

TALKING Together

Safer and Stronger Communities Group report



Cheshire Police Schools Liaison Officer Karl Williamson goes through some bonfire night safety advice with pupils from Woodlands Primary School, Ellesmere Port.

Your views help make safe, strong communities



by Chief Superintendent Craig Guildford

CHAIR OF THE SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES GROUP

WELCOME to this *Talking Together* special which throws the spotlight on our work to make Cheshire West and Chester a safer place to live.

The Safer and Stronger Communities Group brings together the expertise of the Borough Council, Cheshire Police, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, Western Cheshire PCT and other agencies to reduce crime and tackle the problem of antisocial behaviour.

Our Partnership Plan looks at the key areas we are aiming to tackle and sets out solutions for tackling these problems. Much of the plan is based on public consultation, and what residents tell us they want to see improved (see inside).

We are determined to help residents combat these problems they have flagged up to us locally.

Here in Ellesmere Port residents have told us that the greatest problem was "teenagers hanging around" and subsequent antisocial behaviour. So we have taken steps to tackle this head on.

People have also told us that in the run up to bonfire night, there is a problem with unsupervised and often dangerous fires being built in their communities. So Cheshire West and Chester Council have acted by setting up a hotline and a rapid response unit to deal with them (see pages four and five).

Finally, we are continually looking at new ways to communicate with the public so please take time out to read the details about our new-look website, including a new broadband TV feature and ways in which you can keep in contact with us (see page eight).

Your feedback is vital in shaping the work we do and will ultimately benefit you and your community.

Remember, remember... stay safe this November

See centre pages

Public priorities

Thousands of residents across Cheshire West and Chester took part in the biggest ever survey of attitudes about the place where they live. Your comments helped the Safer and Stronger Communities Group draw up an action plan to focus on four main issues. See inside for news of our work to reduce re-offending and tackle alcohol-related crime, antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse.

THE ISSUES

The shocking fact on fears

IT is a shocking fact that one in four people that the Safer and Stronger Communities Groups have spoken to in the Borough will not go into town at night because of the drunken behaviour of other people.

The culture of alcohol is having a profound effect on society and impacting massively on crime, antisocial behaviour and abuse as well as health and well-being.

The aim of the Safer and Stronger Communities Group's work is to reduce the harm caused by alcohol in all its forms.

This includes harm associated with chronic and acute ill-health, crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour.

Our strategy involves a multi-pronged attempt to reduce alcohol harm.

This includes developing information, education and communication, creating effective and accessible intervention and treatment and by improving community safety by combating alcohol-related crime and disorder.

Through schemes such as Re-thinking Drinking and Operation ArcAngel we are starting to make a difference and help people come to terms with the problems.

Big range of help is just a call away

FINDING help with all types of alcohol problems has never been easier.

The NHS website at www.drinking.nhs.uk is packed full of useful information.

Further help is available from Drinkline on 08007 314314 or anyone who needs a face-to-face chat can make an appointment with their family doctor.

The good news is that making small changes to the amount a person drinks can make a big difference to their life.

People with more serious alcohol problems can call the Chester Alcohol Service directly on 01244 347087 or the Ellesmere Port Alcohol Service on 0151 348 8270. In Winsford and Northwich call 01270 580243.



Police officers warn young people about the dangers of binge drinking and concerns over alcohol-related antisocial behaviour.

Expert Angels advise community on avoiding perils of drink

GUARDIAN angels watching out for people with alcohol problems are working to rid the area of high binge drinking levels.

A project called ArcAngel is helping to clamp down on alcohol-related community crime, antisocial behaviour, violence and domestic abuse by targeting key and vulnerable groups of people.

The letters Arc stand for "alcohol-related crime" and reflect the role being taken on by Cheshire Police and their partners to protect people from blighting their lives and the lives of others.

Binge drinking levels in Cheshire West and Chester are higher than the national average, and one of the main aims of

ArcAngel is to explain to people about the risks that binge drinking poses for them and others in the Borough.

As part of this strategy, police officers confiscate alcohol from young people drinking in public places like parks and underpasses.

Targeting 'hot spots'

The officers also talk to them informally about how excessive drinking can damage their health, cause them to take dangerous risks and expose them to sexually-related diseases.

