing’ the future, to create a short film highlighting the crime of human trafficking.

“When I first found out about human trafficking I was really shocked to know that it existed in the world, it existed in the UK, and worst of all, it existed in Sheffield,” Leanne said.

A report about her campaign will feature on ITV Yorkshire Calendar on Tuesday 9 April, from 6pm.

Leanne visits victims of human trafficking once a week as part of her voluntary student society work. She and 60 other volunteers help give the women an opportunity to earn money by making jewellery and selling it at local craft shows.

“We think there needs to be more help out there for vulnerable women. It was hard at first hearing their stories. Many of them are younger than me,” explains Leanne.

During the course of her research, Leanne came across Magda (*not her real name), a young woman lured into coming to the UK with the promise of a better life and tricked into prostitution who was filmed for the broadcast.

“I came from Poland with my boyfriend, because he said in England we’d could find jobs and have a better life,” Magda said.

“Because I loved him, I believed him. When we got here he said there was only one job – it was prostitution.”

Determined to raise awareness of stories like Magda’s, Leanne and a team of fellow campaigners will produce a short film which will highlight what happens after the 45 days at the safe house.

“When I hear their stories it makes me feel really awful, quite sick and shaken, and it just makes me wish I could do more about it,” Leanne said.

“For the last two years I’ve been working to support victims of human trafficking. I’m going to be working with Fixers to make a short film to raise awareness about this crime.”

Detective Sergeant Alisdair Duncan, from South Yorkshire Police, is backing the trafficking awareness campaign.

He said: “It’s probably one of the most horrific areas of criminality that I’ve been involved in and I’ve been a police officer for 29 years now.

“Some of the cases you meet are incredibly sad and examples of the worst kind of exploitation you could ever come across.”

Fixers is a charity which supports over 7,000 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.

Fixers, a trademark of the Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT), helps by providing the creative resources they need to get their campaign off the ground.

“Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea… an idea given a voice by some 7,000 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

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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."

Photo attached. Captions:
1. Leanne Dodson wants more done to help victims of human trafficking

For images, interviews or more information, please contact Jatin Patel in the Fixers Communications Team by email jatin@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
www.facebook.com/FixersUK

Notes to editors:

• Since 2008 some 7,000 young people in England have become Fixers and created 800 projects. Now with a £7.2 million grant from the Big Lottery Fund, Fixers is extending into Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.
• 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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