Moss Side 'Fixers' speak to Manchester Police Commissioner to call for fair treatment for black youths

Thursday 11 July, 2013

A group of young men from Moss Side have launched a campaign to overcome negative stereotypes of youths who live in the area.

As part of their efforts, they spoke to Manchester Police Commissioner Tony Lloyd and raised concerns that young black men are targeted disproportionately by plain-clothed officers in Moss Side.

Led by Yusuf Abdullani, 16 – and with support from Fixers, the charity that supports 16-25-year-olds to tackle the issues that fire them up – the group is producing a series of posters encouraging people to look beyond prejudices.

“When people find out I’m from Moss Side they think I’m a bad person, but I’m really not,” Yusuf says. “Me and my friends are just normal people. We’re like everyone else, we do what everyone does. We just want to build more opportunities for people from Moss Side.”

Commissioner Tony Lloyd met with the young people and said: “The best way of policing any area is where people think the police are there for them and not there against them.
“So if young people think there’s a big gulf, it doesn’t really matter who’s right and wrong, we’ve got to close that gap.”

A report about Yusuf’s campaign, featuring Commissioner Scott, will be shown on ITV Granada Reports on Thursday 4 July, from 6pm.

“People look at us with fear, but we’re just normal lads,” Yusuf says. “We’re not gang members out to cause trouble or harm.

“When people find out I live in Moss Side, one of the first things they ask is: “Have you ever been shot?” They don’t realise that actually the area has improved a lot.”

He believes that the presence of plain-clothed officers in Moss Side is failing to reduce tensions between the police and young black men.

“They’re supposed to help us, but they don’t really help us. They just interrogate us and say ‘What you doing today lads?’

“It makes you feel down and it puts your confidence down.”

Youth worker Melvyn McDonald agrees that perceptions of areas such as Moss Side can affect the way residents are treated.

“Young people like Yusuf are talented but they are stereotyped because of the areas that they are living in,” he says. “They do get treated unfairly by the police and as a youth worker I see that.

“Obviously if they think they’ve got no chance because of the area that they live in, then might as well just live up to the stereotypes, which isn’t right.

“They should have the same chances as everyone else has. They should be treated as equals.”

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.

For Yusuf, this has meant the chance to devise a series of posters which he hopes to display in a prominent Manchester location.

“I’m really happy to get the chance to get my message across,” he says. “I want to go far in life and be a role model for other people – to help them, support them and show them that you can go far in life.”

Fixers, a trademark of the Public Service Broadcasting Trust, has already supported over 7,800 young

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people across the UK to have an authentic voice in their community.

“Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea… an idea given a voice by some 7,800 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.”

Now, with a grant from the Big Lottery Fund, Fixers has extended into Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Peter Ainsworth, Big Lottery Fund UK Chair, said: “The Big Lottery Fund is extremely proud to be supporting Fixers to engage with more young people to change things for the better. Fixers has a tremendous potential – one young person’s initial idea can be transformed into reality, spread across a community and make a positive influence on a wide range of people. There are thousands of young people campaigning to make improvements in their neighbourhoods and Fixers provides a platform to highlight their voluntary work and many achievements.”

Photo attached. Captions:
- Fixer Yusuf Abdullani
- The group of Fixers talk to Manchester Police Commissioner Tony Lloyd

For images, interviews or more information, please contact Matt Kurton in the Fixers Communications Team by email matt@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 7,800 young people in England have become Fixers and created more than 900 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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