



**Date: 7th December 2010**

## Phoenix course helps youngsters understand importance of good behaviour

A unique course being run by Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service with partner agencies is helping young people to understand the importance of good behaviour. The Phoenix programme, part funded by Safer North Devon and Youth Offending Teams from Barnstaple and Exeter is primarily designed to reduce fire risk and fire-related crime or other anti-social behaviour within local communities, by working with 'at-risk' young people.

It teaches them the importance of fire safety, improves their life skills and aims to build self-esteem, leadership skills, improve communication skills and increase motivation. Students attend an intensive 5-day course designed to identify areas of development and agree a way forward with them. An initial 5-day course took place on 27th Sept to 1st Oct at Barnstaple Fire Station with 10 students aged between 13 – 14yrs who took part in a variety of physical and mental challenges. Family and friends watched the students demonstrate their newly acquired skills, including hose running, use of breathing apparatus, road traffic accident drills and basic first aid skills.

Alan Kyle, Phoenix Course organiser said: "The 10 students all with different backgrounds and life skills worked really hard and I was very pleased to see they were all awarded their 'Certificates of Achievement' on the final day. The programme will continue to run for six months and I am looking forward to helping improve our young peoples' behaviour and developing their skills in the future."

Every three weeks, in the six-month period after successful completion of the course, participants are interviewed to see how they are doing. Goals and objectives are set for each young person to monitor their behaviour and a report is sent back regularly to Phoenix by their school or the specialist support agency who nominated them. Activity days are also arranged where the young people, if they want to, can volunteer in the community undertaking activities such as garden clearing which can go towards a Duke of Edinburgh or V Volunteer award. At the end of the six-month programme, participants and their family and friends are invited to a celebration achievement evening to mark their successful completion of the course.

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Phoenix meets the Government, Every Child Matters national indicators for young people which are; being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic well being. Young people can be referred into the programme by any person and/or organisation who may feel they would benefit from the experience, such as local police, The Fire Service or Safer North Devon.

Alan Kyle said: "Everyone put forward for Phoenix is interviewed with their parents, where the 5-day initial course and ongoing six month programme is explained to them and that it is physically and mentally challenging. Each student is told they will also have a personal record file which follows their progress throughout the six months clearly identifying areas in which they can improve. Those participants and parents who want to proceed with Phoenix then sign up and we make arrangements with their school."

The programme acts as a deterrent by showing youngsters what else is out there, rewarding them for good behaviour and giving them a chance to grow up and gain confidence so they are more likely to think twice about engaging in anti-social behaviour in the future. It improves the minds and attitudes of young people helping them to understand the importance of good behaviour. It also reduces fire setting behaviour, increases school attendance thereby reducing anti-social behaviour on the streets and helps to reduce anti-social behaviour in schools.

The Phoenix programme brings together partner agencies from across North Devon who work with young people including the Fire Service, Youth Intervention Officers, Youth Offending Teams and SND Anti-Social Behaviour Officer. Local Councillors also provide support in the form of Councillor Grants with a recent grant approved for £775 supported by Barnstaple Councillors Chris Haywood, Ward Member for Yeo Valley, Des Brailey, Ward member for Long Bridge and John Wilshire, Ward member for Central who had young people from their constituencies taking part in the programme. Further funding requests have also been made to the Bridge Trust and Pilton United charities and the Youth Opportunity Fund, where a panel of young people decide on whether an award is made.

- Ends -

**Note to Editors:**

Students are initially selected to attend the 5-day intensive course followed by the 6-month programme, which is geared towards a student's individual profile. Where possible a member of the appropriate referral agency will be there to reinforce links between the Phoenix syllabus and the student's everyday environment. A number of activity days are arranged at 6, 12, 18 and 24 weeks after the initial 5-day intensive course.

**For further information please contact:**

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