Flintshire teenager to use phone app to educate young people about STIs

Friday 5 April, 2013

Flintshire ‘Fixer’ Jenna Giddings wants to raise awareness of sexually transmitted diseases amongst young people in North Wales.

Jenna, 16, feels a lack of understanding coupled with the pressure of having sex at a young age is fuelling the already significant problem of STIs in Flintshire.

Now working as ‘Fixers’, Jenna and a group of her friends are working on a new phone app to help advise young people about STIs.

Their Fixers campaign will be the subject of a broadcast on ITV News Cymru Wales on Tuesday 9 April 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.

“A lot of young people are suffering from sexually transmitted infections in the area,” said Jenna, who lives near Ffrith.

“There’s an awful lot of pressure for young people to have sex. It’s frowned upon if you don’t.”
“I think these infections are spreading more quickly because people aren’t taking relationships as seriously as they used to be taken. It’s a lot more casual these days.”

“I think people look at sex differently to the way their parents did when they were teenagers, with people changing partners more often.”

Jenna got together with some friends to find a way to communicate the dangers of STIs to fellow teenagers and advise them on finding services available to help them in their local area.

She said: “Our Fixers project is about educating young people on the symptoms of STIs and whereabouts in the area they can go if they do feel they’ve got one.

“People need to start taking more care about what they’re doing and thinking before they do it.”

Fellow Fixer, James Owen, 20, added: “There’s a large amount of pressure on young people to have relationships because it looks cool and this is why there are so many sexual health problems.”

Jenna feels young people feel embarrassed to discuss STIs and therefore unable to approach those closest to them for help.

Jenna added: “Lots of young people find it embarrassing and they don’t feel comfortable going to their family doctor or maybe their parents to ask advice.

“They don’t know information on clinics that are in the area, opening times and where they are situated. As a result, they carry on sleeping around and STIs spread.”

As a group, the Fixers came up with the idea of a phone app, which they felt would allow young people to gain discreet access to information and services.

Sexual Health expert, Dr Olwen Williams agrees that there is a significant problem and more needs to be done to share information about STIs and supports the Fixers’ project.

She said: “What we’ve seen in Wales is the rise in sexually transmitted infections but especially in chlamydia, over the last couple of years.”

“Young people are taking on a project that’s going to raise awareness not only of the STIs themselves, but also how to access information on where to go to get the tests and get treatment.”

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Jenna hopes that the phone app can help young people feel more informed and prevent cases spreading across the region.

“As a group, we thought that using a phone app was a really good way to raise awareness. It’s confidential, it’s personal and it’s only you that knows about it.

“Once the phone app has been set up we’re going to promote it in local high schools.

“What we really hope to do through this project is improve sexual health in the area and prevent more cases occurring. It’s really important that something’s done about it because these sexually transmitted infections can cause infertility and potentially death.”

The award-winning Fixers project has already supported almost 7,000 16 to 25 year olds across the UK to have an authentic voice in their community.

Now, thanks to a £7.2 million grant from the Big Lottery Fund, Fixers aims to recruit more than 2,500 Fixers in Wales by the end of 2016.

The movement is already working with 179 young people in Wales on 26 projects.

Each Fixer is supported to create the resources they need to make their chosen project a success, with creative help from media professionals to make their own promotional material, such as films, websites or print work.

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 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.”

Two photos attached.
Photo one caption: Jenna Giddins
Photo two caption: Flintshire Fixers

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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