



22nd November 2010

Local supermarkets help raise awareness of domestic violence

A new leaflet, developed by Safer North Devon, which raises awareness of the dangers of alcohol and its impact on domestic violence is being given out by local supermarkets* to all customers purchasing alcohol during Domestic Violence Awareness Week (22nd-28th November 2010). The new leaflet encourages victims of domestic violence to come forward, whatever kind of relationship they are in, and to not suffer in silence, giving contact details for local support groups who can help.

Domestic violence includes mental, emotional, financial and sexual, as well as physical violence and abuse. In Devon 62% of domestic violence incidents are influenced by alcohol¹. Last year more incidents of domestic abuse were reported than at any other time since 2003/04, with just over 1 in 5 of these incidents occurring in North Devon and Torridge¹. Children were present in nearly 1 in 2 incidents of domestic abuse in Devon¹.

Local supermarkets supporting the awareness week campaign jointly said: "As major suppliers of alcohol to North Devon residents we have come together for the first time to support this unique initiative. We all have policies to ensure we operate responsibly and within the law when selling alcohol but we also have a duty of care and a social responsibility to support campaigns like this that raise awareness of the dangers of irresponsible drinking and its impact on relationships."

The new 'Alcohol is no excuse' leaflet aims to raise awareness of domestic violence, get the message across that alcohol is no excuse for domestic violence, in a relationship, and to encourage victims to seek help and support by giving contact details for the range of local support services available.

Helen Frisby, North Devon Women's Aid, Refuge Manager said: "In many of our Domestic Abuse cases alcohol can be a feature whether it is the perpetrator who becomes more aggressive after drinking or the victim who uses alcohol as a crutch to support them at a time of crisis, the presence of alcohol can never be underestimated nor can it ever be an excuse for violence or abuse. We want the community to know that help is available whatever the problem and as Partners we are working together to address the many complex issues around Domestic Abuse and alcohol."

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Carol, who lives in North Devon brought her children up as a single parent due to her ex husband's drinking, despite being married for 38 years. She suffered verbal abuse from the beginning which got worse and worse over the last 10 – 15 years of her marriage. Carol was repeatedly verbally abused by her ex husband during her marriage and towards the end was physically assaulted, which Carol felt could have ended in rape, had her daughter not turned up at that moment.

Carol said: "When things were not good at home and he was on days of drinking, on my days off, my daughter would take me to her house from 9am to 11pm. My life just existed day by day waiting for his mood swings. If it wasn't for Women's Aid and my solicitors I wouldn't have been able to move on, they helped me get my life back from just existing to feeling alive and human again. There still are a few bad days but with my support I can deal with them and look to the future. Women's Aid was like a lifeline to me, I wish I'd known about them sooner and that I could have got out of my relationship sooner. There is help out there and you can access it. You don't have to put up with it."

Amanda Palmer, Safer North Devon said: "If more people knew of the local services available to them they wouldn't need to suffer in silence. We hope this leaflet will encourage people to come forward and report domestic violence so they can get the help they need. The leaflet was also given out recently by local supermarkets during Alcohol Awareness Week and it's had the largest single print run for any of our literature, at 105,000 copies. We also intend to distribute it again in public places in the run up to Christmas with the support of our partners."

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.