



Pastors hit the streets

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The training starts here for would-be Street Pastors

CHURCH leaders and Christians with a concern for society are being recruited to help tackle anti-social behaviour in and around Wolverhampton city centre.

Already Wolverhampton City Council has ploughed £6,000 into an inter-denominational scheme to train volunteers to become Street Pastors working in the city to provide a continuous visible presence on the streets.

Organisers have been encouraged by the initial response, with 15 people from local churches and fellowships signing on for the training course, which began in April.

'This is such a brilliant scheme,' said training co-ordinator Richard Moy, of Wolverhampton Pioneer Ministries, 'and it's not just for young fit men. In Taunton, Devon, the average age of a Street Pastor is 60, and some of the most effective people have been 'mamma-type' women who just barge in and say 'go home'. It's quite inspirational.

'The quality of people coming forward locally is tremendous. One guy who has recently been confirmed just wants to get out on the streets because that's where he's come from. He wants to help people like himself.'

First pioneered in London in 2003, the scheme has seen some remarkable results with statistics showing a 75 per cent reduction in crime in some areas. By 2006 the number of Street Pastors around the country had reached 1,000, and that figure is growing all the time.

In June the first Street Pastors in the Lichfield Diocese will be out on the streets of Wolverhampton engaging with people and showing practical care and support.

'To start with we will be in the city centre on Saturday evenings between 10pm-4am,' said Richard, 'but I don't want anyone to be put off by that. If someone is keen to be involved, I would much rather they did an early shift, say 10pm-1am, than nothing at all.'

Anyone interested in training to be a Street Pastor should be over 18, been committed to a Christian fellowship for a year, and be able to provide a reference from their church or minister. For more information contact the office of Wolverhampton Street Pastors on 0845 203 4510 or 01902 399827, or check out the Church 18-30 website: www.wonderers.co.uk