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Alcohol partnership brings community results

Training for retailers, patrols and activities for young people are all being successfully used to reduce the amount of under-age drinking and anti-social behaviour in Edenbridge.

The work is being carried out by the Kent Community Alcohol Partnership project, which is being piloted in Edenbridge. It is being run by Kent County Council's Kent Trading Standards with Kent Police, the Retail Alcohol Strategy Group and Sevenoaks District Council.

Since it started in March, 44 bottles and 21 cans of alcohol have been seized in the town from underage drinkers, and a fine has been issued to a retailer who sold alcohol to a minor. Confiscated bottles and cans have been examined to identify where they were purchased with the aim of contacting the retailers involved for training or enforcement if necessary.

Kent Trading Standards officers have been working closely with retailers in the area to encourage them to have a policy of 'Challenge 25', which means they check identification for anyone who looks under 25 yrs old to try and capture any minors who look older than they are. Retailers have also been offered training sessions to help them deal with the challenges they face around under-age drinkers.

In August, licencing officers from Sevenoaks District Council joined Trading Standards officers to re-visit pubs and off-licences in Edenbridge, offering advice and reminding businesses to remain alert during exam results time when there could be an increase in attempted purchases.

Community wardens have also been playing a key role by working with neighbourhood police teams to identify areas where young people gather when they are drinking, so the teams can talk to the young people directly.

To tackle the summer holiday period, particularly in the evenings, there have been high-visibility patrols by Police Community Support Officers, and the Kent Community Alcohol Partnership has worked with local organisation Play Place to set up activities for young people in the area as an alternative option to drinking alcohol.

The Play Place team has also been working with young people throughout the pilot. They have a regular presence at the Co-op supermarket in the town and hold 'roaming' sessions and activities in Lingfield Park when they speak to young people about why they are drinking and highlight the health issues around drinking and keeping safe.

Kent County Council Cabinet Member for Communities Mike Hill said:
"The initial results of this pilot scheme are very encouraging. By working together in this way it's clear that we can significantly reduce the impact of alcohol on young people and the communities they live in."

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The Kent Community Alcohol Partnership team will be at the Edenbridge Community Safety day at the Co-op supermarket between 10.30am and 3pm on 12 September to tell residents about the work being carried out, and to collect valuable feedback about the issues caused in the community by under-age drinking.

This pilot scheme is also being operated in Canterbury and Thanet. Residents and retailers in all three areas are playing a vital part in providing information to the team about places where young drinkers gather and the impact of under-age drinking in their community.

There is more information available on the Trading Standards website or contact the team by calling 08458 247 247 or by e-mail: KCAP@kent.gov.uk

If the pilot is successful it could be rolled out to other areas of the county.

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