

# Police launch proxy purchasing initiative



Police have launched a new partnership initiative in the Leith area of the city to tackle the issue of proxy purchasing – where adults purchase alcohol for under-18s.

As part of Operation Savana local officers are working alongside the Scottish Alcohol Industry Partnership (SAIP) and City of Edinburgh Council to raise awareness on the risks and penalties associated with buying alcohol for anyone under the age of 18.

If caught committing this offence you could face a fine of up to £5,000, three months in prison, or both and police are keen to ensure that parents, guardians and everyone else is fully alert to these consequences.

During the campaign, a digital advertising screen will be on display on Leith Walk at Shrub Place Lane, warning the public about the police action that could be taken if they are found to be involved in proxy purchasing.

In addition to raising awareness, Operation Savana also looks to encourage communities to come forward and report proxy purchasing and to give confidence to shop staff to challenge anyone they suspect of buying alcohol for underage drinkers.

The initiative has been launched after a similar project involving Police Scotland, SAIP and North Lanarkshire Council proved extremely successful last year.

Chief Inspector Kevin McLean, Local Area Commander for North East Edinburgh said: “We currently believe that the issue of proxy purchasing is under-reported within the Leith area and

one of the key aims of this campaign is to ensure the public contact police if they witness someone buying alcohol for minors.

“We also want people to know the penalties they could face, should they be caught committing this offence. To assist with this, a large digital billboard on Leith Walk will display the campaign’s messages.

“I would urge all members of our Leith communities to take notice of this initiative and help us reduce antisocial behaviour and disorder offences in the area by reporting incidents of proxy purchasing and by refraining from purchasing alcohol for anyone under the age of 18.”

John Lee, Chair of the SAIP Campaigns Group, said: “Responsible retailing and initiatives such as Challenge 25 have helped reduce the number of direct sales of alcohol to under 18s, but young people are increasingly accessing alcohol by other means.

“Asking an adult to buy alcohol for them is one of the most common tactics used. This campaign raises awareness of the serious consequences of buying alcohol on behalf of a young person, provides support for retailers in the area and will help to reduce alcohol-related problems in Leith.”

Community Safety Leader, Cllr Cammy Day, said: “Alcohol consumption can cause young people to take more risks than they normally would, and as well as impacting their health and making them more vulnerable, this can also lead to anti social behaviour or violence.

“The Council recognises its role in protecting the health and wellbeing of the city’s young people and works regularly with partners such as Police Scotland and NHS Lothian to encourage them to keep themselves safe. This campaign reinforces that message.

“Retailers are often reminded of their responsibilities when it comes to selling alcohol, but it is important that if we see adults buying alcohol for someone clearly under 18, we take responsibility and report it to the Police.”