Police are also targeting "hot spots" across the Borough with extra officers providing a highly visible presence on Friday and Saturday nights. Officers are on

hand to assist vulnerable people such as lone females who have obviously had too much to drink and are potential victims.

Pubs and bars recruited by ArcAngel refuse to serve customers who are drunk or allow bottles to be taken off the premises, and ask young people to provide proof of their age if it is suspected they are not old enough to drink on licensed premises.

Cheshire Police is also a party to the Victims Charter which requires all agencies to provide a high level of care and services to people who become victims of alcohol abuse.

Inspector Peter Crowcroft, Head of Strategic Partnerships, recalled the tragic case of Garry Newlove, the Warrington man beaten to

death by two young men who had been drinking when he confronted a gang vandalising his car outside the family home.

Inspector Crowcroft said: "Alcohol abuse has an adverse and harmful effect on people's lives every day and we don't want anyone else to suffer the trauma that Garry Newlove's family has gone through.

"We are working in close partnership with other agencies because the problem is not one that can be addressed by the police on their own.

"Everyone has the right to go out for an evening and enjoy a drink without coming to harm or feeling threatened by those who drink irresponsibly."

Joining forces to tackle £20 billion pound booze problem

ALCOHOL misuse costs the country billions of pounds each year, so public services in Cheshire are working on a range of initiatives to call time on the effects of drinking.

Police, the borough council and the NHS have joined forces to launch a wide-ranging drive on the roots of alcohol-related problems, by pushing for legislation on a minimum price for booze, and introducing home safety checks to support high risk and dependent drinkers.

Other plans include improving the availability of temporary housing for homeless people with alcohol problems, identifying and

introducing a consistent range of Borough-wide initiatives and increasing the number of alcohol free zones and fixed penalty notices.

Residents are being asked to shape future strategies by airing their views in the Big Drink Debate survey.

This can be completed by logging on to NHS Western Cheshire's website at www.westcheshirehealthandcare.nhs.uk

Dr Tony Sharples, Public Health Specialist for NHS Western Cheshire said: "Nationally, alcohol misuse costs between £18 billion and £25 billion per

year and spans all sectors of the economy.

"For the NHS alone, the estimated financial burden of alcohol misuse is around £2.7 billion per year in hospital admissions, attendances at A&E and in primary care.

"More locally, across Cheshire West and Chester there were 2,199 assaults with injury between April 2008 and March 2009.

"And a recent survey of 14 to 16 year olds who drink alcohol found that one in four had been involved in violence and one in 10 had regretted having sex."



THE ISSUES Turning prolific criminals from cycle of offending

IT is true to say that a significant number of criminals who appear before judges and magistrates are no strangers to the justice system.

Sadly a large number of defendants are prolific offenders responsible for a high percentage of the crimes committed in their community.

Much is being done – and achieved – in Cheshire West to address the problem of

Prolific and Persistent Offenders (PPOs).

A multi-agency PPO scheme to target prolific burglars, vehicle crime offenders and street robbers has resulted in one of the country's biggest reductions in re-offending.

A NAVIGATE programme is being developed to embrace even more PPOs and give them the support they need to stop them re-offending.

Saving people from a spiral of crime and helping them to turn their lives around has also led to a reduction in the numbers of victims of crime.

The Community Payback Scheme, under which offenders are sentenced to carry out unpaid community work instead of a custodial sentence, has also had a positive effect in reducing re-offending rates.

Unpaid work teaches skills and pays community back

OFFENDERS are being helped to turn away from a life of crime by being sentenced to carry out unpaid work that benefits others under the Community Payback Scheme.

In Cheshire West and Chester about 55,000 hours of Community Payback are completed every year as offenders literally pay back for the crimes they have committed with tasks as diverse as clearing dense undergrowth, removing graffiti, repairing and redecorating community centres and working with Park Rangers, charity workers and volunteers to improve the local community.

Offenders aged 18 and over can be ordered by the courts to carry out between 40 and 300 hours of work as part of a Community Order or Suspended Sentence Order with an unpaid work requirement.

