

## NEWS RELEASE

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### DOMESTIC ABUSE AWARENESS WEEK

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17<sup>TH</sup> November 2005

- **Experts in tackling domestic abuse are to hold a Survivors Consultation Event in Torbay on Wednesday 23rd November 2005 to gauge how well the bay has dealt with the issue.**

Week commencing Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2005 is the South West Region's **Domestic Abuse Awareness Week**. Torbay's Domestic Abuse Forum will be raising awareness of domestic abuse and promoting the support services that are available to victims and children.

The main event of the week is taking place in Brixham on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2005 - a **Survivors Consultation Event**. During the consultation survivors will be asked for their positive and negative experiences of dealing with various agencies throughout Torbay.

Specially invited representatives from the Housing Department, Police, Torbay Care Trust, Children's Services and South Devon HealthCare NHS Trust will be attending to hear the results presented by survivors themselves. From this day an action plan will be produced on how these agencies can respond to the report and improve their services. Christine Mckenna, the Chair of Torbay Domestic Abuse Forum said "everyone has been working really hard to raise the profile of domestic abuse and the services available to victims and survivors".

Detective Sergeant Nick Wilden, Manager of the police's South and West Devon Domestic Violence Unit, said: "We provide support for victims in the area and offer advice and help to officers attending incidents and throughout the investigative process. Domestic violence

officers provide a vital link for victims to the judicial process and to the multi-agency support networks that now exist within Torbay.

**“The number of incidents reported to Torbay police has risen dramatically in recent years, from 800 in 2003 to a projected figure in excess of 2,500 in 2005. This does not reflect an increase in abuse, but a vastly increased confidence in victims to report incidents to the police.**

Detective Sergeant Nick Wilden added, “The increase is also owing to the improved multi-agency approach. The Police, Health, education, social services, probation and voluntary organisations like Women’s Aid and Victim Support have all been instrumental in this process. Anyone reporting abuse to police in Torbay will be taken seriously and action will be taken wherever possible. Anyone wanting help from the Unit can contact us direct on 01803 841469.”

To coincide with Domestic Abuse Awareness Week, Torbay Domestic Abuse Forum are advertising **‘Domestic Abuse is a Crime!’** on the back of bus tickets, on the sides of buses and on a trailer which is currently being placed at various sites around Torbay. The adverts also provide valuable contact numbers for services such as Torbay Police Domestic Violence Unit 01803 841469 and South Devon Women’s Aid Helpline 01364 644088. Christine Mckenna, who also works at South Devon Women’s Aid said “every woman should feel free to call our helpline, not only to report incidents, but also if they want to talk about current or past experiences”. South Devon Women’s Aid also offer face-to-face support, counselling sessions, local support groups and a Safe House should anyone feel the need to flee.

This awareness-raising week is supporting the Forum’s awareness-raising materials that have been sent out to over 450 local businesses. Striking posters, leaflets and a discreet credit card have been distributed to outline what domestic abuse is, who can experience it and what agencies are there to help.

**Safer Communities Torbay - working with you for you**

As Jo Penhaligon, Torbay's Domestic Abuse Prevention Officer, stressed "Domestic abuse is not just physical violence like being kicked or punched; it also includes emotional, mental and sexual abuse, being told you are worthless or constantly being criticised. It can also take the form of threatening children, intimidation, bullying, controlling your every move or even isolating you from your family and friends. Tragically it could also end in death".

Time off work due to injuries caused by domestic violence costs employers and workers nationally almost £3 billion. Locally the cost is approximately £60 per household in Torbay, totalling almost £3.7 million. Awareness raising packs are available from Safer Communities Torbay by calling 01803 841440 or e-mailing [scatt@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:scatt@torbay.gov.uk).

### **A Problem We Can't Ignore...**

- Domestic abuse is a crime! 1 in 3 women, 1 in 6 men and 1 in 4 people in a same sex relationship will experience domestic abuse at least in once their lifetime.
- Anyone can experience domestic abuse regardless of whatever age, sex, class, colour, ability, religion or sexuality.

Ends

### **Note to Editors:**

To arrange interviews please contact Rachael Powell in the Safer Communities Office on 01803 841440. For more information also visit our website: [www.safercommunitiestorbay.org.uk](http://www.safercommunitiestorbay.org.uk).

**Torbay Domestic Abuse Forum** is a group of representatives from a number of agencies who have a front line involvement with victims, perpetrators or children who have been affected by domestic abuse.

# Domestic Abuse is a Crime!



**For many women, home is a prison.**

**Help them break the silence surrounding Domestic violence**

Torbay Police Domestic Violence Unit .....01803 841469

South Devon Women's Aid Helpline .....01364 644088

Broken Rainbow.....0208 539 9507

(24 hour helpline service for lesbian, gay, bi & transpeople experiencing domestic violence)

**Torbay Domestic Abuse Forum**