

## ITV FIXERS

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**Lead Organisation:** Public Service Broadcasting Trust

**Project Start and End Date:** January 2008 to December 2009

**v Grant Round:** Match Fund

**v Funding:** £701,974

**Match Funding:**

The Nationwide Foundation: £100,000

ITV Meridian Broadcasting: £869,844

### 1. Project Description

The Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT) is a charitable organisation which aims to bring mainstream broadcasting, public and voluntary sector services and viewing audiences together in a unique way. Specifically, the Trust targets individuals who do not or cannot engage with mainstream services or public activities, to allow them to participate in enriching opportunities that bring meaningful benefits.

During 2007 PSBT developed a concept for a new project focusing on young people which is now known as ITV Fixers. Prior to developing the idea for Fixers, PSBT had undertaken work with a significant number of individuals and groups experiencing disadvantage or deprivation but felt that the authentic voice of young people was missing from mainstream media. The extent of negative press coverage surrounding young people in recent times reinforced the perceived need to challenge people's experiences and perceptions of this group.

ITV Fixers is therefore promoted by PSBT as a major media campaign that supports young people between the ages of 16 and 25 to take action on any issue they feel strongly about with the only condition being that the subject area is something that is useful and of benefit to other people. Once the 'Fixer' has been recruited to the project they are supported by a team comprised of Young People's Co-ordinators, Creative Resources and a Broadcast Team to bring their project to life.

All Fixers are guaranteed an online profile to raise awareness of their project, with a number also having the opportunity to develop broadcast films to be shown either online at ITV Local or during a designated slot in the 6pm ITV Regional News. Although initially agreements were only in place with ITV Meridian, the success of the Fixers concept has meant that broadcast films can now be seen in the ITV West, ITV Meridian, ITV West country and ITV Thames Valley regions.

PSBT has aimed to keep the content of Fixers campaigns as broad as possible with topics covered to date including sexual abuse, homelessness, recycling, autism, young people in care, mental health, and knife crime. Once a young person has approached the Fixers team with a concept they are assigned a Young Person's Co-ordinator who acts as their main point of contact and supports the young person in developing their campaign, bringing members of the Creative Resources and Broadcast Teams in as and when necessary.

Although the project is open to all young people, the match funding from the Nationwide Foundation has been ring-fenced for work with hard-to-reach young people. Consequently, one of the four Young People's Co-ordinators is tasked with working exclusively with this group which includes building links with relevant organisations to support the recruitment of these young people to the project.

## **2. Project Volunteers**

Volunteers are recruited through a number of methods, primarily as a consequence of the Fixers team building relationships with local schools, colleges and a range of other organisations that undertake work with young people. Involvement of young people also occurs through word of mouth, as Fixers engaged in the project get support from their friends who then become involved with the campaign and its associated activities.

Each of the Young People's Co-ordinators is assigned to one of the regions covered by ITV Fixers, which supports the process of engagement. The fact that ITV Fixers films are broadcast during ITV news programmes also plays a significant role in promoting the project and recruiting participants. Individuals who are interested in becoming a Fixer are able to register online or contact the team directly to express their interest.

The project has never struggled to recruit participants, potentially due to the nature of the opportunity on offer, which is very different to traditional perceptions of volunteering activity. When promoting ITV Fixers to young people, PSBT has not directly branded the project as a volunteering opportunity but has simply stressed the fact that activity undertaken must be of benefit to others.

The presence of a designated Young People's Co-ordinator tasked with engaging hard-to-reach young people has helped to ensure that a diverse range of volunteers have been recruited to the project.

## **3. Community Beneficiaries**

The specific impacts of the ITV Fixers project upon individuals or groups within communities are difficult to assess, as the majority of Fixers projects are focused upon creating awareness or changing mind-sets. However, as each Fixers project has its own webpage, and in some cases a designated website, feedback received through these mediums and from ITV viewers suggests that the young people involved are, in the majority of cases, having a positive impact upon members of their local communities.

The extent to which the project is having an impact upon communities can also be gauged to a certain extent by ITV's continued commitment to broadcasting Fixers films within their regional bulletins and the fact that discussions are currently underway to extend ITV Fixers to other regions.

## 4. Project Impact

### Overall

As each ITV Fixers project is unique the overall impact is difficult to estimate. For each "fix" the level of impact is likely to be different dependent upon the subject area, the length of the campaign and the commitment of the young people involved. On a more general level it is likely that, due to the significant exposure given to the project through its presence on the ITV regional news, a lot will have been achieved in terms of improving the image of young people amongst older generations. Specific ITV Fixers projects have also been timely, capturing public interest and therefore building momentum. One example is a project focused upon improving the attitudes of employers towards mental health which began as a broadcast film and has now progressed to the stage where human resources representatives from large scale local employers are entering into discussions with the Fixers involved. Although this is just one example it highlights the potential level of impact that an ITV Fixers project can generate.

