Luton woman encourages young people in foster care to ‘open up’ and accept support

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A young woman from Luton, who has been in foster care for over seven years, wants to encourage other young people in care to accept help when it is offered to them.

Fixer Charlotte La Riviere, and her twin sister Laura, 19, found it difficult when they were first placed into foster care and felt they couldn’t trust anyone around them. .

“We moved into foster care a month before we turned 12, and we have been with them ever since,” says Charlotte.

“I remember when I first came into care I was very frightened, very shy and very insecure. It took a few years for me and my sister to begin to trust our foster carers.

“Looking back now, I wish I had taken full advantage of the help that was offered to me because I think it would have been really beneficial.”

With support from Fixers, the national movement of young people ‘fixing the future’, Charlotte is making a film to encourage young people in care to take advantage of the services that are made available to them early on.

“Within the first year of being in care I got offered art therapy counselling, but I didn’t really enjoy it so I chose not to carry it on” says Charlotte.

“I know other young people in care who have also been offered similar services and looking back now they really regret not taking it.”

Her sister Laura also wishes she has accepted help earlier. “I suffered depression when I was 15,” she says.

“It was about when I turned 16 that I realised I couldn’t ignore this problem anymore and I was offered counselling.

“I definitely wish now that I had taken advantage of that counselling because I think that my depression wouldn’t have got so bad.”

Charlotte spoke to Brenda Farrell, Head of Fostering and Adoption at Barnardo’s about her Fixers project.

“Young people, when they are in care, are very vulnerable. They face some of the biggest challenges that they experience in their life,” says Brenda.

“For them to be able to make decisions at that time can be quite difficult. Trust is also another important point and that comes with time.

“Young people like Charlotte and her experiences will inform and design the services for young people in the future. Her role is vital.”

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 8,700 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 19,000 young people

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over the next three years.

“Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea… an idea given a voice by over 8,700 young people over the past five years,” says Margo Horsley, Chief Executive of Fixers.

“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 8,400 young people across the UK have become Fixers and created 900 projects.
• 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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