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## New Alcoblows device helps Police keep youngsters safe

A new device which detects alcohol on the breath is being used by police in North Devon to help protect young people from harming themselves or others, while under the influence of alcohol. When used recently at an alcohol-free underage party for 14 to 17 year olds, at Bar Toko in Barnstaple, 10 people were refused entry after they were screened using the new Alcoblows device and parents contacted.

The alcohol-free party was advertised on Facebook and 600 tickets sold in advance. It was also made very clear that those in attendance would be screened for alcohol and that anyone under the influence of alcohol would be refused entry. When it was announced that local police were loaning Bar Toko two Alcoblow devices to screen attendants, 100 people cancelled their tickets and refunds were given.

PC Daw, Neighbourhood Beat Manager for the Night Time Economy said: "Underage events can involve much police resource and be a problem in the community. The fact that 100 people cancelled their tickets for this event when they found out they would be screened with Alcoblows shows that some young people were intent on drinking alcohol before the event. However, it was a great success and 500 young people had a fun night out in a safe environment, which is what we want."

Nicky Mitchell, Toko Bar Manager said: "We are committed that our events are safe, fun and well run and I am delighted with the evening. It went off without incident, there were no arrests or trouble and the young people attending had a safe, fun evening. Alcoblows has ensured my underage customers are sober, well behaved and safe and it deters youngsters from drinking before an event. I will be using it again."

Alcoblows will be used as a screening device out on the streets and in local parks, for example, particularly for young people under the age of 18, and also to screen young people attending entertainment events. It will also enable pubs and clubs to screen people under 18. It works on a traffic light system and shows, by blowing onto the device, whether someone has alcohol on their breath. It flashes red if a high level of alcohol is detected, amber if a low level of alcohol is detected and green if no alcohol is detected. It can also be used to check containers, such as bottles, cans or glasses, to see if alcohol is present.

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The device was used recently as part of Operation Everest, a local police initiative to introduce young people and licensing staff to the new Alcoblows device. Barnstaple Neighbourhood Support Team uniformed staff went out onto the streets of Ilfracombe, Barnstaple and Bideford introducing young people to the device and screening individuals for alcohol use.

Sergeant Mark Harper said: "15 young people were tested with the Alcoblows device. Nobody failed the test, there were no adverse comments and the device was well received by all. Alcoblows was also taken to Braunton Youth Club where it was introduced to the young people in attendance and they were invited to try the equipment out, with everyone engaging with it very well and supporting the idea."

He continued: "In any given weekend across the country we will have incidents involving young people and alcohol. We have a duty of care to look after these young people and Alcoblows will help by giving us the opportunity to use our powers more to help reduce alcohol-related incidents and anti-social behaviour. Young people can also help themselves by becoming more aware of the risks of drinking, knowing what their limits are and taking responsibility for how alcohol affects their behaviour. Parents can also help by setting a good example around alcohol and not drinking in front of young people at home."

Amanda Palmer, Safer North Devon Manager said: "Police, councils and partners as Safer North Devon are working on lots of joint initiatives, including Alcoblows, Night time patrols and ongoing awareness campaigns with licensees so our communities can continue to enjoy a safe night out. We encourage people to be aware of safe drinking limits and support those in need by signposting them to agencies who can help them."