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National alcohol awareness week 'Under the influence....of parents'

Statistics show that the damage being done to our young people through the misuse of alcohol continues to increase and especially, it seems in North Devon. Ilfracombe, Bideford and Barnstaple are the three towns in Devon with the highest number of alcohol related admissions to hospital.

So what is it that makes young people misuse alcohol? Peer pressure, life crisis, the culture of the day and availability all play their part. But experts tell us that parenting style is a significant factor in the choices that young people make. Children spend more time with their parents during their formative years and what they learn at home by watching as well as listening to their parents will determine many of the life choices they make. But many parents are not sure how to talk to their children about issues of drugs and alcohol or how best to protect them from dangerous influences.

'How to Drug Proof Your Kids' (DPYK) is a six-session programme being delivered across North Devon and is aimed at equipping parents with the knowledge and skills they need to protect their children from the harmful use of drugs including alcohol.

The team leader is police officer Roger Bartlett who says 'Many people do not think of alcohol as a drug, but it most certainly is and indeed is the most prominent issue of concern for parents that attend our courses locally. It has been suggested that if alcohol had been 'discovered' now rather than being part of our society for so long, it would be illegal because of the harm it causes. It is the misuse of this particular drug that fills our cells and A&E departments every weekend of the year!'

DPYK, which has already been delivered to more than 200 parents across North Devon aims to help parents:

- Become better informed about drugs & alcohol including how bad drug misuse is; what the drugs look like; why and how they are used what drugs look like
- Learn how to communicate effectively with their children about drugs
- Develop plans to use at home to help their children make good informed choices
- Benefit from the support & experience of other parents and be encouraged by the fact that they are not alone

Inspector Bartlett says 'When it comes to drug and alcohol misuse, prevention is so much better than cure! The course is for anyone who wants to protect their child whether they are already worried their child is drinking too much or taking drugs or just wanting to avoid having that dreaded call from the police or the hospital. The feedback from those who attend is that they really enjoy themselves and learn so much. A number have shared how it has transformed their relationship with their kids. These issues are not going away and so whilst we cannot offer any

guarantees, we are here to help parents give their children the best possible chance of avoiding harm.'

A course is to be delivered at the **Tarka Tennis Centre**, Barnstaple starting at 7:15pm on Wednesday 10th November and is aimed at any parent or carer of a child over the age of eight. Each course costs £15 per person and bookings can be made through the website: www.dpyknorthdevon.co.uk or by phoning the team office on 01271 336271. **END**

dpyk north devon team

P.S. Members of DPYK North Devon are very eager to provide local comment on **any** issues relating to drug and alcohol misuse that the local press are covering.