

Long-term unemployed Newcastle man encourages other young people not to give up hope

Wednesday 6 February, 2013

A young Newcastle man who has experienced long periods of unemployment and is now encouraging other young people to stay positive will be featured on ITV News Tyne Tees on Thursday, February 7, from 6pm.

Shaun Phillipson, from Newcastle, left school at 16 and knows what it's like to be a NEET (the government acronym for young people who are not in education, employment or training). He has been unemployed for long periods in the past and says it resulted in him losing confidence in his ability.

Now working as a 'Fixer', the 22-year-old has made a powerful short film to show the effect unemployment has on the minds and well-being of young people.

Fixers is a movement 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.

Five months ago, Shaun was unemployed with no prospects and could not see a future for himself.

But after attending an employability course, he is due to complete a month of work experience with a production company this spring, and is hoping to start studying for a media foundation degree later in the year.

Shaun wants to show other young people that they can have a positive future and that they should never give up on their education, training or employment goals.

"My Fixers project is about inspiring other young people and hopefully getting them into the mind frame that they can do what they want to do," he said.

The longest period that Shaun has been unemployed for is two years.

Reflecting on that time, he said: "You start getting yourself into the mind-set that you're never going to be successful because it doesn't seem realistic to you."

He added: "You can feel isolated like you're not a normal member of society. You know that other people who are making a living by going to work just see you as sponging from the government."

Through the ten-minute drama he has made with Fixers, Shaun wants to dispel the myth that most NEETS refuse to work.

Entitled 'Down Not Out', Shaun wants to show his film to as wide an audience as possible, especially young people and the business community.

Fixers are young people who give their time to make a difference in their communities.

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 project of the Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT), funded by the Big Lottery Fund which awarded them £7.2 million in April 2012.

"Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea... an idea given a voice by some 5,500 young people over the past four 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. Their ideas can be challenging, inspirational and often life-changing."

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

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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.”

Picture captions: Two photos of Shaun Phillipson attached.

For images, interviews and more information, please contact Sarah Jones in the Fixers Communications Team by email sarahj@fixers.org.uk or phone 01962 810970.

Notes to editors:

- Fixers is a project of the Public Service Broadcasting Trust, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, and featured on ITV regional news programmes. Since 2008 more than 6,500 young people in England have become Fixers and created some 800 projects. Their achievements have been highlighted in over 300 ITV features. Now with a £7.2 million grant from the Big Lottery Fund, Fixers is extending into Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and aims to work with 21,000 young people over the next four years.
- 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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