

Young carers in Worcester highlight the challenges they face on a daily basis

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A group of young carers from Worcester are campaigning for young people and teachers to understand the challenges they face on a daily basis.

The group, led by Fixer Becky Rowe, 22, and her sister, Sarah, 19, are creating a first-person documentary to encourage greater support for the 180,000 unpaid young carers across the UK.

Becky and Sarah look after their mum, who has physical and mental health problems that prevent her from completing many household tasks.

Alongside this, they also juggle their education, social life, and looking after their younger brother.

"There was a lot of pressure put on me and Sarah at a young age, says Becky.

"It can be really tough. We take on the running of the household and look after our younger brother, Matt, who is 13.

"Caring for our mum put some strain on us, but as we've got used to it – it has become a normal thing. But we have grown up a lot quicker than most people. It is a big responsibility."

With support from Fixers, a charity which supports young people to 'fix the future', the group are creating a film that shows the typical daily routine of many carers across the UK.

Once a month Becky and Sarah go to a carers group with the Youth Support Services and spend time with other young people who also care for loved ones.

Neil Phillips from Youth Support Services wants more people to see what young carers go through on a daily basis.

"It is important that we find out what these young carers do because they do an amazing job," he says.

"They've developed a skill set and maturity that a lot of other people their age haven't got and I think that it's important that people see that."

Sarah wants to make sure her brother doesn't go through what she and Becky have.

She says: "We don't want Matthew to go grow up as fast as we had to; we want him to be able to have his childhood."

The group are hoping to take their film into schools and colleges so people know what a young carer is.

"When I started caring at 14 some teachers were very good, while other teachers would have been better if they had a bit more knowledge," says Becky.

"I felt alone when I was at school. I'm hoping this film will be able to help other children and young adults out there feel less alone and isolated."

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 20,000 young people 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.

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“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

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 8,700 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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