

Underage drinking initiative hailed as a success



An ongoing partnership initiative to tackle underage drinking and associated problems in the East of Edinburgh is being hailed as a success.

In July 2013, the East Edinburgh Community Alcohol Partnership was launched within the Portobello, Piershill and Craigentenny areas to educate the public on the impact of alcohol abuse on communities.

As part of the campaign, local officers have been working closely with partners in education, health, youth groups and the retail sector to discuss the main factors for underage drinking and the subsequent consequences.

All of the agencies have also been focussing on how to reduce the access young people have to alcohol as well as promoting diversionary activities, which promote positive life choices.

Local licensed premises have played a crucial role by implementing their 'Challenge 25' policy and educating staff on responsible selling practices to deter proxy purchasing.

Police and partner agencies have also targeted schools within these regions to provide inputs to young people on the dangers linked to underage drinking and answering any questions or concerns they may have about this issue.

As a result of this activity, alcohol-related antisocial behaviour in East Edinburgh has fallen from 180 reports in 2013/14 to 148 reports in 2014/15. This is a reduction of almost 18%.

In addition, officers have also seen a significant decrease in

the quantity of alcohol being seized from those under the age of 18.

In 2012/13, prior to the launch of the East Edinburgh CAP local policing teams were taking between eight and twelve litres of alcohol off young people each week. Now, only between one and three litres are being seized.

Chief Inspector Jimmy Jones, Local Area Commander for East Edinburgh said: "When we entered into this partnership scheme, our focus was on education. Not only the education of young people but the also the local community, including those responsible for the sale of alcohol.

"We wanted to demonstrate to everyone the real dangers young people can put themselves in if they consume and over-consume alcohol and I think that message has really hit home with many people.

"I am delighted to see that alcohol-related antisocial behaviour has fallen and that our officers are seizing less alcohol from those underage, but we will not become complacent.

"Enforcement activity will continue to identify those who continue to buy or sell alcohol to those under the age of 18 and our ongoing partnership work will look to further address the issue of underage drinking within East Edinburgh."

Derek Lewis, CAP Chairman added: "The rapid growth in the number of local CAPs launched in 2014 and 2015, is a welcome recognition of the need to achieve further reductions in underage drinking, a strong vote of confidence in the CAP model and a powerful demonstration of the effectiveness of local partnerships."