Community Payback projects are co-ordinated by the Probation Service and, as part of the Government's Justice Seen, Justice Done strategy, all offenders carrying out unpaid work are required to wear highly visible clothing bearing the Community Payback logo.

Around 50 per cent of those who go through the scheme are aged 25 and under, but offenders of all ages take part – some even in their Seventies.

Under a nomination scheme, members of the public individuals, clubs, voluntary organisations and community or faith groups, can suggest a Community Payback project by phoning the hotline on 01244 394594 or visiting www.cheshireprobation.org.uk and clicking onto the Community Payback page where the nomination form can be downloaded.

Can lead to employment

This innovative way for offenders to make amends for their crimes while benefiting the local community is proving successful in reducing the rate of re-offending. Community Punishment, as it was previously known, has consistently shown a lower re-offending rate than other sentences.

David Skyner, Community Payback Scheme Manager for Cheshire, said: "A lot of offenders on the Community Payback scheme are long-term unemployed, so carrying out community work helps instill a work ethic, develops work related skills and provides opportunities to gain basic qualifications which can lead to employment. There is a strong link between gaining employment and reducing re-offending and the positive focus that Community Payback has on improving skills to help offenders find jobs."



23-year-old Martin is on the straight and narrow after seven years of offending and 12 convictions for 18 offences. Since he received help and support from the Prolific and Persistent offenders initiative he has turned his back on crime, has a new home with his girlfriend and is looking to start a career in the army.

Meanwhile, prolific car thief John has stayed on the right side of the law after receiving help with his benefits to give him an income. He also took part in counselling and was helped by a community psychiatric nurse. He enjoyed gym sessions and boxing training, and was supported in looking for work. Since he was contacted by the Prolific and Persistent Offenders initiative he has significantly reduced his offending.

CASE STUDY

Crime rates cut after top 60 criminals targeted

TARGETING the 60 most prolific burglars, vehicle crime offenders and street robbers has achieved positive results across Cheshire West and Chester.

The multi-agency Prolific and Persistent Offenders (PPO) initiative reduced re-offending in the group by an impressive 47 per cent – more than three times the national average.

Now the team, made up of police officers and probation staff supported by dedicated drug workers, housing officers, the Youth Offending Service and a range of voluntary groups, has widened the initiative to manage even more prolific and persistent offenders.

Those who agree to be placed on programmes are helped to turn their lives around through help with drug addiction, finding decent accommodation and accessing education, training and employment.

However, those who choose not to work with the PPO team can expect to receive close scrutiny from the joint agencies with, for example, unplanned visits, and any evidence that they are involved in criminal activity is dealt with as a priority and they can expect to soon be back in court.

Every assistance

Inspector Rob Woodward of Cheshire Police said: "The offender has a large part to play in their ultimate destiny. We want them to stop offending and will give them every assistance, but if they don't or won't, then we will stop it for them."

Marie Orrell, Assistant Chief Executive of Cheshire Probation Service, said: "The PPO programme has achieved some of the best results in the country, but most importantly it means we have prevented people from becoming victims of crime while helping people to break out of their cycle of crime."

"We have had a great level of local authority support that is not always received by PPO schemes in other parts of the country."

Give us your feedback on this issue of **Talking Together**

by emailing talkingtogether@westcheshiretogether.org.uk or write to: Marketing and Communications, Cheshire West and Chester Council, First Floor, HQ, 58 Nicholas Street, Chester, CH1 2NP.

Booze-free bar teaches road safety message

ROAD safety officers in the Borough have been helping to drive home the anti-drink drive message to students thanks to an innovative alcohol-free bar which tours colleges and school sixth forms.

The Cheers Bar gives teenagers the chance to sample free non-alcoholic drinks and to wear special impairment goggles, which simulate the effects of alcohol, before being asked to walk on a straight line.

The aim of the Cheers project is to make students aware that any

amount of alcohol can affect their judgement when driving and to stress to people that they can't calculate their alcohol limit.

Sarah Collins, Senior Road Safety Officer for Cheshire West and Chester, said: "The scheme is primarily aimed at young drink drivers and their passengers. "We want people to realise that it takes less than you might think to become a drink driver and it is impossible to calculate your alcohol limit."

