

Emotional conflict of life growing up on the home front

Friday 8 March, 2013

School can be tough for any young person, but it can be even harder when your mum or dad is in the forces.

Now a group of Plymouth Fixers are campaigning to raise awareness of the emotional strain that growing up in a service family can create.

Led by Laurie Foxcroft, 17, they have joined Fixers, the movement of young people fixing the future, and a report on their project will be shown on ITV News West Country on Tuesday, March 12 from 6pm.

Laurie's step-dad has been a submariner in the Royal Navy for over 20 years, so she has first-hand knowledge of the subject.

Working with her friends, Shelby Main, Katriona Goodsell and James Wren, also aged 17 and from Plymouth-based naval families, they believe that many teachers could improve their understanding of the issue.

"Service children face added stress at school, especially when talking about war in a history lesson, or discussing the whereabouts of their father on a parents' evening," said Laurie

"Also, if we relocate, we fall behind on work. Couple this with the worry at home for the safety of your family and your life becomes pretty strained.

"We do not want special treatment from teachers, but we would like to make them aware of the challenges we face."

The Fixers want to show teachers that it is not just the deployment phase itself which can affect service children, but also the pre-deployment, rest and recuperation (R&R) and post-deployment stages - known as the 'deployment cycle'.

While many people assume that the most difficult stage must be when her step-dad is away from home for long periods of time, Laurie says it is actually the R&R stage that she finds the toughest.

"During R&R he is back for what could be any number of days but it's usually quite short, said Laurie. "I feel like I shouldn't become close to him because it makes it harder to say goodbye again."

Fixers is a movement of thousands of 16 to 25-year-olds across the UK who are supported 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.

Laurie and her friends –who are all members of Plymouth-based service children support group HMS Heroes – are making a short film with Fixers, which will be shown to teaching staff, to raise awareness of how the constant change in routine at home can bring its own stresses.

They hope that by giving teachers more information about the cycle of deployment and its effects, it will make life at school easier for service children in future.

"I hope the project will raise awareness and if younger children can be treated with that sensitivity I might not have got, I would feel like I had made a difference," said Laurie.

The award-winning Fixers project has already supported around 7,000 young people the UK to take action on their issue of choice.

Now, thanks to a £7.2 million grant from the Big Lottery Fund, Fixers is set to become a household name and will work with a further 20,000 young people over the next three years.

Fixers is a trademark 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 some 7,000 young people over the past

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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 but across communities.”

Peter Ainsworth, Big Lottery Fund UK Chair, said: “The Big Lottery Fund is extremely happy to be supporting Fixers to engage with more young people to change things for the better. Thousands of public-spirited young people across the UK are campaigning to make improvements in their own communities. By providing a platform to highlight their voluntary work and many achievements, Fixers demonstrates the positive contribution thousands of committed young people are making at a local level and challenges negative stereotypes.”

One photo attached. Caption: Laurie Foxcroft.

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:

- 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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