The table below outlines project performance against outputs based on data provided by v up to the end of September 2008.

Performance	Outcome	Target	Difference	% Target	Investment Round average
Volunteers	559	1305	-746	43%	83%
Opportunities	333	1255	-922	27%	85%
Spend	235,378	275,378	-40,279	85%	111%
Cost per volunteer £421					

The table above indicates that the project has so far achieved 43% and 27% of volunteers and opportunities targets respectively. However, the project still has a significant period of operation to achieve additional outputs. The cost per volunteer to date is £421.

### Volunteer Organisation

PSBT deliver a range of projects that provide links between broadcast media and the community and voluntary sector. However, ITV Fixers appears to be a project held in high esteem by the Trust as, despite a number of the Fixers projects being extremely challenging, the rewards generated in terms of personal and organisational satisfaction were said to be very significant. Many of the staff working on the project had experience of working within the news industry and acknowledged that too often individuals can be viewed solely as a "good story" and forgotten once that story has been told. Through Fixers, project staff were able to work with the subject of a story, supporting their journey to a satisfactory conclusion. In addition, many stated that they were happy to be able to support the process of validating young people in the public arena and allow young people to see for themselves the power they have to create change for the better. Although PSBT was keen to emphasise that its remit was

not to support young people's complex needs, it has taken its role of working with young people very seriously, particularly those from more difficult backgrounds, and wherever possible or necessary have introduced young people in need to relevant support services or had ongoing contact with organisations already supporting them. On a more commercial level ITV Fixers was seen as project which had further cemented PSBTs unique and already strong links with ITV as the organisation had consistently been impressed with the high quality output and broadcast material from the Fixers project. Overall, the project was viewed as one which not only brings huge benefits to the young people involved, but also to project staff who are on a continual learning curve thanks to the variety of campaigns being delivered.

### **Volunteers**

Involvement with ITV Fixers has provided a significant number of young people with a very unique opportunity to turn ideas for positive change into reality. Although some of the young people involved have undertaken relatively short "fixes" the experience of putting together a campaign provided significant opportunities to develop vital transferrable skills including communication, team-work, planning and time-management. For those with an interest in pursuing media related careers the experience has also been invaluable in providing them with an understanding of the industry.

As each of the projects delivered by Fixers is unique in its own way, the impact on the young people involved varies significantly. For those young people who have engaged in a long-term project or completed one fix and moved on to another, the impacts can be significant. For some, participation with ITV Fixers has improved their day to day lives significantly, firstly by increasing their confidence and secondly by challenging people's perceptions of conditions that affect them such as Autism.

Having tangible outputs to show from their involvement in the project was important in helping the young people understand how far they had come and what they had managed to achieve. In some instances involvement with ITV Fixers has led to rare experiences such as the opportunity to interview government ministers or to develop relationships with national organisations.

Relationships with project staff were credited as a key element of maintaining engagement. A number of young people praised the dedication of ITV Fixers staff and particularly the Young People's Co-ordinators who had played such a significant role in inspiring and motivating them to pursue their campaign. The flexibility of the project was felt to be important as young people could work at their own pace and fit their involvement around other commitments. Most were grateful for the encouragement given by project staff when activity slowed.

The idea that those beneficiaries are possibly helping millions of people with their campaign messages continues to motivate a number of those involved, to the extent that many believe they will continue to be active in a voluntary capacity once their Fixers project comes to an end.

## Donor

Although ITV has worked with charitable organisations on numerous occasions, particularly in relation to developing content for news or current affairs programmes, a representative of ITV stated that they were delighted to support the ITV Fixers project. It was stated that the relationship between ITV and the Fixers host organisation, PSBT, is so unique that it allowed for ITV to happily match fund the project with a donation described as something “money can’t buy” – short broadcast slots within regional news programmes on a regular basis. ITV felt that the Fixers project filled a much needed void in broadcasting in terms of promoting the activities of young people in a positive light and celebrating their achievements. At the same time the project helped to raise awareness of and/or tackle important issues likely to be of concern to many of their viewers. It was stated that the length of time ITV have committed to broadcasting Fixers films is almost unprecedented for a project of this nature and is therefore testament to the success and value of the project.

