

Fixers try to make life better for all

Donna-Louise Bishop
donna-louise.bishop@archant.co.uk

A national scheme giving the region's youngsters a voice is urging more people in East Anglia to speak about the issues they may be facing.

Set up five years ago, Fixers is an award-winning project which aims to make a difference to others by getting young people to campaign for awareness.

The project has already supported more than 9,200 people in the UK, aged between 16 and 25, by giving them a voice in their local communities.

And now the organisers behind Fixers want more people from across the region to come forward and have their say.

East Anglia's young people co-ordinator, Ellie Kemp, oversees campaigns from start to finish by offering support to those involved.

"Fixers get involved with, and look for, almost anything as long as its message helps at least one other person," she said.

"It could be making young children aware of how to behave safely around dogs to tackling the lack of support for mental health.

“They have reached thousands of people with their work... Fixers are always courageous and their ideas can be challenging and life-changing - not just for themselves

Margo Horsley



■ Ellie Kemp oversees local Fixers projects.



"I have booked celebrities for a young persons festival, litter picked in the rain, walked dogs, or just lent a listening ear - we're here to be their first port of call.

"We're always looking for more young people to get involved and we never say 'no' to a project as long as it helps someone else."

Fixers has a working partnership with ITV News to report on the achievements of its young people and was set up in 2008 as a trademark of the Public Service Broadcasting Trust.

The project has helped to start nearly 2,000 unique campaigns and following a Big Lottery Fund grant Fixers' next aim is to work with a further 20,000 young people over the next three years.

So far more than 221,000 hours of Fixers' efforts have been contributed across the country with projects addressing issues ranging from drink, drugs, homelessness and mental health, through to unemployment, road safety and bullying.

And with help from ITV, more than 400 projects have been shown on regional news programmes across the country, with several winning awards.

The process works with each young person, known as a "fixer", being supported to create the resources they need to make their campaign or project a success, such as films, websites or printwork.

Margo Horsley, chief executive of Fixers, said: "Fixers started as just an idea - an idea given a voice by over 9,000 young people over the past five years.

"They have reached thousands of people with their work, on a national stage as well as in and around where

The world's a stage for these young people



■ William Houlton, left, and David Mills of the Theateers Theatre Company.

Picture: BILL SMITH

■ A group of Fixers have hit to the stage following the creation of an independent theatre company in Norwich to provide work experience for unemployed young people.

The Theateers Theatre Company recently performed their first play - Every Which Way But Where? - which saw cast and backstage staff positions filled by job-seeking young people from the region.

David Mills, member and director of the company's current production, Fringe Show, said the group got involved with Fixers after a recommendation from a friend. He said: "Fixers helped us to start up the theatre company and they gave us help with funding and transport.

"We started with the aim of helping young people to get experience in theatre as it's quite difficult getting jobs. The aim is to give people who want to get into media and drama a chance to get jobs in the industry."

William Houlton, of Mundesley, is also a member of Theateers Theatre Company and said Fixers had been "really supportive" by giving them good tips and advice.

The group hope to perform at more venues in the future and are looking for new members.

■ For more information about Theateers Theatre Company visit the website www.theateertheatrecompany.webs.com, email theateerscompany@gmail.com or find them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TheateersPerformances.

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."

■ If you are aged between 16 to 25 with a desire to make a change, help someone else, or challenge opinions

contact the Fixers team by emailing talk2me@fixers.org.uk, ringing 01962 810970, visiting the website www.fixers.org.uk, or find on Facebook at www.facebook.com/FixersUK.

Pair turn the tables on homophobic abuse with poster campaign

Two Fixers from Norwich launched a hard-hitting poster campaign earlier this year, which turned the tables around on homophobic bullying by showing it from a heterosexual perspective.

Sarah Marchant, 24, and Schuyler Kerkhoff-Harvey, 17, have both experienced homophobic abuse throughout their lives, and with the help of Fixers embarked on the poster campaign to show people it was wrong to bully someone because of their sexuality.

Instead of showing victims from the LGBT community, their poster campaign - entitled Take a Walk in My Shoes - presented heterosexual

■ Sarah Marchant orchestrated a poster campaign through Fixers.

people being subjected to abuse based on their sexuality.

A humanities and social sciences

student at City College Norwich, Miss Marchant said: "We first got involved with Fixers when they came to a BLAH LGB youth group meeting.

"They explained everything in great detail and put us in touch with the people we needed to help make the project a success.

"It was a fantastic experience and we have had a great response - everyone is becoming much more diverse and accepting in Norwich."

The posters have been displayed in schools and youth clubs in the Norwich area, on ITV, Facebook, and were also displayed at an exhibition at the Forum in July.

