I was born in the wrong body and want to help others like me

Friday 8 March, 2013

A Salford Fixer is drawing on his own experience to smash stereotypes and promote understanding about the transgender community.

Born a girl, Alfie Austin, 19, says he always knew he felt different. But it wasn't until he was 17 that he realised he was a young man trapped in a woman's body.

Coming out as female to male transgender at 18, he recently started taking testosterone and finally feels he can be himself.

However, from losing close friends who couldn't come to terms with his new life, to being thrown out of both male and female toilets, Alfie's life as a young man hasn't been without challenges.

Now working with Fixers, the national movement of young people 'fixing' the future, Alfie is making a music video to promote greater respect and understanding.

A report about his campaign will feature on ITV Granada Reports on Tuesday, March 12, from 6pm.

"To be given the opportunity to actually do something about the issue is really elating," said Alfie. "I am able to take action and not just sit there feeling useless."

Transgendered people are more likely to experience mental distress due to the social disapproval and discrimination that they encounter.

Consequently, they are at a greater risk of depression, self-harm and suicide.

A 2007 survey of 872 transgendered people found that 34% of respondents had considered suicide, according to NHS Choices.

"There is a lot of ignorance surrounding the trans community," said Alfie. "A lot of people think it is ok to bully trans people. Even if they don't believe it's bullying –
at the end of the day, it is. It affects people in ways that can even lead to death."

Alfie, who studies music production in Manchester, will be working with Fixers to make a music video to challenge people's perceptions.

"My coming out as trans has been met with mixed emotions, I have lost friends as well as feeling like the odd one out," said Alfie.

"I would love the opportunity to tell my story and to help others in a similar situation to me."

One example of discrimination came during a night out with friends.

Refused permission to use the male toilets because the attendant thought he was female, when Alfie tried to enter the female toilets, he says he was followed by a bouncer and dragged out of there too.

"It was so embarrassing," he explains. "I went to the owner who told me to use whichever I felt comfortable in but didn't take responsibility for what happened or advise his staff to let me use the men's so I ended up having to go home."

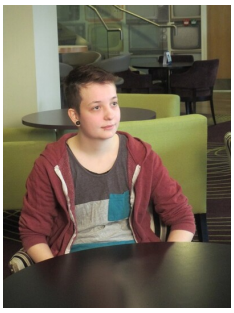
Fixers is a movement of thousands of 16 to 25-year-olds across the UK who are supported to take action and change things for the better, addressing any issue they feel strongly about.

How each Fixer tackles an issue is up to them – as long as they benefit someone else.

The award-winning Fixers project has already supported almost 7,000 young people 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 work with a further 20,000

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young people over the next three years.

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.”

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:
1. Alfie Austin

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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