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North Devon towns top harmful drinking league

NHS statistics tell us that, about 160 people across Devon attend A&E departments with alcohol related issues every single day and that approximately 111,000 people aged between 16 and 64 living in the county drink at hazardous or harmful levels. *

These same statistics place North Devon at the top of the league tables for all of the wrong reasons. The three towns in Devon with the highest hospital admission rates (per head population) for alcohol related issues are all in North Devon they being: Ilfracombe, Barnstaple and Bideford/Northam. (April 2005 – March 2009) *

We are told that young people who start drinking when they are young seem most at risk of long term health problems related to alcohol misuse. So what can we do to prevent our children from getting into harmful drinking? 'How to Drug Proof Your Kids' is a drug and alcohol education programme for parents and carers that has been running across North Devon for the last 4 years. The course is presented by volunteers and seeks to equip parents with the knowledge and skills they need to protect their children from the harmful use of drugs including alcohol.

Team leader Roger Bartlett says 'Whilst illegal drugs worry parents, from the courses we have run, the misuse of alcohol amongst young people is, without doubt, the most prevalent issue for parents. It is so widely available and we know that antisocial behaviour, violence and other crime as well as long term health issues can result from harmful drinking and no parent wants their child to get caught up in that.'

The 6-week course, amongst other things, looks at why young people start hazardous drinking, how a parent can communicate with their children about the issues, how to develop plans that will encourage children to make good choices as well as how to intervene if a parent discovers their child already has a problem.

Roger says 'Our presenters are not experts but have personal, sometimes painful, experiences of these issue and parents seem to be encouraged by the fact that they are not alone. We all learn a huge amount together through sharing our experiences.'

Courses are run across North Devon throughout the autumn and spring terms and cost £15 per person. The next evening course will be run at the Vivian Moon Centre, Braunton from Tuesday 14th September with the next course in Barnstaple planned for the Tarka Tennis Centre from Wednesday 10th November.

Anyone wishing to book or find out more information can call 01271 336271 or visit: www.dpvknorthdevon.co.uk

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* NHS Secondary Uses Service Commissioning dataset 2009