

Domestic Abuse Awareness Week 2011

1 in 4 suffer domestic abuse

– Would you recognise the signs?

“Would you recognise the signs?” is the theme of Domestic Abuse Awareness Week 2011 in Devon which runs from November 21st – 25th 2011.

This year’s campaign aims to highlight the lesser know signs of domestic abuse in an attempt to encourage those at risk – or their friends, family or colleagues - to notice the warning signs and seek expert help.

The Awareness Week, which is run by Devon’s domestic abuse partnership **adva**, alongside Devon and Cornwall Police, will feature a different example of domestic abuse each day of the week, ranging from isolation to cyber stalking and pet abuse. Each will be supported by personal stories and professional advice.

The themes have been based on the DASH assessment (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour Based Violence) which is used by police and domestic abuse workers to identify the level of risk a person is exposed to and what needs to be done to keep a victim safe. It was developed in 2009 on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and in partnership with Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA).

Rachel Martin, Manager for ADVA, which is led by Devon County Council, said: “With one person in four suffering domestic abuse at some time in their lives, it is vital that there is an increased awareness of the early warning signs to ensure that help can be sought, both for the victim and the perpetrator, before the abuse gets out of hand.

“We sincerely hope that this year’s campaign will give people the confidence to call for help, even if they just have a niggling suspicion that something isn’t right. Tragically, there are still too many domestic abuse cases here in Devon that end in serious injury and even death.”

The campaign will be launched to the media at an event at Middlemoor Police Headquarters on Wednesday 16th November for use during Awareness Week, The Police and SAFE-Services Exeter and East Devon will co-ordinate an awareness raising campaign using social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter, focusing on the following themes:

PROGRAMME FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE AWARENESS WEEK 2011

DAY 1 - Monday: Isolation; controlling and excessive jealous behaviour. This is one of the earliest signs that a relationship might become abusive. A jealous or possessive partner may control the household money, the clothes their partner wears or the people their partner is allowed to see.

DAY 2 - Tuesday: Cyber stalking: using social media to monitor the movements and associations of a partner or ex partner. Stalking is one of the most frequently experienced types of domestic abuse and includes persistent calling, texting or surveillance at work,

home or via social networking sites like Facebook. According to Women's Aid, 23% of women have experienced stalking since the age of 16. (Source: Coleman et al 2007).

DAY 3 - Wednesday: Escalation: Repeat victimisation and escalation of abuse.

Domestic abuse often grows in frequency and from threats and verbal abuse to violence, either quickly or over a long period of time.

DAY 4 - Thursday: During pregnancy and just after birth (new born and under 18 months old). Abuse can often start or become worse during pregnancy. Between 4 and 9 women in every 100 are abused during their pregnancies or just after the birth. (source: Taft, 2002 www.womenaid.org). One midwife in five knows that at least one of her expectant mothers is a victim of domestic abuse and a further one in 5 midwives sees at least one woman a week who she suspects is a victim. (source: www.refuge.org.uk)

- *Tender is an organisation that works with and trains health professionals to increase the identification of and support for women experiencing domestic abuse during pregnancy. They will be running three workshops with health professionals at three locations in Devon to help equip them with the ability to identify and support women victims of violence in hospital maternity units, health centres, GP surgeries and Children's Centres.*
- Friday 25th November 10am -12noon at Wonford Community Centre, Exeter
- Friday 25th November 3pm – 5pm South Brent Village Hall, South Devon

DAY 5 - Friday: Pet abuse: There is a strong link between cruelty to animals and domestic abuse. Family pets are often used as a way of controlling the abused, either by hurting them directly or making threats to hurt them. Animals can also be a reason why some victims of abuse choose not to leave their abuser.