



Nottingham youngsters produce mental health rap for Volunteers' Week

Watch film here: <https://youtu.be/0HrrCfCMmGM> (goes live at 8.30am this morning, June 7)

Talented volunteers at the Community Recording Studio in Nottingham have produced a rap showing how volunteering has helped them to improve their mental health.

Ashley, aged 21, Lishon, aged 20, and Malik (MK), aged 19, created the rap to celebrate Volunteers' Week, which runs from June 1-7 and recognises the invaluable contribution that volunteers bring to their community.

Called Psychological Soldier, the track explains how volunteering has enriched their lives, improved their mental health, and boosted their confidence.

Ashley, who began attending the Community Recording Studio aged eight, said: "It feels safe at the Studio and you can talk about things there. They encourage you, nurture you and help you understand yourself. They've also taught me to use equipment and play instruments.

"It's been a lifeline, my confidence has improved, I'm less anxious and have friends who understand where I'm coming from. Volunteering for others is not just for others but also for oneself," he added.

Ashley, Lishon and Malik are all volunteers at the Community Recording Studio's Windmills project which, using cash raised by Comic Relief and the #iwill Fund, works with young people in St Ann's, one of Nottingham's most deprived inner-city communities, to create a Hip-Hopera using hip hop, rap and spoken word to raise awareness of mental health.

Rachael Flanagan, a co-ordinator at the Community Recording Studio, said: "As a charity, without volunteers like Ashley, Lishon and Malik we would find it harder to be able to do what we do for young people free of charge."

The #iwill Fund is made possible thanks to £40 million joint investment from the Big Lottery Fund, using National Lottery funding, and the Department for Digital, Culture,

Media and Sport (DCMS) to support young people to access high quality social action opportunities.

- ENDS -

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Notes to editors

About the contributors:

Ashley is a singer, plays the piano and is learning to play the guitar. His mum left when he was a youngster, and it was during his teens that he started to struggle – lacking confidence, feeling anxious and exhausted and self-harming. He has been attending the studio since he was eight-years-old and has volunteered there since he was 14, calling it his 'lifeline'.

Lishon is a local artist in the Nottingham scene and has been attending the studio for over two years, developing his education and craft as a rap artist. Lishon took part in the last Hip-Hopera programme and he will be taking part in the upcoming one, volunteering his time to mentor the other young people who are taking part.

Malik (MK) has attended the studio for around a year and a half. He is working hard on his new tracks to produce an EP. He is also working towards some live performances around Nottingham. He will be taking part in the up and coming Hip-Hopera, volunteering his time to help develop the other rappers.

Rap transcript:

Malik - Verse 1

I grab a page
Brainstorm and I breathe
I step in the booth
Record and relive myself of any demons
And anxious thoughts
Depression and bad habits
My life they haunt
Lately I've been on a mission to influence decisions
Don't give up
Higher powers are watching
They with us
Don't worry about emotions they are meant to be felt as long as they aren't detrimental to you mental health
Yeah
I know what it's like to be scared
My brain has been strained
My heart pierced
I fell off the horse and stayed there
Luckily I knew a couple people that cared
Hidden potential is growing at CRS
A little family that's pushing me to be my best
We've got you
If you need support to grow your wings
Encourage everyone to fly before you leave our nest

Ashley Kirlew - Chorus

Lord knows why I feel like this
Now that my mind is stronger
And I pushed myself to take the risk
I'm a psychological solider
Lord knows why I feel like this
I pray the worst is over
And I pushed myself to take the risk
I'm. A psychological solider

Lishon Martin - Verse 2

Someone show me where the river is
It's quite frivolous
My only prequisition
Isn't this I wish the official-ist
Of the so called thoughts that are most common
Exile your thoughts I don't promise
Word comments, the world vomits
My mind stomachs
Now I'm punished to trap the ideas and conceal
the words of the most honest
Now I'm lost for words
Which means no comments
Imma take off gunning
The greatest gift for me
Is giving back to you
And if I should choose to lose the word
And in return gain the truth
Then I would make the move
To constitute into independence
We should all just group
We ain't got nothing to lose
I volunteer and spread my name
For the all the causes
I campaign there ain't no shame their ain't no losses

About Comic Relief

Comic Relief is a UK charity which aim to create a just world, free from poverty – where everyone is safe, healthy, educated and empowered. Since 1985, Comic Relief has raised over £1 billion. That money has helped, and is helping, people living incredible tough lives, both here at home in the UK and across the world.

For information about Comic Relief and the work it carries out, please visit www.comicrelief.com.
Comic Relief, registered charity 326568 (England/Wales); SC039730 (Scotland).

#iwill Fund

- The Government (DCMS) and Big Lottery Fund have each invested £20 million in to the #iwill Fund which will help to transform the culture of community engagement by getting young people involved in greater social action opportunities
- Over four years the fund will be developed through investment and match funding from Trusts and Foundations, businesses and philanthropists
- This innovative fund, bringing together a coalition of investors, aims to create the conditions to embed meaningful social action into the lives of every young person

#iwill campaign

- The #iwill campaign is a collective effort involving over 800 partners from across the public, voluntary, education and business sectors with a vision to make meaningful social action part

of life for 10- to 20-year olds by the year 2020, wherever they live and whatever their background

- The #iwill campaign was launched in 2013 with cross-party and cross-sector support after research into how the business, education, public and voluntary sectors could support young people to engage in social action. The campaign is coordinated by Step Up To Serve, a charity registered in England & Wales (no. 1154588)
- HRH The Prince of Wales is Patron of Step Up To Serve and the #iwill campaign. For more information, visit www.iwill.org.uk and follow [@iwill_campaign](https://twitter.com/iwill_campaign)

Big Lottery Fund

- The Big Lottery Fund uses money raised by National Lottery players to help communities achieve their ambitions. From small, local projects to UK-wide initiatives, our funding brings people together to make a difference to their health, wellbeing and environment. Since June 2004 we have awarded £8.5 billion to projects that improve the lives of millions of people
- For more information and contact details please visit www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/about-big/contact-us

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Comic Relief and the #iwill Campaign

As part of Comic Relief's collaboration with the #iwill campaign, Comic Relief pledges to:

- Support the #iwill campaign's objectives by investing £1million in 2017 as match-funding with the #iwill Fund to develop meaningful youth social action opportunities for young people
- Utilise the opportunity provided through the #iwill Fund Learning Hub, as well as our wider learning and evaluation work, to contribute to discussion and debate about the development of high quality social action experiences
- Work with other funders to develop the work in this area by becoming an advocate for the value of youth social action
- Act as an ambassador for the #iwill campaign, sharing our success story and encouraging our partners to be involved in helping to grow youth social action participation.