



18th October 2010

Alcohol awareness week 18th-24th October - Alcohol and Childhood

New campaign highlights impact of alcohol on young people and the community

A new campaign is being launched during Alcohol Awareness Week (18th-24th October) by Safer North Devon* to highlight the problem of proxy sales - where an adult (parent, sibling or friend) buys alcohol on behalf of young people. The campaign was developed after it was noticed by police officers on the frontline that more and younger children were being found with or under the influence of alcohol on our streets and in public places.

A survey was carried out with young people aged 15-16 across North Devon and Torridge and when asked where they obtained their alcohol the majority said at home. A number of young people then brought that alcohol out onto the streets. Proxy sales currently run at 20% compared with sales made directly to young people from off and on licensed (hotels and pubs) premises which are currently 7% and 4% respectively¹.

"Adults buying drink for underage persons' is the most common way they obtain alcohol," says Pc Paul Daw, Night Time Economy Manager for Northern Devon. "By raising awareness, perhaps consideration will be given to the impact that alcohol can have on young people's health and the wider community. It is an offence to purchase alcohol for underage persons and the police will take robust action against anyone caught buying alcohol and giving it to the underage."

Nationally nearly 10,000 people a year die from the consequences of alcohol and on average 13 young people are hospitalised daily². Parents can play their part in helping children make considered decisions as they grow, by moderating their alcohol consumption and setting a good role model. Buying alcohol for under 18s to consume at home is only setting them up for possible problems later on, as health experts say young people should not consume alcohol regularly until their bodies have stopped growing.

Buying alcohol for under 18's is against the law. Police will take robust action and you will face a £5,000 fine and criminal record. Posters alerting adults to the consequences of proxy sales are going into Barnstaple off licenses during Alcohol Awareness Week and will then be displayed in off licenses across the rest of North Devon and Torridge in the run up to Xmas.

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“We do our best to stop adults buying alcohol for anyone underage, says Karen Best of Londis Nisa Store in Barnstaple. “Any initiative that helps my staff and educates our customers is welcome. As a responsible retailer Nisa is committed to keeping alcohol away from underage persons. The posters will make it clearer to our customers why on occasions they are challenged concerning their alcohol purchases.”

The proxy sales campaign is one of a number of initiatives being run by local agencies across North Devon and Torridge to raise awareness of alcohol-related issues, alcohol-related crime and disorder and alcohol-related antisocial behaviour in our communities. Working in partnership, local agencies use a range of enforcement powers including fines and arrest to tackle those who create or encourage alcohol-related disorder, which will not be tolerated locally.

As part of Alcohol Awareness Week 70,000 leaflets produced by Safer North Devon*, in conjunction with local supermarkets, are also being proactively distributed by the supermarkets to anyone buying alcohol. The leaflets raise awareness of the consequences of alcohol in the home. The leaflet will help the community by getting alcohol awareness messages into homes, and help reach victims and those in need.

Anyone can report a proxy sale, suspected proxy sale or alcohol-related crime to Devon and Cornwall Constabulary on 08452 777444 or anonymously to Crime Stoppers on 0800 555 111.

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References:

1. **Statistics on Alcohol: England 2008**, The NHS Information Centre.
2. **Office for National Statistics**, 2008.