Time to break the stigma: Bristol woman launches self-harm support website

Sunday 29 September, 2013

A young woman from Bristol who has recovered from self-harm after a four year struggle, has created a website to improve support for anyone affected by self-harm.

Imogen Smith, 23, wants to highlight the importance that her family and friends played in her recovery and the need for an improved support network and a joined-up approach within this specific area of mental health.

She is concerned that there are many people who struggle on a daily basis who are unable to find the right support, while emphasising recovery from self-harm requires both practical tools and emotional guidance.

Working with Fixers, a national charity which supports young people to 'fix' any issue they wish, Imogen is launching the Self Harm Organisation and its website at a special event.

The event will take place on Wednesday 23 October, between 12-2pm at the Pavilion, Bristol. To register your attendance, please contact Imogen via email at: info@selfharmorganisation.org.uk.

On the launch of the organisation and its website, she said: "Fixers has helped me create this invaluable mental health website, reaching out to anyone whose lives are affected by self-harm.

"My next aim is to register SHO as a charity which provides training programmes for teachers and health professionals as well as helplines for the general public, all run by a team with personal experience of self-harm."

While Imogen wants her project to benefit as many people as possible, she feels there is a distinct mental health problem in Bristol, which is being ignored by the general public and service providers.

She said: "Self-harm is not discussed enough in society and there are serious misconceptions and stigma about it.

"There are a large number of people who battle with it on a daily basis. Are service providers and political influencers doing all they can to support them? If the answer is no, this needs to change!

"Bristol is a diverse and exciting city but there are many people who are trapped into a cycle of self-harm and are burdened with the emotional and physical implications it has upon their daily lives."

"We have come so far as a society in terms of our knowledge and awareness of mental health issues, but, the only way to help people achieve recovery from it, is to embrace a joined-up approach of support.

"If this happens, Bristol has a chance to be at the forefront of this movement for change!"

Fixers is a charity which supports thousands of 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 an issue is up to them – as long as they benefit someone else.

The award-winning Fixers project has already supported around 9,000 young people across the UK to have an authentic voice in their community.

Now, thanks to funding from the Big Lottery, Fixers aims to work with a further 19,000 young people over the next three years.

"Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea… an idea given a voice by some 9,000 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,

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not just for themselves.”

Picture attached. Captions:
Image 1: Imogen Smith, 23, from Bristol

For more information about the event, please contact Imogen Smith via email at:
info@selfharmorganisation.org.uk.

For images, interviews or more information, please contact Jatin Patel in the Fixers Communications Team by email jatin@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:

• 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, around 8,700 young people across the UK have become Fixers and created more than 1,040 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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