She added: "We also look at how larger measures can lead to many

people falling foul of the law and in particular how a high proportion of people are caught in the morning after because they are totally unaware they are over the legal limit."

The scheme is one of nearly 30 ongoing initiatives being spearheaded by the Borough Road Safety Unit which are significantly helping to reduce road accidents.

For more information about road safety projects, including safer driving courses, log onto www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk and click on road safety.

NUISANCE bonfires are being targeted during an expanded multi-agency crackdown in the run up to Bonfire Night and beyond.

Cheshire West and Chester Council has joined forces with Cheshire Constabulary, registered social landlords and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service to carry out a special operation between October 23 and November 7 to tackle antisocial behaviour involving illegal bonfires and fireworks.

Partners will each carry out daily checks of specially designated arson patrol routes in known problem areas. Two smaller targeted response vehicles will also patrol in the evenings and at weekends.

Extra staff in rapid response teams from the council's Streetscene departments based in Winsford, Chester and Ellesmere Port will clear away unofficial bonfires before they become a problem.

Ninety bonfires were removed across the district when the scheme was trialled last year.

Colin Heyes, Arson Reduction Manager for Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, said: "This partnership approach is a key part of our strategy.

"We would therefore encourage members of the community to

Group target the burning issue of bonfire danger



Remember, remember the fifth of November... firefighter Steve Nottage with a blazing, potentially-dangerous home-made bonfire.

BONFIRE HOTLINE
0300 123 7026
Call for removal of illegal bonfires



A firefighter douses the blaze with the aid of the TRV (Tactical Response Vehicle) at Ellesmere Port.

rubbish where anyone can use it as bonfire fuel, or even worse, set light to it.

"Small fires adjacent to buildings often lead to much more serious fires, which cause severe damage and put lives at risk.

"gically, number of wheelie bin fires in the UK that have spread to buildings and resulted in fatalities. This is not about us stopping people having fun. This is about us trying to keep people and

proper y om the pot ntially y

wants to report more serious cases of arson should call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. Partners involved in the scheme are also urging people to attend

professionally organised bonfire events instead of staging their own.

● For more information on how to stay safe go to www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

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Safety messages go out to schools

FIREFIGHTERS and Police Community Support Officers are touring schools across Cheshire West and Chester to advise young people on how to enjoy a safe Bonfire Night.

In the run up to November 5th and Hallowe'en they will give a friendly reminder – often during a 10 minute talk to a school assembly – to discuss bonfire safety and the importance of following the Firework Code.

Incidents reported to Cheshire Fire and Rescue in the fortnight around bonfire night have been reducing for the last couple of years but firefighters know they must continue the advice

and education they give across the area to make sure the public stay safe around bonfires and fireworks.

Together with community safety advocates from Cheshire Fire and Rescue and colleagues from Cheshire Police, fire crews will be continuing to spread the best advice right up until the big day.

October half term sees a special event at Wharton where fire crews, together with their popular mobile five-a-side soccer pitch, will be talking to young people about the potential dangers of bonfire night, but also about the antisocial behaviour associated

with Hallowe'en and mischief night.

Fire Station Manager for Northwich and Winsford Russell Austin said while the Safer and Stronger Communities Group wanted people to enjoy Hallowe'en and Bonfire Night, the priority had to be people's safety.

He said: "The best advice we can give to make sure things go to plan is for people to attend properly organised bonfire and firework events. "But if people are having their own bonfire parties we would urge them to follow the Firework Code and think carefully about where they site a bonfire and what they put on it."

Police walks boost safety

OFFICERS will be carrying out walks throughout their designated areas to come up with ways to improve the community.

Councillors, council workers, residents and other partners will be joining Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) on the walks in Chester to help spot any problems they can solve.

PCSO James Hannath said: "These walks are a great example of different organisations working together to improve life in the community. We take a short walk through a designated area and make notes on how it can be improved.

"This could be anything from cleaning up graffiti to installing improved street lights to make the area less attractive to thieves."

Work needed will be passed on to the relevant agency before a second walk takes place to ensure improvements have been made.

PCSO Hannath said: "Anyone interested in joining the walks can find out more from their local PCSO."



Local resident Jayne Taylor looking through information on the Safer Homes Scheme with PCSO Sharron Fildes.

