

STREET PATROL: PRAISE FOR CHRISTIAN GROUP WHICH HELPS CLUBBERS

'A great benefit to us all'



PICTURE: MIKE SEWELL /159738-7

OUT ON THE TOWN: From left, street pastors Ann Murphy, Francis Obeng and Rachel Lock

Chief constable Matt Baggott today praised the dedication of a group of Christians who patrol the city offering help to distressed clubbers.

A team of 12 volunteer street pastors from Christian churches across Leicestershire went out on patrol in the city centre on Friday.

They aim to be on hand for young clubbers when a night out goes wrong.

Mr Baggott, whose officers are tackling a rising tide of alcohol-related violence in the city, said: "These good people are freely giving up their time to help people in this way and what they are doing is really very important."

"There is a great benefit to us from this fantastic idea and I hope it prospers."

Canon Barry Naylor, the Bishop of Leicester's adviser on urban issues, launched the street pastors in the city centre after seeing the idea working in cities including London, Manchester and Birmingham.

During their first night out, when they worked until the nightclubs closed, a lot of young people approached the team to find out why they were there, Mr Naylor said.

He said: "It was a really good evening, there were a lot of positive people who really wanted to find out what the street pastors are all about."

by **CIARAN FAGAN**

SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

"We also had some good conversations with the police, door staff and owners at the pubs and clubs."

Mary Ogungbeje, from the Leicester Christian Fellowship church in Frog Island, volunteered after she saw the street pastors at work in London.

She said: "When I heard they were going to set up in Leicester I had to join because the work they do is so important."

"We've all been out in the city centre with the police as part of our training and that was a bit of an eye-opener because we saw the situations people can get into."

ENTHUSIASTIC

Clubbers were enthusiastic after they found out why the street pastors were in the city.

Nightclub event promoter Cory Williams, 19, from Kirby Frith, said: "This sounds like a really good idea. They could stop people getting into serious trouble."

Susan Wyatt, 21, a student of Clarendon Park, said: "It's good to know they will be around, although I think the police in Leicester are really good."

Jay Byrne, 19, from Loughborough, said: "These are things that the police just don't have the time to deal with so it's good to know there's someone else around who cares enough to listen."