I want to see equality for everyone

Tuesday 7 May, 2013

A young man from the Hawick area who was bullied at school for having a lesbian mother and left too scared to come out himself, wants teachers across the Borders to treat homophobia as serious as racism.

Working with Fixers, the national movement of young people 'fixing' the future, David Shields wants teachers to understand how damaging homophobia can be.

David, 21, says the memory of the bullying during his time growing up in the Borders has tarnished his view of the region.

"The Scottish Borders is a lovely place," he says. "The views are gorgeous and a lot of people travel to see them.

"But it is hard for me to have a positive view of where I live because it's always clouded by the negativity that I had, and that ruins the whole idea of the Borders."

With the help of Fixers, David is drawing on his personal experiences to help others.

A report about David's Fixers campaign will feature on ITV News Lookaround on Thursday 9 May, from 6pm.

David recalled how his first experience of homophobic bullying came after his parents separated and he moved with his mum to live with another woman.

"It was quite difficult being bullied at school because my mum is a lesbian," he says.

"Every chance they had I used to get bullied. I used to wake up and dread it. At break time I used to dread it.

"I came out at fifteen, but I made sure it was when I left high school. My main focus was that I wanted to be myself and I was always scared to be."

David, who has worked in schools, has seen some efforts to stamp out homophobic bullying, but feels more needs to be done.

He added: "What I would like to see in years to come is plain and simple; equality for everyone."

Karen Wilson, Youth and Schools Development Officer, saw how badly the bullying affected David.

"The David I first met wouldn't walk along the High Street," she says. "He would take all the back ways home. He would not want to go into school because he suffered a lot of homophobia.

"I think schools need to have a zero tolerance when it comes to homophobic remarks."

Fixers is charity which supports 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 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.

Each Fixer is supported to create the resources they need - such as films, websites or print work - to make their chosen project a success.

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

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

Related Sectors:

Children & Teenagers :: Education & Human Resources ::

Related Keywords:

Bullying :: Homophobia :: Racism :: Equality :: Schools :: Fixers :: Borders ::

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“Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea… an idea given a voice by over 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 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.”

For images, interviews or more information, please contact Sue Meaden in the Fixers Communications Team by email sue@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:
http://www.fixers.org.uk
http://www.twitter.com/FixersUK
http://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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