C SHOPPERS in Ellesmere team w

and Neston Neighbourhood Policing holding a drop-in surgery every Friday at the town's Market Place from 1.30pm-3.30pm.

During the surgery, shoppers can call in to speak to a member of their local team, ask for advice, bring up any issues in their area or offer suggestions for local policing.

Anyone who cannot make the surgeries can leave a message with their Neighbourhood Policing Team on 0845 458 6373 or email ellesmere.port.npt@cheshire.pnn.police.uk

Dried-up donations will banish beggars

POLICE in Chester City Centre are urging generous shoppers to give their cash to genuine charities rather than beggars.

Begging is illegal in Chester City Centre and police are working with Cheshire West and Chester Council to crackdown on those who beg for money from visitors to the town.

Sergeant Ian Stead said: "We take the issue of begging very seriously in Chester. It is antisocial and can be

intimidating to visitors. It also affects public perception of legitimate schemes such as authorised sellers of the Big Issue.

"On occasion we have seen begging become aggressive and frightening for some people.

"This behaviour will not be tolerated and we urge people not to give to beggars in Chester. People who wish to help the homeless can help by giving to local charities or buying the Big

Issue from legitimate sellers.

"Charities like Chester Aid to the Homeless work specifically in the city and I would encourage people who wish to be helpful to give their money to a charity like this rather than directly to people on the street."

● To contact the Chester Inner Neighbourhood Policing Unit call 0845 458 69384 or email chester.inner.npt@cheshire.pnn.police.uk



Working with the young people and their families, we can help them to make positive changes which can be sustained.

Support from Cheshire West and Chester's Youth Engagement Service has helped this young lady get back on track at school.

CASE STUDY

YES scores success by turning this young life around

AN 11-year-old girl who was experiencing behaviour problems has found a new direction in life with help from the newly-formed Youth Engagement Service (YES).

The youngster was skipping classes at her primary school and mixing with the wrong crowd before being referred to the scheme in January.

Thanks to a tailor-made programme to increase her self-esteem she found her feet in a Morris Dancing class and has since gone on to show promise in her academic work at High School.

YES has been set up by the Cheshire Youth Offending Service as an early intervention scheme to prevent young people across Cheshire from offending and committing antisocial behaviour.

Referrals to YES are taken to one of Cheshire West and Chester's monthly multi-agency Antisocial Behaviour Panel meetings, and a way forward is proposed for addressing youngsters' negative

behaviour and of supporting them into positive activities. The 11-year-old, who had become involved in antisocial behaviour, was supported by her Case Manager and family members to attend a local dancing class where she made positive friendships.

Her literacy skills were soon identified as higher than average, and her school attendance improved to 100 per cent.

By the end of the school year her confidence had grown sufficiently for her to narrate the school play.

Now at High School, and enjoying programmed activities organised by her case manager, she has continued to steer clear of the Youth Justice System.

Julie Horton, Deputy Manager of the YES service, said: "This example shows that through early identification and positive intervention, challenging behaviours can be addressed.

"Working with the young people and their families, we can help them to make positive changes which can be sustained."

THE ISSUES

Problem areas are targeted first

A CONCERTED initiative is underway to tackle antisocial behaviour hotspots in Cheshire West and Chester.

Across the Borough, almost 30 per cent of antisocial behaviour was reported from five small areas. More than 60 per cent of all reported antisocial behaviour relates to rowdy, loutish or drunken behaviour.

Areas most affected by these areas tend to be town centres, shops and areas where alcohol is readily available. As a result of in-depth analysis of these figures, the

Safer and Stronger Communities Group is targeting responses to the areas that need it the most.

Three antisocial behaviour units have been set up in Chester, Ellesmere Port and Northwich, (see below) while a detailed multi-agency approach is being formulated throughout Cheshire West and Chester.

Ongoing consultation will take place with communities to identify their priorities and the Partnership will strive to address any concerns highlighted.

New gates are pride of our alleys

SUCCESSFUL alleygating schemes are helping to clamp down on burglaries and antisocial behaviour issues while boosting pride in neighbourhoods across the borough.

