LIFE CHANGING ‘YOUTH’ APP T LAUNCHES IN STOKE-ON-TRENT

A BRAND new app designed to improve lives and prevent suicide in young people, aged between 11 -18 years, has launched in Stoke-on-Trent, the team visiting Parliament several weeks ago to demonstrate the blueprint .

The ‘UTH City’ app has been created following one year of extensive research by Ruff & Ruby Urban Youth Charity and Stoke-on-Trent Youth Collective (SOTYC), to provide a digital space for youth engagement, activities and support all in one place.

As well as features such as local events, activities, education, training, jobs, apprenticeships and support services - the app also has its own unique suicide prevention button, which is linked to under 18s crisis care team and Staffordshire Police. Users can also access a ‘talk to support’ which directs to personal ‘safe’ contacts adding an extra layer of support.

Dawn Reynolds is the founder of Ruff and Ruby Urban Youth Charity which was formed in 2010 to engage, empower and help young people to reach their potential.

The SOTYC is a dynamic movement for change which is made up of 95 citywide youth organisations, which Dawn also founded alongside Ben Gibson of In2Health & Wellbeing.

Dawn said: “Our experience working across the City of Stoke-on-Trent spans over 26years, and we’re aware hundreds of young people in the area have limited life chances, low self-esteem and aspirations, which is something we always aim to change.

“Young people can sometimes be influenced via social media channels and other platforms, which can put added pressure on them. This is why we wanted to create something with young people for young people, where there’s no judgement or negativity, but simply a positive and uplifting safe space to be in.

“We also recognised that accessing information to help or to access opportunities to improve life chances is not always easy for young people and again we wanted something which everyone can use.”

Dawn adds: “Over the years we have seen increasing numbers of young people who experience suicidal thoughts and therefore it was very important to us to have a suicide prevention button included. The concept has been co-designed with local young people and a working group of mental health specialists - Crisis Care Team, NHS Young People Service - CYPISH, CAMHS, North Staffs MIND and CHANGES.

“This feature is unique and there is no other like it in the country. We have ensured its robust, and at the same time aims to reduce suicide in young people.”

Kay Speedman, Trustee of Ruff & Ruby and ex-serving police officer, whose daughter took her own life says: “If there was something like this out there years ago then Cailtlin may have not have taken her life. This is going to be life changing where young people can access  the support, information and help they need with one tap to realise their value, have hope and purpose.”

For the initial project funding from the National Lottery Community Fund was awarded to Ruff & Ruby, who were supported in submitting their bid by Coalfields Regeneration Trust.

The ‘UTH City App,’ has been built by local website and design company - BWAR UK, who are based in Hanley.

Now local businesses and organisations are being invited to support the App which is expected to reach 27,000 11-18 year old’s in 12 months.

Options are available to sponsor pages , advertise & upload apprenticeship and training opportunities, as well as job vacancies and local events.

“We received 12-month funding from the Lottery, which was great, but we really need support from others so we can push forward - be stronger together and make a difference to the lives of young people."

Local hip hop collective – all young adults from Stoke on Trent – ‘Antidote’ have written the promotional track - Light in Dark Mode for the ‘UTH City App.’

The lyrics are powerful and aim to encourage young people to sign up to the ‘digital home ‘ to engage ,energise, educate & elevate the lives of young people in Stoke on Trent .

The app is also accessible for families & professionals providing key information regarding the lives of young people & where to access services .

The ‘UTH City’ App team will also be in the fan zone at Stoke City Football Club in September , and will be visiting local schools and colleges over the coming months to demonstrate the App.

For more information and to find out how to support the ‘UTH City App’ please contact Ruff & Ruby Email: info@ruffandruby.com

Visit Ruff and Ruby Urban Youth Charity [www.ruffandruby.com](http://www.ruffandruby.com) and SOTYC [www.sotyc.co.uk](http://www.sotyc.co.uk)