## 5. Project Management and Monitoring

Overall responsibility for collecting and collating monitoring information lies with PSBT, with the Young People’s Co-ordinators playing a key role in collecting the required information regarding numbers of volunteers engaged, together with equality and diversity elements. All ITV Fixers are required to complete a registration form to allow this monitoring information to be tracked - this can be done either online or by hard copy. Project staff try to be flexible in terms of when the registration forms are completed as they prefer to build a relationship with young people first, particularly those within the hard-to-reach groups, before asking them to complete what appears to be formal paperwork. This was also the view in relation to the accreditation element of the project as despite offering v50, it was feared that introducing the idea of accreditation at an early stage may over-formalise the process and discourage some from participating.

Despite PSBT having an enhanced level of understanding of v’s monitoring requirements due to involvement in their development, the current approach was still viewed as overly complicated and the monitoring forms confusing. The requirement to state figures for each quarter rather than cumulative totals was also felt to be inappropriate to the ITV Fixers project. While the purpose and value of monitoring information was understood it was felt that benefits would be obtained from simplifying current processes.

Due to the nature of the funding agreement, information relating to engagement of hard-to-reach young people must also be submitted to the Nationwide Foundation to measure progress on the target of working with 130 young people from priority groups. Submitting this information was viewed as a relatively straightforward process although due to the nature of the target group achieving outputs was said to be more difficult.

## 6. Involvement of Young People

Although young people are not directly involved in the management of the project, PSBT is keen to ensure that as far as possible activity is youth led. Consequently, all ITV Fixers projects have come from young people's own ideas and the broadcast films created have little or no input from ITV presenters to allow young people true ownership. PSBT must clearly play a role in managing and informing editorial content but in doing so significant attention is paid to ensuring that the voice of the young people involved is authentic and that messages communicated are those of the Fixers and not of the organisation.

## 7. Project Succession

As a commercially minded organisation with new ideas to pursue, PSBT was realistic about the lifespan of the project in its current form. Although discussions are currently underway to extend the project into other English regions and possibly Wales, with ITV supporting this, PSBT is also considering options for transferring management responsibility to an alternative organisation. The very unique relationship between PSBT and ITV is undoubtedly responsible for the success of the project as ITV has confidence in the Trust's ability to produce high quality content, therefore transferring management to another organisation may be difficult. However, PSBT is keen that the project should continue in some form, possibly focusing more towards online content than television broadcast, and even suggested that v may be a suitable organisation to take ownership of it. Although PSBT staff are currently looking to develop this idea and would be willing to work closely with v to make it happen, it comments that developing closer relationships with v has proved difficult.

## 8. Summary

- **Situation** It was felt that the views and achievements of young people were under-represented in the media and that a forum should be developed through which the positive attributes of young people could be promoted in a way which empowered young people and brought wider benefits to other individuals. It was also thought that many young people had ideas for campaigns designed to raise awareness of and tackle important issues but had no idea how to turn their ideas into a reality
- **Priorities** To support young people in "fixing" a problem or issue important to them and others through the development of a campaign which makes use of a variety of media including television, the internet and print. All ideas for fixes must come from young people themselves and must be of use to others
- **Resources** v Funding: £701,974  
Match Funding: The Nationwide Foundation: £100,000, ITV Meridian Broadcasting: £869,844
- **Activities** Vary between projects but can include the creation of

broadcast films aimed at raising awareness of a particular issue, the creation of designated websites or leaflets, brokering meetings between young people and relevant local or national organisations and in some instances political figures

- **Participation** The project is open to all young people but also specifically targets those from a range of priority groups including ex-offenders, victims of domestic abuse, families of prisoners and the financially excluded
- **Short-term outputs** 559 young volunteers engaged to the end of September 2008
- **Medium-term outcomes** Increased public awareness about the positive activities of young people and knowledge relating to specific issues tackled within Fixers projects. Improved motivation and confidence amongst young people involved in addition to the development of a range of other skills
- **Long-term impacts** A generation empowered by the realisation that they are capable of bringing about change and having a voice within society. A lifelong commitment to helping others

Strengths and Achievements	Areas for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project gives young people a voice where they normally would not have one – this helps to tackle the generation gap</li> <li>• Allows young people to set and achieve aspirational goals, leading to empowerment</li> <li>• Participants develop numerous soft skills particularly around confidence and communication</li> <li>• The voluntary activities of the young people involved are reaching millions of people and potentially improving the lives of thousands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater efforts to ascertain and record the impact of Fixers projects on individuals and communities would be beneficial</li> <li>• Extending the project to other regions would allow more young people to benefit from this exciting opportunity</li> <li>• Some external organisations who become involved with projects may do so as a way of promoting themselves. Need to ensure that activity is genuine so that young people do not become disillusioned</li> </ul>