Through the initiative alleys and entries affected by crime and disorder are blocked to the general public by lockable gates at each end of the alley that can only be accessed by local residents.

Residents experiencing crime and antisocial behaviour can contact the community safety team to discuss their concerns.

These will be discussed at a task group of public services who create an action plan, look at crime figures and decide whether an application for an alleygating order is needed.

Although alleygating is not always the answer, it has proved to be a very effective tool in tackling a number of complaints.

These include reducing domestic burglary, reducing shed break-ins, reducing criminal damage, reducing antisocial behaviour, reducing levels of youth nuisance and reducing alcohol related disorder.

In addition, they help to increase feelings of safety and encourage a feeling of ownership in the neighbourhoods.

People can find out more about alleygating schemes by contacting the Community Safety Partnership 01244 973942 or visit the community safety pages on www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Together we'll clamp down on nuisance

SPECIAL antisocial behaviour units have been set up to tackle nuisance and low-level disorder in Cheshire West and Chester.

The units in Chester, Ellesmere Port and Northwich have been created by the Borough's Safer and Stronger Communities Group to work together to tackle bad behaviour which makes people's lives a misery.

A Community Safety Officer stationed in each unit will send letters to parents of young people identified as being involved in antisocial behaviour.

The officer will also develop a support package for individuals to encourage change while being tough on negative, challenging behaviour.

Community Safety Wardens, Registered Social Landlords and Cheshire Police will all work together to reduce persistent antisocial behaviour.

"We are introducing a more holistic approach to tackling antisocial behaviour issues," said Michelle Brown, Crime and Antisocial behaviour Manager for the Community Safety Team at Cheshire West and Chester Council.

"Information will be exchanged between agencies on a continuous basis, and the message that we are all working together will go out to those responsible for rowdy and loutish behaviour.

"If a Community Safety Warden becomes aware of a problem, the offender should know that their landlord or housing officer will also be in the loop, as well as the police."

The unit based in Ellesmere

Port Police station sees the introduction of Community Safety Wardens to the town for the first time, while the unit based in Northwich Police station covers Northwich and Winsford. The unit in Chester covers the Rural West Area.

Community Safety Wardens are able to hand out on-the-spot penalties for dog fouling, litter and cigarettes, while resolving issues over graffiti and neighbour disputes.

The teams will not only respond to antisocial behaviour offenders but will also focus on the victims, offering a multi-agency response similar to the process already proven to be successful for victims of domestic abuse.

Further plans by the Safer and Stronger Communities Group include implementing an antisocial behaviour case management database, to allow agencies to share information easily.



Down your street... Community Safety Wardens John Hickey and Michelle Markert pictured at the our place market stall in Ellesmere Port where members of the public can register their concerns.

Cheshire West and Chester wants to make it easier to report antisocial behaviour to the Council. People know to call 999 in an emergency, and call 0845 458 0000 at other times. Sometimes, however, problems need the police and council to work together with communities to bring about longer term solutions.

If you are experiencing antisocial behaviour and you think the council should help address, or you would like a Community Safety Warden to contact you please ring us on 0300 123 7033 Monday to Thursday 8.30am-5.30pm, Friday 8.30am-5pm (excluding bank holidays) or fill in the online reporting form at www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Residents urged to contact police over nuisance neighbour problems

THE Safer and Stronger Communities Group is clamping down on nuisance neighbours and the antisocial misery they can cause.

Just one or two families can ruin dozens of lives through threats, intimidation, harassment and vandalism.

Rowdiness, loud music or televisions, and refusing to silence constantly barking dogs are all hallmarks of nuisance neighbours.

Neighbours who make too much

noise can now be fined up to £5,000 or have noisy equipment removed by local authorities.

If problems continue, housing associations, councils and police working in partnership can apply for antisocial behaviour orders, or work together to get tenants evicted.

Safer and Stronger Communities Group Lead Chief Superintendent Craig Guildford said: "Sometimes, what appears to be antisocial behaviour is actually a crime. This is common with drug dealing.

"While it may be a case of antisocial behaviour in the first instance, criminal charges may be brought.

"The main thing to do if you have a concern about criminal activity going on in a house in your street is not to confront the residents yourself but to contact the police."

