



26th November 2010

North Devon Fire Officers to receive domestic violence and abuse awareness training

Fire Officers are to receive specialist training in spotting the signs of domestic abuse and violence for the first time in North Devon. The Domestic Violence and Abuse Awareness training, instigated by Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (DSFRS) in conjunction with Safer North Devon and voluntary agencies, means Fire Officers will be better able to identify the signs of domestic violence and abuse when offering fire safety information or attending incidents or, for example, during their every day duties.

Alan Kyle, from DSFRS and Safer North Devon said: "We do not receive any formal domestic violence and abuse awareness training so this is a great idea. We regularly visit people offering them fire safety advice, so the new training will provide us with further opportunities to make our communities safer places to live, in line with our mission statement, 'Acting to Protect and Save'.

"The training provides an opportunity for early intervention which although difficult to measure, equally cannot be underestimated in terms of the development and protection of our communities and the impact to society. It's a good example of how inter agency partnerships can make a positive and real difference to individuals and to the community as a whole."

Keen to support partners and voluntary agencies and to develop new initiatives, Alan Kyle from DSFRS approached North Devon Women's Aid (NDWA) about the possibility of organising some domestic violence and abuse awareness training for officers. Discussions were successful and ADVA, the Devon-wide 'Against Domestic Violence and Abuse agency' will now provide the training.

Alan Kyle has already completed a 'level two' awareness course and two more fire service trainers' will attend the first, 'level one' course and then cascade the information learnt, down to the rest of the DSFRS team. The officers will attend a one day multi-agency course for practitioners from agencies such as, Health, Police, Social Services, Housing, Education, Probation/Court Welfare and Voluntary agencies. They will examine the nature, scale and consequences of domestic violence and abuse and how to take appropriate action, where possible.

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Alan Kyle said: "The course will raise awareness of the impact of domestic violence upon children and families, increase understanding of how best to offer help and support and raise standards of practice both individually and collectively. This is a pilot project over the next six months and if successful could potentially be rolled out across the fire service throughout Devon and Somerset. An officer I know who has previously had some domestic violence and abuse awareness training has already used this knowledge to help support a person who was a victim of abuse."

Helen Frisby, Refuge Manager Operational/Network, North Devon Women's Aid said: "In North Devon we have seen a rise in domestic violence and abuse reporting against the county trend. One of the reasons for this is our extensive work in raising education and awareness. We have a very strong partnership working in the area and the benefit of having trained personnel within Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service is their access to community and especially people's homes, where we know most domestic abuse occurs.

"To have officers trained in recognising the signs and having the knowledge to provide information and/or signposting to relevant agencies will be a valuable addition to the Partnership Team here in North Devon and eventually even Countywide."

Amanda Palmer, Safer North Devon said: "This is a very exciting project. Safer North Devon has strong links with DSFRS, ADVA and NDWA. At our heart is community safety and by working with our partners we can not only increase awareness of domestic violence and abuse in the home but also help and support some of our more hard to reach vulnerable people within our communities."

For further information on domestic abuse visit: <http://www.safernorthdevon.co.uk/domestic-violence.asp> or ring North Devon's Women's Aid on tel: 01271 321946 (main office) or 01271 370079 (outreach office). If you are in immediate danger call 999.

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Note to Editors:

*Adva is Devon's 'against domestic violence and abuse' partnership comprising different agencies across Devon: local authority, district councils, police, probation, education, social care, crown prosecution service, courts service, health services, women's aid services, victim support etc.

*Police and councils work with other partner agencies as Safer North Devon to ensure North Devon and Torridge remains a great place to live. The Partnership covers both North Devon and Torridge Districts and is supported by agencies who are accountable under the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act to deliver on a reduction in Crime, Fear of Crime and Anti-social Behaviour as well as others with a local stakeholder interest. Our accountable bodies are North Devon and Torridge which include: Devon County Council, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, North Devon Council, Devon Primary Care Trust, Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, Devon and Cornwall Police Authority, Torridge District Council and Devon and Cornwall Probation Area. For further information visit: www.safernorthdevon.co.uk

For further media information contact: Sue Welham, 07956 253486, suewelham@yahoo.co.uk