

Don't let your life be ruined by seeking five minutes of teenage internet 'fame'

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A Harrogate Fixer is warning other teenagers about the dangers of following the trend of posting provocative pictures of themselves online.

Jade Weatherill, 17, has seen the negative impact other young people have suffered as a consequence of seeking internet 'fame' in this way.

Now working with Fixers, the national movement of young people 'fixing' the future, Jade is leading a group which is producing a viral advert to get their message across.

Aimed at urging 13 to 17-year-olds not to fall victim to the fad, the viral advert will be posted on social media websites.

"There is a lot of pornography on social media sites that young people are putting up themselves," said Jade, who attends Harrogate College.

"It's an issue that needs to be targeted. If we can get one person to think about not putting compromising pictures of themselves online or being rude and obnoxious, that would be a great thing for us to achieve."

The group say they have witnessed girls as young as 12 using sexually explicit language and encouraging others to engage sexually with them online.

And they have been aware of girls aged 14-17 posting naked and semi-naked images of themselves, or sending sexually explicit text messages to their boyfriends, which have then been uploaded onto the internet when the relationship ends.

In research for their campaign, the Fixers spoke to one young woman, on the basis of anonymity, who told how her life was devastated when a friend took a naked photo of her in the bathroom without her consent – and posted it on social media.

"I had more than a hundred friend requests as a result of the picture being posted online," said the anonymous young woman. "Some people thought it was a big joke. I was so upset that I missed an exam, I didn't leave the house for about four months and I put on loads of weight. It left me unable to trust people."

Dr Dan Laughy, a senior lecturer in Media Theory at Leeds Metropolitan University, has researched the modern phenomenon of internet fame.

"It does feel a bit like being a very minor celebrity and for some young people that's a vehicle for freedom of expression," he said.

"I think young people often believe that what they're doing is fairly private and locked in, but it is in fact very much available for anyone to see. They've left a digital footprint and anyone can trace it."

The group's Fixers campaign will be the subject of a broadcast on ITV News Calendar on Thursday, June 6 from 6pm.

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 around 7,800 young people across the UK to have an authentic voice in their community.

Now, thanks to funding from the Big Lottery, 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).

“Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea... an idea given a voice by some 7,800 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. Caption: Fixer Jade Weatherill

For images, interviews or more information, please contact Sarah Jones in the Fixers Communications Team by email sarahj@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:

- 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, around 7,800 young people across the UK have become Fixers and created more than 960 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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