To report antisocial behaviour contact Cheshire Police on 0845 458 0000. In an emergency call 999.

THE ISSUES

Working hard to help affected families

DOMESTIC abuse affects one in four women and one in six men in the UK.

It can be physical, sexual or emotional violence and abuse or stalking that happens within families. It can be carried out by men against women, women against men and in same sex relationships.

Children are affected by seeing or hearing it as well as suffering abuse themselves. This means that you, your family or your neighbours could be suffering it.

Cheshire West and Chester Council knows that it

is important to deal with domestic abuse and works together with partner agencies to be sure everyone living and working in the Borough knows what they can do about it, and to get the right help to those who need it.

Agencies are working hard to improve what they do to help. Specialist services include the West Cheshire Domestic Abuse Family Safety Unit, employed by the council to work with men and women at the highest risk of harm and voluntary sector refuge and outreach services.

IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

Domestic Abuse Family Safety Unit	01606 351375
Vale Royal Women's Aid	01606 871523
Chester Women's Services	01244 314950
Ellesmere Port Women's Services	0151 355 4759

Caring council service says 'no' to abuse in the home

PIONEERING work to tackle domestic abuse in Cheshire West and Chester has been backed by the Borough Council this year.

It comes as the area's newly formed Domestic Abuse Partnership launches more initiatives to further strengthen its nationally recognised 'Thinking Family' strategy.

Partnership is at the heart of confidential services delivered through the West Cheshire Domestic Abuse Family Safety Unit by Independent Domestic Violence Advocates.

Their work centres on the safety and support of adults and children while ensuring abusers are held to account through specialist courts and involve Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences for adults at high risk of serious injury.

They work with local specialist providers like Women's Aid and refuges and organisations like the police, doctors, social workers, the probation service, housing officers and children's centre workers.

Practical help

Any agency which comes into contact with a family, like Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, is trained to recognise signs of abuse.

In 2009-10 this partnership approach safeguarded 411 High Risk adults with 582 children in Cheshire West and Chester who were supported and protected to live free from abuse.

Women's Aid and refuges supported a further 172 women and 248 children, with police responding to 1,384 incidents.

Councillor Lynn Riley, Cheshire West and Chester Council's Executive Member for Community and Environment, said: "From day one, we have set out to understand the iceberg of domestic abuse in Cheshire West and to offer practical help across the Partnership to anyone who is in need.

"Domestic abuse is rarely a subject we discuss in everyday life



CASE STUDY

MUM of four Clare knew her second marriage was over when her husband snatched their new baby son off and later subjected her and her two daughters to a prolonged and violent attack at their home in Ellesmere Port.

He took an overdose as the terrified family locked themselves in an en-suite bathroom and called the police. He was later convicted of three assaults and the couple are now divorced.

Clare and her children were referred to the West Cheshire Domestic Abuse Family Safety Unit for practical and emotional support.

She said: "His eyes went black at the time. I've never seen anything like it. I was hysterical.

"Witness support staff referred us to an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate and the help was absolutely brilliant. You don't realise how controlled you've been.

"But you're not on your own and I can now see the positives. Life is now so much better. My advice to anyone is that you don't need to put up with it. Help is just a phone call away.

No need to suffer in silence... partners in Cheshire West and Chester are working together to support victims of domestic abuse.

yet it affects men and women of all ages and from all walks of life, children, teenagers, parents abused by growing children, older people abused by carers and people in same sex relationships.

"We know that for every case that gets reported there are many more below the surface so the Partnership is here to support victims and their families to build a stronger future."

The innovative work of the Partnership includes a new women's recovery programme delivered through children's centres and a survivors' focus group led by police for feedback.

Further initiatives are now being considered, including increased out-reach support for victims, the review of specialist provision for children and increased capacity to meet demand from front line staff for more training.



Working together to support the victims of domestic violence are, left to right, Vale Royal Women's Aid Manager Carmel Duff; Community Safety Manager Gavin Butler; Portfolio Holder for Community and Environment Cllr Lynn Riley; Cheshire West and Chester Domestic Abuse Strategy Team Leader Sheila Brookes and Manager for Stonham and Ellesmere Port Women's Services Sally Starkey.



