

Young people get active to stay safe

The Fire Service ran a scheme this summer to give young people (aged 8 –12 years) an opportunity to take part in football coaching and to learn life safety skills. Organised by Safer North Devon, the Police and Torridge District Council, Soccersafe was introduced after it was identified that young people had little to do in three priority neighbourhoods in Bideford, contributing to unacceptable amounts of anti-social behaviour (ASB). Fire crews were also suffering verbal abuse from children in the east side of Bideford.

Soccersafe is extremely valuable as it engages and develops relationships with young people, local schools, key partners and most importantly local families. “The primary aim is to engage young people in an enjoyable activity whilst providing an opportunity for them to learn about ASB, fire reduction and arson,” says Graham Rooke, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.



“It helps reduce speeding, arson and ASB, including the abuse of fire fighters and the police. It also gives us access to potential offenders, increases young peoples’ understanding of the emergency services, allows them to integrate with adults in a safe environment, helps young people understand why health and fitness is so important and signposts young people to other clubs and activities.”

Funded by the partner agencies, Soccersafe culminates in a tournament day at Bideford Football club where the winning teams are presented with medals sponsored by Safer North Devon. It is hoped that the event can also be made available to young people in surrounding areas in further years, depending on funding available.

“One of the Fire Services priorities is Community Safety,” says Amanda Palmer, Safer North Devon Manager. “By working together we can provide the best solutions to solve local crime and ASB, and work together to make North Devon and Torridge a safer place to live, work and visit.”

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This year Soccersafe expanded and evolved to include street dance classes and a dance off led by the Torrington Streetz crew, with feedback suggesting that everyone involved would like to participate again. Comments from Soccersafe 2010 include:

"I would like to thank the emergency services for giving up there time for us," A. Vitali, age 10.

"I enjoyed the street dance, meeting new friends and will use the safety advice to check things at home," Doble, age 10.

"I talked to mum and dad about making an escape plan for our house and how to get out if there was a fire. I also loved playing as a team member, being with everyone and always to look and listen when crossing the road," D. Chinnock, age 9.

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