

news release

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"Valentine's Day isn't always chocolates and roses" – raising awareness of abusive relationships

As Valentine's Day approaches, Hertfordshire's County Community Safety Unit is sending the message that Valentine's Day is not always chocolates and roses and help is available for those suffering from domestic abuse.

Sarah Taylor, Programme Manager for domestic abuse for the County Community Safety Unit, said: "Everyday many people across the county and nationally are suffering. Some victims may not even realise they are being subjected to abuse – but they feel confused and depressed and know something is not quite right we want to let them know that support is available via the helpline on 08 088 088 088 and the website www.hertssunflower.org

On Thursday (February 6th) members of the media were invited to Hertfordshire Police Headquarters at Welwyn Garden City for a presentation on the subject and for the re-launch of the True Love? campaign which raises awareness of abuse – particularly amongst young people. Detective Chief Inspector Julie Wheatley along with Sarah Taylor, lead and Programme Manager for domestic abuse for the County Community Safety Unit gave the presentation.

Since the launch of the True Love? Campaign in November 2012, police have seen an increase in the number of reported domestic abuse incidents – particularly amongst the 16 / 17 year old age group. Figures indicate an increase of 5.3 per cent in reporting figures for this age group with an overall increase of 11 per cent for overall crime.

Detective Chief Inspector Clare Smith from the Harm Reduction Unit based at Hatfield Police station which investigates cases of domestic abuse, harassment and stalking, said: "We welcome this increase in reporting figures, particularly in the 16/ 17 year age group as it indicates that more people are becoming aware of abuse in relationships and have the confidence to report it.

"For a victim to realise they are in an abusive relationship can often be confusing and as the perpetrator will use coercive and controlling behaviour over a period of time to chip away at the victim's confidence and they may be nasty –name calling and mocking - but will then



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Police and Crime
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for Hertfordshire

Issued by Corporate Communication
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shower them with presents or treat them really well so it is a constant emotional rollercoaster for the victim. They may also try and control them sexually, and threaten them if they do not do something for them – but then tell them how attractive they are and how lucky they are to be with that person. They may also try and tell them to not see friends or family and maintain other relationships – saying they want to have that person (the victim) all to themselves – or they may arrange to meet them and then not turn up and follow it up with a number of text messages apologising for their behaviour and give them another chance. These are mind games – a dangerous game to play. This is all testing the water for an abuser to see how far they can push you.

Abusers may also try and exert financial control over you. It may take a victim a very long time to realise that they are in an abusive relationship because of the confused signals. Our True Love? Campaign which is under the national umbrella for This is Abuse – a national government campaign – raises these issues – particularly amongst young people.

Sarah Taylor added: “Our advice to people, whatever their gender, sexuality, background or religion - who suspect they are in an abusive or controlling relationship – or even if they are no longer with that person and they are still trying to control them – is to contact police or Hertfordshire Sunflower – we will help you deal with this and live a life free from abuse.”

“Domestic abuse affects every corner of society regardless of gender, class, age, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or lifestyle.

Domestic abuse rarely involves a ‘one-off’ incident. It is more usually a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour by one person (or group) over another. Domestic abuse will often escalate from something seemingly small such as name calling or threats, to incidents of physical or sexual abuse, and can begin at any stage of a relationship, sometimes continuing after a relationship has ended.

David Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, said: “Abuse and violence within the home or within relationships is not acceptable and it is heartening to see the progress that the Force and its partners are making in this area. This increase hopefully means that people are getting wiser to the games that abusers play and are reporting their concerns rather than hoping that the problem will just go away.

“In the coming months I will be looking at ways police and partner agencies can strengthen the work they do together to detect crimes and further protect victims. I will also be looking to provide further support for initiatives to help the victims of domestic abuse.



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About the County Community Safety Unit:

In June 2010, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary launched a joint County Community Safety Unit, bringing together professionals from the county council's former Crime and Drugs Strategy unit (CDSU) and the police.

The new unit - the first of its kind in the country - has more than 120 staff working in four key areas: vulnerable people, which includes domestic violence, safeguarding adults and child protection; offender management, involving the support of Hertfordshire Probation Service; safer communities, which takes responsibility for work around anti-social behaviour and alcohol misuse and the county drug strategy.

- Ends -

Notes to editors: For further information please contact Senior Press and PR Officer Olivia Finucane on 01707 354588.



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