Lifeline thrown to residents

LIFELINE, a programme designed to encourage men to address abusive behaviour in relationships, is being delivered from Ellesmere Port from October.

The multi-agency project is being run in partnership with the NSPCC and is funded and supported by Cheshire West and Chester Council through The Domestic Abuse Partnership.

It involves the referral of men who want to change their behaviour to a voluntary group programme of two stages, one lasting 12 weeks, the other 20 weeks, and is not an alternative to prosecution.

Each fully staffed programme will cover issues like the pattern of abusive behaviour, motivation, the risk of re-offending, parenting skills and quality of life.

Partners and ex-partners will be offered contact visits so staff can carry out risk assessments, safety planning and help with referral of both women and children to other existing services.

Referrals will come from agencies like the police, housing, probation service, social care providers and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service.

For more information about this project please contact the Referral line at the NSPCC on 01925 418430.



A watchful eye... CCTV operator Pete Seago in the control room, Chester.

Hi-tech CCTV network scores success in cutting crime

A BOROUGH-WIDE CCTV monitoring scheme is recording significant successes in detecting and deterring crime in key population centres.



CCTV Manager Peter Johnson with a camera located in Chester City Centre.

Cheshire West and Chester Council employs a professional CCTV team that works closely with the police and other partner agencies to gather evidence and share intelligence.

As well as identifying potential criminals, the 194 cameras in Chester, Ellesmere Port, Neston and Northwich are helping to reduce the fear of crime, provide a deterrent and enhance community safety.

During the single month of August, a total of 391 incidents were logged under the Chester scheme, with 88 of these passed on at the request of the police for use as evidence.

Also during this month, a series of successful interventions were made by operators in the control centre within Chester Town Hall including:

- CCTV evidence was obtained of a male allegedly responsible for setting fires in the city, leading to his identification by the police and subsequent arrest.
- Operators monitored a group of three males assaulting a police officer on Watergate Street, alerting police control and providing evidence.

- At the request of the police, operators searched for and found a high-risk suicidal male who had just escaped from his care home. Police were able to intercept him on the railway lines in the Northgate area of the city.

Peter Johnson, CCTV Manager at Cheshire West and Chester Council, said: "Our operators use local knowledge and shared intelligence to monitor the right cameras at the right time of day or night."

"The cameras covering town centres, car parks and roadways have the ability to pan, tilt and zoom across 360 degrees, allowing the operators to follow a suspect and monitor incidents more effectively."

The CCTV scheme, which runs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, also operates two mobile vehicles which can be deployed to rural areas, events and emergencies.

- Since the recent installation of three new cameras on Chester's Rows, CCTV operators have detected several drugs-related offences, two assaults, one incident of a youth shooting street-level pedestrians with an air gun, people using the Rows as a toilet and numerous shoplifting offences.

Web TV appeals to the YouTube generation

A NEW broadband TV service which gives residents and public services the chance to upload videos about life in the area has been launched to appeal to the YouTube generation.

It targets young people who communicate through social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter or who watch videos from around the world on websites.

Launched in early October, it will create an online forum where the public can share their videos on all aspects of life Borough-wide, including culture, shopping and leisure, places of interest and even the massive variety of things they get up to in their spare time.

They can upload videos which are funny, thought-provoking or just plain daft.

They can also use the site to start a debate on issues affecting their communities, including antisocial behaviour and nuisance.

The Council and its public service partners will post video responses which deal with people's complaints or give the public the latest news.

The new TV service will support efforts to make Cheshire West and Chester a safer place to live and work.

The Council's Head of Marketing and Communications Pam Bradley said: "We will use the TV site a lot to communicate with the public and we expect it will help us reach out to younger people."

"It will become an important communications tool, as we will be able to literally show people what we are doing, for example, to make bonfire night safer, cut down on crime or help people who may have alcohol or drug problems, to name but a few issues."

- The broadband TV site, which goes live on October 8, is at www.westcheshiretv.co.uk



The stylish branding of West Cheshire's new broadband TV service.

Talking Together is published by West Cheshire Together, a partnership of Cheshire West and Chester Council, Cheshire Police, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, Cheshire Police Authority and NHS Western Cheshire.



Working in partnership for local people

