

## We're using our battles with food to promote eating disorder understanding.

Friday 8 March, 2013

Three Tyneside-based Fixers are drawing on their own battles with food in a bid to break down the stigma and misconceptions around eating disorders.

Led by Jane O'Mahoney, 22 from South Tyneside, the young women want to use their personal experiences to raise awareness of the psychological impact of having an eating disorder.

They want people to understand that having an eating disorder isn't just about being consumed with weight control, but it is often accompanied by intense periods of depression too.

Working with Fixers, the national movement of young people 'fixing' the future, they are planning to visit schools and colleges across Tyneside to talk to 16 to 18-year-olds.

A report about their campaign will feature on ITV News Tyne Tees on Tuesday, March 12 from 6pm.

"I was angry with food, as ridiculous as that sounds," says Jane, who developed anorexia when she was 15 and later became bulimic. "I didn't want to eat it but I would binge on it. The worst part of it for me psychologically was the binge eating. You would just hate yourself."

Helping Jane with her campaign are her fellow Fixers, Erin Ruddick, 22, from North Tyneside, and Samira Jay, 21, from Newcastle.

Erin has struggled with eating since her early-teens and by the time she was 17 she was being sick every day.

She was hospitalised in 2011 for binge purge anorexia, and in 2012 for restrictive anorexia.

"At my worst, I just wanted to be dead, so in a sense, starvation was one route to ending the cycle I didn't think I could get out of," said Erin.

Samira, who is an ambassador for eating disorder charity Beat, says she has also suffered with both bulimia and anorexia in the past.

"There comes a time when nothing matters. You don't care about people, you don't care about education, you don't care about your friends, you just care about listening to what is like a voice in your head."

The Fixers say they that they are all in the process of overcoming their eating disorders but that it is a daily struggle.

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.

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 young people over the next three years.

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

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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.”

Two photos attached. Captions:

1. Lead Fixer Jane O'Mahoney
2. (L-R) Fixers Erin Ruddick, Samira Jay and Jane O'Mahoney

For images, interviews or more information, please contact Sarah Jones in the Fixers Communications Team by email [sarahj@fixers.org.uk](mailto: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](http://www.fixers.org.uk)  
[www.twitter.com/FixersUK](https://www.twitter.com/FixersUK)  
[www.facebook.com/FixersUK](https://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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