

Police launch annual festive safety campaign in capital



Police have today launched Operation Winter City, their annual festive campaign, aimed at keeping people safe during the holiday season.

Officers will be deployed in the city centre to provide a high-visibility presence in order to engage with the public, offering a range of useful crime prevention advice and personal safety information.

This will include guidance on how to protect your valuables when shopping or partying, helpful tips on protecting yourself online and information on safeguarding your home and its contents.

This year, in addition to crime prevention and public safety police also want to raise awareness of a number of other issues that affect our communities during this time of year, including homelessness, alcohol abuse and domestic violence.

Throughout December, hundreds of thousands of people are expected to visit the city centre and surrounding areas to shop, socialise and take part in the range of events Edinburgh has become famous for, including the Winter Market and Edinburgh's Hogmanay Street party.

Edinburgh Division's specially created social media 'Countdown to Christmas' Calendar will also return, allowing the public to view a police safety message on both Facebook and Twitter every day from the 1st-31st December.

In recognition of the different issues that people deal with over the festive period and the fact the Christmas can be a

challenging and lonely time for many, Edinburgh's policing team chose to launch this year's Winter City campaign at the Salvation Army's Pleasance Lifehouse for people overcoming homelessness.

Every day, the church and charity, much like the police, take calls from members of the public in relation to alcohol abuse, domestic violence and mental health issues. These can often result in vulnerable people requiring the assistance of police or living rough on our streets, which is where partners like Salvation Army offer such an important service, supporting and helping people when they most need it.

Chief Inspector Helen Harrison, Event Commander for Winter City said: "Without a doubt, over the festive season Edinburgh is one of the most amazing cities to live in, work in or visit as there are so many amazing spectacles and attractions to take in.

"However, it is no coincidence that the increase in people within the city centre coincides with a busier time for police, emergency services and partners such as the Salvation Army.

"The purpose of Winter City is to provide our communities with all the necessary information they need to keep themselves safe, while at the same time deploying additional resources to the busiest areas of Edinburgh to deal with any issues or incidents, which may arise.

"I would urge the public to assist us with our crime prevention and public safety efforts by ensuring their properties are always appropriately secured when left unattended and that any valuables such as gifts are not on display to others. In addition, people should be mindful of their limits when it comes to alcohol consumption, as this is often the main factor in the various issues that both ourselves, and our partners deal with over the festive season.

“After the popularity of last year’s social media Christmas calendar, we will again utilise Facebook and Twitter to issue festive safety messages over the coming month, look out for BRUCE0 who are leading our social media winter campaign this year.

“People can view our messages by liking the Edinburgh Police Division Facebook page and following our @EdinburghPolice Twitter account.”

Iain Wilson, the Salvation Army’s homelessness services manager in Edinburgh, said: “As a church and charity we offer spiritual and practical support to some of the city’s most vulnerable people.

“However, we can only offer that support by working in partnership with the public, businesses and agencies such as the police.

“It goes without saying that we are delighted to be able to support the police with their Christmas campaign.”